

INTERNATIONAL

March

OF THE LIVING



MARCH OF THE LIVING

INTERNATIONAL HANDBOOK

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

WELCOME	2
GOALS OF THE MARCH OF THE LIVING	5

POLAND AND JEWISH LIFE BEFORE THE WAR

A BRIEF HISTORY OF POLAND	8
SOME FAMOUS POLES	15
HOW JEWS CAME TO POLAND	24
THE GOLDEN AGE	25
SHTETL FACTS	26
COMPARING EASTERN & WESTERN JEWRY	27
COMPETING RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS	28
CHASSIDISM	30
POLISH JEWRY IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD	38
1000 YEARS OF THE JEWS IN POLAND	45
DEVELOPMENT OF JUDAISM	53

HOLOCAUST

HOLOCAUST TIMELINE	61
NUREMBERG RACE LAWS	67
1936 OLYMPICS IN GERMANY	70
THE WANNSEE CONFERENCE	99
POLAND AND THE HOLOCAUST	103
JEWISH POPULATIONS IN EUROPE 1939-91	117
THE HUNGARIAN HOLOCAUST 1944	119
LIST OF CONCENTRATION CAMPS	130
SURVIVORS & LIBERATORS: A COMPLEX LEGACY	136
GLOSSARY OF THE HOLOCAUST	140

RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS

RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS	150
RESISTANCE AND RIGHTEOUS	153
IRENA SENDLER	158
RAOUL WALLENBERG	161
POLAND HONOURS RIGHTEOUS GENTILE	164
YIZKOR FOR THE RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS	166

JEWISH LIFE AFTER HOLOCAUST

REBIRTH OF JEWISH LIFE	171
JEWISH LIFE IN POLAND TODAY	175
WHERE THE WORLD'S JEWS LIVE	183

TESTIMONIES & REFLECTIONS

TESTIMONIES, POEMS AND READINGS	186
PRAYERS AND PSALMS	238
POLAND TRAVEL INFORMATION	242
NOTABLE QUOTES ON THE HOLOCAUST	247
GENERAL GLOSSARY	248
BIBLIOGRAPHY	250
JEWISH ACTIVISM	255

“Those that fail to learn
from history are doomed
to repeat it.”

– *George Santayana (Spanish philosopher)*



A Pledge to the Jewish People

*A*s a participant in the March of the Living, together with Jewish students from around the world, I will embark on a journey into the past and future of the Jewish people.

Together, we will encounter the remnants of our tragic past in Poland. Together we will experience the hope of our future when we visit the land of Israel.

In Eastern Europe we will pay tribute to the memory of our martyrs who never lived to see redemption. In Israel we will witness the miraculous rebirth of a brave and valiant nation attempting to fulfill a 2,000 year old dream. In Israel we will also learn about the many challenges that still face this young nation and of the role that we, as Jewish students, can play in ensuring that Israel continues to flourish as a strong, independent and just nation

Upon my return...

I pledge to keep alive and honour the legacy of the multitudes of our people who perished in the Holocaust.

I pledge to fight anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism, Holocaust denial and all other forms of hatred directed towards the Jewish People and Israel.

I also pledge to fight every form of discrimination manifested against any religion, nationality or ethnic group.

I pledge to actively participate in the strengthening of Jewish life in the Diaspora and Israel.

I pledge to increase my knowledge of our Jewish heritage and to give of my time to increasing Jewish awareness in my school and in my community.

At a time when so many of our Jewish brothers and sisters - in our own community, in Israel and in other parts of the world - need our assistance, I pledge to contribute, in whatever way I can, to worthy Jewish charitable causes.

This is my solemn pledge to the Jewish People, to those who came before me, to those of my generation, and to those who will follow in future generations.

Date _____

Signature _____

Introduction

Dear March of the Living Participants,

It is now over 2 years since the horrific attacks on Southern Israel. Yet those tragic events that took place on that morning, which shattered our belief that we lived in a relatively protected and safe world, continue to impact everything around us.

Our homes, our schools, our campuses and our streets are no longer safe places, where we felt free to walk wearing anything that identified us as Jews. Antisemitism, the age-old hatred has once again reared its vile head, in a different guise maybe, but ultimately the same.

And as I now write this, we are over one month into another war, with fierce fighting in the North and our Israeli colleagues spending many hours each day in and out of shelters. We all ask ourselves, how and when can we all live in peace, and when can we treasure life ?

I look back 81 years to the Holocaust, and I ask, what lessons have we learnt? How can hatred and violence fill the streets of London, Paris and Chicago? How is it that people sit and watch and do nothing when hate fills our streets?

As a student of the Holocaust for over 30 years, I can safely say that what we are seeing today is not comparable to the period you are about to explore. The Holocaust was an unprecedented event in history. It was a multitude of complexities, involving millions of people across the entire planet. However long you spend learning, it will never be enough to even grasp the tiniest of fragments.

My own journey began in Tokyo over 30 years ago. A story of a survivor, a Japanese diplomat who saved Jews and a chance meeting ignited within me the desire to learn more about the history of my people.

It is impossible to fathom the sheer enormity of the Shoah. How can one think of 6 million people? That is 6 million individuals: fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, husbands, wives, children. 6 million hopes and dreams; shattered, destroyed! 6 million murdered for the crime of being a Jew. Others too, who did not fit into a Nazi ideology. Homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Roma and disabled, amongst others all murdered because they did not fit into a Master Race.

Our journey explores the rich and diverse history of Polish Jewry, spanning almost 1000 years. We cannot understand what was lost until we know what was there before. Every time I return, the experience changes, just as each group changes. We collectively take one trip, but we are each on our own journey.

While on this journey, I ask all of you to open your minds, to challenge and ask, to be prepared to listen, and to open your eyes to see. The complexity of the Holocaust is far more than Auschwitz. It is the forests of Eastern Europe; it is the Operation Reinhard Reinhold Death Camps, and it is the Ghettos across Poland and beyond. It

is the stories of those who died and how they lived, the heroes of the resistance, the child smugglers, the bystanders, the collaborators, the Righteous, the great Rabbis and scholars murdered, the Nazi ideologues and the ordinary men who became murderers.

This year like previous ones, we will focus on passing the torch, as more than 40 Holocaust survivors from across the world, will join our groups and be charged with passing the torch to younger generations. Not only do we learn their first-hand testimony, but we also learn their spirit at how they rebuilt their lives. It is important for us to honour those who bear witness, and remember the words of Elie Wiesel "When you listen to a witness, you become a witness."

Along with our survivors are the amazing educators who will challenge you. Each year they inspire, and they help you look both inward and outwardly at the stories. There are a host of volunteers that need our thanks, from our operational managers, and the entire medical team, and of course all of our staff who this year have worked double shifts to overcome the challenges presented by the war. The team that has worked tirelessly, Revital, Monise, Ariana, Michel, Shirley, Avi, Brooke, Liron, Liora, Greg, David, Eli, Pawel, Robyn, Naomi, Tamar and of course a special thanks for Liz, who does not miss a single issue.

A special thank you to our directors, Shmuel our Chairman, Phyllis our President, Baruch, Avi, Shlomo, Moishe, Shimon and Mark. I would also like to thank all our partners who help make this journey work. Our land providers, the airlines we work with, the production teams, all our local guides and of course the security teams that we work so closely with.

I wish to thank our donors. For many of you, the March would not be possible without their generosity.

As each year passes, we move closer to changing the story from memory to history. As this happens, it becomes more imperative that we be true to our history, as never before have so many looked to deny it. This year, despite the fact that our Israeli brethren were unable to travel, we are still marching with almost 7000 participants, from over 70 delegations across the world. It is up to all of us to carry the torch of memory and hold it bright for future generations so that they will overcome hate whenever and wherever it raises its head. We must proclaim it stronger than ever, no more anti-Semitism or hate of any kind. There must be no room for racism, and we must say 'Never Means Never'.

Ladies and gentlemen of the 2026 March of the Living, thank you for joining us on our mission and for being a part of this special programme. I hope it inspires you, educates you and that you get as much from this journey as I have from all of mine.

Thank you.

Scott Saunders MBE
Founder and Chairman of March of the Living UK
CEO International March of the Living



13 GOALS of the MARCH OF THE LIVING

1

To remember the Six Million Jews who perished in the Shoah.

2

To pay tribute to the courage of those who survived the Holocaust — who rebuilt their lives despite the haunting memories of the past — and to be the bearers of their memories, the witnesses for the witnesses.

3

To remember the millions of other innocent victims of Nazi Germany's genocidal policies during WWII.

4

To recognize and learn from the altruistic actions of the "Righteous Among the Nations." who teach us to never be a bystander in the face of oppression.

5

To honor the heroic Allied veterans and partisan fighters who fought to liberate Europe from the hands of Nazi tyranny during WWII.

6

To never again allow for the unchecked rise of the menace of antisemitism.

7

To never again allow any kind of discrimination directed by any individual or group against another to gain strength. Given the Jewish people's historic experience of persecution, our tradition teaches that the Jewish people have a special responsibility to oppose intolerance — "Love the stranger because you were once strangers" (Deut. 10:19) — and to teach the world that all human beings are created *btselem elohim* (in the image of G-d — Gen. 1:27), and deserve equal dignity and respect.

8

To inspire participants to commit to building a world free of oppression and intolerance — a world of freedom, democracy and justice, for all members of the human family.

9

To familiarize students with the rich Jewish heritage that existed in Poland and other countries in pre-WWII Europe. The goal is to inspire students to consider leading Jewish lives today that reflect many of the diverse values and traditions of pre-war European Jewry. Students should also learn about the complex history of the Jewish presence in these countries — both positive and negative.

10

To understand the importance of the existence of Israel:

- As the spiritual center and homeland of the Jewish people.
- Through the lesson that Jews will never again allow themselves to be defenseless.
- By developing a love for the people of Israel and an appreciation of the hardships and sacrifice endured by her citizens on behalf of Israel.
- Through the understanding of the concept of Meshoah Le'tkumah —from destruction to rebirth. Despite the devastation of the Holocaust, the Jewish people never gave up their belief in building a better tomorrow. Rather, they rose up — against all odds — and established the State of Israel: the hope and future of the Jewish people.

11

Jewish Unity — To instill in students a love for Am Yisrael, an appreciation for and connection to the Jewish people in every land, throughout the ages and in contemporary times.

12

Tikkun Olam — To remind students of the Jewish people's responsibility to be Or Lagoyim, a light unto the nations, by reaching out to people of other faiths and cultures, and by mending our too often shattered world through providing help and assistance to those most in need.

13

The final goal is not so much to learn from or about history — but to enter into history. By joining the March of the Living, young Jewish students and others of diverse backgrounds take part in a commemorative act that demonstrates to the world that the death of six million of our people — and so many other innocent victims — has been marked and will never be forgotten.

WE CANNOT UNDERSTAND WHAT WAS LOST
UNTIL WE KNOW WHAT
WAS THERE BEFORE.

**Poland and Jewish Life
Before the War**

A Brief History of Poland

- **850** — Founding of the Piast dynasty in the Polish realm.
- **966** — Piast ruler, Miesko is baptized. Poland adopts Christianity and becomes an acknowledged partner of European christian states
- **1370-1386** — End of Piast dynasty. A French -Hungarian dynasty rules Poland. Jadwiga, daughter of the king of Poland and Hungary, marries Jogaila, grand duke of Lithuania, establishing the beginning of the Jagiellonian dynasty. Poland's union with Lithuania enables it to become the dominant power in east central Europe during the 15th and early 16th centuries
- **1572** — End of Jagiellon dynasty. Polish nobility begin to elect their kings from various royal houses of Europe and from native Polish aristocratic families. These weak rulers allow the strength of the Polish Lithuanian state to be sapped by powerful neighbours.
- **1648** — Chmielnicki revolt in the Ukraine - an attempt to destroy the Polish state. Cossacks kill tens of thousands of Jews. This uprising causes the greatest loss of Jewish life until the Shoah. About half the Jewish population is destroyed. There is a very high loss of life among the Poles
- **1655** - Sweden invades Poland and forces the cession of considerable territory in 1660. Poland becomes embroiled in conflicts with Russia and Sweden. Internally the Polish state succumbs to economic backwardness and social conflicts between Roman Catholics and Orthodox Poles,
- **1795** — Third and final partition of Poland as its territory is seized by Russia, Austria and Prussia. Poland is eradicated from the political geography of Europe.
- **1815** — Kingdom of Poland is established within the Russian empire. Unsuccessful Polish revolts in
- **1830, 1846 and 1863** leads to Russification and Germanization in the educational systems of Russian and Prussian sectors.
- **1917** — The Russian Revolution. Poland is occupied by the Germans.
- **1918** — Independent Polish state is reestablished after the fall of Russian, Austrian and German Empires.
- **1926-1935** — Poland's political life is dominated by Marshal Josef Pilsudski who ruled dictatonally.



- **1939** — Germany invades and occupies the western two thirds of Poland, and the Soviet Union occupies the remainder.
- **1941** — Germany invades Soviet Union. All of Poland comes under Nazi rule, German policy is designed to eradicate Polish culture through mass executions and to exterminate the large Jewish minority.
- **1944-1945** — Soviet Red Army drives the Germans from Polish soil, and Poland's boundaries are redrawn. Communists curtail free elections, collectivize Polish farms and nationalize industries.
- **1944-1956** — Poland is firmly in the grip of Stalinist totalitarianism.
- **1980-81** — Solidarity, under Lech Walesa's leadership wins legal status after a series of strikes. In response to continuing pressure by Solidarity, defense minister Wojciech Jaruzelski declares martial law and terminates Solidarity's legal status.
- **1988** — After years of a flailing economy and renewed labour unrest, Jaruzelski approves negotiations with the outlawed Solidarity movement.
- **1989** — Negotiations result in far-reaching reforms of Poland's political system, allowing Solidarity to participate in free elections. Solidarity enjoys an overwhelming victory in the June elections. In subsequent months the new government enacts radical plans to transform Poland's centrally planned economy into a free enterprise economy. 1989 represents the end of communism in Poland.

Timeline of Polish History

ORIGINS TO 10TH CENTURY

In the area that is today called Poland, in the early centuries AD there lived many groups or tribes, including the Celts, Balts, Scythians, Huns, Goths, and Germanic peoples. It is believed that the Slavs arrived in the 6th or 7th century when several different Slavic tribes settled in the area. By the mid-10th century, the Polania tribe became dominant. Legends say that the chief, Piast, united the groups into one cohesive unit, naming it Polska (Poland). This region became Wielkopolska, or Greater Poland.

- 966: Duke Mieszko I, Poland's first recorded leader, converted to Christianity after marrying Dabrowka of Bohemia. This is formally recognized as the birth of the Polish nation. By accepting Christianity, Poland became an influential participant in the sphere of Western culture. Poznan became the Episcopal see, or capital city. Mieszko allied himself with the German Emperor Otto I and placed his land under the protection of the Pope.

THE PIAST DYNASTY 966–1370

- 992: Duke Mieszko I dies. By the time of his death, Poland's borders extended to an area similar to today's boundaries. The city of Gniezno was the capital, and the towns of Gdansk, Szczecin, Poznan, Wroclaw, and Krakow already exist.
- 1100s: Boleslaw Krzywousty (Boleslaus the Wry-Mouthed) divides Poland among his sons in an apparent attempt to reinforce unity. The division instead caused rivalry, leaving Poland prey to various foreign invaders.
- 1320: Polish state is reunified.
- 1333–1370: Poland achieves political and cultural unity under the rule of Kazimierz III Wielki (Casimir the Great). The city of Krakow flourishes as capital.



Portrait of Jadwiga of Anjou,
Queen of Poland

- 1364: The university is founded at Krakow, one of Europe's first universities.

The Jagiellonian Dynasty 1382–1572

- 1382: The Polish crown is passed on to 10-year-old Jadwiga. Poland forms an alliance with the pagan Lithuania when young Jadwiga marries Duke Jagiello of Lithuania. Jagiello converts to Christianity and becomes Wladyslaw II Jagiello, ruling from 1386-1434. The union increases Poland's boundaries dramatically and creates an alliance with Lithuania that lasts for 400 years.

During this time there are many wars against various enemies (Teutonic Knights,

Tatars, Russia, the Ottoman Empire). However, the country prospers economically, culturally, and spiritually.

- 1500s: The Renaissance comes to Poland. Polish becomes the language in lieu of Latin. Literature, learning, culture, and architecture flourish.
- 1543: Nicolaus Copernicus (Mikolaj Kopernik) publishes “On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres,” proposing that the earth revolves around the sun.
- 1569: The Polish Parliament, or Sejm, unifies Poland and Lithuania into one state. Royal succession is now based on election by the Sejm, including allowing foreign candidates for consideration. The decision was disastrous for Poland, and during the period of the Royal Republic, only four out of eleven kings were native Poles.

THE ROYAL REPUBLIC 1572–1795

- 1573: The Sejm guarantees religious equality. Roman Catholics, Jews, Protestants, Orthodox Christians, and Muslims all live together in Poland in peace.
- 1596–1609: Poland’s capital city is moved from Krakow to Warsaw.
- 1655–60: Known as the Deluge, Sweden invades Poland with the help of the Tartars and Cossacks from the East. Poland is virtually destroyed as cities are burned and plundered.
- A population of 10 million is reduced to 6 million due to the wars, famine, and the bubonic plague.
- 1674–96: This period is the reign of Jan III Sobieski, an expert military commander.
- Sobieski’s forces have many victories over the Turks.
- 1700s: Poland’s three powerful neighbors, Russia, Prussia and Austria, each want to own Poland. This was all but impossible without risking war with each other. They finally settled their dispute by dividing Poland among themselves in a series of agreements called the Three Partitions of Poland.
- 1791: After the First Partition leads to some reforms, a constitution is passed, called the Constitution of the Third of May. It is the second written document that outlines the responsibilities of the Government (the U.S. Constitution is the first). Catherine the Great of Russia invades Poland to break up the newfound democracy.
- 1793: During the Second Partition, Russia and Prussia take over half of what was left of Poland.
- 1794: Tadeusz Kosciuszko, the famous general who helped win the American Revolution, starts a rebellion for Polish independence, but it is not strong

enough to defeat the Russians.

- 1795: The Third Partition divides the rest of Poland. Poland is “officially” non-existent for the next 123 years.
- 1870s: Russia attempts to eradicate Polish culture, making Russian the official language of the Russian partition. Prussia does the same in their portion of Poland, attempting to
- Germanicize Poles. Under the Austrian partition, Galician Poles are allowed to retain some autonomy.
- 1890s: Poland experiences mass emigration due to poverty. Approximately 4 million out of 22 million Poles emigrate to the United States prior to World War I.



Jozef Pilsudski (1930).
Wikipedia.org

- World War I 1914–18: With Poland’s three occupying powers at war with each other, Poland becomes the main fighting ground. Because there was no official Polish state, there was no Polish army. Poles were forced into the Russian, German, and Austrian armies and forced to fight against one another. Native Poles now in America join Haller’s Army in France to fight for their country.
- 11 November 1918: Poland becomes independent as WWI comes to an end. The country was devastated by the war. Approximately one million Poles died. All Polish institutions had to be rebuilt as the country once again formed a nation. The official boundaries are not set until 1923.
- 1919: The Treaty of Versailles gives Poland western Prussia, thus getting access to the Baltic Sea.
- 1919-20: During the Polish-Soviet War, Jozef Pilsudski’s army defeats the Russians. Poland gains western Ukraine and Belarus.
- 1926: Pilsudski makes himself dictator of Poland. Despite the dictatorship, the economy stabilized at this time and culture continued to prosper.
- 1930s: Poland signs non-aggression pacts with Germany and the Soviet Union. The pacts soon prove to be pointless.
- 23 August 1939: Germany and the Soviet Union sign a nonaggression pact, with Stalin and Hitler planning to divide Poland once again.

WORLD WAR II 1939–45

- September 1939: Hitler invades Poland on 1 September. On 17 September, the Soviet Union invades eastern Poland. Mass arrests, executions, and exiles begin.
- June 1941: Hitler attacks the Soviet Union, and Poland remains under the Nazi regime for the next three years. Many Poles are deported to labor camps. The

Polish intelligentsia are executed, and the Nazis plan to eliminate the Polish Jews entirely. Most of Poland's Jewish population, and many non-Jews as well, die in Nazi death camps set up throughout Poland in Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor and Treblinka. The Germans exterminated most of Poland's 3.3 million Jews, along with another approximately 3 million Jews from other occupied countries.

- April 1943: The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, pitting hundreds of Jews in the besieged Warsaw Ghetto against the might of the German army, is quelled after over a month of battle. It is the single largest act of defiance until that point of the war.
- 1944–1945: In 1944, the Warsaw Uprising took place in the Polish, non-Jewish side of Warsaw which is crushed by the Germans as Russian troops looked on. Later that year, and in early 1945, Russia's Red Army is victorious over the Germans. Russia set up a Communist-dominated government for Poland in Lublin. In February 1945, Russia, United States, and Great Britain meet at the Yalta Conference and agree to leave Poland under Soviet control.

At the war's end, over 6 million Poles were dead, approximately 20% of Poland's pre-war population.

- 1956: Industrial strikes break out in Poznan in an attempt to gain "bread and freedom" from Soviet rule. In October a reformed government is elected without the stamp of Moscow approval. This unheard of defiance elicits a visit from Khrushchev and results in several armies massing at the Polish border.
- 1956–1970s: Poland experiences some internal independence under Soviet rule. Most importantly the Church survives and even flourishes as a counterpoint to Soviet repression. Poland manages to rebuild its war-devastated iron, steel, shipping, and mining industries, but fails to regain a decent standard of living.
- 1978: Karol Wojtyła, the Archbishop of Krakow, is elected to Pope. Taking the name John Paul II, he is the first non-Italian pope in nearly 500 years.
- 1980: Strikes and riots ensue as the economy crumbles. At the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk, the government reaches an agreement with the workers. The workers



Strike in Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk (1980).
Photo by T. Michalak / Wikipedia.org

are allowed to organize into an independent trade union, called Solidarnosc, or Solidarity. Strike leader Lech Walesa is elected as the head of Solidarity, and by November 60% of the Polish workforce is organized. Solidarity gradually grows into a strong, non-violent, sociopolitical movement.

- 1981: In December, Martial Law is declared. Solidarity is suspended.
- 1982: The government formally dissolves Solidarity. The cost of living rises over 100% during the year.
- 1983: Martial law is lifted.
- 1989: In April, Solidarity is re-established.
- 1990: Prices rise by 250%, with incomes dropping by 40%. In November, the first fully free election is won by Lech Walesa. His rule results in disillusionment as no economic miracles take place, and the political forces fail to stabilize.
- 1997: Poland's National Assembly adopts a new Constitution.

Today Poland is a flourishing Western-style democracy, a member of NATO, as it continues to gain international credibility

Some Famous Poles



COPERNICUS, NICHOLAS, or Mikolaj Kopernik (1473-1543) — Born in Poland, founder of modern astronomy. Copernicus attended the university at Krakow in 1491, then spent several years in Italy where he studied medicine and canon law. His major interest, however, was mathematics and he ultimately specialized in astronomy.

Contrary to the theories of his day, which placed the earth in the center of the universe, Copernicus launched a scientific revolution when he placed the sun in the center and reduced the earth to the position of a planet revolving around the sun.

Though now universally accepted, Copernicus' theory endured the initial opposition of fellow scientists, the denial of man's senses suggesting the sun went around the earth, and the wrath of theologians like Martin Luther who stated: "this fool wishes to reverse the entire science of astronomy; but sacred Scripture tells us that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, and not the earth."

KOSCIUSZKO (pronounced KOS-CHOOS-KO), THADDEUS, or Tadeusz (1746-1817) — Born of impoverished landed gentry in the eastern Polish province of Polesie on February 4, 1746, Thaddeus

Kosciuszko, a military engineer, became one of the 18th century's greatest champions of American and Polish freedom. One of the first foreign volunteers to come to the aid of the American revolutionary army, Kosciuszko made many significant contributions to the American Revolution including the fortifications at Saratoga and West Point. At war's end, he was promoted to Brigadier General and received Congressional recognition honoring his "meritorious service."



Following the war, Kosciuszko returned to his homeland to fight the occupying Russians. After being wounded 17 times during the battle of Maciejowice in 1794, the bleeding Kosciuszko was taken prisoner by the Russians. After two years in prison, Czar Paul granted the Pole amnesty on the condition he never return to his homeland.

Thaddeus Kosciuszko once again set off for to America, but yearning for Poland, he left the United States in 1798. On his departure from America Kosciuszko declared Thomas Jefferson to be the executor of his estate, and urged him to purchase slaves and grant them liberty in his (Kosciuszko's) name. He never was able to return to his homeland and died in exile in Switzerland in 1817.

The two worlds of Kosciuszko were in sharp contrast. The revolution he helped lead in Poland in the early 1790's was crushed; an exile from Poland, Kosciuszko was a hero in the United States. The life and work of this Polish-born patriot is commemorated at the Thaddeus Kosciuszko National Memorial located in Philadelphia. Among the many monuments named after him, the best known are the ones found in front of the White House and another found in West Point.



CHOPIN, FREDERIC, or Fryderyk (1809-49) — Polish composer and pianist born near Warsaw. Chopin started playing piano at the age of 4, first appeared in public when he was 9 and at 19 went on his first concert tour. One of the great composers of the romantic period, he wrote more than 200 works for the piano, including nocturnes, mazurkas, waltzes, and ballads. For harmony and rhythms he often turned to the folk music of his native Poland.

Despite the lively musical life of Warsaw, Chopin urgently needed wider musical experience, and so his devoted parents found money to send him to Vienna. On a subsequent trip to Germany and Italy, news reached him of the Polish revolt against Russian rule. The ruling Russian powers in Poland refused to allow him to return, and because of this and the general turmoil that existed in Europe at the time, Chopin spent most of the rest of his life in exile.

Chopin soon found himself in Paris, the centre of European culture and the Romantic movement, where he discovered the the right atmosphere for his abilities. He quickly established ties with many Polish émigrés and with a younger generation of composers, including Franz Liszt, Hector Berlioz, Vincenzo Bellini, and Felix Mendelssohn. Paris celebrated the genius of the young composer, and Chopin began to concentrate on the central passions of his life—teaching and composing.

An introduction to the wealthy Rothschild banking family helped Chopin move ahead even further. With his refined manners and sensitivity, Chopin found himself a favourite in the great houses of Paris, both as a recitalist and as a teacher. His new piano works at this time included two books of études (1829-36), the Ballade in G Minor (1831-35), the Fantaisie-Impromptu, and many smaller pieces, among them mazurkas and polonaises inspired by Chopin's strong nationalist feeling.

Toward the end of his life, Chopin's health deteriorated rapidly. He made his last public appearance on a concert platform at the Guildhall in London on Nov. 16, 1848, when, in a final patriotic gesture, he played for the benefit of Polish refugees. He returned to Paris, where he died the following year; he was buried at the cemetery of Père Lachaise. However, he requested that his heart be buried in his native Polish soil. During WWII, in an attempt to destroy Polish cultural life, the Nazis forbade the playing of Chopin's music.

MAURYCY GOTTLIEB (1856-1879) One of eleven children, Maurycy Gottlieb was born in Drohobycz, Poland, and enrolled at the Vienna Art Academy at age fifteen.

He later studied under Polish painter Jan Matejko in Krakow, but quit Matejko's studio after repeatedly experiencing anti-Semitism from other art students. Gottlieb returned to Vienna to search for his Jewish roots. Yet, despite his encounters with anti-Semitism, Gottlieb maintained a love and admiration for Poland. At the age of twenty he was awarded a gold medal at a Munich art competition for the painting *Shylock and Jessica*, taken from Shakespeare's play *Merchant of Venice*. The face for Jessica was modeled on Laura Rosenfeld, the unmarried daughter of a prosperous merchant family of Vienna to whom Gottlieb had proposed marriage.

According to some sources, upon hearing of Laura Rosenfeld's marriage to a banker of Berlin, Gottlieb took his own life. (Laura Rosenfeld herself was later deported by the Nazis to Auschwitz in 1944, and perished on route.) As a Polish-Jewish artist, Gottlieb is unique. As a Polish painter, he is considered to be the best of his generation.

Today, his paintings are to found in museums throughout Eastern Europe. He is also regarded by many as the "father of national Jewish art" and has been referred to as the "Jewish Rembrandt". His painting of Jesus, (*Jesus preaching at Capernaum*) an unusual subject for a Jewish artist before the 20th Century, depicts Jesus with prayer shawl & earlocks, speaking in synagogue.



In "*Jews Praying in the Synagogue on the Day of Atonement*" Gottlieb depicted himself as a child, youth and old man praying.

image: Jewish Virtual Library

Though a secular Jew he steadily looked back toward a heritage as a source for his inspiration. His most famous painting, "*Jews Praying in the Synagogue on the Day of Atonement*" depicts himself as a child, youth and old man praying on this holy day. Also depicted in the painting in the woman's gallery is Laura Rosenfeld, whose later rejection caused his suspected suicide at age 23. The large-size painting now hangs in the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, and is among its most celebrated works. A street in Jerusalem is named after the painter, and his "*Day of Atonement*" painting was also featured on an Israeli postage stamp.



JOSEPH CONRAD (1857-1924) Joseph Conrad was born in Berdichev, Poland in 1857. His original name was Jozef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski. He is best known for his novels "Lord Jim" (1900), "Nostromo" (1904) and "The Secret Agent" (1907), and the short story "Heart of Darkness" (1902). Typical for his works is deep pessimism: he writes stories of men in extreme situations as in "Heart of Darkness" about a man who finds himself drawn to a savage whom he only should despise.

The award-winning film, "Apocalypse Now", directed by Francis Ford Coppola was loosely based on "The Heart of Darkness", but substitutes American soldiers in Vietnam in place of Conrad's subject matter.

CURIE, MARIE Sklodowska (1867-1934) — Chemist and physicist. Along with her husband, Pierre Curie, she is known for her work on radioactivity and on radium. Marie Curie's interest in science was stimulated by her father, a professor of physics in Warsaw. Madam Curie studied and was to later teach at the Sorbonne in Paris, France.

In 1898 the Curies discovered both radium and polonium (named for Marie's homeland). For their work in radioactivity, the Curies shared the 1903 Nobel Prize in physics.

By 1914, Curie was the head of two laboratories, one in her native Warsaw and one at the Sorbonne, known as the Radium Institute. Unable to continue her experiments after the outbreak of World War I, she received approval to operate X-ray machines on the battlefield so the wounded could receive immediate treatment.



Within two years she had established two hundred permanent X-ray units throughout France and Belgium. After the war ended, Curie raised funds for a hospital and laboratory devoted to radiology, the branch of medicine that uses X rays and radium to diagnose and treat disease.

Madam Curie died on July 4, 1934, from the cumulative effects of radiation exposure. In 1995 Madame Curie and Pierre's remains were enshrined in the Pantheon in Paris, France.

ARTHUR RUBINSTEIN (1887–1983) “I have found that if you love life, life will love you back.” Born in Lodz, Poland, Arthur Rubinstein became one of the great pianists of the twentieth century. At age 3, Rubinstein began to study piano, and within five years he had given his first public performance.

Rubinstein studied in Warsaw and Berlin, making his debut in 1900 with the Berlin Symphony Orchestra. He first played in the United States in Carnegie Hall in 1906, and later achieved great acclaim there in 1937, especially for his superb lyric interpretations of Chopin’s music and his ardent championship of Spanish works.



The growing threat of Nazi occupation necessitated Rubinstein’s relocation to America, where he found a home in Los Angeles among a number of other European refugees. Although he became a citizen in 1946, he lived most of his later life in Europe. After the war and the loss of his entire family in Lodz, he dedicated himself to performing publicly in support of the new state of Israel.

Rubenstein continued to actively perform until age 90 and his popularity spanned generations. Rubenstein once said, “On stage, I will take a chance. There has to be an element of daring in great music-making. These younger ones, they are too cautious. They take the music out of their pockets instead of their hearts.”

Even after going blind, he traveled the world lecturing and teaching. He died in Geneva, Switzerland in 1982, and his ashes were buried in an Israeli forest named after him.

SIR JOSEPH ROTBLAT (1908-) Sir Joseph Rotblat was born into a Jewish family in Warsaw in 1908. In 1939 he accepted an invitation from James Chadwick to work at the University of Liverpool. After the outbreak of WWII, despite many attempts, Rotblat was unsuccessful in his efforts to bring his wife to England. She was among the many Poles who lost their lives during the German occupation. It was the invasion of Poland that made Joseph Rotblat first think about developing an atomic bomb. He now realised the extent of Germany’s military strength and brutality. He was afraid that the handful of physicists who had stayed in Germany might already be developing such a bomb, which Hitler would then use to force Nazism on the world. ‘It was a terrible time for me, perhaps the worst dilemma a scientist could experience. Working on a weapon of mass destruction was against all my ideas - all my ideas of what science should do - but those ideas were in danger of being eradicated if



Hitler acquired the bomb.’

During the war, Rotblat was recruited to work in the Manhattan Project. But As soon as Joseph Rotblat heard confirmation, supplied by scientific intelligence reports towards the end of 1944, that the German scientists had abandoned their atomic bomb programme, he left the Manhattan Project and returned to Britain. Some time later he along with Albert Einstein and Bertand Russell signed the anti-nuclear

Manifest. In 1958, Rotblat co-founded the UK Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Later, he applied his knowledge of nuclear physics to work in medicine and was Chief Physicist at St Bartholomew's Hospital for 30 years. Much of his work on world peace has been on a diplomatic level and is closely associated with the Pugwash Conferences, with which he shares the 1995 Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts to eliminate nuclear arms.

Quotes from Joseph Rotblat: “

All of us who want to preserve the human race owe an allegiance to humanity; and it's particularly the job of scientists, because most of the dangers to the world result from the work of scientists.”

“We are gradually realising the futility of war ... Now we must begin to think about security in global, rather than national, terms. We must get used to the idea that we are members of a world community ... We have to develop in each of us a sense of loyalty to humankind that will be an extension of our present loyalties to family, city, nation.”

POPE JOHN PAUL II (1920-2005) — Born Karol Joseph Wojtyla in Wadowice, Poland on May 18, 1920. In 1978 at the age of 58 he was elected to lead the Roman Catholic Church. John Paul II was the first non-Italian chosen as Pope in 456 years, the youngest in this century, and the most traveled and broadcast in history. Many believe his support of the trade union, Solidarity, in his native Poland, was a precipitating event in the collapse of the Soviet bloc.

In 1994, John Paul oversaw the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Israel, ending

a tense standoff that had existed since 1948. After that time, the Pope asked for forgiveness from the Jewish People for their suffering at the hands of Christians over the centuries.

In a historic visit to Israel in 2000, the Pope visited the Western Wall in Jerusalem where he placed a note in one of its crevices stating: “We are deeply saddened by the behavior of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours to suffer, and asking your forgiveness, we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the People of the Covenant.”

Though Pope John Paul II was the most pro-Jewish Pope to date, some Jewish quarters have criticized the Pope for not apologizing for the role of the Church in condoning anti-Semitism, and for his support of the canonization of Pope Pius XII as a saint, despite his controversial record toward Jews during the Holocaust. On social questions, John Paul II was a conservative pope who was firmly against abortion, use of contraceptives, divorce, political office holding by nuns and priests, and ordination of women to the priesthood. However, he also championed democracy and economic justice for the developing nations of the world.



The Real Hero in Reconciling Christians and Jews

By David Rosen

Ha'aretz

Forty years ago, during the papacy of Pope John XXIII, the Catholic Church determined that the attempt to present the Jewish people as rejected by God was false, and cleared the Jews of responsibility for the death of Jesus.

But it was Pope John Paul II who was the true hero of Christian-Jewish reconciliation. The late pontiff called for "a new and profound understanding between the Church and Judaism everywhere, in every country, for the benefit of all." He stated unequivocally that the idea that the Church has replaced the Jewish people in a covenant with God was wrong, and even questioned the attempt to proselytize among Jews.

The two most significant events in terms of Christian-Jewish reconciliation were his visit to the Great Synagogue of Rome in 1986 and his visit to Israel in 2000. The scene of John Paul embracing the chief rabbi of Rome, Elio Toaff, reached millions of believers who did not choose to or who could not read his writings. He described the visit to the synagogue as the most important event of that year, one that would be remembered for "hundreds of thousands of years" and gave "thanks and praise to Providence" for the occasion.

Full diplomatic relations were inaugurated between the Vatican and Israel in 1993, and then the Pope made an official visit to Israel in 2000, in a clear rejection of the traditional position of the Church that the Jews had been exiled from their land because of their refusal to accept Jesus and were condemned to wander. The visit had a powerful effect, primarily on the Jews of Israel. Most of them, especially traditional and Orthodox Jews, had never met a modern Christian. The common image of Christianity among them was negative, drawn from a tragic past.

The Pope's visit to Israel opened the eyes of Israelis to a new reality. Not only was the Church no longer an enemy, its head was a true friend! To see the Pope at Yad Vashem, demonstrating solidarity, weeping at the suffering of the Jewish people, to learn that he had helped save Jews during the Holocaust and that subsequently, as a priest, he had returned Jewish children adopted by Christians to their Jewish families, to see the head of the Catholic Church placing a prayer of atonement for the sins of Christians against Jews between the stones of the Western Wall - all of these scenes had a profound effect on many Israelis.

The widespread publicity given the Pope's visit to Israel had no less an important effect, and perhaps a more important one, on Christians, particularly on Catholics, in their relation to Jews, Judaism and Israel.

... The contribution of Pope John Paul II to the new spirit in Vatican-Jewish relations was unprecedented. In a speech to the American-Jewish Committee in 1985, John Paul said, "I am convinced ... that the relationships between Jews and Christians have radically improved in these years. Where there was ignorance and therefore prejudice and stereotypes, there is now growing mutual knowledge, appreciation and respect. There is, above all, love between us; that kind of love, I mean, which is for both of us a fundamental injunction of our religious traditions ... Love involves understanding. It also involves frankness and the freedom to disagree in a brotherly way where there are reasons for it."

PM Sharon pays tribute to pope as 'friend' of the Jews

By Haaretz Staff and The Associated Press

Pope John Paul II was "a man of peace, a friend of the Jewish people," Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said at the opening of the weekly cabinet meeting Sunday, as he offered the country's condolences on the pope's death to the Christian community both in Israel and abroad.

John Paul "acknowledged its [the Jewish people's] uniqueness and toiled for an historic reconciliation of the nations and the renewal of diplomatic ties between Israel and the Vatican in 1993," continued Sharon, who met the pope in 1999, when he was foreign minister, and invited him to Israel for the millennium celebrations on behalf of the government. "The world lost yesterday one of the most important leaders of our times, whose contribution to bringing people together, uniting nations, and to understanding and tolerance will accompany us for many years."

President Moshe Katsav offered a similar tribute, saying: "The pope ... bravely put an end to historic injustice by officially rejecting prejudice and accusations against Jews."

Over the course of his papacy, John Paul II revolutionized the Vatican's relationship with both Israel and the Jewish people. In 1979, on his first journey home to Poland as head of the Catholic Church, he became the first pope ever to visit a Nazi death camp, kneeling in prayer at Auschwitz - a place he described as a "triumph of evil." In 1986, in Rome, he became the first pope to enter a synagogue; during that visit, he made his now-famous statement that the Jews are Christians' "elder brothers" and spoke of Christian responsibility for crimes against the Jews.

In 1993, the Vatican finally recognized Israel, a step widely regarded as removing any theological opposition to the Jewish state's existence. And in 2000, John Paul II not only visited Israel, but won Israelis' hearts by visiting sites such as the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial and the Western Wall, where he observed the ancient Jewish custom of placing a note in the cracks between the stones. "We are deeply saddened by the behavior of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours to suffer and, asking your forgiveness, we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the people of the Covenant," the note read.

But while many Israelis mourned the loss of a uniquely friendly pontiff, for some, the mourning was more personal: Elderly Holocaust survivors reminisced Sunday about growing up with Karol Wojtyla, the man who became John Paul II, in the small Polish town of Wadowice, and about encounters with the young seminary student toward the end of World War II. These early friendships are widely believed to have been a major factor in the late pope's efforts at reconciliation with the Jewish people and the Jewish state.

One survivor, Idit Tziner, said that she was an emaciated 13-year-old in 1945. She had just been released from a Nazi labor camp and was sitting on a street corner in the snow, too weak to walk, when Wojtyla approached.

“Suddenly, he appeared, like an angel from heaven, when nobody else was taking any notice of me,” she said on Israel TV. “He brought me a cup of hot tea and two huge slices of bread and cheese ... After a while he asked me if I wanted to get away from that place and I told him I wanted to get to Krakow, but I couldn’t walk. So he hoisted me on his back, like a sack of flour, and carried me, four or five kilometers.”

Former chief rabbi Israel Meir Lau, also a Holocaust survivor, recalled that he met the pope five times. At one meeting, the aging pontiff told Lau that he remembered the rabbi’s grandfather going to synagogue every Saturday with masses of grandchildren around him.

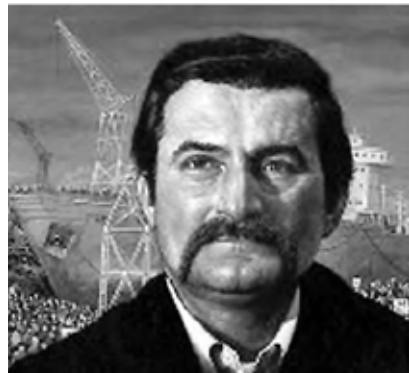
“He asked me: ‘How many survived the Holocaust?’” Lau told Israel Radio. “Just five, 42 were killed. And then he [the pope] looked at the ceiling and said: ‘In all my travels - I visited 120 countries I see anti-Semitism and I emphasize our obligation, the obligation of all humanity, to ensure the continued existence and the future of our elder brother, the Jewish nation.’”

(Jewish relations with John Paul II were not friction-free: There were disputes, for instance, over the canonization of Edith Stein, a Jewish convert to Christianity who became a nun and died in Auschwitz, and over the beatification of Pope Pius XII, who many Jews accuse of failing to speak out during the Holocaust.)

LECH WALESA (1943-) — Born in Popowo, Poland. An electrician at the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk, Walesa became one of the founding members and leader of the Solidarity free trade union movement.

Solidarity emerged to challenge the communist government of Poland. Walesa led a series of strikes in 1970 and 1976, and in August of 1980 he successfully challenged the government to improve working conditions and to grant political concessions.

In 1983 Walesa was awarded the Nobel Prize for peace and in 1990 he was elected president of the Republic of Poland. However, Walesa’s skills as a union leader, which relied on his blunt speech and confrontational style, did not serve him as well in his political life. In the 1995 election he was defeated by the former communist Aleksander Kwasniewski, head of the Democratic Left Alliance.



How Jews Came to Poland

A LEGEND: It happened in 1492 when the Jews were expelled from Spain. Where could these Jews flee, if not toward the East? After wandering for months, they finally reached a land of many forests. Suddenly, a heavenly voice called out to them in Hebrew: *ʻyli hPo POH-LIN*, Here shall you rest. And from that day on the country was known as Poyin (Poland).

In actuality Jews lived in Poland from the eleventh century, fleeing there from German expulsions and massacres. These refugees brought with them Ashkenazic (German in Hebrew) Jewish customs and communal structures as well as a German dialect mixed with Hebrew that eventually became Yiddish. The flow of Jews into Poland increased between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries when it reached its peak. By then the Jewish community in Poland had surpassed the German Jewish population. At first the Jews were able to take advantage of many opportunities in Poland in the trades and commerce. In large part they had to provide for their own social services and in return were left alone. Persecutions of Jews in Poland began in 1399.

In 1648 the Russian Orthodox Cossacks and Ukrainian peasants who lived in the southeastern part of the Polish Commonwealth rebelled against the Polish Catholic landowners and noblemen. Their leader, Bogdan Chmielnitski, not only attacked Poles and Catholics, but massacred tens of thousands of Jews.

The Chmielnitski rebellion left Poland weakened and in 1772 Poland's powerful neighbors, Prussia, Austria and Russia, divided Poland into three partitions. Despite a brief period of independence during the Napoleonic Wars in 1795, the division held. Most of Poland went to czarist Russia. In the smaller German area, Jews began to adopt German speech and manners and most moved to large German cities like Berlin. In the Austrian area, Galicia, Jews maintained most of their institutions and customs.

With the absorption of Eastern Poland, the Russians, who had until that time excluded almost all Jews, found themselves with a sizable Jewish population. They responded by allowing Jews to live only in the areas captured from Poland and a few other provinces to the south.

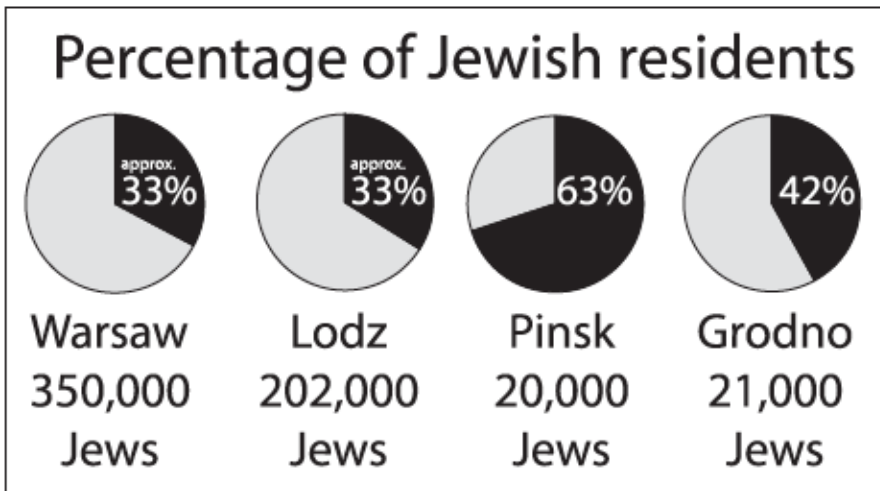
This area was called the Pale of Settlement. By 1885 there were over 4 million Jews living in the Pale. Between pogroms and restrictive measures, most Jews were kept in a state of poverty. The independent Polish nation which emerged from World War I was not much kinder to the Jews than previous rulers. Though the mandate to all the new countries of Europe was self-determination, democracy and freedom for minorities, each country reacted differently to its Jews. In Poland, there was anger because the majority of its merchants were Jews. The Poles instituted tax policies and monopolies to punish and exclude Jews. The democracy became a dictatorship and with it came discrimination and in the 30s, pogroms. The new Polish state had severe economic problems and many Jews faced unemployment and poverty. Despite this, in the small towns or shtetlach and in the great urban concentrations of Jews in Warsaw and other cities Jewish life flourished.

Throughout Poland the ideologies that had sprung up in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Hasidism, Zionism, Socialism (the Bund) and enlightenment secularism, set up social services, great cultural institutions, centers of learning, publishing houses and even political parties. On the eve of World War II, Polish Jews were faced with great poverty and physical threats of intermittent pogroms, but they were the largest Jewish population in Europe. One third of Warsaw's population was Jewish, making it the second most populous city after New York. Poland was still the center of Jewish life in the world.



The Golden Age

- From 1919 to 1939, Jews accounted for about 10% of the population of Poland: in 1921 they were 2.8 million out of 27 million; in 1939 3.5 million out of 35 million.
- Jews constituted over 27% of Poland's city and town dwellers. Over one-quarter of the Jewish population was concentrated in the nation's six major cities.



- In Poland, 55% of all petty shopkeepers were Jewish.
- Twenty-seven percent of all actively working Polish Jews were petty merchants, the overwhelming majority self-employed, with family rather than hired help.
- Because Polish Jews were excluded from state employment, all but shut out of municipal jobs, and rarely school teachers on any level, they were overrepresented in the professions: Half of all physicians and lawyers in private practice (approx. 10,000) were Jewish.
- In the early twenties about a quarter of all students enrolled in Polish universities were Jewish. By the end of the decade, 40% of Poland's university graduates were Jewish.

Shtetl Facts

Of course, certain essential Jewish features were recurrent throughout Eastern Europe. Most important, there was the nuclear religion and its overlay of habits, customs, and traditions, completely ruling the lives of Jews as individuals and as a collective— or collectives. There was the community structure, socializing, protecting, domineering, with its own languages: Yiddish, mainly, but not for only, secular life, Hebrew, mainly for religion and for certain other forms of communication, as in business. And there was the omnipresent Christian world, with its laws, pressures, hostility, friendliness, its commercial and economic relations, and its myriad other energies that were part of an intricate cultural enmeshing with Jews.

But despite the features common to all Eastern European Jews, no two shtetls were truly alike. The personal and public dynamics, the interrelations with non-Jews, the climate, the economics, the politics, even the dialect of Yiddish and the pronunciation of Hebrew varied sufficiently to form sharp differences, often contradictions – a crazy quilt through time and space. For we are speaking of an enormous geographic area, and we are speaking of centuries of Jewish history.

Source: Shtetl, Joachim Neugroschel

Yiddish Word Finder

Melamed	מלמד	teacher
Cheder	חדר	classroom
Shadchen	שדכן	matchmaker
Ziveg	זיווג	a match for a daughter
Badchan	בדחן	the 'official' shtetl jester

Shtetl Superstitions

- In a mourner's home the mirrors had to be covered with black cloth. If one's reflection appeared in the mirror the parting soul might take the person with it.
- To avert an evil eye, *ayn-hora*, one should spit three times and say each time, "Tfu, Tfu, Tfu Kaayn ayne-hora."
- An itching palm meant you would be counting a lot of money.
- Bread falling to the floor butter-side down meant that failure awaited you.
- Counting people was not advisable. If you must, proceed to count negatively: not one, not two, not three, etc.
- To cheat the evil spirits a sick child would be given a second name. The Angel of Death, arriving with a summons for, say Moishela, would get confused if he did not find Moishela at home, but instead found Avroomele.
- One should never refuse charity to a beggar because he might be Eliyahu Hanavi in disguise, or one of the *lamedvavnicks*, the thirty-six just men on whom the existence of the world depends.

Comparing Eastern & Western European Jewry

It is important to recognize that neither of these cases are absolutes. There existed within each of these models various shades of grey. And in the Mediterranean countries, inhabited primarily by Sephardim Jews, the model of Jewry would be different still with different languages spoken (Ladino as opposed to the Yiddish), different foods, customs and religious observance.

<p>EASTERN EUROPE. Including Poland, Latvia, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary & Czechoslovakia</p> <p>The majority of Jews spoke Yiddish or Hebrew as their Mother Tongue- Jewish languages.</p> <p>A large proportion of Orthodox Jews lived in the State.</p> <p>Little intermarriage existed</p> <p>Jewish National Identity was high</p> <p>Jews tended to be rural, although they had a prominent profile in cities too.</p> <p>There was a recent history of "pogroms" and over acts of anti-Semitism</p> <p>Acquiring citizenship was a very serious problem, and Jews did not enjoy full or equal rights with non-Jews.</p> <p>Jews had a lower literacy rate than Western Jews, but a higher rate than local non-Jews.</p> <p>Emigration quotas, weakening economic base, and anti-Semitism, left many youth feeling trapped .</p> <p>Jewish children were very active in Jewish youth movements.</p> <p>Jewish children were schooled in Jewish languages</p>	<p>WESTERN EUROPE. Including France, Holland, Belgium, Italy, Austria, and Germany</p> <p>Most Jews spoke the "vernacular", some were no longer even fluent in traditional Jewish languages.</p> <p>Far fewer numbers of Orthodox religious Jews lived in the State.</p> <p>Intermarriage rates were high.</p> <p>Judaism was seen as one's religion, National Identity was to the State.</p> <p>Jews tended to be urban.</p> <p>There were few overt acts of anti-Semitism.</p> <p>Jews enjoyed full national and local citizenship rights.</p> <p>Jews tended to be well educated.</p> <p>Such perceptions were almost unheard of .</p> <p>Jewish youth movements were marginal.</p> <p>Few Jewish children attended Jewish schools.</p>
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This material has been sourced from Yad Vashem material developed for Teachers Seminar on the Holocaust as well as the Ohio Dept. of Education Holocaust Curriculum titled "Prejudice Unleashed". It gives examples of 2 distinctive European Jewish communities.

Competing Religious Movements of Eastern Europe in the 18th & 19th Centuries

THE MITNAGDIM

As early as 17th century, Vilna began to achieve widespread fame as a centre for rabbinical studies. Scholars such as Joshua Hoeschel Ben Joseph, Shabbetai ha-Kohen, and R. Moses, established houses of study which began to attract students from far and wide. The Lithuanian rabbis upheld the traditional Jewish approach that equated religious leadership with scholarly mastery of the Talmud and the codes of Jewish religious law. The value of intensive study and learning was central.

By the latter half of the 18th century, Lithuania's reputation among scholars was further enhanced thanks to one extraordinary man whose brilliant mind, dedication to the value of study and commitment to truth was unmatched: Rabbi Elijah b. Solomon Zalman, the Ga'on of Vilna. With his strong personality and compelling leadership, he drew numerous disciples to his doorstep. His presence was instrumental in the growth of Vilna as one of the most stimulating religious and spiritual centers of the day. His work had a profound influence on Judaism.

THE YESHIVA MOVEMENT

Until the rise of the celebrated yeshivot of Lithuania, the Yeshiva did not function as an independent institution. The local Rabbi acted as head of the Yeshiva as part of his general duties, and students who came to study with him were supported by the local community.

A shift occurred when the Yeshiva became somewhat independent of the Rabbi, and indeed, of the community. It had its own "Rosh Yeshivah" (Principal), its own separate buildings, and its own administrative staff. In the period following the death of the Ga'on, the Movement continue to flourish modelled on the ideals he embodied.

The Yeshiva Movement did not penetrate the Hasidic community, where young men were encouraged to study in their local Bet Hamidrash without any formal organization or course of study. (The Lubavitch Yeshiva and the Hasidic Yeshiva of Lublin were two notable exceptions.)

Most of the great Yeshivot of today are the spiritual and pedagogical heirs of the Lithuanian centres of study. Within their walls, the highest value is assigned to the study of Torah for its own sake. Most students come from out of town, thereby fulfilling the Talmudic injunction to "exile yourself to a place of Torah".

Secular subjects are never studied within the Yeshiva, although graduates may pursue courses such as science or economics in order to earn a living. They may study the Bible and other religious texts, but these, too, are not a formal part of the curriculum, which focuses on Talmudic learning. The Yeshiva is the only place where this intense type of study is practiced. It is very different from the modern methods used in university Jewish studies courses and even in Rabbinical seminaries.

The Yeshiva is a world unto itself, and the study is continuous and without end. Three of the great Yeshivot of today bear the names of the Lithuanian towns in which the Yeshivah movement first evolved and flourished: Ponevezh, Slobodka and Telz. Following the example established in Lithuania, a cohesive and influential institution continues to thrive.

ISRAEL SALANTER AND THE MUSAR MOVEMENT

A nineteenth century Lithuanian Talmudist and religious thinker, Israel Lipkin (known as Salanter after the town of Salant, where he grew up) was the founder of the Musar movement. He held that the both the Hasidim and the Mitnagdim were

in error: the Mitnagdim because they believed they had no need for a Rebbe, and the Hasidim because they believed they had a Rebbe. The Hasidim, who had great admiration for this gifted teacher, contended that the Mitnagdim had a Rebbe in Israel Salanter, but failed to make the most of him.

Building on the early influences of Reb Zundel of Salant, Rabbi Salanter taught that a mechanical performance of the precepts was inadequate to achieve the good life as required by the Torah. The ethical demands of the Torah – who we are as human beings, how we treat one another – were of paramount importance. “One must not be frum (observant) by standing on another’s shoulders.”

Rabbi Salanter served as a sort of traveling Rosh Yeshivah, studying and teaching in a number of places. In Kovno, he founded the first Yeshiva based on his version of Musar. A literature of Musar, meaning “reproof” or “instruction”, had developed in the Middle Ages, but Salanter’s interpretation encouraged the repetitive reading of a few texts accompanied by a melancholy tune. He recognized that while observant Jews would never think of offending against the laws of kashruth, they might thoughtlessly deal unscrupulously with other people. Just as the laws of kashruth had been inculcated, so, he argued, the same habituated training needed to be provided in ethical matters. Both ethical and religious conduct had to be practiced over and over until they became second nature.

For at least half an hour each day, students closed their copies of the Talmud and sat in a darkened room rehearsing the Musar texts. To this day, the Lithuanian-type of Musar Yeshivah focuses on developing rigorous Talmudic and Halachic scholars who, at the same time, live their lives governed by yirat shamayim (fear of heaven). Even within the Musar movement, there is more than one approach. The two main schools are those of Slobodka and Navaradok. The difference between them has been summed up in these words: “In Slobodka, they taught: man is so great, how can he sin? In Navaradok, they taught: man is so small, how dare he sin?”

Rabbi Elijah ben Solomon Zalman (1720-1797), THE GA'ON OF VILNA

The Hebrew word Ga'on, meaning “pride”, was originally a title restricted to the heads of the Talmudic academies, especially in Babylonia, during the immediate post-Talmudic era until about the 12th century. Later on it came to be used in reference to outstanding Talmudic sages. Rabbi Elijah certainly fit this definition. He became the living symbol of a great Ga'on. Having demonstrated remarkable intellectual abilities as a child, he was supported by the community and allowed to devote his full energies to study, without the usual communal responsibilities of a Rabbinic position.

The scope of his learning extended beyond the normal Yeshiva curriculum, then limited to the Babylonian Talmud. He studied the full range of ancient and medieval Rabbinic literature, and ventured into such secular subjects as astronomy, mathematics and biology in pursuit of accuracy and clarity. He believed that many ambiguities in Talmudic texts were the result of inaccurate copying. The changes he made were controversial at first, but modern scholarship accepts and benefits from his explanations and interpretations.

A rigorous critical thinker, Rabbi Elijah did not approve of the casuistic mode of study known as pilpul that was

common in the yeshivas of Poland.

Though an ardent student of the Kabbalah, he rejected the popular Hasidic version of Jewish mysticism and objected to the cult of personality implicit in the leadership of the Hasidic Tzaddik.

So firm was his opposition to the Hasidic movement that in 1772, at his instigation, the Vilna Rabbinical court issued an order of excommunication against the “sect”. In 1781 the order was expanded to prohibit marriage and commercial relations with Hasidim. Not only did he question the purity of their leaders' motives, he also challenged their scholarly credentials. His adherents became known as the Mitnagdim (Hebrew for “opponents”). After Rabbi Elijah's death, his grave became a holy place where his followers left slips of paper with their prayers. Today, a bronze bust and memorial plaque mark the place in Vilna which was once his home.

Time and circumstance would lessen the antagonism of the Mitnagdim for the Hasidim. The Hasidim became less radical and more conventionally Orthodox, and the two groups came to recognize their shared vulnerability to the secular ideologies and religious reformers within Judaism, and the Czarist government and Christian clergy externally. It is perhaps ironic that today, the Chabad Lubavitch movement helps sustain the Jewish community of Vilna.

Chassidism

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Ba'al Shem Tov and the Beginnings of Chassidism:

The Ba'al Shem Tov, Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer Ba'al Shem Tov (the 'Master of the Good Name') was born in Podolia in 1700 and was known to be of humble origins.

He was a synagogue sexton and an assistant teacher who spent several years in solitude and meditation. He became a 'ba'al shem' or miracle-worker, curing people with amulets and charms. The main tenets of his beliefs are known, but he left no written works apart from a few letters and several of his sayings that were noted by his disciples.

The Ba'al Shem Tov established contact with the ascetic kabbalists of his day. He guided the kabbalists away from seclusion to inclusion and leadership of the community. This was the new type of 'tzadik', or righteous leader. According to Chassidic belief, the tzadik is the foundation of the world, and could hasten salvation through his mentoring actions. The tzadik had an attachment to God, and acted as an intermediary between God and the people, bearing a responsibility for their spiritual well-being.

The basic assumption of Chassidism is that 'there is no place empty of Him'. God is everywhere, divinity exists in everything. The central role of the tzadik is to release all of the divine elements that exist in the material world. Joy is a fundamental tenet of Hasidic teaching.

The Ba'al Shem Tov believed that his teachings could serve as a guide to the people and bring Redemption closer. He had a mystical vision on Rosh Hashana in 1747, in which he saw his soul ascending to heaven. He described the dream to his brother-in-law in a letter, in which he stated that the Messiah would come when the Ba'al Shem Tov's teachings became widespread. He was not sure what path to take to achieve this goal, but when the Ba'al Shem Tov died in 1760, his teachings were wellknown.

Rabbi Dov Baer, also known as 'The Maggid', the great Maggid of Hasidism, transferred the movement's center from Podolia to Volhynia, and sent out emissaries to spread Chassidic teachings in Galicia, White Russia, Lithuania and central Poland.

Prayer was regarded as a central link to the upper spheres, and considered more important than religious study. The Hasidic movement also initiated prayers according to the Sephardi prayerbook, which had been adapted by Rabbi Isaac Luria in Tzfat. It was different than the established Ashkenazi version used by

Polish Jews. The importance of kavanah - inner devotion was stressed, including cries, movement and fervor during worship.

On the Sabbath, the Se'udah Shlishit (the third meal eaten on the Sabbath) was when the Rebbe would generally preach, tell stories about the tzadikim, and chant Hasidic melodies. It became customary to travel to the Rebbe on holidays and Sabbaths. Eventually, they designed their own special ceremony. The 'Melaveh Malkah', was a fourth meal where every word and story uttered by the Rebbe was treated with the utmost significance.

Some Hasidim made their way to the Holy Land, but many communities continued to grow in Poland, Belorus and Lithuania. Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi was a great talmudic scholar who eventually formed his own school of Hasidic thought, known as Chabad, which is the Hebrew acronym for wisdom, understanding and knowledge.

From its inception, opposition to Hasidism began in Vilna, which was known as the 'Jerusalem' of Lithuania. Rabbi Elijah, the Gaon (genius) of Vilna banned contact with the Hasidim, and had them excommunicated. He opposed the Hasidic notion of the tzadik as idol-worshipping, and their beliefs as arrogant and valueless. The conflict between the Gaon of Vilna and the Hasidim continued for many years and even served as a pretext for the establishment of the great yeshivot (academies of Talmudic study) throughout the region.

To this day, large numbers of Jewish visitors continue to visit various sites of Hasidic interest in the Ukraine. Among the famous sites are: Uman, the burial place of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, and Gadyach location of the tomb of Shneur Zalman, the Alter Rebbe and founder of the Lubavitch Hasidic movement.

FAMOUS HASIDIC QUOTATIONS:

Ba'al Shem Tov:

"My teaching is based on three kinds of love: love of God, love of Torah and love of humanity."

"Why do we say "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob?" This is to teach you that Isaac and Jacob did not merely mimic the tradition of Abraham. Each encountered God in their own unique way."

Rabbi Nachman ben Simcha of Bratslav:

"The world is a very narrow bridge. The key to crossing is to not be afraid."

"When you are about to leave Egypt-any Egypt-do not stop to think: how will I earn a living out there? One who stops to make provisions for the way will never get out of Egypt."

“No matter where I go, it is always to Israel”.

“There are men who suffer terrible distress and are unable to tell what they feel in their hearts and they go their way and suffer and suffer. But if they meet one with a laughing face, he can revive them with his joy. And to revive a man is no slight thing.”

“He who is able to write a book and does not, it is as one who has lost a child”.

The Lubliner Rabbi:

“Better an insincere peace than a sincere quarrel”.

The Belzer Rabbi:

“Let a person do good deeds with the same zeal that an evil person does bad ones.”

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson:

“ In a sense, we have all wandered away from our true selves. Birth is the beginning of our soul’s journey, sent off from its divine source to live in an unnatural state, a land of materialism. Throughout our lives, therefore, we crave to be reunited with our real selves.

We search for our soul, for the G-dly spark within ourselves. We long to reconnect with our source”.

From Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk:

“The Rabbi once asked Jacob of Radzyman: ‘What is the purpose of man’s creation’ Jacob replied: ‘Man was created in order to perfect his soul’. The Kotsker shouted: ‘Jacob! Is this what we were taught in Przysucha?’ ‘Man was created in order to increase God’s glory!’”

“Where is God’s dwelling? God dwells wherever man lets Him in.”

“The prohibition against idolatry includes the prohibition against making idols out of the mitzvot. We should never imagine that the chief purpose of a mitzvah is its outer form; rather it is the inward meaning.”

Rabbi Simcha Bunim of Pzhysh:

“The sins which people commit-those are not their great crimes. Temptation is powerful, and strength is slight! The great crime is that people can turn at any moment and they do not do so.”

The Maggid of Mezrich:

“We learn three things from a child:

1. Keep yourself busy.
2. You don’t need a reason to be happy.
3. If you want something cry and cry until you get it.”

Miscellaneous Hasidic sayings:

- Work for peace within your family, then within your street, and then within your community.
- It's easier to abandon evil traits today than tomorrow.
- Three times the Torah asks us to love: twice in Leviticus we are commanded to love human beings: then in Deuteronomy our love is directed to the Holy One. Only after we have learned to love people can we come to love the Holy One. “
- People can see their reflection in water only when they bend down close to it; and the human heart too, must lean down to the heart of another so that it may see itself reflected there within.
- A rebbe was asked: “What purpose do atheists serve in this world?” He responded: “God created atheists so that people would not rely on God to help the poor or say that the poor and all those who suffer will receive their ultimate reward in the world to come.” (The doubt created by atheists encourages all Jews to conclude that when it comes to the less fortunate, we cannot rely on God's help or future justice in the afterlife - we must help those in need today with our own hands. E.N.)
- Fools believe that the money which they have lying in their coffer is theirs, while the money they give away to charity is theirs no longer. Actually, quite the reverse is true. Only those possessions which are given away for sacred purposes remain one's property, but those possessions which a man greedily amasses for himself are not his at all. Such gains will not remain with him for longer than a fleeting moment.



Chassidic Tales

**“He who completely believes Jewish folk tales is a fool;
he who completely dismisses them is an even greater fool.”**

TO TELL THE STORY

In the days of the Ba'al Shem Tov, whenever a catastrophe threatened the Jewish people, the great master would go into a secret place in a nearby forest. There he would chant a prayer according to a special melody while standing under a densely branched tree he had known from the time both he and the tree were young. Thus the catastrophe would be averted.

Two generations hence, when enemies again rose up against the House of Israel, the Ba'al Shem Tov's grandson, a famous Rabbi in his own right, would go into the same forest and say: "I cannot find the tree where my grandfather once prayed. But I know the right prayer and the proper melody." And once again the Jews were saved.

The grandson's grandson, another renowned scholar, moved too far from the forest to be able to visit whenever there was a need for divine intervention. Moreover, the words to the prayer his grandfather had once recited were now lost.

Nevertheless, when the Jews were in mortal peril, he would hum the Ba'al Shem Tov's melody. And this too was sufficient to avert the disaster.

In our days, the words to the prayer are forgotten, the melody is lost, and even if the forest still existed we could never again locate the exact spot where the Ba'al Shem Tov once stood under the densely branched tree. Yet we will continue to tell and retell the story of the forest, the melody and the ancient prayer. And this too will be sufficient.

ILLUSION & REALITY

One of the Besht's (Ba'al Shem Tov) essential parables tells the following tale: The king built a castle which he surrounded with concentric barriers, made up of high walls, each more formidable than the previous. Then he issued the following statement: Anyone who is able to find me will become my most trusted advisor, and elevated to the position of assistant to the King.

The first group of those who attempted to reach the King were scared off by fierce guards and wild animals that threatened them when they began to approach the castle. The second group was able to overcome their fear, but were offered lavish riches when they reached the second wall. They too succumbed, and went no further.

Only the King's son, who loved him so much, whose only desire was to see his father's face, kept going. But, finally he too, was overwhelmed by the obstacles. He cried out: Father please help me! In a moment, all the walls disappeared, and the King was standing right next to him.

Moral: All obstacles in life are an illusion; God is right in front of you if you truly seek him.

ENDLESS LOVE

A father complained to the Ba'al Shem Tov that his son had forsaken God. 'Rabbi, what shall I do', he asked. 'Love him more than ever'.

HOW GOD FEELS

A little boy went out to play hide-and-seek with his friends. He went out to hide, but all of his friends left and he found himself alone. He ran crying to his grandfather and told him what happened. His grandfather started crying, too. He told his grandson: 'That is exactly how God feels. Because He too is hiding, and no-one is looking for him.'



INNOVATION & TRADITION

A newly appointed Hasidic Rabbi was challenged by his Hasidim for innovations he was introducing. They complained that he was violating the tradition that had been passed down to him by his father, the previous Rebbe. The young Rebbe replied: 'By introducing my new ideas, I am being loyal to the tradition of my father. He was an original human being who followed the dictates of his heart and so am I.'

NOT A TRACE

On the day before Passover, Rabbi Levi Yitzhak, while walking through the marketplace, met several Gentiles who were known to be smuggling goods across

the border.

'Do you have any smuggled silk' he asked them.

'We do', they answered.

'How many yards to you have', he continued.

'Don't worry Rabbi,' said the smuggler.

'We have as much as you need.' He left them and soon met a Jew.

'Do you have any Hametz', he asked.

'Hametz?' asked the astonished Jew.

'Heaven forbid that a Jew should have Hametz after the sixth hour on Erev Pessach!'

Soon he met a second Jew and again asked, 'Do you have any Hametz?'

'What did you ask, Rabbi', answered the distraught man. 'Hametz at this time!' Am I not still a Jew?'

Rabbi Levi Yitzhak lifted his eyes toward Heaven and said 'Master of the World, look down from Heaven and see how Your people Israel tremble at Your word and hasten to fulfill Your commandments. The Russian Tzar is a mighty and fearsome ruler who has many generals and guards and prisons to enforce his decrees. And he commands thousands of soldiers to protect the border to see that no merchandise is brought across it unlawfully. Nevertheless, daily they smuggle in all manner of merchandise and fear not to see it openly in the market. But You, O Lord, Who have no generals or guards or prisons, have simply written in Your Torah 'There shall no leavened bread be seen with thee.' And on Erev Pessach, long before the evening comes, there is not a trace of Hametz to be found among all of the people of Israel'.

THE ULTIMATE QUESTION

Reb Zusya of Hanipol once said: When I reach the seat of judgement, I am not afraid that I will be asked: 'Zusya why were you not like Moses, why were you not like Rabbi Akiva?' I am afraid that I will be asked: 'Zusya! Why were you not Zusya!!!'

THE FORGOTTEN ART

There once was a king who so loved music, he hired musicians who shared his passion for music to play each morning before him. And the king delighted in hearing their music. When the musicians died, their sons sought to take their places. But, alas, they had neither mastered the art of their fathers nor had they kept their instruments in proper condition. Worse still, the sons no longer loved the king as did their fathers but set their eyes only upon the reward, blindly following their fathers' custom of arriving early each morning at the palace to perform. But the harsh sounds that emerged were so offensive to the ear, that after a time the king no longer listened to their music.

Still, there were among the sons of the old musicians, those who were determined to correct the situation. They set about the difficult task of relearning the forgotten art. Before coming to the king, they would now first try to tune their instruments, and in so doing would often arrive late. Upon entering the king's court and hearing the racket of the other musicians who were already present, they sought out an obscure corner for themselves where they could play undisturbed in accordance with their ability. They



gathered each morning to perform, remaining long after the other musicians had departed so that they might improve their skill. Long before leaving their homes for the palace each morning they continued to struggle with their poor instruments.

The king was aware of their efforts and it was good in his eyes. For even though they did not play with the same talent as their fathers, still they strove, within their limits, to once more bring joy to the king. Thus was their music received by the king with favour.

The Image of Polish Jewry in the Interwar Period

	Existential Problem	Proposed Solution
General Zionists	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Antisemitism – economic boycott; attacks on and murder of Jews in Lvov (pogrom, 1918) 2. Quotas on Jewish enrollment in high schools 3. Antisemitic speeches by members of the National-Democratic Party (the Endecja) 4. Influence of Austrian and German antisemitism on Polish antisemitism 5. Restriction of Jewish influence in local elections by redrawing boundaries of cities and towns 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Settlement of Palestine by farmers, artisans, and blue collar workers 2. A Jewish majority in Palestine 3. Aspiration to unite all groups and classes behind Zionist goals 4. The World Zionist Organization -- broadly democratic, seeks to supervise all operations
Revisionist Zionists	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Antisemitism is a constant; it has ebbed but is about to re-erupt. 2. The Polish Jewish masses – equanimity, resignation, despair 3. Jews are likened to a group of people seated in a cart without reins careening toward a chasm. 4. The situation of European Jews – “a catastrophe of historic magnitude” 5. We are a minority everywhere; antisemitism = xenophobia. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jewish majority in Palestine – the minimum aspiration, not the maximum 2. Another million Jews would create a Jewish majority in Palestine. 3. Three to four million Jews in Eastern Europe are knocking on the gate – entry visas

Chart taken from:
The Image of Polish Jewry Between Two World Wars
 by Ephraim Kaye

	Existential Problem	Proposed Solution
Poalei Zion – Hitahdut	<p>Two types of national recognition:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> “Bourgeois” nationalism observes the contrast between itself and other nations. Militant nationalism (Revisionism). Socialist nationalism – separatism – stronger emphasis on the negative aspects of other strata in Polish Jewry (the Bund) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Our nationalism – aspiration to build the country on foundations that correspond to our national sensitivities, efforts to become an integral part of the Socialist movement Struggle for unrestricted, unlimited aliya Aspiration to create a Jewish socialist proletarian society in Palestine, entrenched in all sectors of agriculture and industry
Mizrachi	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Hatred of the “eternal people” is eternal hatred.” Why do they hate us? Because we are different from all other nations and tongues. We are weaker than any other nation and tongue; we are foreigners in every nation and tongue; we lack the territorial base that other nations have. Agudath Israel opposes Zionism – The Council of Torah Sages ruled that it is not yet time to advocate settlement of Eretz Israel. Agudath Israel condemns the Zionists’ efforts in Eretz Israel but lauds the Jewish settlement in Eretz Israel. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The nations will eventually recognize the Jews as a living nation and grant them national rights. Mizrachi construes Jewish Palestine as being Jewish in religion and language. Mizrachi’s role is to raise its banner, the national-religious banner. To encourage as many national-religious Jews as possible to make aliya

Chart taken from:
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	Existential Problem	Proposed Solution
<p>The Haredim ("Ultraorthodox") -- Agudath Israel</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Our people, our Torah, and our religion are in a sorrowful, miserable state. 2. The study halls and yeshivot have emptied, the Torah is cast aside, and our sons and daughters have abandoned us. 3. The flames of heresy and desecration have made inroads among our people. The Zionists' goal is to secularize Jewish community life and to resemble all other nations. 4. The founder of Jewish nationalism opposed Orthodoxy all his life. Nationalism has become a substitute for Torah. 5. Nationalism: a new deity, tantamount to idolatry 6. The national-religious renounce one of the basic tenets of the Jewish faith. Nationalism = idolatry. The national-religious are collaborators in idolatry 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The only reliable remedy: unity and organization. 2. The formation of Agudath Shelomey Emuney Yisrael (Agudath Israel) to supervise all matters of religion and faith and observance of the holy Torah. 3. Settlement of Eretz Israel is a commandment that stands alone. We have neither perished nor expired without Eretz Israel. 4. Without the Torah, Israel cannot survive for even one century . 5. Our overriding concern must be Jews, followed by Eretz Israel. 6. Settlement of Eretz Israel is a commandment, but settling groups of provocative apostates is the exact opposite: a massive transgression. It is the way not to build Eretz Israel but to destroy it.

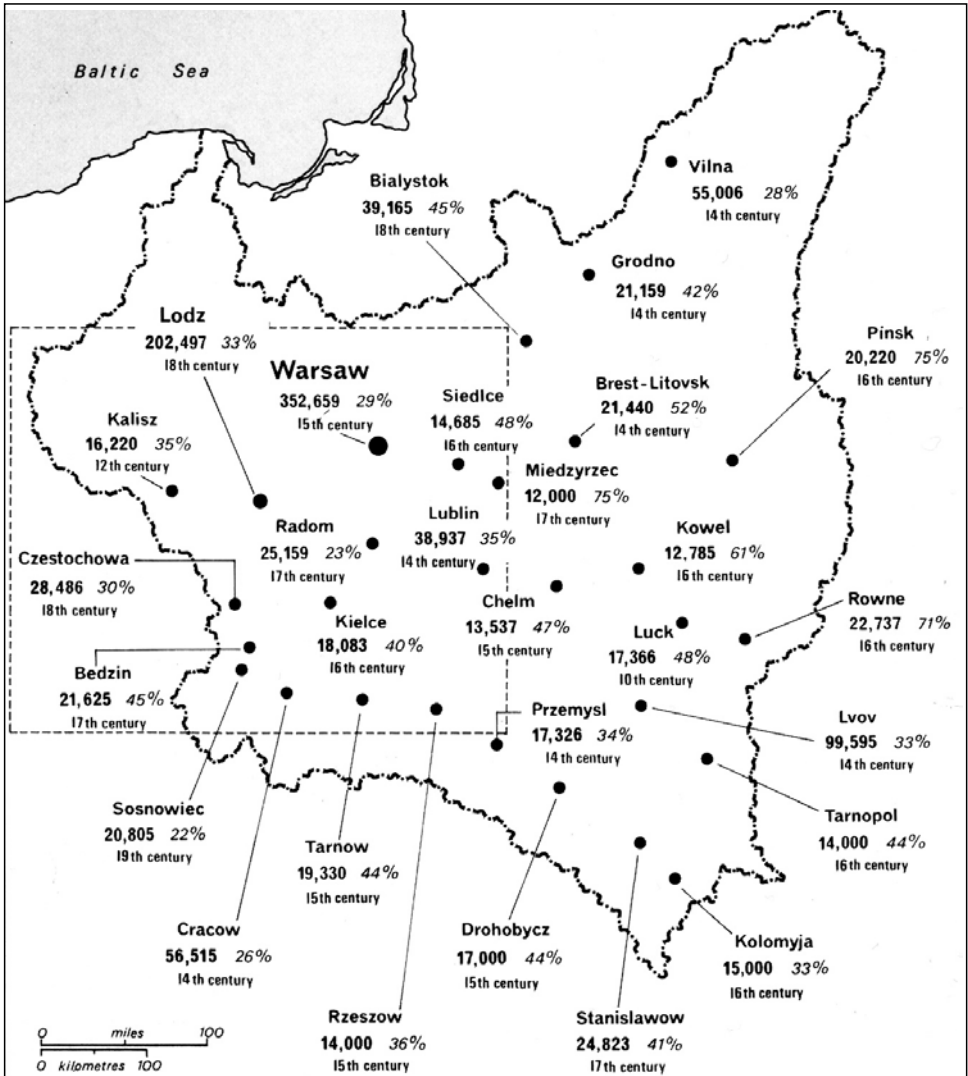
Chart taken from:
The Image of Polish Jewry Between Two World Wars
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	Existential Problem	Proposed Solution
The Bund	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Antisemitism and attacks on Jews in various Polish towns (March 9, 1936) 2. Boycotting of Jewish workers -- policy of starving the Jewish masses 3. Attempt to create a Jewish ghetto in the universities 4. Polish nationalists declare that Poland is simply a way station for Jews. 5. A national home in Palestine would not eradicate the Diaspora; to state otherwise is to repudiate the Diaspora and its spiritual value. 6. Perhaps one-tenth of world Jewry can settle in Palestine . 7. The Diaspora will continue to exist; only faith in a better future for the Jewish masses in the Diaspora would die! 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Our homeland is Poland; we are not foreigners here. 2. Our fatherland is the land where we live. 3. The Jews regard themselves as citizens with equal rights. 4. Each nation's proletariat should have its own organization. 5. Poles and Jews have a common destiny. 6. The Bund continues to urge Jews to consider themselves Polish citizens entitled to equal rights . 7. The possibility of building a new socialist society 8. We shall fight fascism together with the Poles; we shall spare no sacrifice on behalf of this country. 9. Cultural autonomy in Poland -- a Yiddish-language school system

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	Existential Problem	Proposed Solution
Assimilationists	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Antisemitism exists everywhere . 2. The Zionist solution is good only for a few hundred thousand Jews. Even a liberal regime would not accept the state-within-a-state solution (the Bund program). 3. The Jewish masses will continue living here in Poland, but in what way? 4. Recent incidents perpetrated by gangs of youths – humiliating riots 5. The Jewish problem is a blatant example of how the law of resemblance works: the need to resemble the other, countered by factors that prevent this. The process ends with assimilation. 6. Zionism aims to achieve a Jewish national renaissance are the result of every individual's congenital wish to assimilate to his or her surroundings. 7. There are two problems with Socialism (the Bund): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. It has no justification in the social structure of Polish Jewry. b. It is by definition a cosmopolitan movement. The Jewish Socialists Must emphasize their Jewish distinctiveness. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anyone with a cultural affinity for contemporary Europe is already standing on assimilationist soil. 2. The Ihud prescribes assimilation of the masses as the only solution. 3. The circle of non-Jewish sympathizers is growing steadily. 4. SAMA – its board includes Polish Catholics and members Of Polish academic youth organizations . 5. Recent incidents have confirmed our argument. Should the entire society be blamed? Many have protested! 6. We should build a bridge by which adherents of different religions dwelling in the same country can achieve a rapprochement. 7. Assimilation is the solution to the Jewish problem according to the Western European model . 8. All segments of Polish Jewry are essentially assimilationist; we are merely the noblest manifestation of assimilation's many facets.

Chart taken from:
The Image of Polish Jewry Between Two World Wars
 by Ephraim Kaye



Polish cities with 12,000 or more Jewish inhabitants in 1931.
 Map credit: © Martin Gilbert 1982.

1000 Years of the Jews in Poland

INTRODUCTION

The history of the Jews in Poland dates back over a millennium. For centuries Poland was home to the largest and most significant Jewish community in the world. Poland was the centre of Jewish culture due to a long period of statutory religious tolerance and social autonomy. This ended with the 'Partitions of Poland' that began in 1772, in particular, with the discrimination and persecution of Jews in the Russian Empire.

During World War II (1939-1945) and the occupation of Poland by Nazi Germany there was a near complete genocidal destruction of the Polish Jewish community.

Since the fall of communism there has been a Jewish revival in Poland. It is characterised by the annual Jewish Culture Festival, new study programmes at Polish high schools and universities, the work of synagogues such as the Nozyk, and the Museum of the History of Polish Jews.

From the founding of the Kingdom of Poland in 1025 through to the early years of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth created in 1569, Poland was the most tolerant country in Europe. Known as *Paradisus Iudaeorum* (Latin for "Paradise for the Jews"), it became a shelter for persecuted and expelled European Jewish communities and home to the world's largest Jewish community of the time.

Almost three-quarters of all Jews lived in Poland by the middle of the 16th century. With the weakening of the Commonwealth and growing religious strife (due to the Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reformation), Poland's traditional tolerance began to wane from the 17th century onward and particularly after the Partitions of Poland.

The Partitions of Poland were three partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth that took place towards the end of the 18th century and ended the existence of the state, resulting in the elimination of the sovereign Poland for 123 years. The partitions were conducted by the Russian Empire, the Kingdom of Prussia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. They divided up the Commonwealth



A Jewish couple, Poland, c. 1765

lands over a period of time. Polish Jews were subject to the laws of the partitioning powers, especially the increasingly anti-Semitic Russian Empire.

When Poland regained independence in the aftermath of World War I, it was the centre of the European Jewish world with one of the largest Jewish communities of over 3 million. Antisemitism, emanating from both the political establishment and the general population, common throughout Europe at the time, became an increasing problem.

At the start of World War II, Poland was partitioned between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union (Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact). The war resulted in the death of one-fifth of the Polish population, with 90% or about 3 million of Polish Jews killed along with approximately 3 million Polish non-Jews. Although the Holocaust occurred largely in German occupied Poland, there was less collaboration with the Nazis by its citizens than in many other European countries.

EARLY YEARS

The first Jews arrived in the territory of modern Poland in the 10th century. Travelling along the trade routes leading eastwards to Kiev and Bukhara, Jewish merchants crossed the areas of Silesia. A diplomat and merchant from the Moorish town of Tortosa in Spanish Al-Andalus, known under his Arabic name of **Ibrahim ibn Jakub**, was the first chronicler

to mention the Polish state under the rule of Prince Mieszko I. The first mention of Jews in Polish chronicles occurs in the 11th century. It appears that Jews were then living in Gniezno, the capital of the Polish kingdom of the Piast dynasty. The first permanent Jewish community is mentioned in 1085 by a Jewish scholar Jehuda ha-Kohen in the city of Przemyśl. The first extensive Jewish emigration from across Europe to Poland occurred at the time of the First Crusade in 1098.

Under Bolesław III (1102–1139), the Jews, encouraged by the tolerant regime of this ruler, settled throughout Poland, including Lithuanian territory as far

as Kiev. He recognised the value of the Jews in the development of the commercial interests of his country. The Jews came to form the backbone of the Polish economy and **coins minted by Mieszko III even bear Hebrew markings**. Jews enjoyed undisturbed peace and prosperity in the many principalities into which the country was then divided. They formed the middle class in a country where the general population consisted



of landlords (developing into *szlachta*, the unique Polish nobility) and peasants, and they were instrumental in promoting the commercial interests of the land.

The Magdeburg Law was a contributing factor in the emigration of Jews to Poland. It was a charter given to the Jews, among others, that specifically outlined the rights and privileges that Jews had in Poland. For example, they could define their neighbourhoods and economic competitors and set up monopolies.

The Roman Catholic Church became less tolerant, but there were still those amongst the reigning princes who sought to protect the Jewish community. Rulers such as Boleslaw the Pious of Kalisz recognised the Jews as desirable for the economic growth of the country.



Drawn by Polish painter
Walery Eljasz 1841-1905

In 1332, **King Casimir III the Great** (1303-1370) expanded the old charter with the Wislicki Statute. His reign was known for its close ties to the Jews. He prohibited the kidnapping of Jewish children for enforced baptism and inflicted heavy punishment for the desecration of Jewish sites. However, with the advent of the Black Death in 1348, the first *blood libel* was recorded and in 1367 the first *pogrom* took place in Poznan. Under Casimir's successor, Louis I of Hungary (1370–1384), the complaint became general that "justice had disappeared from the land". An attempt was made to deprive the Jews of the protection of the laws. Guided mainly by religious motives, Louis I persecuted them,

and threatened to expel those who refused to accept Christianity. His short reign did not suffice, however, to undo the beneficent work of his predecessor.

CENTRE OF THE JEWISH WORLD

Alexander the Jagiellonian (1461-1506) originally expelled the Jews from Lithuania became more tolerant after the Jews were expelled from Spain, Austria, Germany and Hungary. Poland became a haven for Jewish exiles from Western Europe.

The most prosperous period for Polish Jews began following this new influx of Jews with the reign of Zygmunt I (1506–1548), who protected them in his realm. His son, Zygmunt II (1548–1572), in the main, followed the tolerant policy of his father and also granted autonomy to the Jews in the matter of communal administration and laid the foundation for the power of the *Kahal*, or autonomous Jewish community.

Jewish religious life thrived in many Polish communities. In 1503, the Polish monarchy appointed Rabbi Jacob Polak, the official Rabbi of Poland, marking the emergence of the Chief Rabbinate and by 1551, Jews were given permission to choose their own Chief Rabbi. The Chief Rabbinate held power over law and finance, appointing judges and other officials. During this period, Poland-Lithuania became the main center for *Ashkenazi* Jewry and its *yeshivot* achieved fame from the early 16th century. It is thought that about three-quarters of all Jews lived in Poland by the middle of the 16th century. Around the mid-16th century, Poland also welcomed Jewish newcomers from Italy and Turkey, mostly of Sephardi origin.



Remuh Synagogue late 1920s

Moses Isserles (1520–1572), an eminent Talmudist of the 16th century, established his *yeshiva* in Kraków. In addition to being a renowned Talmudic and legal scholar, Isserles was also learned in Kabbalah and studied history, astronomy and philosophy. The **Remuh Synagogue** was built for him in 1557. *ReMa* is the Hebrew acronym for his name, Rabbi Moses Isserles.

UPRISING AND DECLINE

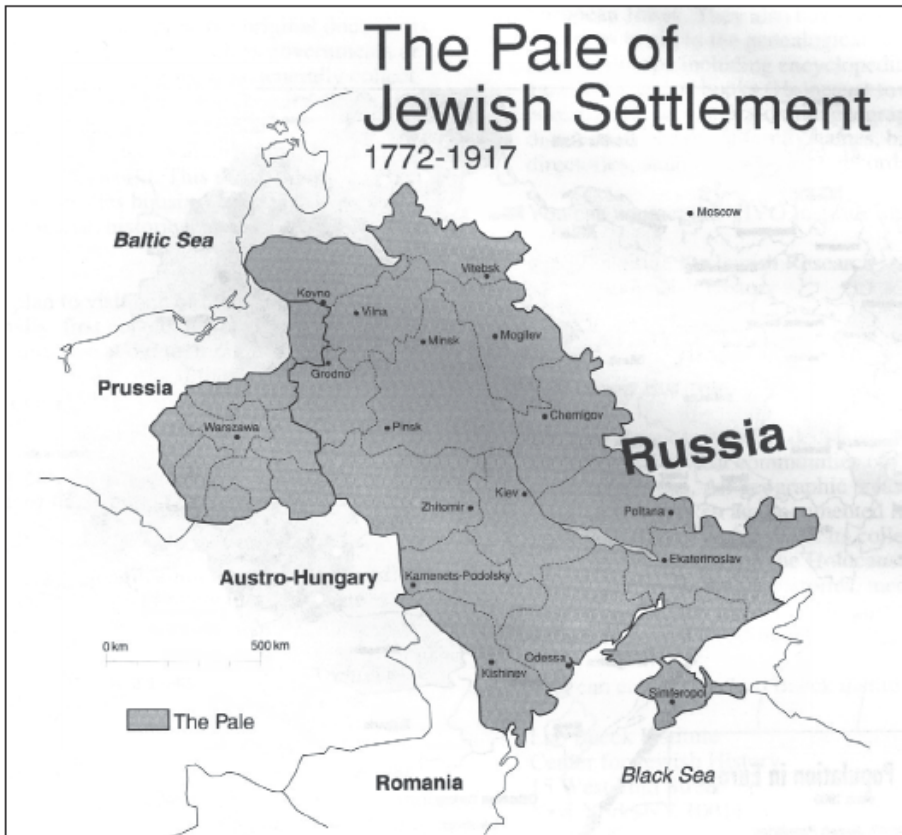
From 1648 onwards several conflicts devastated the Polish Commonwealth and during this period at least 200,000 Jews were either murdered or emigrated. During the *Chmielnicki Uprisings* (1648-1657), a Cossack rebellion within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Bohdan Khmelnytsky's Cossacks murdered thousands of Jews and Poles in the eastern area he controlled (today's Ukraine). Here the Jews were perceived as allies of the Polish nobles who had stolen the peasants' homes and land. The Chmielnicki Uprising was followed by an invasion by the Swedish Empire in what became known as "The Deluge". Thousands of Jews emigrated during the Uprisings to central Poland and western Europe.

During this period an estimated 3 million Polish citizens died, approximately one third of the population. By the time the Saxon dynasty came to the throne, the Jews had lost the support they once had and attacks on Jews increased, becoming almost daily events in the larger cities.

THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE AND THE JEWS OF POLAND (1795-1918)

Official Russian policy would eventually prove to be substantially harsher towards the Jews than that under independent Polish rule. The lands that had once been Poland were to remain the home of many Jews. In 1772, Catherine II, the Empress of Russia, instituted the **Pale of Settlement** restricting Jews to the western parts of the empire. This would eventually include much of Poland although it excluded some areas in which Jews had previously lived. By the late 19th century, over four million Jews would live in 'The Pale'.

Initially, Russian policy towards the Jews of Poland was confusing, alternating between harsh rules and somewhat more enlightened policies. In 1802, the Tsar established the 'Committee on the Improvement of the Jews' in an attempt to develop a coherent approach to the Empire's new Jewish population. In 1804 it suggested several steps that were designed to encourage Jews to assimilate, although it did not force them to do so. It proposed that Jews be allowed to attend school and even to own land, but it restricted them from entering Russia. The more enlightened parts of this policy were never fully implemented, and the conditions of the Jews in the Pale gradually worsened.



The Cantonist Laws passed by Tsar Nicolas in the 1820s kept the traditional double taxation of Jews in lieu of army service, while actually requiring all Jewish communities to produce boys between the ages of 12 and 18 to serve in the military, where they were often forced to convert. Though the Jews were accorded slightly more rights with the emancipation reform of 1861, they were still restricted to the Pale of Settlement and subject to restrictions on ownership and profession. In 1881, however, the status-quo was shattered with the assassination of Tsar Alexander II, which was falsely blamed on the Jews.

The assassination prompted a large-scale wave of anti-Jewish riots throughout 1881–1884. In the 1881 outbreak, pogroms were primarily limited to Russia, although in a riot in Warsaw two Jews were killed, 24 others were wounded, women were raped and over two million rubles worth of property was destroyed.

The new Tsar, Alexander III, blamed the Jews for the riots and issued a series of harsh restrictions on Jewish movements. Pogroms continued until 1884, with at least tacit government approval. They proved a turning point in the history of the Jews in partitioned Poland and throughout the world. As a result of the pogroms and the waves of antisemitism, 36 Jewish Zionist delegates met in Katowice in 1884, forming the *Chovevei Zion* movement. The pogroms prompted a great flood of Jewish emigration mainly to the United States. Nearly two million Jews left the Pale by the late 1920s, setting the stage for the Zionist movement.

An even bloodier wave of pogroms broke out from 1903 to 1906, and at least some of the pogroms are believed to have been organised or supported by the Tsarist Russian secret police, the Okhrana.

THE INTERWAR YEAR 1918-1939

During World War I, while many other non-Polish minorities were ambivalent or neutral to the idea of a sovereign Polish state, Jews actively participated in the fight for Poland's independence between 1914 and 1918. Representatives of the local Jewish merchant associations adopted a resolution declaring their participation in the struggle for Poland's independence and issued an appeal to the Jewish masses. Similar proclamations came from the Jewish youth organisations.

During the military conflicts that engulfed Eastern Europe at the time – the Russian Civil War, Polish-Ukrainian War and Polish-Soviet War – many pogroms were launched against the Jews by all sides. A substantial number of Jews were perceived to have supported the Bolsheviks in Russia and they came under frequent attack by all those opposed to the Bolshevik regime.

At the end of World War I, the West became alarmed by reports of alleged pogroms in Poland against Jews. American pressure for government action reached the point where President Woodrow Wilson sent an official commission to investigate the issue. Among the incidents, a Polish officer in Pinsk, accused a group of Jewish communists of plotting against the Poles, shooting 35 of them.

In 1918 the Polish army captured the city of Lvov (then Lemberg) and hundreds of people were killed in the chaos, among them about 72 Jews. In Warsaw, soldiers of the Blue Army assaulted Jews on the streets but were punished by military authorities. When the Polish troops entered Vilnius in 1919, the first Lithuanian pogrom in a modern city on Lithuanian Jews took place. Abuse of the Jews, including pogroms, continued elsewhere, especially in the Ukraine. The result of the concern over the fate of the Jews of western Poland was a series of explicit clauses in the Treaty of Versailles protecting the rights of Jews and minorities in Poland.

The number of Jews immigrating to Poland from the Ukraine and Soviet Russia during the interwar period grew rapidly. According to the Polish national census of 1921, there were 2,845,364 Jews living in the Second Polish Republic; but, by late 1938 that number had grown by over 16 per cent to approximately 3,310,000. The average rate of permanent settlement was about 30,000 per annum. At the same time, every year around 100,000 Jews were passing through Poland in unofficial emigration overseas. Between the end of the Polish–Soviet War and late 1938, the Jewish population of the Republic had grown by over 464,000. Jews preferred to live in relatively tolerant Poland rather than in the USSR, and continued to integrate, to marry into Polish Gentile families, to bring Polish Gentiles into their community through marriage, to feel Polish and to form an important part of Polish society. Between 1933 and 1938, around 25,000 German Jews fled Nazi Germany for sanctuary in Poland.

“JUDAISM IS NOT A RELIC OF THE PAST,
BUT A LIVING FAITH.”

— RABBI JONATHAN SACKS

Development of Judaism, Jewish Thought and Culture in Poland

The culture and intellectual output of the Jewish community in Poland had a profound impact on Judaism as a whole. Some Jewish historians have recounted that the word Poland is pronounced as *Polania* or *Polin* in Hebrew, and as transliterated into Hebrew, these names for Poland were interpreted as “good omens” because *Polania* can be broken down into three Hebrew words: *po* (“here”), *lan* (“dwells”), *ya* (“God”), and *Polin* into two words of: *po* (“here”) *lin* (“[you should] dwell”). The “message” was that Poland was meant to be a good place for the Jews.

THE SHTETL

The word shtetl in Yiddish means small town. The Jews in Eastern Europe often made up a majority of the populations of the towns. The shtetl pattern first took shape within Poland-Lithuania before the partitions of the kingdom. Jews had been invited to settle in the private towns owned by the Polish nobility from the 16th century, with relatively favorable conditions. In many such private towns Jews soon formed the preponderant majority of the population.



Their occupation in *arenda* led many Jews to settle in the villages around these towns, while many who settled in them were also engaged in *arenda* as well as having other business in the villages. Hence both the economy as well as the style of living in such towns had close links with the villages, in addition to assuming the all-pervading character of a ‘Jewish town’. Originally dependent on the highly structured and powerful communities in the larger cities from which the settlers first came, these small communities increasingly acquired importance. Their development was unhampered by the established rights and inimical anti-Jewish traditions of the Christian towns-people, as the communities in the old “royal towns” had been. Thus the movement of Jews to smaller towns where they were needed and therefore protected, by the greater and lesser Polish

nobility, continued. The community of the 'private town' often constituted the town itself for all intents and purposes, and therefore could strengthen and consolidate a homogeneous pattern of values, attitudes and mores.

With the partitions of Poland-Lithuania the final crystallisation saw the process of geopolitical differentiation of the communities in the territories divided between Poland's neighbours. In Russia, the shtetl developed in the Pale of Settlement. In 1815, Congress Poland was incorporated into the Pale, and it continued to exist until the October Revolution of 1917. The liberal revolution of 1917 liquidated the Pale of Settlement, while the Communist revolution that followed liquidated the traditional shtetl life. Between the two world wars, independent Poland became the greatest Jewish centre in Eastern Europe.

Yidishkeyt ("Jewishness") and *menshlikhkeyt* ("humanness") were the two major values of the community around which life centred. Both the sacred and the profane were integrated in this way of life. The traditional ideals of piety, learning and scholarship, communal justice and charity, were fused in the warm and intimate lifestyle of the shtetl. The *Yidishkeyt* and the *menshlikhkeyt* of the shtetl were expressed in innumerable activities, all of which were geared toward the goal of living the life of a "good Jew" and were manifested in the synagogue and at home, in the holiness of Sabbath and the humdrum existence of the market, in the structure of the community and in the organisation of the family.

The life of the Jew oscillated between synagogue, home and market. In the synagogue he served God, studied His Law and participated in social activities created in response to the needs of the community and its individual members. The synagogue was the house of prayer, the house of study and the house of assembly combined. The Rabbi was the head of the community, teacher, leader and trusted council. The seating arrangement in the synagogue reflected the social structure of the community: along the eastern wall, where the Ark was located, were the most honoured members of the community, the rabbi and the council, the men of learning, of substance and of status. The seats facing the eastern wall were occupied by the burghers and behind them were the remaining Jews, poor or uneducated.

The home of the individual was the basic unit in the culture and life style of the shtetl; it was founded on a patriarchal and closely knit structure on traditional lines. His home was the place where the shtetl Jew enjoyed his *Yidishkeyt* in the serenity and peace of Sabbath, in the rituals of the Passover Seder, or in the dignity and holiness of the High Holidays. It was where he derived the proud pleasure from the achievements of his family. He fed the stranger on Friday and provided meals for the poor student from the *yeshivah* (academy for the advanced study of Jewish texts). The home was also part of the community, and hardly any important activity at home was separable from the synagogue or the total community. Birth and death, bar mitzvahs and weddings, illness and recovery, were family events which tied

the home to the synagogue, and by extension to the community. No family event was ever private, for life in the shtetl was life with people, and therefore part of the total community life.

JEWISH LEARNING

Yeshivot were established under the direction of the rabbis in the more prominent communities. Such schools were officially known as gymnasiums, and their rabbi principals as rectors. Important yeshivot existed in Krakow, Poznan and other cities. Jewish printing establishments came into existence in the first quarter of the 16th century and in 1530 a Hebrew Pentateuch (Torah) was printed in Krakow. By the end of the century the Jewish printing houses of that city and Lublin issued large numbers of Jewish books, mainly of a religious nature.

The growth of Talmudic scholarship in Poland was coincident with the greater prosperity of the Polish Jews. Because of their communal autonomy, educational development was wholly one-sided and along Talmudic lines. Exceptions are recorded, however, where Jewish youth sought secular instruction in the European universities. The learned rabbis became not merely expounders of the Law, but also spiritual advisers, teachers, judges and legislators. Their authority compelled the communal leaders to make themselves familiar with the abstruse questions of Jewish law. Polish Jewry found its views of life shaped by the spirit of Talmudic and rabbinical literature, whose influence was felt in the home, in school and in the synagogue.

In the first half of the 16th century the seeds of Talmudic learning had been transplanted to Poland from Bohemia, particularly from the school of Jacob Pollak, the creator of *Pilpul* (sharp reasoning). Shalom Shachna (c. 1500-1558), a pupil of Pollak, is counted among the pioneers of Talmudic learning in Poland. He lived and died in Lublin, where he was the head of the yeshiva that produced the rabbinical celebrities of the following century. Shachna's son Israel became Rabbi of Lublin on the death of his father. His pupil Moses Isserles (known as the *ReMA*) (1520-1572) achieved an international reputation among the Jews as the co-author of the *Shulchan Aruch*, ("Code of Jewish Law"). His contemporary and correspondent Solomon Luria (1510-1573) of Lublin also enjoyed a wide reputation among his co-religionists; and the Jews throughout Europe recognised the authority of both. Heated religious disputations were common, and Jewish scholars participated in them.

Simultaneously, the *Kabbalah* (Jewish mysticism) had become entrenched under the protection of Rabbinism; and such scholars as Mordecai Jaffe and Yoel Sirkis devoted themselves to its study. This period of great rabbinical scholarship was interrupted by the Chmielnicki Uprising and The Deluge (Ukrainian war of liberation from Poland).

CHASSIDISM

The Hebrew word Chassid, means “pious” and describes a spiritual devotion that extends beyond the requirements of Jewish religious law. The development of Chassidism arose from several movements that took place in Ukraine and Poland. In 1648 Cossack massacres led to the murder of thousands of Jews. In addition to the pogroms, Jewish communities had to worry about taxation, support for widows, orphans and the disabled, creating a class divide in the Polish Jewish community. Times were also troubled with foreign invasions, peasant uprisings, a declining central government and conflict between Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox Christians.

The wealthy Jews and the Talmudic scholars who led the communities often did not distribute the tax burdens fairly. The Rabbinic leadership, led by Shabbtai Zvi, did not protest about this situation and became discredited amongst much of the Jewish community. Meanwhile new forms of devoutness appeared within certain segments of the community.



In this time of mysticism and overly formal Rabbinism came the teachings of Israel ben Eliezer, known as the **Ba'al Shem Tov**, or *BeShT* (1698-1760), that had a profound effect on the Jews of Eastern Europe and Poland in particular. His disciples taught and encouraged the new fervent brand of Judaism based on *Kabbalah* known as Chassidism. The new movement spread rapidly among Eastern European Jewry when leading disciples of the Ba'al Shem Tov won followers of their own and formed separate communities apart from other Orthodox

Jews. The rise of Chassidic Judaism within Poland's borders and beyond had a great influence on the rise of Orthodox Judaism all over the world, with a continuous influence through its many Chassidic dynasties including those of Chabad-Lubavitch, Aleksander, Bobov, Ger and Nadvorna among others.

HASKALAH

The 18th century was in many European countries an era of Renaissance, rationalism and pragmatism. This trend also surfaced within the Jewish community, shaping a new approach towards religion, tradition, as well as their place in society. **The resurgence of Jewish cultural enlightenment** is called Haskalah. It began in Germany, from where it spread to other countries. The Haskalah reached Poland as well, but its influence in that region was comparatively weak. Only a very small but influential group of Jews from Warsaw and Lvov accepted the Haskalah ideas. Their principal goal was the reform of the education system and inclusion of secular courses in the curriculum. According to the Haskalah,

mastering of lay knowledge by Jews would lead to cultural and social advancement of the nation. Assimilation and active involvement of Jews in the culture of their adopted country was yet another aspect. The Haskalah movement was to trigger the rise of civil consciousness, identity and patriotism.

Haskalah initiated the process of reform within Judaism and openness towards foreign influences. Increasingly more Jews participated in everyday life of the country and had an influence on all aspects of social life. It did not ignore religious autonomy, but was opposed to the distinctness in morals or customs manifested, among others, in wearing traditional attire or use of a separate language, calling for the abandonment of Yiddish. Polish Jews did not have the same opportunities to embrace emancipation as those from France or Germany, and only in the late 19th century, thanks to legislative changes and a wider acceptance by Polish society, were Jews tempted to become closer to Polish culture and society.

CULTURAL TRENDS: HEBREW, YIDDISH AND POLISH

The development of Jewish secular culture in Poland reached its height in the late 19th century and lasted until the outbreak of the World War II. While the surge of pogroms led to the increase of separatist inclinations, novel political ideologies

י	ח	ז	ו	ה	ד	ג	ב	א	
Yod	Tet	Chet	Zayin	Vav	He	Dalet	Gimel	Bet	Alef
(V)	(T)	(Ch)	(Z)	(V)	(H)	(D)	(G)	(B/V)	(silent)
ע	ס	נ	מ	ל	כ	ף			
Ayin	Samech	Nun	Nun	Mem	Mem	Lamed	Khaf	Kaf	
(silent)	(S)	(N)	(N)	(M)	(M)	(L)	(Kh)	(K/Kh)	
ת	ש	ק	ר	ץ	פ				
Tav	Shin	Resh	Qof	Tzadeh	Tzadeh	Feh	Peh		
(T)	(Sh/S)	(R)	(Q)	(Tz)	(Tz)	(F)	(P/P)		

brought pioneering social developments. On the one hand was the rise of the Zionist movement and on the other assimilation. Within the Jewish culture in Poland the trends can be related mainly through language preference.

The development of Hebrew literature was due mainly to the efforts of the Zionist movement.

Alongside the desire to create a Jewish State in Palestine, they wanted to bring back to life the Hebrew language, used for centuries merely for prayer. Naturally followers of assimilation wrote in Polish. Their contribution to the development of Polish culture was enormous, as intellectuals and thinkers. They may be called Polish Jews or Poles who had a Jewish heritage.

The emergence of Yiddish literature was a unique phenomenon. Yiddish became the heart of the Diaspora's cultural heritage, despite being sneered at by the reformers. Through Yiddish, new artistic, political and social trends were able to reach the Jewish masses. Secular culture began to separate from religion; the press and books reached a wider circulation with the publication of outstanding literary works.

JEWISH POLITICS IN POLAND

Political activity of Polish Jews was characterised by considerable diversity. The first groups formed came under the heading of *Chovevi Zion* (Chivat Zion). These organisations are now considered the forerunners and foundation-builders of modern Zionism. When, at the end of the 19th century, Polish political parties were formed, Jews often created their own splinter groups.



Solely Jewish parties were established at the end of the 19th century and were distinguished by three basic trends; *Zionist*, *socialist* and *religious*. Their aims and objectives varied considerably. The Zionists guidelines were set by **Theodore Herzl** and aimed to create a national base for Jews in Palestine. They collected money for the purchase of land as well as prepared their followers for new life conditions and work there. These ideas were the guiding principles of the Zionist Organisation of Poland (*Histadrut*), subordinate to the World Zionist Organization. Strong influence was gained by *Poalei Zion* (Workers of Zion),

active in Poland from 1906, and whose aim was to create a Jewish socialist state in Palestine, as well as to bring in national and cultural autonomy for Jews in countries with large Jewish populations. Another group was the *Mizrachi*, an organisation founded in Vilnius in 1902, whose aspiration was to create a national Jewish centre in Palestine, a religious state ruled by orthodox principles of Judaism.

In 1897, the most influential Jewish political party, faithful to the social-democratic principles, was formed in Vilnius. It was named the General Jewish Labour Union, popularly called the Bund. Its principle aim was to attain national and cultural autonomy for Jews in those countries, where Jewish population was particularly numerous. The Bund placed considerable emphasis on the enhancement of secular education and self-education circles, especially among the working class, artisans and tradesmen. The Bund was very critical of the Zionist concept and ideal.

Among the orthodox Jews, the greatest influence was won by *Agudat Israel* (Union of Israel), founded in 1912. Agudat considered Jews as a religious and not a national community; it therefore came out mainly in support of their religious and commercial rights. Initially Agudath resisted Zionism, but from the 1930s it accepted the idea of emigration to Palestine. Numerous influential Chassidic tzadikim (righteous) and prominent religious leaders became active members of the party.



A Bundist demonstration, 1917

“THE FINAL SOLUTION WAS A TURNING POINT IN HISTORY.
FROM THE FOURTH AND SIXTH CENTURIES THE MISSIONARIES
OF CHRISTIANITY SAID TO THE JEWS:
“YOU MAY NOT LIVE AMONG US AS JEWS”.
IN THE MIDDLE AGES THE SECULAR RULERS
DECIDED: “YOU MAN NOT LIVE AMONG US”.
FINALLY THE NAZIS DECREED: “YOU MAY NOT LIVE.”

RAUL HILBERG, HISTORIAN

Holocaust

Holocaust Timeline

1933

- 30 Jan** Adolf Hitler appointed Chancellor of Germany
- 22 Mar** Dachau concentration camp opens for political prisoners
- 1 Apr** Boycott of Jewish shops and businesses
- 7 Apr** Laws for Re-establishment of the Civil Service bars Jews from holding civil service, university and state positions
- 26 Apr** Gestapo (secret state police) established
- 10 May** Public burning of books written by Jews, political dissidents, and others not approved by the state
- 14 Jul** Law stripping East European Jewish immigrants of German citizenship
Laws are passed in Germany that permit the forced sterilisation of Roma, the mentally and physically disabled, African-Germans, and others considered "inferior" or "unfit"

1934

- 2 Aug** Hitler proclaims himself Führer und Reichskanzler (Leader and Reich Chancellor). Armed forces must now swear allegiance to him

1935

- Apr** Jehovah's Witnesses are banned from all civil service jobs and are arrested throughout Germany
- May** "No Jews" signs are posted outside German towns and villages and outside shops and restaurants
- 31 May** Jews barred from serving in the German armed forces
- 15 Sep** "Nuremberg Laws": anti-Jewish racial laws enacted; Jews no longer considered German citizens; could not marry Aryans; nor could they fly the German flag
- 15 Nov** Germany defines a "Jew": anyone with three Jewish grandparents; someone with two Jewish grandparents who identifies as a Jew

1936

- 3 Mar** Jewish doctors barred from practicing medicine in German institutions
- 7 Mar** Hitler invades the Rhineland
- 17 Jun** Himmler appointed the Chief of German Police
- 12 Jul** First German Roma are arrested and deported to Dachau concentration camp
- July** Sachsenhausen concentration camp opens
- 25 Oct** Hitler and Mussolini form Rome-Berlin Axis

1937

- 15 Jul** Buchenwald concentration camp opens

1938

- 13 Mar** Anschluss (incorporation of Austria): all anti-Semitic decrees immediately applied in Austria
- 26 Apr** Mandatory registration of all property held by Jews inside the Reich
- 13 May** German government passes a decree requiring the registration of all Roma without a fixed address living in Austria; by June 1938, all Roma children above the age of 14 have to be fingerprinted. This is a central part of the growing racial definition of Roma as “criminally asocial”
- 6 Jul** Evian Conference held in Evian, France on the problem of Jewish refugees
- 1 Aug** Adolf Eichmann establishes the Office of Jewish Emigration in Vienna to increase the pace of forced emigration
- 3 Aug** Italy enacts sweeping anti-Semitic laws
- 30 Sep** Munich Conference: Great Britain and France agree to German occupation of the Sudetenland, previously Western Czechoslovakia
- 5 Oct** Following request by Swiss authorities, Germans mark all Jewish passports with a large letter “J” to restrict Jews from emigrating to Switzerland
- 28 Oct** 17,000 Polish Jews living in Germany expelled; Poles refuse to admit them; 8,000 are stranded in the frontier village of Zbaszyn
- 7 Nov** Assassination in Paris of German diplomat Ernst vom Rath by Herschel Grynszpan a Polish-Jewish refugee

- 9-10 Nov** Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass): anti-Jewish pogrom in Germany, Austria and the Sudetenland; 200 synagogues destroyed; 7,500 Jewish shops looted; 30,000 male Jews sent to concentration camps (Dachau, Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen)
- 12 Nov** Decree forcing all Jews to transfer retail businesses to Aryan hands
- 15 Nov** All Jewish pupils expelled from German schools
- 8 Dec** Jews may no longer attend universities as teachers or students
- 12 Dec** One billion Mark fine levied against German Jews for the destruction of property during Kristallnacht

1939

- 30 Jan** Hitler in Reichstag speech: if war erupts it will mean the Vernichtung (extermination) of European Jews
- 15 Mar** Germans occupy Czechoslovakia
- Jun** Cuba and the United States refuse to accept Jewish refugees aboard the ship S.S. St. Louis, which is forced to return to Europe
- 5 Jun** Two thousand Roma males above the age of 16 are arrested in Burgenland Province (formerly Austria) and sent to Dachau and Buchenwald concentration camps; 1,000 Roma girls and women above the age of 15 are arrested and sent to the Ravensbruck concentration camp
- 23 Aug** Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact signed: non-aggression pact between Soviet Union and Germany
- 1 Sep** Beginning of World War II: Germany invades Poland
- 21 Sep** Heydrich issues directives to establish ghettos in German-occupied Poland
- Oct** Hitler extends powers to doctors to kill institutionalised mentally and physically disabled persons in the "euthanasia" programme
- 12 Oct** Germany begins deportation of Austrian and Czech Jews to Poland
- 28 Oct** First Polish ghetto established in Piotrków
- 23 Nov** Jews in German-occupied Poland forced to wear an arm band or yellow star

1940

- 9 Apr** Germans occupy Denmark and southern Norway
- 7 May** Lodz Ghetto (Litzmannstadt) sealed, 165,000 Polish Jews in 1.6 square miles (4.1 square kilometres)

- 10 May** Germany invades the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and France
- 20 May** Concentration camp established at Auschwitz
- 22 Jun** France surrenders
- 8 Aug** Battle of Britain begins
- 27 Sep** Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis
- 16 Nov** Warsaw Jews forced into the Warsaw Ghetto: ultimately contains 500,000 people

1941

- 21-26 Jan** Anti-Jewish riots in Romania, hundreds of Jews butchered
- 1 Feb** German authorities begin rounding up Polish Jews for transfer to Warsaw Ghetto
- 6 Apr** Germany attacks Yugoslavia and Greece; occupation follows
- 22 Jun** Germany invades the Soviet Union
- 31 Jul** Goring authorises Heydrich to coordinate resources of the Reich for a "solution of the Jewish Question" throughout Europe
- 1 Sep** German Jews above the age of six are forced to wear a yellow Star of David sewed on the left side of their clothes with the word "Jude" printed in black
- 28-29 Sep** 34,000 Jews massacred at Babi Yar outside Kiev
- Oct** Establishment of Auschwitz II (Birkenau) for the extermination of Jews, Roma, Poles, Russians and others
- 5-9 Nov** 5,000 Roma are deported from labour and internment camps in Austria to the Lodz ghetto in Poland
- 7 Dec** Japanese attack Pearl Harbour
- 8 Dec** United States declares war on Japan. The Axis nations of Germany and Italy, in retaliation, declare war on the United States.
Chelmno (Kulmhof) extermination camp begins operations: 340,000 Jews, 20,000 Poles and Czechs murdered by April 1943
The first gassing of victims in mobile gas vans occurs
- 11 Dec** United States Congress, responding to declaration from the Axis, declares war on Germany
- Dec-Jan** 5,000 Austrian Roma from the Lodz ghetto are deported to the killing centre at Chelmno where they are all killed in mobile gas vans

1942

- 20 Jan** Heydrich convenes the *Wannsee Conference*, presenting his plans to coordinate a European-wide “Final Solution of the Jewish Question” to key officials from Reich Ministries
- 17 Mar** Extermination begins in Belzec; by end of 1942 600,000 Jews murdered
- May** Extermination by gas begins in Sobibor killing centre; by October 1943, 250,000 Jews murdered
- Jun** Jewish partisan units established in the forests of Byelorussia and the Baltic States
- 22 Jul** Germans establish Treblinka concentration camp
- Summer** Deportation of Jews to killing centres from Belgium, Croatia, France, the Netherlands and Poland; armed resistance by Jews in ghettos of Kletzk, Kremenets, Lachva, Mir and Tuchin
- Winter** Deportation of Jews from Germany, Greece and Norway to killing centres; Jewish partisan movement organised in forests near Lublin

1943

- Jan** German 6th Army surrenders at Stalingrad
- Mar** Liquidation of Kraków ghetto
All Roma in Germany and Nazi occupied countries, with few exceptions, are arrested and deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau
- 19 Apr** Warsaw Ghetto revolt begins as Germans attempt to liquidate 70,000 inhabitants; Jewish underground fights Nazis until early June
- Jun** Himmler orders the liquidation of all ghettos in Poland and the Soviet Union
- Summer** Armed resistance by Jews in Bedzin, Bialystok, Czestochowa, Lvov and Tarnów ghettos
- 2 Aug** The prisoners at Treblinka rebel
- Autumn** Liquidation of large ghettos in Minsk, Vilna and Riga
- 14 Oct** Armed revolt in Sobibor extermination camp
- Oct/Nov** Danish citizens smuggle most of the nation’s Jews to neutral Sweden

1944

- 19 Mar** Germany occupies Hungary
- 15 May** Nazis begin deporting Hungarian Jews; by 27 June, 380,000 sent to Auschwitz
- 6 Jun** D-Day: Allied invasion at Normandy
- Spring/
Summer** Red Army repels Nazi forces
- Jun/Jul** 7,196 Jews are deported from the Lodz ghetto to Chelmno death camp where they are killed
- 20 Jul** Group of German officers attempt to assassinate Hitler
- 24 Jul** Russians liberate Majdanek killing centre
- 7 Oct** Revolt by prisoners at Auschwitz; one crematorium blown up
- Nov** Last Jews deported from Terezin to Auschwitz
- 8 Nov** Beginning of death march of approximately 40,000 Jews from Budapest to Austria

1945

- 17 Jan** Nazis empty Auschwitz and start prisoners on 'death marches' to Germany
- 27 Jan** The Soviet army liberates Auschwitz
- Apr** Troops from the United States liberate survivors from the Buchenwald and Dachau concentration camps
- 6-10 Apr** 'Death March' of prisoners from Buchenwald
- 11 Apr** Troops from the United States liberate Buchenwald
- 15 Apr** British troops liberate Bergen-Belsen
- 30 Apr** Hitler commits suicide
- 5 May** Troops from the United States liberate Mauthausen concentration camp
- 8 May** V-E Day: Germany surrenders; end of Third Reich
- 6 Aug** Bombing of Hiroshima
- 9 Aug** Bombing of Nagasaki
- 15 Aug** V-J Day: Victory over Japan proclaimed
- 2 Sept** Japan surrenders; end of World War II
- Nov** The war crimes tribunal is convened at Nuremberg, Germany

Nuremberg Race Laws 1935

The Nuremberg Laws were two laws which excluded the Jews from German life, as well as took away some of their natural rights. They were first declared at the annual Nazi rally held in Nuremberg in 1935. At that rally, Hitler delivered a speech about the Jewish controversy to unite party activists and state officials to deal with the Jewish issue. Subsequently, on 15 September 1935 the two laws were approved.

The first law, **Reichsbürgergesetz** (Law of the Reich Citizen), was designed to deprive Jews of their German citizenship. Only Germans or those with related blood were considered citizens of the Reich from then on. The second law, **Gesetz zum Schutze des Deutschen Blutes und der Deutschen Ehre** (Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour), or simply **Blutschutzgesetz**, forbade marriage or sexual relations between Jews and those of German blood. This law also prohibited the employment of German maids under the age of forty-five in Jewish households. Jews were not even allowed to raise the German flag. This law basically stated that the purity of German blood was absolutely necessary in order to preserve the German people.

On account of these laws German Jews lost their independence from one day to the next. They were no longer allowed to vote or hold public offices since they were no longer considered citizens of the Reich. The Nuremberg Laws also made it more difficult for the Jews to go out into public places such as the theatre or shops. Jews were not even allowed to seek medical attention anymore. Soon thereafter all Jews were recognised by the big red "J", which was short for "Jude," that was stamped on their passports. "Jews Forbidden" signs also went up all over Germany, which made it very difficult for the Jews to get service or lodge in hotels. The Nuremberg Laws were only the beginning of the Nazi policy of antisemitism. The Nuremberg Laws paved the way to the Holocaust, which showed people how far Germans would go to "cleanse" their nation.

NUREMBERG LAW FOR THE PROTECTION OF GERMAN BLOOD AND GERMAN HONOUR, 15 SEPTEMBER 1935

Moved by the understanding that purity of the German Blood is the essential condition for the continued existence of the German people, and inspired by the inflexible determination to ensure the existence of the German Nation for all time, the Reichstag has unanimously adopted the following Law, which is promulgated herewith:

Article 1

- 1) Marriages between Jews and subjects of the state of German or related blood are forbidden. Marriages nevertheless concluded are invalid, even if concluded abroad to circumvent this law.
- 2) Annulment proceedings can be initiated only by the State Prosecutor.

Article 2

Extramarital intercourse between Jews and subjects of the state of German or related blood is forbidden.

Article 3

Jews may not employ in their households female subjects of the state of German or related blood who are under 45 years old.

Article 4.

- 1) Jews are forbidden to fly the Reich or National flag or to display the Reich colours. They are, on the other hand, permitted to display the Jewish colours. The exercise of this right is protected by the State.

Article 5

- 1) Any person who violates the prohibition under Section 1 will be punished by a prison sentence with hard labour.
- 2) A male who violates the prohibition under Section 2 will be punished with a prison sentence with or without hard labour.
- 3) Any person violating the provisions under Section 3 or 4 will be punished with a prison sentence of up to one year and a fine, or with one or the other of these penalties.

Article 6

The Reich Minister of the Interior, in coordination with the Deputy of the Führer and the Reich Minister of Justice, will issue the Legal and Administrative regulations required to implement and complete this Law.

Article 7

The Law takes effect on the day following promulgations except for Section 3, which goes into force on 1 January 1936.

*Nuremberg, September 15, 1935 at the Reich Party Congress of Freedom
The Führer and Reich Chancellor Adolf Hitler, The Reich Minister of the Interior Frick,
The Reich Minister of Justice Dr. Gürtner, The Deputy of the Führer R. Hess.*

THE REICH CITIZENSHIP LAW OF 15 SEPTEMBER 1935

The Reichstag has adopted by unanimous vote the following law which is herewith promulgated.

Article 1

- 1) A subject of the state is one who belongs to the protective union of the German Reich, and who, therefore, has specific obligations to the Reich.
- 2) The status of subject is to be acquired in accordance with the provisions of the Reich and the state Citizenship Law.

Article 2

- 1) A citizen of the Reich may be only one who is of German or kindred blood, and who, through his behaviour, shows that he is both desirous and personally fit to serve loyally the German people and the Reich.
- 2) The right to citizenship is obtained by the grant of Reich citizenship papers.
- 3) Only the citizen of the Reich may enjoy full political rights in consonance with the provisions of the laws.

Article 3

The Reich Minister of the Interior, in conjunction with the Deputy to the Fuehrer, will issue the required legal and administrative decrees for the implementation and amplification of this law.

Promulgated: 16 September 1935. In force: 30 September 1935.

FIRST SUPPLEMENTARY DECREE OF 14 NOVEMBER 1935

On the basis of Article III of the Reich Citizenship Law of 15 September 1935, the following is hereby decreed:

Article 1

- 1) Until further provisions concerning citizenship papers, all subjects of German or kindred blood who possessed the right to vote in the Reichstag elections when the Citizenship Law came into effect, shall, for the present, possess the rights of Reich citizens. The same shall be true of those upon whom the Reich Minister of the Interior, in conjunction with the Deputy to the Fuehrer shall confer citizenship.
- 2) The Reich Minister of the Interior, in conjunction with the Deputy to the Fuehrer, may revoke citizenship.

Article 2

- 1) The provisions of Article I shall apply also to subjects who are of mixed Jewish blood.
- 2) An individual of mixed Jewish blood is one who is descended from one or two grandparents who, racially, were full Jews, insofar that he is not a Jew according to Section 2 of Article 5. Full-blooded Jewish grandparents are those who belonged to the Jewish religious community.

Article 3

Only citizens of the Reich, as bearers of full political rights, can exercise the right of voting in political matters, and have the right to hold public office. The Reich Minister of the Interior, or any agency he empowers, can make exceptions during the transition period on the matter of holding public office. The measures do not apply to matters concerning religious organisations.

Article 4

- 1) A Jew cannot be a citizen of the Reich. He cannot exercise the right to vote; he cannot hold public office.
- 2) Jewish officials will be retired as of 31 December 1935. In the event that such officials served at the front in the World War either for Germany or her allies, they shall receive as pension, until they reach the age limit, the full salary last received, on the basis of which their pension would have been computed. They shall not, however, be promoted according to their seniority in rank. When they reach the age limit, their pension will be computed again, according to the salary last received on which their pension was to be calculated.
- 3) These provisions do not concern the affairs of religious organisations.
- 4) The conditions regarding service of teachers in public Jewish schools remains unchanged until the promulgation of new laws on the Jewish school system.

Article 5

- 1) A Jew is an individual who is descended from at least three grandparents who were, racially, full Jews...
- 2) A Jew is also an individual who is descended from two full-Jewish grandparents if:
 - a) he was a member of the Jewish religious community when this law was issued, or joined the community later;
 - b) when the law was issued, he was married to a person who was a Jew, or was subsequently married to a Jew;
 - c) he is the issue from a marriage with a Jew, in the sense of Section I, which was contracted after the coming into effect of the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor of 15 September 1935;
 - d) he is the issue of an extramarital relationship with a Jew, in the sense of Section I, and was born out of wedlock after 31 July 1936.

Article 6

- 1) Insofar as there are, in the laws of the Reich or in the decrees of the National Socialist German Workers' Party and its affiliates, certain requirements for the purity of German blood which extend beyond Article 5, the same remain untouched...

Article 7

The Fuehrer and Chancellor of the Reich is empowered to release anyone from the provisions of these administrative decrees.



MARKING 90 YEARS SINCE THE WINTER & SUMMER OLYMPICS IN GERMANY

How Nazi Germany co-opted the Olympics – and how the world went along

Compiled by Eli Rubenstein, Director of Education, International March of the Living

MARKING 90 YEARS SINCE THE WINTER & SUMMER OLYMPICS IN GERMANY

How Nazi Germany co-opted the Olympics – and how the world went along

Table of Contents

- I. The Olympics as Propaganda
- II. The Nuremberg Laws and the 1936 Olympic Games
- III. The 1936 Nazi Olympics: A Case Study in Antisemitism, Racism, Indifference, Ambition & Cowardice
- IV. International Boycott Movements
- V. The 1936 Winter Olympics in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Bavaria: A Prelude to the 1936 “Nazi” Summer Olympics in Berlin
- VI. Worldwide Jewish and Black Participation at the 1936 Summer Olympics
- VII. Conclusion
- VIII. IOC under fire for selling Nazi-era Olympic Games T-shirt (CNN Article - Feb 13, 2026)
- IX. 1936 Olympic Timeline
- X. Appendix: Voices Opposed to Participation in the 1936 Berlin Olympics

I. The Olympics as Propaganda

According to historians Richard Menkis and Harold Troper:

“The Olympic Charter proclaimed the power of athletic and sporting competition as a tool for the promotion of peace and unity between people and nations.

Fundamental to this Olympic vision of peace and harmony through sporting excellence was the expectation that the Olympic Games must take place in an atmosphere of mutual respect and without the burden of political, religious, or racial prejudice.” The 1936 Nazi Olympics, which what the 1936 Berlin Olympics essentially constituted, were hijacked by Hitler and his propagandists, violating virtually every aspect of the high-minded Olympic ideals referred to above.



A view of the Olympic opening ceremony with large swastika flags draping the stadium structure, capturing the propaganda backdrop of the event—Nazi visuals dominating what was promoted internationally as a global celebration of sports and unity. Credit: AP

Nazi Germany’s racial ideology proclaimed the Germans as the “Master Race”, and the Berlin Olympics were the ideal venue within which their physical supremacy could be showcased.

Equally important, Nazi Germany hoped to burnish its reputation among the nations of the world, by games in the history of the event. Thus, for a period, Nazi officials ordered most examples of persecution against the Jews and other minorities to be hidden until after the games were completed.

Finally, a successful Olympic event would further cement Hitler’s rule and popularity among the local German population.

Note: In 1936 both the Olympic Winter and Summer Games were held in Germany - both were used by Nazi Germany for propaganda purposes. The Olympic Winter Games took place in Garmisch-Partenkirchen from February 6–16, with 672 athletes from 28 nations competing. The Olympic Summer Games were held in Berlin from August 1–16, with 3963 athletes from 49 nations competing. Unless otherwise indicated, the Olympics being referred to in this document are the Summer Olympics in Berlin.

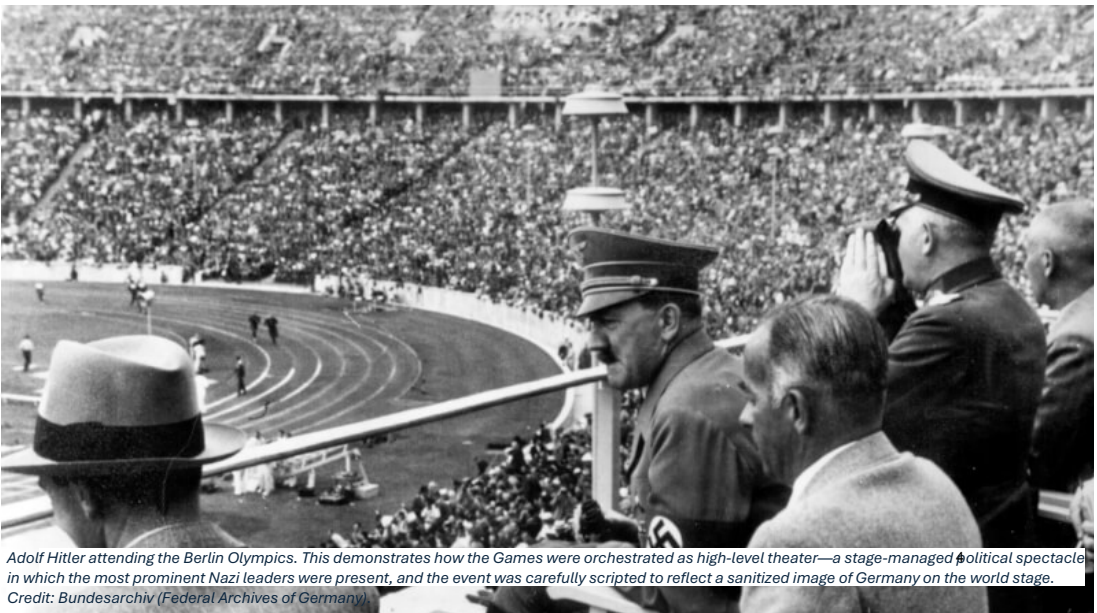
II. The Nuremberg Laws and the 1936 Olympic Games

In 1935, the Nazis passed the infamous Nuremberg Laws, which essentially made German Jews non-persons and removed German Jews from German society. (Article 4/1 of the Order proclaimed, "A Jew cannot be a citizen of the Reich. He cannot exercise the right to vote; he cannot hold public office.") Jews were subject to the full weight of the law but were afforded no protection of the law. "Their social death was complete", in the words of the above-mentioned historians.

The 1935 Nuremberg Laws initially mentioned only Jews. The laws were eventually expanded to include Black people and Roma and Sinti (Gypsies) living in Germany, who were also now labelled as racial aliens and denied a place in society.

Yet, in anticipation of the world's eyes being turned on Germany during the 1936 Olympics, Hitler and his henchmen delayed the full implementation of the Nuremberg Laws until after the Olympics were completed. This allowed Nazi Germany's propaganda efforts during the Olympics to succeed in fooling the world to the point where the New York Times opined – after the conclusion of the games - that the 1936 Olympics put Germans "back in the fold of nations," and even made them "more human again."

When the summer games were over, Germany exalted in its victory, with 89 German medals vs. 56 for the US. Then Nazi Germany soon followed suit with its ever-increasing persecution of Jews and other minorities and its pursuit of his military goals.



Adolf Hitler attending the Berlin Olympics. This demonstrates how the Games were orchestrated as high-level theater—a stage-managed political spectacle in which the most prominent Nazi leaders were present, and the event was carefully scripted to reflect a sanitized image of Germany on the world stage.
Credit: Bundesarchiv (Federal Archives of Germany)

German Jewish diarist Victor Klemperer warned that as soon as the games concluded, the Nazis would “first of all take things out on the Jews.” As the local SA sang, “Wann die Olympiade ist vorbei, / schlagen wir die Juden zu Brei.” (When the Olympics are over, we’ll beat the Jews to a pulp.)

Just a few short years later, the world would learn the full extent of Nazi Germany’s deception and the true intention of their evil designs.



On September 15, 1935, the Nazi regime enacted the "Nuremberg Laws" during a rally in the city of Nuremberg, Germany.

III. The 1936 Nazi Olympics: A Case Study in Antisemitism, Racism, Indifference, Ambition & Cowardice

Soon after Hitler took power, Nazi Germany began to prohibit Jews from almost all aspects of civic life, including participating in sports. Jews were excluded from German sport and recreational facilities and German sports clubs.

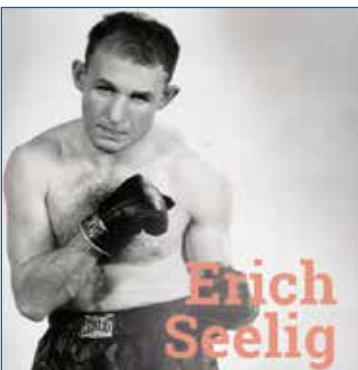
As early as April 1933, the German Swimming Association banned Jews from its member clubs. The German Boxing Federation forbade Jews to fight in or officiate over German championship contests. Jews people were excluded from hiking and other outdoor activities organized by German Alpine clubs and banned from public swimming pools.

An editorial in the popular and viciously antisemitic *Der Stürmer* stated: “We need waste no words here. Jews are Jews, and there is no place for them in German sport.

Germany is the Fatherland of Germans and not Jews, and the Germans have the right to do what they want in their own country.”

Despite pledging that racism would not occur, the Nazis excluded Jews, Roma and Sinti, who were successful German athletes in the 1930s, from the 1936 Olympics. Examples include:

- Erich Seelig, Boxer, expelled from the German Boxing Association.
- Daniel Prenn, Tennis, was removed from Germany’s Davis Cup Team and banned from international competition.
- Gretel Bergmann, High Jump, was expelled from her German Club in 1933 and from the National Team in 1936.



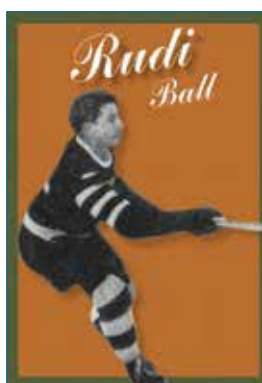
Left to right: Erich “Ete” Seelig, Jewish boxing champion stripped of titles and exiled in 1933 (TeBe Geschichten); Gretel Bergmann, high jumper removed from the 1936 Olympic team days before the Games; Daniel Prenn, Germany’s top tennis player excluded by the Nazis (Yad Vashem / Bundesarchiv).

Nazi Germany did allow two half Jews (Mischlinge) whose fathers were Jewish (but not their mothers) to represent Germany at the 1936 Olympics: Helene Mayer who won a silver medal at the 1936 Summer Olympics, and Rudi Ball, a German ice hockey player who played in the 1936 Winter Olympics. Mayer, who did not consider herself Jewish, and Ball, who played according to some accounts to protect his family in Germany, were the only two exceptions.

Of course, Nazi Germany used their participation as window dressing to cover up their overall policy of excluding German Jews from participation in the 1936 Olympics.



Helene Mayer, USHMM



Rudi Ball. Swedish Ice Hockey Historical and Statistical Society

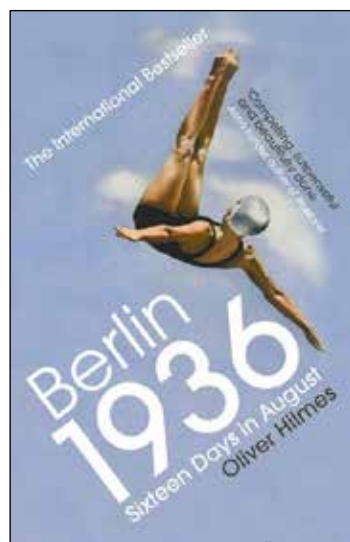
German author Oliver Hilmes:
"Berlin 1936: sixteen days in August"

"The strategy of the token Jew was developed by the Americans, and not by the Nazis. The question the international community kept asking at this time was, how would Nazi Germany treat Jewish sportsmen and Jewish people?"

"And so, the American sports officials developed the idea that Germany should take one or two Jewish sports people in their Olympic team. And that would be enough to convince the Americans to come to Berlin."

"Hitler's sports officials said, okay we take one token Jew, and that was the price Germany had to pay for the US to come to Berlin. And so, the US came to Berlin, and Hitler had his victory."

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/how-the-nazis-token-jew-turned-the-1936-berlin-olympics-into-a-propaganda-win/>



IV. International Boycott Movements

Up until the start of the 1936 winter and summer Olympics in Germany, international movements arose to boycott Nazi Germany's Olympics because of their antisemitic and racist policies. Groups in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, France, Sweden, Czechoslovakia, and the Netherlands lobbied their countries to boycott the 1936 Berlin Olympics.

None of them succeeded.

Among the reasons for their failure were:

- Local antisemitism (Avery Brundage, president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC)) was infamous for holding racist, sexist, and anti-Semitic beliefs.
- Personal ambition and greed.
- Naïve belief that the Nazi-sponsored games would further human relations between competing countries.
- Trusting Nazi Germany's declarations that the games would be free from any taint of racial discrimination.
- Contending that sports must be separate from political considerations.

V. The 1936 Winter Olympics in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Bavaria: A Prelude to the 1936 “Nazi” Summer Olympics in Berlin



Adolf Hitler watches as the crowd below lifts their arms to give the Nazi salute during the Olympic Winter Games in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Bavaria, Germany, on Feb. 17, 1936.

The 1936 German Winter Olympics began on Feb. 6, 1936, in the alpine town of Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Bavaria, in southern Germany. Not far away was Dachau, the infamous concentration camp founded in March 1933, and regarded as the first and longest-running Nazi concentration camp.

Dachau was initially used to imprison political opponents. Later prisoners included homosexuals, Roma and Sinti, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and, of course, German Jews.



According to Berlin-based journalist Paul Hockenos, the 1936 winter Olympics were a “spectacle... meticulously orchestrated by the Nazis to showcase Germany’s ostensible civility—in other words, to mask its nefarious intentions—as well as to test-run for the Summer Games.”

Support for Germany to host both the winter and summer games came from the American Olympic Committee president, Avery Brundage, who resisted calls to boycott the German Olympics over its treatment of German Jews. After witnessing overt antisemitism on his visit to Germany in 1934 – including signs saying, “Don’t buy from Jews,” “The Jews are our misfortune,” and “No Jews allowed” - Brundage countered: “In my club in Chicago, Jews are not permitted either.” In part because of Brundage’s stubborn (and false) insistence that Jews were not discriminated against in German sport or Germany, the US Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), eventually voted in 1935—58 to 56 —to participate in the games.

Thus, on Feb. 6, 1936, Hockenos writes: “With pomp and marching bands, the 10-day Olympics commenced at the new ski stadium when Hitler, in a long, black leather coat and surrounded by the IOC brass and Nazi higher-ups, opened the Games that morning....The winter events spanned figure skating, speed skating, men’s hockey, bobsled, cross-country skiing, and, for the first time, downhill skiing. The 646 athletes from 28 countries, including Japan, Turkey, and Yugoslavia, made it the largest Winter Games ever at that time.”

“The 1936 Winter Olympics counted as a slam dunk for Hitler: The international extravaganza played straight into his wheelhouse, postponing the day that the world would condemn the regime.”

“On the day of the closing ceremony, propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels wrote in his diary: “Everyone is praising our organization. It was also dazzling. A wonderful picture at the end. Framed by the eternal mountains. Then the fire goes out. The Winter Games are over.”

Like what happened before the summer Olympics in Berlin that were to follow, in Garmisch, all antisemitic signage was scrubbed before the hundreds of thousands of sports fans began visiting the town in February 1936. And like the summer Olympics, virtually all German Jewish athletes were banned from both games (with two notable exceptions: hockey player Rudi Ball and fencer Helene Mayer, both half Jews who the Nazis used in a tokenistic and propagandistic fashion, to cover up their overall ban on German Jewish participation in sports. In fact, by 1935, Germany had banned all Jewish athletes from its sporting leagues.)

Immediately after the Games in Garmisch and Berlin, the Nazis dropped their façade and only intensified their persecution of Jews across Germany on their path to implementing the Final Solution. Both the winter and summer games of 1936 were critical historical points in this journey of deception that ultimately made the world's greatest athletes complicit in what was to be one of the world's greatest crimes.

See: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2026/02/06/olympics-winter-germany-hitler-history/>

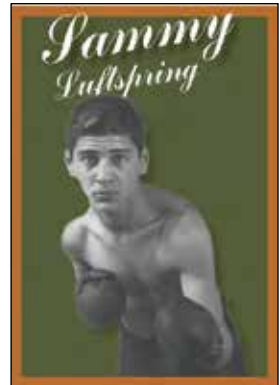


The 1936 Winter Olympics opening ceremony with Rudolf Hess, IOC president Henri de Baillet-Latour, and Adolf Hitler

VI. Worldwide Jewish and Black Participation at the 1936 Summer Olympics

Some athletes decided to boycott the games for moral reasons. Jeremiah Mahoney, leader of the Amateur Athletic Union in the US, stated that American participation in the Berlin Games meant "giving American moral and financial support to the Nazi regime, which is opposed to all that Americans hold dearest."

According to Menkis and Troper, Canadian Jewish boxers Sammy Luftspring and Norman "Baby" Yack's expressed their disappointment at not being able to represent Canada but stated that they "have gone into the question very carefully with our families and friends in the community" and knew in good conscience they could not act differently...., "the German Government is treating our brothers and sisters worse than dogs ... We would have been very low to hurt the feelings of our fellow Jews by going to a land that would exterminate them if it could."



Despite qualifying, Sammy Luftspring, a promising Canadian Jewish boxer, at the urging of the Canadian Jewish community, withdrew from the 1936 Berlin Olympics due to the Nazi regime's antisemitic policies. USHMM

Yet a fair number of black and Jewish athletes from countries outside of Germany did participate in the Olympics. Many succeeded in winning a medal, which some viewed as a victory over the Nazis.

But the games themselves were not without racial controversies:

- Athletes from several countries gave Adolf Hitler the Nazi salute as they marched into the stadium in Berlin, although they later claimed they thought they were giving the Olympic salute.
- Nazi youth leader Baldur von Schirach quoted Hitler as saying: "The Americans should have been ashamed of themselves for allowing their medals to be won by Negroes. I would never have shaken this Negro's [Owens's] hand." When he suggested that Hitler be photographed with Owens, Hitler yelled back: "Do you really think I'd allow myself to be photographed, shaking the hands of a Negro??"



Hitler and Baldur von Schirach together at a Youth rally at the 1936 Nuremberg Party Congress. Bundesarchiv.

- American Jewish runners Marty Glickman and Sam Stoller were, at the last minute, replaced by black athletes Jesse Owens and Ralph Metcalfe in the 400-meter relay. Many saw this change as a concession to Nazi anti-Semitism.



Left to right: Marty Glickman and Sam Stoller after being abruptly pulled from the U.S. 4x100 relay despite qualifying; Glickman—who never competed in an Olympic event—later became a famed New York sports radio announcer (Knicks, Giants, Jets); while Jesse Owens and teammates stood on the podium, the two Jewish sprinters who trained and travelled with the team were omitted at the last moment.

- Nazi minister Albert Speer wrote that Hitler "was highly annoyed by the series of triumphs by the marvelous colored American runner, Jesse Owens. People whose antecedents came from the jungle were primitive, Hitler said with a shrug; their physiques were stronger than those of civilized whites and hence should be excluded from future games."
- Irving "Toots" Meretsky was the only Jewish member of the Canadian Olympic basketball team. He ventured into Jewish neighborhoods in Berlin to deliver letters from Canadian Jewish families to their relatives in Berlin. He later wrote, "No one was on the streets, and the shades were drawn. I knocked at a few doors and was finally let in. It was obvious they were all scared."

According to historians Menkis and Troper Jewish achievements in sport were antithetical to Nazi ideology. According to Nazi doctrine, they wrote:

".... Jews prospered not through animal strength but through unbridled satanic cunning. Negating previous Jewish achievements in sport and athletics, Jews were commonly caricatured by the Nazi propoganda machine as physically weak and repulsive bogeymen – short, fat, beady-eyed, round-shouldered, and hook-nosed. They were hardly fit competition for the fraternity of strong white Olympic combatants. As a result, if Black athletic success validated Nazi racial theory, any comparable Jewish success served to undermine it." ¹

¹ George Eisen, "Jews and Sport: A Century Retrospective," *Journal of Sport History* 26 (1999), 225–39, quoted in *More than Just Games: Canada & the 1936 Olympics*, Richard Menkis & Harold Troper, University of Toronto Press, 2015

VII. Conclusion

Sports, at its finest, should provide the ultimate level playing field for all. All members of the human family should be judged by only one criterion – their ability to perform a given athletic challenge. When living up to this ideal, sports can become a vehicle through which all of humanity can celebrate each other's achievements. But the 1936 Nazi Olympics were a demonstration of the exact opposite value system.

Both the 1936 Winter and Summer Olympics in Germany offered the world an opportunity to take a moral stance against Germany's hate-filled policies against Jews and other minorities.

By boycotting the Olympics, the world could have upheld the Olympic ideals of equality, peace and mutual respect, which are the right of every human being on this planet.

Instead, fooled by Germany's deceptions or blinded by ambition and greed, the world caved and allowed Nazi Germany to stage the 1936 Olympics, affording it a platform for its propaganda while camouflaging its true intentions.

As the United States Holocaust Museum concludes: "Despite the exclusionary principles of the 1936 Games, countries around the world still agreed to participate...The Nazis promoted an image of a new, strong, and united Germany while masking the regime's targeting of Jews and Roma, as well as Germany's growing militarism. The many nations that sent teams to the 1936 Olympics legitimized the Adolf Hitler regime both in the eyes of the world and of the German domestic audience."

Within a few years, Germany would launch the world into World War II, resulting in the deaths of tens of millions of innocent people, including 6 million Jews.

The 1936 Olympic Games in Germany were one of many avoidable stepping stones along the way that facilitated this disastrous outcome.

Has the world learned anything since?

**VIII. IOC under fire for selling Nazi-era Olympic Games T-shirt
(CNN Article - Feb 13, 2026)**

**IOC under fire for selling Nazi-era
Olympic Games T-shirt**



The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has been criticized for selling merchandise commemorating the 1936 Berlin games, which Adolf Hitler used to showcase his Nazi ideology.

The website for the Olympics — currently in the spotlight due to the ongoing Milan Cortina Winter Olympics — features a men’s T-shirt marking the controversial Nazi games. The garment, which is showing as “out of stock,” is part of the IOC’s “Heritage Collection.”

The T-shirt features the original poster for the 1936 games, designed by Franz Würbel. It depicts an athletic male figure crowned with a laurel wreath and with the Olympic rings in the background. The Brandenburg Gate sits beneath him, with the caption: “Germany Berlin 1936 Olympic Games.”

The landing page for the Heritage Collection on the Olympics website states: “Each edition of the Games reflects a unique time and place in history when the world came together to celebrate humanity.”



Adolf Hitler at the opening of the Olympic Games in Berlin in 1936 (brandstaetter images/Hulton Archive/Getty Images)

Hitler used the games, held three and a half years after the Nazis came to power, as a spectacle of Nazi propaganda. He set out to showcase the racial superiority of so-called Aryan athletes and openly denigrated African-American participants as “non-humans.”

Nevertheless, African American athlete Jesse Owens emerged as the star of the games, taking to the podium to collect four gold medals, surrounded by people giving the Nazi salute. Christine Schmidt is the co-director of the Wiener Holocaust Library in London, the world’s oldest archive of Holocaust materials.

She told CNN: “The Nazis used the 1936 Olympics to showcase their oppressive regime to the world, aiming to smooth over international relations while at the same time preventing almost all German-Jewish athletes from competing, rounding up the 800 Roma who lived in Berlin, and concealing signs of virulent antisemitic violence and propaganda from the world’s visitors.

“The Nazis’ fascist and antisemitic propaganda infiltrated their promotion of the games, and many international Jewish athletes chose not to compete. The IOC would be minded to consider whether any aesthetic appreciation of these games can be comfortably separated from the horror that followed.”

The decision to sell the T-shirt was also criticised by Scott Saunders, CEO of International March of the Living, an annual educational program that will this year see around 8,000 people gathered at the former Auschwitz death camp to commemorate the Holocaust.

He told CNN: “As the world reflects on this latest controversy, it is impossible not to recall that we are approaching 90 years since the 1936 Berlin Olympics — an event the Nazi regime used to legitimize itself on the global stage while persecution of Jews was already well underway.

“Sport has the power to unite, to inspire, and to elevate the very best of humanity. But history reminds us that it can also be manipulated to sanitize hatred and normalize exclusion. The lesson of Berlin is urgent. When antisemitism resurfaces in public life, whether in stadiums, streets, or online, silence is not neutrality. It is complicity.”

The IOC defended its decision to produce and sell the T-shirt. In a statement sent to CNN, an IOC spokesperson said the Olympic Heritage Collection “celebrates 130 years of Olympic art and design” and features all previous games.

The spokesperson added: “While we of course acknowledge the historical issues of ‘Nazi propaganda’ related to the Berlin 1936 Olympic Games, we must also remember that the Games in Berlin saw 4,483 athletes from 49 countries compete in 149 medal events. Many of them stunned the world with their athletic achievements, including Jesse Owens.

“The historical context of these Games is further explained at the Olympic Museum in Lausanne. For the 1936 edition, the number of T-shirts produced and sold by the IOC is limited, which is why they are currently sold out.”

Link to Article: <https://www.cnn.com/2026/02/13/sport/ioc-nazi-era-t-shirt-scli-intl-spt>

IX. 1936 Olympic Timeline

1931

May 13 The International Olympic Committee awards the 1936 Summer Olympics to Berlin.

1933

January 30 Adolf Hitler is appointed Chancellor of Germany by President von Hindenburg.

March The city of Cologne prohibits Jews from using city playgrounds and sports facilities.

March 22 Dachau, the first concentration camp, opens. Political opponents of the Nazis are detained.

April 1 The first state-directed boycott of Jewish shops and businesses.

April 4 The German Boxing Federation excludes Jewish boxers from participating in competitive bouts and orders the cancellation of all contracts involving Jewish promoters.

April 7 The first Nazi laws excluding Jews from Civil Service, medical professions and the Arts are enacted. Schools and universities are Aryanized. Jewish children are denied access to public education.

April 25 The Nazi's Sports Office orders public sport and gymnastic organizations to implement an "Aryans only" policy. Until May, exceptions are made for Jewish war veterans and the families of Jewish soldiers who had died in the war.

June 2 The Prussian Ministry of Science orders all Jewish youths expelled from village, city, county, and district groups of physical education associations and organizations.

July 14 A law is enacted to permit the forced sterilization of Roma and Sinti ("Gypsies"), the mentally and physically disabled, African-Germans and others considered "unfit." East European Jewish immigrants stripped of German citizenship.

Sept/Oct "Non-Aryans" are prohibited from being professional or amateur jockeys.

1934

March 7 The Reich Youth Leadership prohibits German Jewish youth groups from wearing uniforms.

1935

"Olympic training courses" for Jews are established by the Nazis to deflect international criticism about Nazi policies. None of the participants are permitted to partake in the Olympics.

June 19 The Baden Minister of Interior prohibits group hikes and similar activities for all non-National Socialist youth groups.

September 15 "Nuremberg Laws," anti-Jewish racial laws are enacted. Jews lose the right to German citizenship and to marry Aryans. Sexual relations between Jews and non-Jews are forbidden. Aryan women under age 45 cannot work in Jewish homes.

November 14 Following the lead of Great Britain, the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada votes in favour of Canada's participation in the 1936 Olympic Games with no discussion of the boycott movement or anti-Jewish racial laws in Germany.

December 3 The Nazi government issues an order to "remove all signs and posters relating to the Jewish question" in the region of Garmisch-Partenkirchen, so as not to endanger international support for the Berlin Games.

1936

February 6-16 The Winter Olympics open at Garmisch-Partenkirchen in the Bavarian Alps. Prior to the Winter Games, the Garmisch-Partenkirchen town council passed an order to expel all Jews in its jurisdiction, but it waits until after the Olympics to implement the antisemitic decree. Anti-Jewish signs are temporarily removed.

March 7 German troops reoccupy the Rhineland.

July 12 The Sachsenhausen concentration camp opens. Camp inmates are kept out of public sight, withdrawn from forced labour on road construction or on railway lines during the summer of the 1936 Olympics. By the end of 1936, the camp holds 1,600 prisoners.

Mid-July The Olympics stadium in Berlin is completed two weeks before the games, after being plagued by construction delays.

July 16 About 800 Roma and Sinti ("Gypsies") are interned in the Berlin district of Marzahn.

July 20 The first modern Olympic torch relay begins in Athens. The final runner reaches the Olympic Stadium in Berlin on August 1 during the opening ceremonies.

August 1-16 The Summer Games take place in Berlin.

August 18 Two days after the Olympics, Captain Wolfgang Fürstner, Head of the Olympic Village, kills himself because he is dismissed from active military services due to his Jewish ancestry.



OLYMPISCHE SPIELE 1936



„Ich rufe die Jugend der Welt!“

SCHIRMHEER DER XI. OLYMPISCHEN SPIELE BERLIN 1936. DER FÜHRER UND REICHSKANZLER ADOLF HITLER

Programm der XI. Olympischen Spiele Berlin 1936: Kritzler (Leipzig) Sportband, 2. Aufl. August 1936
Festschrift: Sportband, 2. Aufl. August 1936
Katalog (Leipzig): Sportband, 2. Aufl. August 1936
Sonderband, 2. Aufl. August 1936, 10. August 1936

PRÄSIDENT DER DEUTSCHEN OLYMPISCHEN KOMITEES: REICHSSPORTFÜHRER UND TUMMELER DER OSTEN



ÜBERREICHT DURCH **J.G. Farbenindustrie Aktiengesellschaft**

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By Paul Hockenos

Article in Foreign Policy

February 6, 2026

www.vhec.org/1936_olympics/

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X. Appendix

Voices Opposed to Participation in the 1936 Berlin Olympics

A.A.U. Boycotts 1936 Olympics Because of the Nazi Ban on Jews; Governing Body of American Sport Calls on American Olympic Association to Take Like Stand at Meeting Tomorrow -- Pledge Against Discrimination Said to Be Violated.

The New York Times

The New York Times, Nov. 21, 1933

The Amateur Athletic Union of the United States, the largest sports-governing body in the world, voted almost unanimously today to boycott the 1936 Olympic Games at Berlin unless there is a change in the attitude of the Hitler government toward Jews in sport.

Whereas sport is the greatest if not the only true democracy in America, all therein being equal irrespective of race, color, religion or social or financial conditions; and Whereas both the Amateur Athletic Union of the United States of America and the American Olympic Association were founded and exist upon these basic principles; and Whereas the Olympic Games of 1936 were awarded to the city of Berlin by the International Olympic Committee; and Whereas it is our understanding and belief that, at the time of such award, the German Olympic committee, representing itself and also the organizing committee of the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games, accepted the games upon the basic principle of sports competition as herein referred to and reiterated its continued adherence to said principles as late as June of 1933; and Whereas it is believed and is common and universal knowledge that the German Olympic Committee and the Berlin organizing committee, under and by reason of the decrees and directions of the government of Germany, have violated the code of the Olympic Games and the fundamental ideals of sports competition in that they have deprived Germans of Jewish descent or belief from the rights of Olympic competition, if not by direct restriction, certainly indirectly by the withdrawal from them of the rights of German citizenship and of a reasonable opportunity to train, prepare for and take part in sports competition in general and in the Olympic Games in particular.

Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath, Rabbi, Holy Blossom Temple, Head of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (1943 – 1973)

In his sermon on Yom Kippur, the most sacred day on the Jewish calendar that in 1936 fell just one month after the close of the Games in Berlin, the rabbi offered a vision of the future made bleak by the Christian world's unwillingness to deny the Nazis their moment of Olympic victory. This, Eisendrath lamented, proved to be a failure of Olympic proportions. It crushed what he regarded as the last best hope of undercutting the Nazi regime. As a result, Christendom had left the Nazis triumphant, while consigning German Jews to an unimaginable fate. By failing the test of humanity, Eisendrath proclaimed, Christendom had also relegated itself to moral darkness:

“thus spread their pagan and poisonous doctrines to the four corners of the earth with the inevitable consequence that havens of refuge which might have been mercifully opened to the harried and hunted Jew are now flung tightly closed, for as myriads of superficially tourists told me this past summer, after a few days visit to the Nazi Reich: “Now I understand why Germany had to rid herself of the Jews.”

And what is “destructive and deadly” to one land, must be likewise so in others. Such is the happy fruitage of the Olympic Games as we begin to recognize that what appeared three years ago to be but the darkest hour before the dawn was in reality but the first faint shadow of twilight presaging the deep, dark blackness of a seemingly endless night to come. Nay, the watchmen saw not deeply enough three years ago when calmly they announced the breaking of the day. Those faint glints of grey which they discerned upon the far distant horizon, and which they designated as the sure promise of the day, were but the last flickering rays of the setting sun fast sinking into the gaping sea leaving the world, the world of Israel especially cheerless and cold and lost beneath the glowing, starless sky.”



Harvey Golden, Executive Director, Montreal YMHA

Given the new Germany's determination to subvert the Games to further Nazi ends, Golden wondered how anybody could believe that

"Olympic ideals can for a moment be maintained in the atmosphere of Nazi Germany. Where the Olympic ideal preaches amity and good fellowship, Nazi Germany glorifies race and war; where the Olympic ideal visualizes fair competition among amateur athletes, lovers of sport for sport's sake, Nazi ideology visualizes a marshaled army of athletes dedicated to the ideal of "Deutschland über alles."

Golden accused the IOC and its president, Count Baillet-Latour, of being wilfully blind to Nazi oppression and aggression in hope that Berlin could be "the meeting place of all nations and the beginning of a friendly alliance, without which neither peace nor happiness can be realized." For Golden, the "hypocritical gesture" of removing anti-Jewish signs did not signal any change of heart among the Nazi leaders. Even without signs, the state-authorized terror being inflicted on Jews and others marked as enemies of the state continued while the Nazis milk the Olympics for all its prestige and propaganda value. Golden did not want to aid the Nazis in their plans or, as he put it, "I do not want to see our fine Canadian athletes ... used as a catspaw by the Nazi dictatorship ... Indeed, I am not willing to direct a body blow at democracy as it has been developed under the British flag, by putting Canada's best and finest under the cloying, evil influence of Nazi ideology." Golden also had an answer for those Canadians who regarded it an act of patriotism to support Canadian athletes, and that politics should not be allowed to interfere with sport. Golden claimed it an act of patriotism not to go Berlin, as a way to protect the Canadian commitment to democracy and, idealistically, the Canadian heritage "where races and religions mingle in friendship and equality."



Montreal Jewish Public Library Archives, Allan Raymond Collection, Fonds 1255

Matthew Halton, Canadian foreign correspondent for the Toronto Star (1931-1938), and the CBC, prior, during and post-World War II & for the BBC

As a result of the Olympics, the popular German embrace of Hitler, according to Matthew Halton, was nothing short of a “semi-religious rapture.”

Shortly after personally witnessing vicious street-level Nazi barbarism against so-called enemies of the state, Halton warned his Toronto Daily Star readers, “You may not appreciate your democracy now, but some day you will. If you had been with me last week and seen fine men who had been completely broken on the Fascist wheel you would know whereof I speak.”

Halton warned Canadians to be watchful “for the first signs of Fascism in your own country.”

“Nothing can stop a war now. These Olympics depress me terribly. I see the razzle dazzle but I think of the thousands of Jews in this country who, as soon as the Games are over, will again be tormented and many of them killed. We should have boycotted these games. By coming here, we are encouraging Hitler.”





EVIL, WHEN ORGANIZED,
DOES NOT SHOUT—IT IS WRITTEN,
SIGNED, AND FILED.

— ANONYMOUS

The Wannsee Conference

The Wannsee Conference was held on 20 January 1942, in a villa owned by the SS-Nordhav Foundation in the attractive Berlin lakeside suburb of Wannsee. It was presided over by SS-Lieutenant General Reinhard Heydrich, Chief of the Security Police and Security Service. Heydrich summoned fourteen men representing the governmental and military branches most involved in implementing the practical aspects of the 'Final Solution'. Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring had charged him with arranging all practical matters concerning the implementation of the Final Solution of the Jewish question. Heydrich was an ambitious and meticulous officer who relished the responsibility of power. One of Heydrich's foremost intentions was to make sure that all these men understood perfectly what duties and responsibilities their office was expected to fulfill.

Heydrich's assistant, SS Lt-Colonel Adolf Eichmann tells us in testimony at his trial in 1961, that the meeting was relatively brief, lasting only an hour to an hour and a half, and that the atmosphere of the meeting was one of cooperation and agreement. These high-ranking members of the Nazi government met at mid-day over a buffet luncheon to discuss the annihilation of an entire people.

Those attending were:

- Gauleiter Dr. Alfred Meyer and Reichamtsleiter (Chief Officer) Dr. Georg Leibbrandt – Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories
- State Secretary Dr. Wilhelm Stuckart – Reich Ministry of the Interior
- State Secretary Dr. Erich Neumann – Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Four Year Plan
- State Secretary Dr. Roland Freisler – Reich Justice Ministry
- State Secretary Dr. Josef Bühler – Office of Governor General (Poland) representing Hans Frank
- Under State Secretary Martin Luther – Foreign Office
- SS Senior-Colonel Gerhard Klopfer – Party Chancellery representing Martin Bormann
- Ministerial Director Friedrich Kritzinger – Reich Chancellery
- SS Major-General Otto Hofmann – Race and Resettlement Main Office
- SS Major-General Heinrich Müller – Reich Security Main Office
- SS Lt-Colonel Adolf Eichmann – Reich Security Main Office
- SS Senior-Colonel Dr. Eberhard Schöngarth – Commander of the Security Police and the SD in the General Government [Poland]
- SS Major Dr. Rudolf Lange – Commander of Security Police and Security Service for General Commissariat Latvia, as Deputy of Commanding Officer of Security Police and Security Service for Reich Commissariat Ostland (Baltic States and White Russia) Security Police and Security Service.

Approximately 11 million Jews will be involved in the final solution of the European Jewish question, distributed as follows among the individual countries:

Country	Number
A. Germany proper	131,800
Austria	43,700
Eastern territories	420,000
General Government	2,284,000
Bialystok	400,000
Protectorate Bohemia and Moravia	74,200
Estonia - free of Jews -	
Latvia	3,500
Lithuania	34,000
Belgium	43,000
Denmark	5,600
France / occupied territory	165,000
unoccupied territory	700,000
Greece	69,600
Netherlands	160,800
Norway	1,300
B. Bulgaria	48,000
England	330,000
Finland	2,300
Ireland	4,000
Italy including Sardinia	58,000
Albania	200
Croatia	40,000
Portugal	3,000
Rumania including Bessarabia	342,000
Sweden	8,000
Switzerland	18,000
Serbia	10,000
Slovakia	88,000
Spain	6,000
Turkey (European portion)	55,500
Hungary	742,800
USSR	5,000,000
Ukraine	2,994,684
White Russia	
excluding Bialystok	446,484
Total over	11,000,000

The number of Jews given here for foreign countries includes, however, only those Jews who still adhere to the Jewish faith, since some countries still do not have a definition of the term "Jew" according to racial principles.

The influence of the Jews in all walks of life in the USSR is well known. Approximately five million Jews live in the European part of the USSR, in the Asian part scarcely 1/4 million.

The breakdown of Jews residing in the European part of the USSR according to trades as approximately as follows:

Agriculture	9.1%
Urban workers	14.8%
In trade	20.0%
Employed by the state	23.4%
In private occupations such as medical profession, press, theater, etc.	32.7%

“MONSTERS EXIST, BUT THEY ARE TOO FEW IN
NUMBER TO BE TRULY DANGEROUS.
MORE DANGEROUS ARE THE COMMON
MEN... READY TO BELIEVE AND TO ACT
WITHOUT ASKING QUESTIONS.”

— PRIMO LEVI

Poland and the Holocaust

Prior to World War II there were 3,500,000 Jews in the Polish Second Republic, about 10% of the population, living predominantly in the cities. Between the September 1939 invasion of Poland and the end of World War II, over 90% of Polish Jewry perished.



Persecution of the Jews by the Nazi German occupation government, particularly in the urban areas, began immediately after the invasion. In the first year and a half, the Germans confined themselves to stripping the Jews of their valuables and property for profit, herding them into ghettos and putting them into forced labour

in war-related industries. During this period the Germans forced Jewish communities to appoint Jewish Councils (Judenräte) to administer the ghettos and to be “responsible in the strictest sense” for carrying out German orders. After the German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941, German police units, especially the *Einsatzgruppen*, operated behind the front lines to shoot ‘dangerous elements’ (Jews and Communists). About 2 million Jews were shot and buried in mass graves — in what is today known as the Holocaust by Bullets — many in the areas of eastern Poland, which had been annexed by the Soviets in 1939. The survivors were incarcerated in newly created ghettos.

At the Wannsee conference (see separate section) near Berlin on 20 January 1942, Dr Josef Bühler urged Reinhard Heydrich to begin the proposed “final solution to the Jewish question”. Accordingly, in 1942, the Germans began the systematic killing of the Jews, beginning with the Jewish population of the General Government. Six extermination camps (Auschwitz, Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor and Treblinka) were established in Poland in which the most extreme measures of the Holocaust, the mass murder of millions of Jews from Poland and other countries, was carried out between 1942 and 1944. The camps were designed and operated by Nazi Germans and there were no Polish guards at any of the camps, despite the sometimes-used misnomer Polish death camps. Of Poland’s prewar Jewish population of 3,500,000, only about 50,000-120,000 would survive the war.

On 17 September 1939, while the Poles were still attempting to stave off the German offensive, the Soviets invaded Poland and occupied the eastern part of the country. This was in accordance with the 'Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact', concluded between the Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov and his German counterpart von Ribbentrop prior to the invasion. Within three weeks the Germans had defeated Poland and divided it into three regions: the western and northern provinces of the former Polish state (including the country's second-largest city, Lodz) were annexed to the Reich; eastern districts were annexed to the Soviet Union and Lithuania; an enclave in central Poland was converted into the Generalgouvernement – an area whose political future was undefined during the initial phase of the occupation. Approximately 1.8 million Jews were trapped in the German-occupied zone of Poland, and more than a million Polish Jews in the eastern areas of Poland came under Soviet rule.

Following the onset of the war, the Germans freed themselves of many of the restraints they had maintained in peacetime. Circumstances no longer required them to bow to public opinion or political considerations. Unhesitatingly, they terrorised the Polish people, arrested and murdered its leaders and intellectual elite, defining Poles as "hewers of wood and drawers of water", and as servants of the "master race".

Since anti-Jewish policy and the solutions to the Jewish question were presented as part of the attempt to eliminate the damage caused by the Jews to the German nation and government, the police and SS were authorised to be the executive force in dealing with the Jews. On 21 September 1939, Reinhard Heydrich, chief of the Security Police, sent a directive the 'Schnellbrief' (express letter), explaining the procedures and approach that would be invoked against the Jews in the Polish occupation zones: Jews living in towns and villages were to be transferred to ghettos, and Jewish councils (Judenräte) would be established to carry out the German authorities' orders.

Heydrich's instructions distinguished between a transitional phase in solving the "Jewish problem" and the "final aim". It should not be presumed, however, that the term "Final Solution" had been defined by then or that the overall murder scheme had been planned. What existed at that time, apparently, were vague plans and a general and indefinite wish to solve the Jewish problem in some rapid and radical way. During this phase, the idea to deport the Jews from the Reich was still dominant. As they marched into the towns of Poland, Germans preyed on the Jews they encountered, subjecting them to humiliation and beatings, shearing the beards of the Orthodox and organising public hangings to terrorise the population. The perpetrators were members of special SS units who accompanied the regular military units. They torched synagogues and Jewish homes and abducted Jews on the street for forced labour to repair the damage from the battles. After receiving enormous monetary fines for having "caused" the World War and its attendant

devastation, Jewish leaders were inundated by decrees, such as the registration of a Jewish labour force and the imposition of compulsory labour. The Jews were steadily dispossessed of their possessions and deprived of their sources of livelihood. Throughout the occupied areas the Germans restored the medieval practice of requiring Jews to wear a badge of shame, armbands with the Star of David or yellow Stars of David on their lapels.



In less than two years, from the onset of their offensive against Poland in September 1939 to the beginning of the campaign against the Soviet Union in June 1941, the Germans managed to conquer most of Europe. Norway, Denmark, Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Yugoslavia and Greece fell after only brief military operations.

After completing their immensely successful military campaign in the west, the Germans tightened their grip on European Jewry. South-Eastern Europe; Italy, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria, willingly accepted the German dictate and were incorporated into the Nazi sphere of influence. In the vastness of continental Europe, which the Germans considered the domain of their “new order”, the Jews had come under the Nazis’ thumb.

Though Nazi ideology prescribed the same fate for all of European Jewry, different methods of implementation of anti-Jewish policy were employed in the conquered countries. It was clear to the Nazis that in Western Europe antisemitism lacked the intensity and popularity of the Eastern European version and that much of the local population viewed the Jewish populace as an integral part of society. Thus, in terms of the implementation of their anti-Jewish policy, they had to be more considerate of the local populations and of the governments that had been left with some measure of self-rule.

In Western Europe, the Nazis did not ghettoise the Jews, whereas in Eastern Europe the Germans placed the Jews in severely congested ghettos. They were imprisoned behind fences and walls, with the active assistance of the local population, cutting them off from the outside world and their sources of livelihood. The Jews there were doomed to humiliation, poverty, decline and death. In Western Europe the Nazis applied their anti-Jewish policy gradually. They enforced racial legislation and introduced policies of Aryanisation and discrimination. Despite these differences, the Germans’ overall goal with regard to the Jews was identical: to remove them from the realms of German conquest by expulsion or death resulting from their worsening conditions.

Expropriation of Jewish property was an essential element of Nazi anti-Jewish policy. The Nazis systematically plundered land and property throughout Europe that had

been obtained through hard work and creativity for hundreds of years and which were an important part of Jewish economic and cultural activity. At the outbreak of the war, according to Nazi directives, apartments and real estate, factories and industries, small businesses and cultural and art treasures were to be seized.

GHETTOS

After the invasion of Poland, the Nazis established ghettos in the incorporated territories and General Government in which Jews were confined. These were initially seen as temporary, until the Jews were deported out of Europe. Such deportation never took place, with the ghettos' inhabitants instead being sent to extermination camps. The Germans ordered each ghetto be run by



a **Judenrat** consisting of Jewish community leaders, with the first order for the establishment of such councils contained in a letter dated 29 September 1939 from Heydrich to the heads of the *Einsatzgruppen*. The ghettos were formed and closed off from the outside world at different times and for different reasons. The councils were responsible for the day-to-day running of the ghetto, including the distribution of food, water, heat, medicine and shelter. The Germans also mandated them to undertake confiscations, organise forced labour, and finally, facilitate deportations to extermination camps. The councils' basic strategy was one of trying to minimise losses, largely by cooperating with Nazi authorities (or their surrogates), accepting the increasingly terrible treatment, bribery and petitioning for better conditions and clemency. Overall, to try and mitigate still worse cruelty and death, "the councils offered words, money, labour and finally lives".

The ultimate test of each *Judenrat* was the demand to compile lists of names of deportees to be murdered. Though the predominant pattern was compliance with even this final task, some council leaders insisted that not a single individual should be handed over if they had not committed a capital crime. Leaders such as Joseph Parnas in Lviv, who refused to compile a list, were shot. On 14 October 1942, the entire council of Byaroza committed suicide rather than cooperate with the deportations.

In Warsaw **Adam Czerniaków** (see Biographies) killed himself on 23 July 1942 when he could take no more as the final liquidation of the ghetto got under way. Others, like Chaim Rumkowski, who became the "dedicated autocrat" of Lodz, argued that their responsibility was to save the Jews who *could* be saved, and that therefore others had to be sacrificed.

The importance of the councils in facilitating the persecution and murder of ghetto inhabitants was not lost on the Germans: one official was emphatic

that “the authority of the Jewish council be upheld and strengthened under all circumstances”, another that “Jews who disobey instructions of the Jewish council are to be treated as saboteurs”. When such cooperation crumbled, as happened in the Warsaw ghetto after the Jewish Combat Organisation displaced the council’s authority, the Germans temporarily lost control.

MASS MURDER AND THE FINAL SOLUTION

The turning point in the Nazis’ plan to “solve the Jewish problem” began with Operation Barbarossa, the massive military invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, intended to wind up the war by the winter. The invasion had been planned for a long time, and in anticipation, the Germans prepared units of Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Latvian and Belarusian nationalist and oppositionist collaborators.



Hitler considered the invasion of the **Soviet Union** as part of his plan to provide the German nation with “living space” (Lebensraum) and an opportunity to destroy Communism, which he loathed. For this reason he instructed his military commanders to subject Kommissars (political officers who accompanied the Red Army) and intellectuals to cruel and harsh treatment. Under his inspiration, the “Kommissars Order” set out the rules for treatment of these officials and for Jews in the Soviet territories.

In the first weeks of the invasion Jewish women and children were shot by happenstance, but by the middle of August the scope of the murders had been widened to include all Jews. This policy crystallised as a result of Hitler’s visit to the front and his conclusion that the territorial solution to the Jewish problem was by then impractical, a conclusion that paved the way for the systematic mass murder of the Jews. Jewish women and children were defined as “worthless consumers” who could not contribute to the workforce.

Four special operations divisions (Einsatzgruppen) – A, B, C, and D – operated behind the corps that took part in the campaign against the USSR. The units were made up of SS, police and auxiliaries mobilised from the local population.

Hundreds of thousands of Jews managed to flee into the depths of the Soviet Union, but approximately 2 million Jews remained under Nazi occupation and were the victims of mass murder carried out by the Einsatzgruppen units. In less than half a year, by the end of 1941, about half a million Jews had been murdered within the areas of the Soviet Union conquered by the Nazi. The murders generally took place in forests, valleys and abandoned buildings close to the homes of the victims. The Jews were forced to undress and hand over their valuables a short distance from the mass graves. They were taken in groups to the pits and shot. Many were buried alive.



In September 1941, members of Einsatzgruppe C murdered 33,771 Jews from Kiev over two days in **Babi Yar**. Babi Yar also became a site for the mass murder of Sinti and Roma and Soviet prisoners of war.

From November 1941, Jews and other victims of the Nazi regime (Soviet POWs, partisans, hostages and others) were murdered in the Blagovshchina forest,

close to the village of Maly Trostinets, southeast of Minsk. The first to die were some 100,000 Jews from the Minsk ghetto, and starting in May 1942, Jews were brought from Germany, Bohemia and Moravia, Poland and the Low Countries and murdered there. Some were murdered in gas vans, and the rest were shot. All the victims were buried in pits that had been dug in advance. According to different estimates, between 206,500 and half a million people were murdered in the Trostinets area.

Towards the end of 1941 the Germans realised that they would not defeat the Soviet Union in a lightning war as they had originally planned. The German army would require a workforce that would help in paving roads, clearing minefields, producing ordinance and equipment. The decision was thus made to temporarily leave Jewish prisoners alive in camps and ghettos in order to employ them for the German war effort. The extermination was renewed in its full intensity in the spring of 1942. By the winter of 1943 most of the Jews of Belorussia and almost half of the 2.5 million Jews of Ukraine had already been murdered.

Some 220,000 Jews were living in **Lithuania** when the Germans invaded in June 1941. Even before the Germans arrived at the major Jewish settlements, murderous riots perpetrated by the Lithuanians broke out against the Jews. At the encouragement of the Germans, the riots continued and thousands of Jews were murdered.

The German entrance to Lithuania was accompanied by acts of murder, rape, looting and abuse. The victims were led from Vilna to the Ponar forest pits nearby, shot by Germans and Lithuanians and thrown in. Few survived the massacres, and of those, hardly any managed to elude the local population. From July 1941 to 1944, more than 70,000 people, nearly all of them Jews, were murdered at Ponar.



On 15 August 1941, the Kovno ghetto was sealed, and as per German orders, 20,000 Jews were imprisoned in the poorer section of the Slobodka (Williampola) suburb. The fatal turning point in the lives of the ghetto inmates came on 28 October 1941, when the Germans gathered all of the Jews in the ghetto and a brutal selection took place. More than 9,000 residents of the ghetto were led to the Ninth Fort (one of the forts surrounding the city) and murdered. By the end of 1941 only 40,000 Jews remained in all of Lithuania and they were concentrated in four ghettos – **Vilna, Kovno, Siauliai** and **Swieciany** – and in a few labour camps.

In the summer and autumn of 1943, the Vilna and Swieciany ghettos were liquidated and the ghettos in Kovno and Siauliai were converted to concentration camps. A few months later approximately 1,200 babies, children and elderly people were murdered in the Kovno ghetto, and many youngsters were sent from the ghetto to labour camps in Estonia. In July 1944, with Kovno on the brink of liberation by the Soviet army, the ghettos in Kovno and Swieciany were liquidated and many of their inhabitants were sent westwards to camps in areas still under German control, including **Stutthof, Dachau**, and **Auschwitz-Birkenau**. Approximately 10,000 Lithuanian Jews were still alive when Germany surrendered in May 1945, as well as some 2,000 Jews who had fled to the Soviet Union and survived the war there.

Germany occupied **Latvia** at the beginning of the invasion of Russia. At that time approximately 74,000 Jews were living in the country. Units from Einsatzgruppe A carried out the first mass murder of Latvian Jews in July 1941. By the end of October 34,000 Latvian Jews had been murdered.

32,000 Jews were sealed into two ghettos in Riga. In November 1941 Friedrich Jeckeln, a senior SS officer, was ordered by Himmler to liquidate the ghettos and then to liquidate all of Latvian Jewry. Between 30 November and 7 December 1941, 25,000 Jews were murdered in the Rumbula forest. At the same time the Jews of the ghettos of Dvinsk and Liepaja were also murdered.

Before World War II, 4,550 Jews lived in **Estonia**, the smallest of the Baltic States, about half in the capital city of Tallinn. The Soviet Union occupied Estonia in 1940 as a result of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The Germans conquered Estonia in July 1941 and many Jews fled to the Soviet Union. Those who did not manage to escape were placed under a harsh regime of restrictions: they were forced to don the yellow star and were stripped of their possessions. With the arrival of the Einsatzgruppen units the destruction of Estonian Jewry began. Local right-wing militias assisted in the murder of the Jews and by October 1941 most of the Jewish males above the age of 16 had already been murdered. It was reported at the **Wannsee Conference** (January 1942) that Estonia had been successfully rendered “judenfrei”, free of Jews.

There is no document that indicates specifically by whom, at what time, and in what way it was decided to embark on the total extermination of the Jews. Many scholars believe that such an order was never issued in writing; instead, it was given orally, by Hitler, or with his knowledge, in the summer of 1941. On July 31, 1941, shortly after the invasion of the Soviet Union, the Nazi Reichsmarschall Herman Göring ordered Reinhard Heydrich, head of the RSHA (Reich Main Security Office), *“to make all the necessary preparations... for the Final Solution of the Jewish problem in the German sphere of influence in Europe”*.

Immediately following the invasion, the mass murder of men, women and children began, but in November 1941, the German policy toward Jews took a fateful turn. Mass murder by gunfire failed to meet the Nazis' expectations and was taking a cumulative toll on the German soldiers' performance. By then, too, the Nazi leadership realised that the Blitzkrieg had not gone well, that the war against the Soviet Union would not end quickly, and that killing by gunfire was not efficient enough and failed to achieve its goal. As a result, a decision was made in November or December to shift to organised, systematic murder on an industrial scale.

Already in the summer of 1941, Rudolf Höss, commander of the **Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp** (near the Polish town Oswiecim), had received orders to explore new methods of mass murder using poison gas. The Germans had already employed gas in the Euthanasia Programme and had murdered tens of thousands of the physically and mentally handicapped until the programme was halted due to pressure from the German public and clergy. However, the methods



and knowledge gained during this programme served as the basis for the systematic mass murder of the Jews – the “Final Solution”.

The first experiment with mass murder by gas was performed in Auschwitz in September 1941. The victims of the experiment were Soviet prisoners of war. The Germans pumped Zyklon B, a cyanic gas, into a sealed room and within a few minutes the victims had all been killed.

On 20 January 1942, a crucial meeting was held in Wannsee (a suburb of Berlin), chaired by Reinhard Heydrich with the participation of 15 officials and representatives of the Reich authorities. At this meeting, the Reich Security Main Office coordinated the extermination plans vis-à-vis the relevant ministries and authorities. Heydrich spoke about the inclusion of 11,000,000 Jews in the Nazi programme for the “*Final Solution to the Jewish Question*”. *The minutes of the Wannsee Conference record that: “Due to the war, the emigration plan has been replaced with deportation of the Jews to the east, in accordance with the Führer’s will.”* **As a result of the meeting a network of extermination camps was established in which millions of Jews were murdered in 1942-1943.**

With the advent of the European-wide *Final Solution* the Jews were generally ordered to gather within close proximity of railroad stations. They were then deported to the extermination camps on extended trips under horrendous conditions that claimed many victims. The Jews of Europe were systematically murdered in the extermination camps as part of the Final Solution. In some of the camps permanent gas chambers were erected. In Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka and Chelmno, practically all of the deportees – men, women and children – were sent straight to their deaths.

In many cases, the deportation orders were given to the Judenrat suddenly, often around the Jewish holidays when awareness was reduced. Local police were charged with carrying out the *Aktion* (round-up of Jews) and the Jewish police were also tasked with participating in the round-up.

The Jews were ordered to gather in a specific location, usually close to a train station, and to bring with them only a few possessions. During the *Aktion* anyone that did not follow the order to gather or could not keep pace with the others was shot. At the train station the Jews were loaded into crowded cattle cars without proper ventilation. The cars were sealed from the outside and the Jews were kept in the cars for days without water or food until they reached their destination. Many perished as a result of the conditions on the train.

The powerful mechanism of murder employed throughout Europe relied upon various deceptions and lies. The Jews in Poland were told that “non-essential and unproductive elements” would be sent for labour in the east while Jews in the west were informed of their transfer to settlements in the east. The murder machine



would suddenly descend upon cities and towns and the *Aktion* would last for days or weeks. The Germans would begin the deportations with the weaker strata (the poor, refugees). The other sectors of society held on to the illusion that they would be left alone. After the initial deportation the ensuing stages would follow – until the complete liquidation.

The Jews' response to the brutal scheme was a consequence of several factors. During the years preceding the extermination operation, the Nazis had done everything possible to drain the Jews of their physical strength, numb their will, deprive them of their human dignity, destroy their ability to organise and cut them off from the outside world. Indeed, systematic starvation and looming death had diminished the endurance of the ghettoised masses and their ability to gather their strength. By now the Jews concerned themselves with immediate matters only – rescue of family members, obtaining some bread and sustaining the body, which yearned for warmth and nutrition.

The *Aktionen* dealt the Jews a blow that thwarted any possibility of organising large-scale self-defense of any kind. The rumours about the death camps were usually greeted with disbelief, as ordinary logic and the human mind refused to grasp the very possibility of what was rumoured. Thus, Nazi Germany managed to mislead the masses until, literally, the last moment.



Chelmno was the first extermination camp the Germans established on Polish soil. Murder operations began there on 8 December 1941, and continued intermittently until January 1945. The Jews of the Lodz ghetto and the vicinity were the primary victims deported to Chelmno, where they were murdered by means of

gas vans. When the deportees reached the camp, they were ordered to undress, stripped of their belongings, and tricked into boarding a van whose exhaust pipe was actually connected to its interior. After the doors were closed, the van began to drive toward a designated burial place in a nearby forest. No one survived. By using three gas vans, nearly 300,000 Jews and 5,000 Sinti and Roma were murdered in Chelmno. Only three Jews are known to have survived this death camp.

Starting in March 1942, after the guidelines for action were worked out at the Wannsee Conference, the Germans established three extermination camps at the eastern boundary of the Generalgouvernement, not far from main railroad lines: **Belzec** (established in March 1942, this camp functioned until December of that year; in the spring of 1943, the cremation of bodies began in order to cover up the traces of the murders committed); **Sobibor** (May-July 1942, and October 1942-October 1943); and **Treblinka** (July 1942-August 1943).

The Nazis' purpose in building these camps was to carry out the systematic murder of European Jewry as part of the Final Solution. Permanent gas chambers were constructed in these camps and selections were performed. As the deportation trains arrived, the victims – men, women and children – were sent directly to the gas chambers. Approximately 1,700,000 Jews, mostly from Poland, were murdered in these three extermination camps.

A standard method of extermination was used in these three camps: carbon monoxide from large tank engines was released into sealed chambers. The victims were stripped of their clothing and crowded into the gas chambers where they died of suffocation within a short time. The corpses were removed by Jewish slave labourers and thrown into large pits and they were later burned in an attempt to destroy any evidence. The entire process of murder took only a few hours and the camps would process and murder numerous transports in the same day.

Majdanek was established in late 1941, for Soviet prisoners of war and as a concentration camp for Poles. The gas chambers and crematoria were built in 1942. In the spring of that year, thousands of Jews, Slovaks, Czechs, Germans and Poles were murdered in Majdanek. The camp operated until the Soviet army liberated the Lublin area in July 1944. Approximately 78,000 people were murdered in Majdanek.

Only a small percentage of those who arrived in transports in 1944 to the remaining death camps – **Auschwitz**, **Majdanek** and **Chelmno** – were selected for labour. They were chosen for various tasks in the extermination process such as sorting through and packing the clothing and possessions of the victims and burying and disposing of the bodies by burning them. This latter group of Jews was part of the Sonderkommando units, special units that worked under cruel and terror-ridden conditions. These workers were often sent to be murdered in the gas chambers after a few months and replaced with “new” prisoners. The others, women, men, children, the elderly and those whose strength had failed during their brief internment in the camp, were taken straight to the gas chambers. Transports and extermination continued until late 1944. Although Himmler ordered a dismantling of gas chambers, prisoners continued to die of exhaustion, starvation and disease.



In December 1941 the murder of the Jews from the **Lodz ghetto** began in Chelmno with gas vans. Murder of Polish Jews in **Auschwitz** began in March 1942 and between March and July 1942, with the arrival of the deportation trains, men, women and children were sent straight to their deaths in the gas chambers of **Belzec**, **Sobibor** and **Treblinka**.



On 22 July 1942, on the eve of the Ninth of Av in the Jewish calendar, the Germans began the mass deportations from the **Warsaw ghetto**. By the time they ended on 21 September, Yom Kippur, some 260,000 inhabitants of the ghetto had been deported to the Treblinka extermination camp.

Approximately 1,700,000 Jews, primarily from Poland, were murdered in Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka by the end of 1943 and between September 1942 and the summer of 1944 tens of thousands of Jews, most from Poland, were murdered in Majdanek, outside of Lublin.

In the summer of 1944 the remaining 80,000 Jews from the **Lodz ghetto** were deported to be murdered. Most were sent to **Auschwitz-Birkenau**, while some were sent to the Chelmno murder site, which was reopened for this purpose. Approximately 300,000 Jews were murdered in Chelmno, mostly from Poland. The murders in Auschwitz and Chelmno continued until the Red Army liberated the camps in January 1945.

At the end of the war, approximately 380,000 Polish Jews were still alive in Poland, the Soviet Union, or in the concentration camps in Germany, Austria and the Czech territories.



Death March, Dachau to Tolz, (1945) a pencil drawing by Hellmut Bachrach-Baree (1898-1969).

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DEATH MARCHES

As the Third Reich crumbled and the eastern front collapsed, the Germans began a comprehensive retreat to the west, towards Germany. In the summer of 1944, while the Soviets were launching their massive push in the east, the Germans began clearing out the concentration camps and forcing the prisoners on death marches to the west. Prisoners were forced to march long distances in bitter cold, with little or no food, water, or rest. Those who

could not keep up were shot. The marches served a twofold purpose: to ensure that no witnesses would be left to testify to the murders, as well as to exploit the Jewish labour force until the last possible moment at the destination of the marches in German and Austrian camps. The guards who were ordered to lead the prisoners understood that these duties were an obstacle to their own escape from the Red Army; thus, they were all the more eager to kill the prisoners and get away. This mass murder continued until Germany's surrender on 8 May 1945.

The first camps to be evacuated were in the Baltic States and in eastern and central Poland. At that time the camps were usually evacuated by train, with Kaiserwald being evacuated by boat, but some prisoners also departed the camps on foot. Shortly afterwards a massive wave of death marches began.

On 28 July 1944, the camp established on the ruins of the Warsaw ghetto was evacuated and 3,600 prisoners, mostly from Greece and Hungary, were forced on a death march. Their destination was Kutno, approximately 130 kilometers from Warsaw. The Germans shot anyone who lagged behind along the route. Food was not provided for the prisoners and they were prevented from drinking water. The surviving prisoners were transported on freight cars from Kutno to **Dachau**. Fewer than 2,000 inmates reached Dachau on 9 August 1944.

In September 1944, some 4,000 inmates were marched from Bor, Yugoslavia to Hungary, from where they were sent to Oranienburg, Germany. More than 3,000 of the marchers were murdered. In November 1944, 70,000 Jews were marched from Budapest to concentration camps in the Third Reich, primarily to **Dachau** and **Mauthausen**. Tens of thousands were murdered during the march.



In January 1945, as a result of renewed Soviet attacks, the evacuation of the rest of the camps in Poland began. The larger death marches of that month left from **Auschwitz** in the south and **Stutthof** in the north. The evacuation of Auschwitz

and its sub camps began on 18 January 1945. Approximately 66,000 prisoners, mostly Jews, were marched and taken in freight cars to various camps, most to **Gross-Rosen**, **Buchenwald**, **Dachau** and **Mauthausen**. At least 15,000 perished during the journey. A few days later the evacuation of the subcamps of Stutthof began and the main camp of Stutthof was evacuated on January 25. In total, some 26,000 of the 50,000 inmates of Stutthof perished in the marches or were shot on the beach.

The evacuation of Gross-Rosen and some its subcamps began in February 1945. Some 40,000 prisoners were evacuated. Thousands were murdered along the way and the remainder was sent to the concentration camps **Dora-Mittelbau**, **Flossenburg**, **Buchenwald**, **Mauthausen**, **Dachau**, **Bergen-Belsen** and **Sachsenhausen**. From March 1945 until the German surrender on 8 May, at least a quarter of a million prisoners were forced on death marches that lasted for weeks at a time. They perished throughout central Germany and western Austria from suffocation, heat, starvation, hunger and thirst in freight cars, or were murdered on the foot marches.

At the end of March and beginning of April, 21,000 – 23,000 of the 48,000 prisoners of Buchenwald were marched hundreds of kilometers to other concentration camps.

The death marches continued until the last day of the war. In total, from the summer of 1944 until the end of the war, between 200,000 – 250,000 Nazi concentration camp prisoners were killed. After the war hundreds of mass graves with the corpses of tens of thousands of prisoners who perished on these marches were found all along the routes of the marches.

Number of Jewish Victims Murdered in Death Camps Located in Nazi-Occupied Poland



MAJDANEK
75,000
(60,000 were Jews, followed by Soviet POWs, Poles and others)

SOBIBOR
250,000 Jews

CHELMNO
300,000
(Almost all Jews, along with a few thousand Gypsies)

BELZEC
500,000 Jews

TREBLINKA
875,000 Jews

AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU
1-1.1 Million Jews
(Plus 75,000 Poles, Gypsies, Russian POWs and others)

Note: These camps are mentioned because they were used as "death factories" which employed technology (i.e. poisonous gas) to murder its many victims. There were hundreds of other concentration/labor/assembly/transit camps built by the Nazis throughout Europe, where tens of thousands of Jews were murdered, either through conventional execution, or starvation and disease brought on by their horrific living conditions.

In Poland, for instance, approximately 65,000 mostly Jewish prisoners were murdered in Stutthof, the first concentration camp created by the Nazis outside Germany. In Maly Trostenets, just east of Minsk in Belarus, up to 65,000 prisoners, mostly Jews, were murdered. Another 135,000 prisoners, including large numbers of Soviet POWs, were murdered in the Trostenets area. This horrific pattern of mass murder was repeated by the Nazis untold times throughout Nazi-occupied Europe. A complete listing of all the Nazi camps and the number of victims in each would fill several pages.

from *The Holocaust* by Martin Gilbert
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Jewish Populations in Europe 1939–91

Country ^a	1939	1945	1960	1991
World Total	16,600,000	11,000,000	12,160,000	12,850,000
Europe Total	9,500,000	3,800,000	3,241,000	2,010,000
European Community	1,295,000 ^h	843,000 ^h	890,000	987,000
Belgium ^b	93,000	32,000	36,000	32,000
Denmark	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000
France	320,000	180,000	350,000	530,000
Germany	195,000	45,000	24,000	42,000
Greece	75,000	8,000	6,000	5,000
Italy	47,000	29,000	32,000	31,000
Netherlands	141,000	33,000	30,000	26,000
Spain ^c	6,000	10,000	6,000	13,000
United Kingdom ^d	345,000	350,000	400,000	302,000
Other West Europe ^e	130,000	109,000 ^h	47,000	44,000
Former USSR (Europ. part) ^f	3,394,000	1,989,000	1,970,000	868,000
Other East Europe ^g	4,681,000	859,000	334,000	111,000

^aBoundries as in 1990.

^bIncluding Luxembourg.

^cIncluding Portugal, Gibraltar

^dIncluding Ireland.

^eSweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland, Austria, Switzerland.

^fBelarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia (incl. parts in Asia), Ukraine.

^gAlbania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Yugoslavia, Turkey (European part).

^hIncluding refugees in transit.

Source: Based on files available at Division of Jewish Demography and Statistics, the A. Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, the Hebrew University, Jerusalem.

From: *American Jewish Yearbook*, 1993.



March of the Living

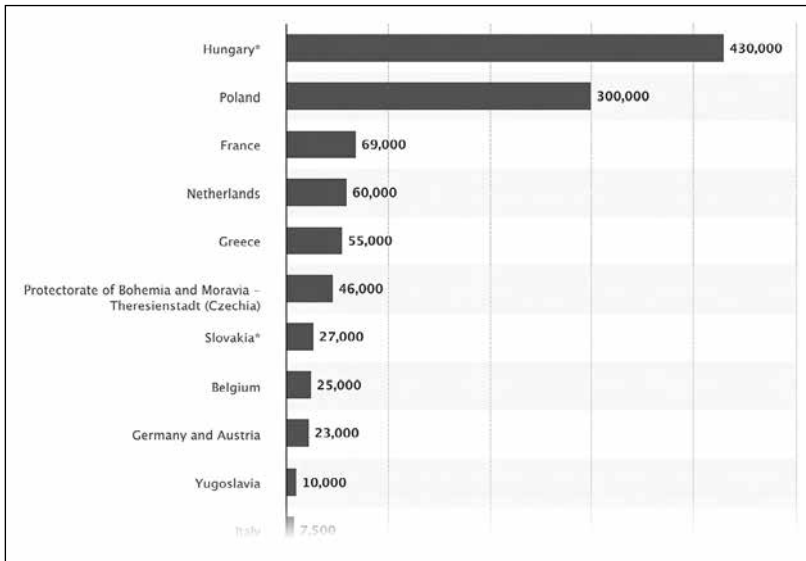
The Hungarian Holocaust 1944

WHY STUDY THE HOLOCAUST IN HUNGARY?

The fate of Jews during the Holocaust differed country by country, region by region. What evolved slowly in Germany over twelve years or in Poland over three, took less than three months in Hungary. The Germans invaded Hungary on 19 March 1944. Jews were immediately defined, and their property confiscated; by April they were ghettoised. On 15 May, the deportation began and by 8 July 1944; 437,402 Hungarian Jews had been deported to Auschwitz on 147 trains.

One in ten Holocaust victims was a citizen of Hungary.

The deportation from the Hungarian provinces of close to 440,000 people over a period of only 56 days in 1944 was the deadliest extermination campaign in the history of the Holocaust. About 400,000 were murdered on arrival at Auschwitz. Those remaining were sent to slave labour camps. Fewer than 5 percent of these deportees ever returned.



Estimated number of Jewish deportees to Auschwitz concentration camp complex during the Holocaust 1941 – 1945, by country of origin.

It was the *Ungarnaktion* (Hungary Action) that made Auschwitz-Birkenau the deadliest concentration camp and the universally known symbol of the Holocaust.

This mass murder took place during the Nazi occupation of Hungary. However, large-scale collaboration and initiative-taking on the part of the Hungarian government and the state apparatus were essential factors in accomplishing the murderous plans of the Nazis.

HUNGARY - EARLY HISTORY

The history of the Jews in Hungary dates as far back as the Roman Period, with the first records predating the Hungarian conquest of the Carpathian Basin in 895 CE by over 600 years. Written sources prove that Jewish communities lived in the medieval Kingdom of Hungary, and it is even assumed that several sections of the heterogeneous Hungarian tribes practiced Judaism. Jewish officials served the king during the early 13th century reign of Andrew II. From the second part of the 13th century, the general religious tolerance decreased, and Hungary's policies became similar to the treatment of the Jewish population in Western Europe.

The first anti-Jewish laws were issued in 1061, not allowing any trade on Sundays and moving market day to Saturday, thus excluding Jews from trading.

After the Mongol invasion of Hungary 1241-42, King Bela IV energetically took in hand the reconstruction of the country. His policy of reconstruction included attracting immigrants from other countries, and for this purpose he tried to make conditions in Hungary attractive for Jews.

There was one instance of expulsion in 1360, but the Jews were invited back in 1364. Discriminatory measures against Jews were like those across European during this period.

In 1526 The capital city and fortress of Buda fell to the Turks, central Hungary came under Ottoman rule for the next 160 years, and the Jews lived in relative peace as did most Jews in the Ottoman Empire. In 1686 the imperial Austrian forces reconquered Buda, leading to the reestablishment of Hungarian rule over much of central Hungary. For the Jews of Buda, however, the "liberation" was a total catastrophe. The Austrian soldiers forced their way into the city and ransacked or destroyed all property they found. A large part of the city was destroyed, including the synagogue, with all its Torah scrolls and holy books. Of the approximately one thousand Jews who were found in the city on the day it was taken, about half were massacred and the other half were captured and held for ransom.

During the Habsburg rule in the 18th century, Jews in Hungary faced certain restrictions, but there were also periods of relative stability and economic opportunities. The Habsburgs implemented various reforms affecting the status of Jews, including efforts to assimilate them into broader society.

19TH CENTURY LIFE, EMANCIPATION (1867-1914), & WORLD WAR I

In the 19th century, the Jewish community in Hungary experienced a process of emancipation and integration. The Hungarian Revolution of 1848-1849 played a role in granting civil rights to Jews. Jews became increasingly involved in various aspects of Hungarian society, including politics, business, and culture. On 4 October 1877, the Budapest University of Jewish Studies was established.

A trend to a strict Orthodox approach to Judaism, supported by Moses Sofer of Pressburg, marked the early 19th century. His leadership helped make Pressburg a spiritual centre for orthodox Jews, and it had many important yeshivot. He promoted the study of Torah, leading to the growth of yeshivot around the country. The Hungarian Rabbinate was important at the time and produced many religious works. Chassidism was introduced by Isaac Taub and it spread to northeast Hungary.

The Haskalah, Jewish enlightenment, came to Hungary in the 1830's, along with the Reform Movement, both of which countered the Orthodox trends. The late 19th century, 1869-70, was marked by a religious schism in the Jewish community. There were three main divisions: Orthodox, Neolog (Reform/Conservative) and Status Quo Ante (communities associated with neither of those two movements). Assimilation became widespread among Hungarian Jewry and many young adults began intermarrying.



Theodor Herzl 1860-1904

Zionism was also prevalent in Hungary. Shimon Sofer (1850 -1944) was the rabbi of the Hungarian city of Eger (Erlau) and the progenitor of the Erlauer Chassidic dynasty. He recommended that his disciples move to Israel, and they became part of the Ashkenazi Yishuv movement. The most famous Zionist, Theodor Herzl, was born in Budapest and lived in Hungary during his youth.

During this period, Jews became prominent in the political, economic, and cultural spheres in Hungary. In the 1880s Jews were active in the liberal professions and in journalism. In 1895, the Jewish religion was officially recognised by the state and given the same rights as Protestant and Catholics religions.

Despite the economic growth and religious empowerment, Jews faced political antisemitism. In the 1870s and 1880s, anti-Jewish propaganda increased, and a blood libel occurred in **Tiszaeslar** in 1882 (see QR code).



The Orthodox Synagogue of Sopron, Hungary, dates from the 1890s



The population of Hungarian Jews reached 910,000 by 1910. Jewish merchants consisted of 55-60% of all merchants in Hungary at the time of World War I. About 10,000 Jews lost their lives on the battlefield in World War I and many were disabled.

THE INTER WAR YEARS

After WWI, at the Treaty of Trianon, Hungary ceded to neighbouring nations fully two-thirds of its imperial territory and two-thirds of its population, including a third of its ethnically Magyar citizens and half of its Jews.

The Jewish population numbered 444,567 in 1930 – just over 5% of the country's inhabitants. They were still divided between a modernised, Neolog community and the orthodox who formed about a third of the total. These two communities were quite distinct, with their own welfare structures and representation.

Admiral Miklos Horthy became regent in 1920 and immediately introduced a quota limiting the number of Jews allowed into higher education. The Arrow Cross Movement (fascist movement) aimed to eliminate Jewish influence from society and to redistribute Jewish wealth.

Jews represented a quarter of all university students and 43% of Budapest Technological University students. In 1920, 60% of Hungarian doctors, 51% of lawyers, 39% of all privately employed engineers and chemists, 34% of editors and journalists, and 29% of musicians identified themselves as Jews by religion. Among the owners of land of more than 1000 hold, (570 hectares), 19.6% were Jewish and of the 2,739 factories in Hungary, 40.5% had Jewish owners.

Resentment of this Jewish trend of success was widespread: Admiral Horthy himself declared that he was "an anti-Semite", and remarked in a letter to one of his prime ministers: "*I have considered it intolerable that here in Hungary everything, every factory, bank, large fortune, business, theatre, press, commerce, etc. should be in Jewish hands, and that the Jew should be the image reflected of Hungary, especially abroad.*"

Unfortunately for Jews they had also become, by a quirk of history, the most visible minority remaining in Hungary (besides ethnic Germans and Gypsies); the other large "non-Hungarian" populations (including Slovaks, Slovenes, Croats, and Romanians, among others) had been abruptly excised from the Hungarian population by the territorial losses at Trianon. That and the highly visible role of Jews in the economy, the media, and the professions, as well as in the leadership of the 1919 Communist dictatorship, left Hungary's Jews as an ethnically separate group which could serve as a scapegoat for the nation's ills.

The scapegoating began quickly. In 1920, Horthy's government passed a "numerus clausus" (closed number) law that placed limits on the number of minority students in proportion of their size of the population, thus restricting the Jewish enrolment at universities to 5% or less.

Anti-Jewish policies grew more repressive in the interwar period as Hungary's leaders, who remained committed to regaining territories lost in WWI, chose to align themselves (albeit warily) with the fascist governments of Germany and Italy – the international actors most likely to stand behind Hungary's claims. The inter-war years also saw the emergence of flourishing fascist groups, such as the Hungarian National Socialist Party and the **Arrow Cross Party**.



WORLD WAR II

After Adolf Hitler rose to power in 1933, the Hungarian government became interested in making an alliance with Nazi Germany. The Hungarian Government felt that such an alliance would be good for them, in that the two governments maintained similar authoritarian ideologies, and the Nazis could assist Hungary in retrieving land it had lost in World War I. Over the next five years, Hungary moved closer to Germany.

The Munich Conference of September 1938 allowed Germany to annex the Sudeten region of Czechoslovakia. In November, Germany carved a piece of Czechoslovakia - territory that had formerly belonged to Hungary - and handed it back to Hungary to cement relations between the two nations. In August 1940, Germany gave Hungary possession of northern Transylvania and in October 1940, Hungary joined Germany, Italy, and Japan in the Axis alliance.

Hungary commenced issuing anti-Jewish legislation soon after the Anschluss in March 1938. Hungary passed a law whereby Jewish participation in the economy and the professions was cut by 80 percent. In May 1939, the Hungarian Government further limited the Jews in the economic realm and distinguished Jews as a "racial", rather than a religious group. In 1939 Hungary created a new type of labour service draft, which Jewish men of military age were forced to join. Many Jewish men would die within the framework of the forced labour they performed pursuant to this draft. In 1941 the Hungarian Government passed a race law, like the Nuremberg Laws, which officially defined who was to be considered Jewish.

In 1941, in line with the Nazis policies towards Jews, the Hungarian government deported approximately 20,000 non-Hungarian Jews to Ukraine, where they were murdered by the Einsatzgruppen.

Later, when it became clear that the Nazis would not emerge victorious from the war, the Hungarian government attempted to pull out of the alliance with Germany and sought an armistice with the Allies. Despite the brutal range of anti-Semitic laws they had enacted, the Hungarian Government refused to deport more Hungarian Jews. In response, Germany invaded and occupied Hungary in March 1944. The Nazis set up a new government loyal to Germany.

Adolf Eichmann was deployed to Hungary to carry out the extermination of its Jewish population. Eichmann aimed to deport more than 800,000 people to the camps in the east. Despite the likelihood of defeat in the war by this stage, genocide was still a priority for the Nazis. Arriving with just a few German staff, Eichmann was reliant on the collaboration of the Hungarian authorities to achieve this aim. The Hungarian authorities cooperated enthusiastically with Eichmann's plans.

Following the Nazi occupation in 1944, the persecution of the Jews turned actively murderous. Almost immediately, Jews had to wear a Star of David on their clothes and their movement was restricted. Telephones and radios were confiscated, and Jewish property and businesses were seized. During April, the Jews of Hungary were forced into ghettos. Sometimes the ghettos encompassed the area of a former Jewish neighbourhood and other times the ghetto was merely a single building, such as a factory.

In some Hungarian cities, Jews were compelled to live outdoors, without shelter or sanitary facilities. Food and water supplies were dangerously inadequate. Medical care was virtually non-existent. Hungarian authorities forbade the Jews from leaving the ghettos and police guarded the perimeters of the enclosures. Individual gendarmes often tortured Jews and extorted personal valuables from them. None of these ghettos existed for more than a few weeks and many were liquidated within days.

RESCUE AND RESISTANCE

Despite the overwhelming odds, some courageous individuals and organisations in Hungary undertook rescue and resistance efforts to save as many Jews as possible. Raoul Wallenberg, (see biographies) a Swedish diplomat, issued protective passports, providing temporary immunity to thousands of Jews. Additionally, Jewish resistance groups, such as the Budapest Jewish Council, organised underground networks to help Jews escape deportation and find safe hiding places. At least 10,000 forged passes offering protection, known as Shutzpasses, were distributed to Budapest's Jews, and around 6,000 Jewish children and accompanying adults were saved in houses ostensibly under the protection of the International Red Cross.

At least 7,000 Jews were smuggled out of Hungary by the Jewish resistance. They went through Romania to ships on the Black Sea that would take them to British-controlled Palestine.

Armed resistance took place in the form of sabotage and uprisings. Some Hungarian Jews joined partisan groups or sought refuge in forests, establishing hidden camps and engaging in acts of sabotage against the Nazis and their sympathisers. Hungarian Jews engaged in cultural and spiritual forms of resistance as a means of preserving their heritage and maintaining human dignity. They organised clandestine lectures, art exhibitions, theatre performances, and religious ceremonies to maintain a semblance of normalcy and cultural identity.

Hannah Szenes (see biographies) was a young Hungarian Jewish woman and a poet. She volunteered to join a small group of Jewish parachutists, trained by the British, to assist in rescuing Jews in Hungary. Tragically, she was captured, tortured, and ultimately executed by the Nazis.

Istvan Szabo, although not Jewish himself, was a Hungarian diplomat who helped Jewish individuals obtain Hungarian protective papers (known as *Schutzpasse*). These papers provided a limited degree of protection from deportation and allowed some Jews to survive.

In 1943, the Hungarian resistor, Margit Slachta, of the Hungarian Social Service Sisterhood, went to Rome to encourage papal action against the Jewish persecutions. She had sheltered the persecuted in Hungary and protested forced labour and antisemitism. In 1944 Pope Pius appealed directly to the Hungarian government to halt the deportation of the Jews of Hungary and his nuncio,



Angelo Rotta, led a citywide rescue scheme in Budapest. Rotta became a leader of diplomatic actions to protect Hungarian Jews. With the help of the Hungarian Holy Cross Association, he issued protective passports for Jews and 15,000 safe conduct passes - the nunciature sheltered some 3000 Jews in safe houses. Rotta was declared 'Righteous Among the Nations' by Yad Vashem after the war.

DEPORTATIONS

In March 1944 there were more than 800,000 Jews living in Hungary, because of annexations of regions from Slovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia.

The Hungarian government placed the instruments of state power - the police, gendarmerie, and civil service - at the disposal of the SS and their Hungarian accomplices. Since time was of the essence as Soviet forces were fast approaching neighbouring Romania, they subjected the Hungarian Jews to the war's most concentrated and ruthless Final Solution program. What took years in Poland and elsewhere, the Nazis and their Hungarian collaborators accomplished in less than four months in Hungary.

In May 1944 the deportations to Auschwitz began. In just eight weeks, some 434,351 Jews were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau in 147 trains.

On 2 July, American and British forces bombed Budapest, and on 6 July, to exert his sovereignty, Horthy ordered that the deportations should end. By 9 July 1944 all of Hungary (with the notable exception of Budapest) had become Judenrein. Ironically, it was on that very day that Raoul Wallenberg (see Biographies) arrived in Budapest on his mission of rescue.

After October 1944, when the Arrow Cross party came to power, thousands of Jews from Budapest were murdered on the banks of the Danube and tens of thousands were marched hundreds of miles towards the Austrian border. In all, some 565,000 Hungarian Jews were murdered.

THE VRBA-WETZLER REPORT (OR AUSCHWITZ PROTOCOLS)

Rudolf Vrba and his fellow escapee Alfred Wetzler fled Auschwitz three weeks after German forces invaded Hungary and shortly before the SS began mass deportations of Hungary's Jewish population to the camp. The information the men dictated to Jewish officials when they arrived in Slovakia on 24 April 1944, which included that new arrivals in Auschwitz were being gassed and not "resettled" as the Germans maintained, became known as the Vrba-Wetzler report. Vrba alleged that lives were lost in Hungary because it was not distributed quickly enough by Jewish leaders, particularly Rudolf Kastner of the Budapest Aid and Rescue Committee.



Vrba argued until the end of his life that the deportees might have refused to board the trains, or at least that their panic would have disrupted the transports, had the report been distributed sooner and more widely.

It is now known for certain that the report reached Budapest at the end of April or the beginning of May 1944. Within 8 days it was translated into Hungarian and handed to the Zionist leader Otto Komoly.

From late June and into July 1944, material from the Vrba–Wetzler report appeared in newspapers and radio broadcasts in the United States and Europe, particularly in Switzerland, prompting world leaders to appeal to Hungarian regent Miklós Horthy to halt the deportations.

THE KASTNER AFFAIR

Rudolf Kastner, was head of the Zionist movement in Hungary and head of the Judenrat when the Nazis occupied Hungary in 1944.

Kastner was offered a deal by the Germans to exchange 100,000 Jews for 10,000 trucks. Historians debate if this was a genuine offer. In either event, many Jews accepted the offer at face value, and one, Joel Brand, served as a middleman to broker the deal. Try though he did, his pleas fell on deaf ears. The British were not sympathetic, and the Jews were disbelieving.

At the beginning of the negotiations, as a token of good faith, the Nazis allowed one train with 1,684 notable Hungarian Jews (among them the Satmar Rebbe, Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum) to escape Nazi-controlled Hungary. Despite Eichmann's promise that the train would go directly to a neutral country, the Jews were held in Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in a special section for some months. Eventually, they were given passage to neutral Switzerland and most survived the war.

Kastner later claimed credit for saving their lives. However, many felt he was a traitor and selected only family members or those who paid the most money.

One day, in 1953, a person named Malchiel Gruenwald saw Kastner on the street in Tel Aviv and from then on took up a concentrated campaign of vilification against Kastner. Finally, Kastner had no recourse but to sue Gruenwald for libel. The suit was brought to court by the Israeli government on behalf of Kastner.

The result was the infamous Kastner trial. All the bad blood came out. Most damning of all were the accusations against the leaders of the Zionist movement, who it was claimed knew about the plight of Hungarian Jewry but did nothing to save it. Kastner was accused of having failed to warn the Hungarian Jewish community that they were to be loaded onto trains and taken to the gas chambers in Auschwitz, in occupied Poland. It was alleged that he had known about the gas

chambers since at least the end of April 1944 – when he had received a copy of the Vrba-Wetzler report – but had neglected to inform the wider community that they were not being deported from Hungary to be "resettled," as the Nazis had said.

The highly acrimonious trial was described in a famous book, *Perfidy*, by American playwright and Jewish activist, Ben Hecht. Though banned in Israel it quickly became an underground bestseller, especially among anti-Zionist Jews.

Although Kastner won the trial he was awarded one shekel, which was a message that he really lost. The court ruling said that Kastner had "sold his soul to the devil" by selecting some Jews to be saved, while failing to alert the rest of the community to its fate. Shortly thereafter he was assassinated in Israel. His murderer was never found.

“FOR THE DEAD AND
THE LIVING, WE MUST
BEAR WITNESS.”

— ELIE WIESEL

Partial List of Nazi-Germany Concentration Camps

<i>Camp Name</i>	<i>Country (today)</i>	<i>Camp Type</i>	<i>Dates In use</i>	<i>Estimated No. of prisoners</i>	<i>Estimated No. of deaths</i>	<i>Subcamps</i>
Amersfoort	Netherlands	Prison and transit camp	Aug 1941 – Apr 1945	35,000	1,000	
Arbeitsdorf	Germany	Labour camp	Apr 8, 1942 – Oct 11, 1942		min. 600	
Auschwitz–Birkenau	Poland	Extermination & labour	Apr 1940 – Jan 1945	400,000	1,100,000 – 1,500,000	
Banjica	Serbia	Concentration	June 1941 – Sept 1944	min. 23,637		
Bardufoss	Norway	Concentration	Mar 1944 – ?	800	250	
Belzec	Poland	Extermination	Mar 1942 – Jun 1943		600,000	
Bergen-Belsen	Germany	Collection point	Apr 1943 – Apr 1945		70,000	2
Bolzano	Italy	Transit	Jul 1944 – Apr 1945	11,116		
Bredtvet	Norway	Concentration				
Breendonk	Belgium	Prison and labour	Sept 20, 1940 – Sept 1944	min. 3,532	min. 391	
Breitenau	Germany	*Early wild camp*, then labour camp	Jun 1933 – Mar 1934, 1940 – 1945	470 – 8,500		
Buchenwald	Germany	Labour	Jul 1937 – Apr 1945	250,000	56,000	
Chelmno (Kulmhof)	Poland	Extermination	Dec 1941 – Apr 1943, Apr 1944 – Jan 1945		320,000	
Crveni krst	Serbia	Concentration	1941 – 1945	30,000		
Dachau	Germany	Labour	Mar 1933 – Apr 1945	200,000	31,591	
Falstad	Norway	Prison	Dec 1941 – May 1945		min. 200	
Flossenbürg	Germany	Labour	May 1938 – Apr 1945	min. 100,000	30,000	
Grini	Norway	Prison	May 2 1941 – May 1945	19,788	8	Fannrem Bardufoss Kvænangen
Gross-Rosen	Poland	Labour camp; Nacht und Nebel camp	Aug 1940 – Feb 1945	125,000	40,000	

In the vast array of Nazi forced labor camps— numbering some 42,500 at last count – Jews and other prisoners were often forced to work under extreme conditions; hundreds of thousands perished from arbitrary executions, disease, starvation, or from being worked to death. According to the most recent research reported in the New York Times (March 1, 2013), the forms of Nazi incarceration across Europe included “30,000 slave labor camps; 1,150 Jewish ghettos; 980 concentration camps; 1,000 prisoner-of-war camps; 500 brothels filled with sex slaves; and thousands of other camps used for euthanizing the elderly and infirm, performing forced abortions, ‘Germanizing’ prisoners or transporting victims to killing centers.

Camp Name	Country (today)	Camp Type	Dates In use	Estimated No. of prisoners	Estimated No. of deaths	Subcamps
Herzogenbusch (Vught)	Netherlands	Prison and transit	1943 – Summer 1944	31,000	750	
Hinzert	Germany	Collective point and subcamp	July 1940 – Mar 1945	14,000	min. 302	
Janowska (Lwów)	Ukraine	Ghetto & transit & labour & extermination	Sept 1941 – Nov 1943		min. 40,000	
Jasenovac	Croatia	Extermination	Aug 1941 – Apr 1945		85,000 – 700,000	
Kaiserswald (Melaparks)	Latvia	Labour	1942 – Aug 6, 1944	20,000		16, including Eleja-Meitenes
Kaufering / Landsberg	Germany	Labour	Jun 1943 – Apr 1945	30,000	min. 14,5000	
Kauen (Kaunas)	Lithuania	Ghetto & internment				Prawenischken
Klooga	Estonia	Labour	Summer 1943 – Sept 28 1944		2,400	
Lager Sylt (Alderney)	Channel Islands	Labour	Mar 1943 – Jun 1944	1,000	460	
Langenstein Zwieberge	Germany	Buchenwald subcamp	Apr 1944 – Apr 1945	5,000	2,000	
Le Vernet	France	Internment	1939 – 1944			
Majdanek (KZ Lublin)	Poland	Labour & Extermination	Jul 1941 – Jul 1944		75,000	
Malchow	Germany	Labour and transit	Winter 1943 – May 8 1945	5,000		
Maly Trostenets	Belarus	Extermination	Jul 1941 – Jun 1944		65,000	
Mauthausen-Gusen	Austria	Labour	Aug 1938 – May 1945	195,000	min. 95,000	
Mittelbau-Dora	Germany	Labour	Sept 1943 – Apr 1945	60,000	min. 20,000	
Natzweiler-Struthof	France	Labour camp; Nacht und Nebel camp	May 1941 – Sept 1944	40,000	25,000	
Neuengamme	Germany	Labour	Dec 13 1938 – May 4 1945	106,000	55,000	

Camp Name	Country (today)	Camp Type	Dates In use	Estimated No. of prisoners	Estimated No. of deaths	Subcamps
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Number of Jewish Victims Murdered in Death Camps Located in Nazi-Occupied Poland

MAJDANEK
75,000
(60,000 were Jews, followed by Soviet POWs, Poles and others)

SOBIBOR
250,000 Jews

CHELMNO
300,000
(Almost all Jews, along with a few thousand Gypsies)

BELZEC
500,000 Jews

TREBLINKA
875,000 Jews

AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU
1-1.1 Million Jews
(Plus 75,000 Poles, Gypsies, Russian POWs and others)

Note: These camps are mentioned because they were used as "death factories" which employed technology (i.e. poisonous gas) to murder its many victims. There were hundreds of other concentration/labor/assembly/transit camps built by the Nazis throughout Europe, where tens of thousands of Jews were murdered, either through conventional execution, or starvation and disease brought on by their horrific living conditions.

In Poland, for instance, approximately 65,000 mostly Jewish prisoners were murdered in Stutthof, the first concentration camp created by the Nazis outside Germany. In Maly Trostenets, just east of Minsk in Belarus, up to 65,000 prisoners, mostly Jews, were murdered. Another 135,000 prisoners, including large numbers of Soviet POWs, were murdered in the Trostenets area. This horrific pattern of mass murder was repeated by the Nazis untold times throughout Nazi-occupied Europe. A complete listing of all the Nazi camps and the number of victims in each would fill several pages.

“[And] a dream full of horror has still not ceased to visit me, at sometimes frequent, sometimes longer intervals. It is a dream within a dream, varied in detail, one in substance. I am sitting at a table with my family, or with friends, or at work, or in the green countryside; in short, in a peaceful relaxed environment, apparently without tension or affliction; yet I feel a deep and subtle anguish, the definite sensation of an impending threat. And in fact, as the dream proceeds, slowly and brutally, each time in a different way, everything collapses, and disintegrates around me, the scenery, the walls, the people, while the anguish becomes more intense and more precise. Now everything has changed into chaos; I am alone in the centre of a grey and turbid nothing, and now, I know what this thing means, and I also know that I have always known it; I am in the Lager once more, and nothing is true outside the Lager. All the rest was a brief pause, a deception of the senses, a dream; my family, nature in flower, my home. Now this inner dream, this dream of peace, is over, and in the outer dream, which continues, gelid, a well-known voice resounds: a single word, not imperious, but brief and subdued. It is the dawn command, of Auschwitz, a foreign word, feared and expected: get up, “Wstawàch.”

— Primo Levi
The Truce

Survivors & Liberators: A Complex Legacy

Note: This short essay was written in April 2025 to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the end of WWII in Europe and of the liberation of Europe – and hundreds of thousands of Jews – from Nazi tyranny.

By Eli Rubenstein, Director of Education, International March of the Living

The 2025 March of the Living marks the 80th anniversary of the end of WWII in Europe and the liberation of hundreds of thousands of Jews from Hitler's camps, and in hiding places all across Europe.

As Allied forces liberated the camps, they came face-to-face with the full brutality of Nazi Germany and their war on the Jews. Convinced that future generations would not believe the gruesome atrocities his troops were seeing – or even worse, deny the facts - General Dwight D. Eisenhower, commander of the Allied forces in Europe during World War II, insisted that large scale photo and film documentation of Nazi death camps be undertaken. Soviet troops also documented the evidence of the atrocities they witnessed upon liberating Auschwitz-Birkenau on Jan. 27, 1945 and elsewhere.



Of the almost 3 million Jews sent to Hitler's death camps, very few survived - nearly all of them from Auschwitz-Birkenau. (In the weeks before the liberation of Auschwitz, approximately 56,000 prisoners were evacuated on death marches – in the course of which 15,000 perished on the way.)

Large numbers of Jews were deported to other camps (concentration camps, forced labor camps, etc.), where they perished as well.

Historians estimate that among the survivors of the camps liberated in 1945, about 90,000 Jews were still alive in the camps freed by Allied troops on the day of liberation. Tragically, many of them perished in the days following - leaving between 60,000 and 70,000 survivors to begin a new chapter in their lives.

At first glance, these moments of liberation might be viewed as overwhelming instances of elation and positive experiences – after all millions of people were freed from the merciless grip of Nazi Germany.

But for many of the Holocaust survivors, these were not necessarily moments of unbridled joy. For some, it came with the realization that not a single member of their immediate family – parents, grandparents, children, siblings, uncles and aunts – were alive. They were literally alone in the world – strangers to everyone on planet earth. “What now?” was the first question many survivors had on their minds almost immediately after liberation.

When the Soviet Army liberated Auschwitz-Birkenau on Jan. 27, 1945, they found some 7,500 prisoners alive there and in the surrounding camps.



9-year-old Miriam Ziegler at the barbed wire in Auschwitz on the day of her liberation by Soviet troops. (Miriam is pictured second from left, with her arm outstretched showing the number tattooed on her.)

Among the prisoners were hundreds of children including Miriam Ziegler:

“I was 9 years old when I was liberated. I remember standing at the wires.... This is when we saw the Russian soldiers were coming in on their trucks and walking and marching. And we couldn’t believe it - No more Nazis over us. And my feelings were, now what? What’s going to be now?”

For many Holocaust Survivors, there was no home to return to – either their homes had been destroyed, or had been occupied by others, who greeted them with surprise that they were still alive, even with open hostility. Threats of murder were also not uncommon, which tragically, were sometimes acted upon.

The situation for the liberators was also not without its challenges.

Many liberators testify that as they were entering the camps, they could hear the gunfire of Nazi soldiers in the process of executing prisoners moments before their arrival. Others testify they arrived in one camp minutes after the Nazis herded thousands of prisoners into wooden barracks and burnt them alive.

The liberators described the universal horror and shock they felt when they first saw the prisoners who barely survived the Nazi atrocities – and the piles of bodies surrounding them of those who did not survive.

Many of the emaciated prisoners were on the verge of death and sadly many of them did not survive for more than a few hours or days after the moment of liberation. Some of the prisoners, while physically alive, could not understand or even comprehend what liberation meant, or believe they were being freed from the years of torment they had just undergone.

Some of the American liberators testified, that until they saw these “walking ghosts”, they had no idea of the extent of the brutality visited upon the Jews by the Nazis – and only now did they fully understand the evil they were combating. Decades later, many of the liberators still experienced nightmares of their first encounter with these beaten, starved and tortured Jewish prisoners, surrounded by piles of corpses too numerous to count.

According to the testimony of some American liberators, among the last words uttered by those who perished, were desperate pleas for “vasser... vasser” - “water, water”. One liberator remembers a prisoner just saying the words “too late, too late” – before expiring in front of his eyes.

American chaplain Rabbi Eli Bonin, who liberated Dachau in 1945, wrote this to his wife Eleanor: “Nothing you can put in words can describe what I saw there. The human mind refuses to believe what the eyes can see. All the stories of Nazi horrors are underestimated rather than exaggerated. I shall never forget what I saw there, and in my nightmares the scenes still recur..... No possible punishment can ever repay the ones who were responsible.”

Soviet soldiers who liberated Auschwitz on January 27, 1945, had similar responses to their American counterparts. Here are a few excerpts from their testimonies:

Alexander Vorontsov:

Until the end of the war, I worked as a film cameraman. What I saw and filmed there was the most horrible thing I ever saw or filmed. I don't think even our army command had an idea of the scale of the crimes committed in this largest of concentration camps. They were practically skeletons, covered with skin, their eyes staring blankly. These memories will be with me for the rest of my life.

They looked at our soldiers with fear in their eyes because they didn't know that these were Soviet soldiers, liberators, and so they were expecting the worst, death... We explained to them who we were and why we came here, because they did not understand who we were and why we came. Both women and men would cry. Some began to smile a little through tears.

David Dushman:

They were all standing there. All with uniforms. Just eyes, just eyes. It was very, very terrible.

Mykola Karpenko:

We saw a huge pile of human waste, clothes, shoes, braids, hair, and remains of human bones. I have a feeling of hatred when I think about Auschwitz.

Moisey Malkis:

Two women came up to me, one of them started clapping her hands, and the other was just happy. One of them gave me a kiss.

Otari Amaglobeli:

There was total atrophy, just bone and skin from all the hunger.... Many were starved beyond recognition. Every other one had a stomach ulcer rather, multiple ulcers. Because they hadn't eaten anything. Total avitaminosis (from long-term lack of vitamins).

While many – perhaps even most – survivors showed remarkable resilience and courage in rebuilding their lives after liberation, their victory was never complete, as the loss of their loved ones was never far away.

But the survivors also expressed unending gratitude to the soldiers – American, Soviet, British, and Canadian – who liberated them, and to their adoptive countries around the world who allowed them to strike roots, rebuild their lives, and begin new families. In return, these same survivors contributed immensely to the fabric of life in the communities and in the countries that gave them refuge and welcomed them to their shores.

As one American liberator, Eli Heimberg, who entered Dachau after its liberation on April 29, 1945, wrote: “Despite the horrors of the Holocaust, a new spirit arose among most of the survivors. From out of the ashes of despair, I witnessed the resurgence of a people taking their place once more in society, retaining their compassion and a continuing will to learn and pursue their culture.

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Glossary of the Holocaust

Aktion (German) Operation involving the mass assembly, deportation, and murder of Jews by the Nazis during the Holocaust.

Allies The nations fighting Nazi Germany, Italy and Japan during WWII; primarily the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union.

Anielewicz, Mordecai (1919-1943) Major leader of the Jewish resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto; killed 8 May 1943.

Anschluss (German) Annexation of Austria by Germany on 13 March 1938.

Aryan Race "Aryan" was originally applied to people who spoke any Indo-European language. The Nazis, however, primarily applied the term to people of Northern European racial background.

Auschwitz Concentration and extermination camp in Upper Silesia, Poland, 37 miles west of Krakow. Established in 1940 as a concentration camp, it became an extermination camp in early 1942. Eventually it consisted of three sections: Auschwitz I, the main camp; Auschwitz II (Birkenau) an extermination camp; Auschwitz III (Monowitz) the I.G. Farben labour camp, also known as Buna. In addition, Auschwitz had numerous sub-camps.

Axis The Axis powers originally included Nazi Germany, Italy, and Japan who signed a pact in Berlin on 27 September 1940. They were later joined by Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary and Slovakia.

Babi Yar A ravine in the Ukrainian capital of Kiev and the site of the massacres carried out by German forces and local collaborators during the campaign against the Soviet Union.

Baeck, Leo (1873-1956) Rabbi, philosopher, and community leader in Berlin. In 1933 he became president of the Reich Representation of German Jews, an organisation responsible to the Nazi regime concerning Jewish matters. Despite opportunities to emigrate, Baeck refused to leave Germany. In 1943, he was deported to the ghetto of Terezin (Theresienstadt), where he became a member of the Council of Elders and spiritual leader of the Jews imprisoned there. After the liberation of the ghetto he emigrated to England.

Belzec One of the six extermination camps in Poland. Originally established in 1940 as a camp for Jewish forced labour, the Germans began construction of an extermination camp at Belzec in November 1941, as part of Aktion Reinhard. By the time the camp ceased operations in January 1943, more than 600,000 people had been murdered there.

Bergen-Belsen Concentration camp established in 1940 holding Jews, POWs, political prisoners, Roma, "asocials", criminals, Jehovah's Witnesses and homosexuals. During its existence approximately 50,000 people died there.

Bolshevism The communist form of government adopted in Russia following the Bolshevik revolution of 1917.

Chamberlain, Neville (1869-1940) British Prime Minister, 1937-1940. He concluded the Munich Agreement in 1938 with Adolf Hitler, which he mistakenly believed would bring "peace in our time".

Chelmno An extermination camp established in late 1941 in the Warthegau region of Western Poland, 47 miles west of Lodz. It was the first camp where mass executions were carried out by means of gas. A total of 320,000 people were exterminated at Chelmno.

Churchill, Winston (1875-1965) British Prime Minister, 1940-1945. He succeeded Chamberlain on 10 May 1940, at the height of Hitler's conquest of Western Europe. Churchill was one of the very few Western politicians who recognised the threat that Hitler posed to Europe. He strongly opposed Chamberlain's appeasement policies.

Concentration Camps Immediately upon their assumption of power on 30 January 1933, the Nazis established concentration camps for the imprisonment of all "enemies" of their regime: actual and potential political opponents (e.g. communists, socialists, monarchists), Jehovah's Witnesses, Roma, homosexuals, and other "asocials." Beginning in 1938, Jews were targeted for internment solely because they were Jews. Beforehand, only Jews who fit one of the earlier categories were interned in camps. The first three concentration camps established were Dachau (near Munich), Buchenwald (near Weimar) and Sachsenhausen (near Berlin).

Dachau The first concentration camp, established near Munich in southern Germany in March 1933.

Death March Transfer of concentration camp inmates, in which they were forced to march to new locations, in order to prevent their liberation by the invading Allied armies. At least one third of the prisoners died or were killed along the way.

Der Stürmer Meaning "The Attacker" – an anti-Semitic propaganda weekly founded and edited by Julius Streicher, published in Nuremberg between 1923 and 1945.

Displaced Person A survivor remaining when the war ended on 8 May 1945, and who had no home to which they could immediately return.

D.P. camp Special camps set up to house, treat and revive displaced persons

Eichmann, Adolf (1906-1962) SS Lieutenant-Colonel and head of the Jewish Section of the Gestapo. Instrumental in organising the "Final Solution," planning the extermination of 11,000,000 European Jews. The Israeli Secret Service finally discovered his presence in Argentina, and he was smuggled to Israel, tried, convicted and executed on 31 May 1962.

Einsatzgruppen (German) Battalion-sized, mobile killing units of the Security Police and SS Security Service that followed the German armies into the Soviet Union in June 1941. These units were supported by units of the uniformed German Order Police and auxiliaries of volunteers (Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, and Ukrainian). Their victims, primarily Jews, were executed by shooting and were buried in mass graves from which they were later exhumed and burned. At least a million Jews were killed in this manner. There were four Einsatzgruppen (A,B,C,D) which were subdivided into company-sized Einsatzkommandos.

Euthanasia The original meaning of this term was an easy and painless death for the terminally ill. However, the Nazi euthanasia programme took on quite a different meaning: the taking of eugenic measures to improve the quality of the German "race." This programme culminated in enforced "mercy" deaths for the incurably insane, permanently disabled, deformed and "superfluous." Three major classifications were developed: 1) euthanasia for incurables; 2) direct extermination by "special treatment"; and 3) experiments in mass sterilisation.

Evian Conference (6 July 1938) Conference convened by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in July 1938 to discuss the problem of refugees. 32 countries met at Evian-les-Bains, France where not much was accomplished, since most western countries were reluctant to accept Jewish refugees.

Extermination Camps Nazi camps for the mass killing of Jews and others (e.g. Roma, Russian prisoners-of-war, ill prisoners). Known as "death camps," these included: Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor and Treblinka. All were located in occupied Poland.

Final Solution The name for the plan to eliminate 11,000,000 Jews in Europe to solve the “Jewish Question.” Beginning in October 1941, Jews were rounded up in occupied German territories and deceptively sent to be “resettled” in the east; ultimately, most of the deportees were shot or gassed.

Frank, Hans (1900-1946) Governor-General of occupied Poland from 1939 to 1945, under whose auspices millions of Polish Jews were murdered. Also represented Hitler as his personal lawyer. He was tried and executed in Nuremberg in 1946.

Frick, Wilhelm (1877-1946) A dedicated Nazi bureaucrat appointed Minister of the Interior in 1933 where he was responsible for enacting Nazi racial laws. In 1946, he was tried at Nuremberg, convicted and executed.

Genocide The deliberate and systematic destruction of a religious, racial, national or cultural group.

Gerstein, Kurt (1905-1945) Head of the Waffen SS Institute of Hygiene in Berlin. While maintaining ties with the resistance, Gerstein purchased the gas needed in Auschwitz, officially for fumigation purposes, but actually used for the killing of Jews. He passed on information about the killings to Swedish representatives and Vatican papal nuncios. Overwhelmed with remorse he hanged himself in a French jail after the war. He is the author of a widely quoted description of a gassing procedure in Belzec, protagonist of Rolf Hochhuth's *The Deputy*, and the subject of Saul Friedlander's biography, “The Ambiguity of Good”.

Gestapo The official secret police of Nazi Germany and German-occupied Europe. The force was created by Hermann Goring in 1933 by combining the various security police agencies of Prussia into one organisation.

Ghetto The Nazis revived the medieval ghetto in creating their compulsory “Jewish Quarter” (Wohnbezirk). The ghetto was a section of a city where all Jews from the surrounding areas were forced to reside. Surrounded by barbed wire or walls, the ghettos were often sealed so that people were prevented from leaving or entering. Established mostly in Eastern Europe (e.g. Lodz, Warsaw, Vilna, Riga, Minsk), the ghettos were characterised by overcrowding, starvation and forced labour. All were eventually destroyed as the Jews were deported to death camps.

Göring, Hermann (1893-1946) Appointed by Hitler as his second in command and eventual successor. He was in charge of Germany's re-armament program and in particular the establishment of the German air force. He initiated the “Final Solution” and gave the order to Heydrich to carry it out. Also convicted at Nuremberg in 1946 but committed suicide before his scheduled execution.

Greater German Reich Designation of an expanded Germany that was intended to include all German speaking peoples. It was one of Hitler's most important aims. After the conquest of most of Western Europe during WWII, it became a reality for a short time.

Grynszpan, Herschel (1921-1943?) A Polish Jewish youth who had emigrated to Paris. He agonised over the fate of his parents who, in the course of a pre-war roundup of Polish Jews living in Germany, were deported to the Polish frontier. On 7 November 1938, he went to the German Embassy where he shot and mortally wounded Third Secretary Ernst vom Rath. The Nazis used this incident as an excuse for the *Kristallnacht* (Night of the Broken Glass) pogrom.

Hess, Rudolf (1894-1987) A long-time, close associate of Hitler, he flew from Augsburg in Germany and landed in Scotland on 10 May 1941, where he was arrested. He was tried at Nuremberg and sentenced to life imprisonment but committed suicide in 1987.

Heydrich, Reinhard (1904-1942) Head of SS Nazi intelligence, he became head of the Reich Security Main Office (Reichssicherheitshauptamt – RSHA). Organized the Einsatzgruppen, which, together with their auxiliaries, systematically murdered over a million Jews, principally in occupied Russia during 1941-42. Presided over the Wannsee Conference to implement and coordinate the “Final Solution”. On 29 May 1942 he was assassinated by Czech partisans. (See Lidice for consequences)

Himmler, Heinrich Reichsführer-SS, head of the Gestapo and the Waffen-SS, Nazi Minister of the Interior from 1943 to 1945 and organiser of the mass murder of Jews in the Third Reich.

Hitler, Adolf (1889-1945) Leader of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter Partei: NSDAP – Nazi Party) after World War I. He was unsuccessful in his November 1923 attempt to forcibly bring Germany under Nazi control, in the “Beer Hall Putsch.” Arrested and jailed for a five-year term, he wrote “Mein Kampf”, describing his plan to create a greater Germany. Released after eight months, he re-entered politics and, by intimidating his enemies, eventually was allotted the chancellorship. He set up a dictatorship, brutally eliminating all his rivals, enemies and opposition. In September 1939, after annexing Austria, the Sudetenland and finally the remnant of what is today the Czech Republic, he invaded Poland. After an initial series of stunning victories, Hitler had overtaken much of Europe. However, following the defeat of the Sixth Army at Stalingrad in February 1943, the Germans began suffering defeats on all fronts. Although the war was obviously lost, he encouraged Germans to fight to their deaths – but committed suicide on 30th April 1945 rather than be captured alive.

Holocaust The destruction of some 6 million Jews by the Nazis and their followers in Europe between the years 1933-1945. Other individuals and groups were persecuted and suffered grievously during this period, but only the Jews were marked for complete and utter annihilation. The term “Holocaust” – literally meaning “a completely burned sacrifice” – tends to suggest a sacrificial connotation to what occurred. The word Shoah, originally a Biblical term meaning widespread disaster, is the modern Hebrew equivalent.

Jedwabne Massacre/Pogrom (10 July 1941) 340 Polish Jews of all ages were locked in a barn and set on fire. It was perpetrated by a group of Poles under the supervision of a German para-military group.

Jehovah’s Witnesses A religious sect, originating in the United States, organised by Charles Taze Russell. They base their beliefs on the Bible and have no official ministers. Recognising only the kingdom of God, the Witnesses refuse to salute the flag, to bear arms in war and to participate in the affairs of government. This doctrine brought them into conflict with National Socialism. They were considered enemies of the state and were relentlessly persecuted.

Jewish Badge A distinctive sign which Jews were compelled to wear in Nazi Germany and in Nazi-occupied countries. It often took the form of a yellow star of David.

Judenrat (Plural: Judenräte) Council of Jewish representatives in communities and ghettos set up by the Nazis to carry out their instructions.

Judenrein “Cleansed of Jews,” denoting areas where all Jews had been either murdered or deported.

Kapo Prisoner in charge of a group of inmates in Nazi concentration camps.

Kielce Pogrom A violent massacre of Jews in the south eastern Polish town of Kielce. The mass violence of the Kielce pogrom drew on an entrenched local history of antisemitism – especially false allegations accusing Jews of using the blood of Christian children for ritual purposes (a charge known as a “blood libel”)—with the intent of discouraging the return of Jewish Holocaust survivors to Poland. While the pogrom was not an isolated instance of anti-Jewish violence in post-war Poland, the Kielce massacre convinced many Polish Jews that they had no future in Poland after the Holocaust and spurred them to flee the country. Coming just one year after the end of World War II, the massacre shocked people around the world.

Kristallnacht (German) Night of the Broken Glass: pogrom unleashed by the Nazis on 9-10 November 1938. Throughout Germany and Austria, synagogues and other Jewish institutions were burned, Jewish stores were destroyed, and their contents looted. At the same time, approximately 35,000 Jewish men were sent to concentration camps. The “excuse” for this action was the assassination of Ernst vom Rath in Paris by a Jewish teenager Herschel Grynszpan whose parents had been rounded up by the Nazis.

Lidice Czech mining village (pop. 700). In reprisal for the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, the Nazis “liquidated” the village in 1942. They shot the men, deported the women and children to concentration camps, razed the village to the ground and struck its name from the maps. After WWII, a new village was built near the site of the old Lidice, which is now a national park and memorial.

Lodz City in western Poland (renamed Litzmannstadt by the Nazis), where the first major ghetto was created in April 1940. By September 1941, the population of the ghetto was 144,000 in an area of 1.6 square miles (statistically, 5.8 people per room). In October 1941, 20,000 Jews from Germany, Austria and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia were sent to the Lodz Ghetto. Those deported from Lodz during 1942 and June-July 1944 were sent to the Chelmno extermination camp. In August-September 1944, the ghetto was liquidated and the remaining 72,000 Jews were sent to Auschwitz.

Majdanek Mass murder camp in eastern Poland. At first a labour camp for Poles and a POW camp for Russians, it was turned into a gassing centre for Jews. Majdanek was liberated by the Red Army in July 1944, but not before 250,000 men, women and children had lost their lives there.

Mauthausen A camp for men, opened in August 1938 near Linz in northern Austria, Mauthausen was classified by the SS as a camp of utmost severity. Conditions there were brutal, even by concentration camp standards. Nearly 100,000 prisoners of various nationalities were either worked or tortured to death at the camp before liberating American troops arrived in May 1945.

Mein Kampf (German) This autobiographical book (My Struggle) by Hitler was written while he was imprisoned in the Landsberg fortress after the “Beer-Hall Putsch” in 1923. In this book, Hitler propounds his ideas, beliefs and plans for the future of Germany. Everything, including his foreign policy, is permeated by his “racial ideology”. The Germans, belonging to the “superior” Aryan race, have a right to “living space” (Lebensraum) in the East, which is inhabited by the “inferior” Slavs. Throughout, he accuses Jews of being the source of all evil, equating them with Bolshevism and, at the same time, with international capitalism. Unfortunately, those people who read the book (except for his admirers) did not take it seriously but considered it the ravings of a maniac.

Mengele, Josef (1911-1979) SS officer at Auschwitz in charge of “selections” of the new deportees. His pointing to the right or the left would determine either immediate gassing and death or being sent to forced labour. Known as the “Angel of Death,” he was notorious for his “medical” experiments, especially on twins and Roma. Escaped after the war from a British Internment hospital and was hunted until his body was found in Brazil in 1986. In 1992 DNA tests on the exhumed corpse confirmed his identity.

Musselmann (German) Concentration camp slang word for a prisoner who had given up fighting for life.

Night And Fog Decree Secret order issued by Hitler on 7 December 1941, to seize "persons endangering German security" who were to vanish without a trace into night and fog.

Nuremberg Laws Two anti-Jewish statutes enacted in September in 1935 during the Nazi party's national convention in Nuremberg. The first, the Reich Citizenship Law, deprived German Jews of their citizenship and all pertinent related rights. The second, the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honour, outlawed marriages of Jews and non-Jews, forbade Jews from employing German females of childbearing age and prohibited Jews from displaying the German flag. Many additional regulations were attached to the two main statutes, which provided the basis for removing Jews from all spheres of German political, social and economic life. The Nuremberg Laws carefully established definitions of Jewishness based on bloodlines. Thus, many Germans of mixed ancestry, called "Mischlinge", faced anti-Semitic discrimination if they had a Jewish grandparent.

Operation Reinhard In the autumn of 1941, Nazi Germany implemented a plan to systematically murder the Jews in the General Government. This plan was codenamed "Operation Reinhard". Three killing centres were established as part of this action: Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka. Operation Reinhard marked the deadliest phase of Nazi Germany's intention to commit genocide against the Jewish people.

Partisans Irregular troops engaged in guerrilla warfare, often behind enemy lines. During WWII, this term was applied to resistance fighters in Nazi-occupied countries.

Protocols Of The Elders Of Zion A major piece of anti-Semitic propaganda, compiled in a book at the turn of the century by members of the Russian Secret Police. Essentially adapted from a 19th century French polemical satire directed against Emperor Napoleon III, substituting Jewish leaders, the Protocols maintained that Jews were plotting world dominion by setting Christian against Christian, corrupting Christian morals and attempting to destroy the economic and political viability of the West. It gained great popularity after WWI and was translated into many languages, encouraging antisemitism in France, Germany, Great Britain and the United States. Henry Ford funded the printing of 500,000 copies that were distributed throughout the United States in the 1920s. Long repudiated as an absurd and hateful lie, the book has been reprinted and is widely distributed by Neo-Nazis and others who are committed to the destruction of the State of Israel.

Rath, Ernst vom (1909-1938) Third secretary at the German Embassy in Paris who was assassinated on 7 November 1938 by Herschel Grynszpan, a Polish Jewish teenager.

Ravensbrück A women's concentrationcamp located in northern Germany.

Righteous Among The Nations Term established by Yad Vashem, and applied to those non-Jews who, at the risk of their own lives, saved Jews from their Nazi persecutors.

Roma (Gypsies) A nomadic people, believed to have come originally from northwest India, from where they immigrated to Persia by the fourteenth century. Roma first appeared in Western Europe in the 15th century. By the 16th century they had spread throughout Europe, where they were persecuted almost as relentlessly as the Jews. The Roma occupied a special place in Nazi racist theories. It is believed that approximately 500,000 perished during the Holocaust. The Sinti and Lalleri were sub groups of Roma.

SA(abbreviation: Sturmabteilung) The storm troops of the early Nazi party; organised in 1921.

Sachsenhausen Nazi concentration camp in Oranienburg. Germanv.

Selection Euphemism for the process of choosing victims for the gas chambers in the Nazi camps by separating them from those considered fit to work.

SIPO The Security Police of Nazi Germany.

Sobibor Extermination camp in the Lublin district in Eastern Poland (see Belzec). Sobibor opened in May 1942 and closed one day after a rebellion of the Jewish prisoners on 14 October 1943. At least 250,000 Jews were killed there.

Sonderkommandos Work units of Nazi death camp prisoners, composed almost entirely of Jews, who were forced, on threat of their own deaths, to aid with the disposal of gas chamber victims.

SS Abbreviation usually written with two lightning symbols for Schutzstaffel (Defence Protective Units). Originally organised as Hitler's personal bodyguard, the SS was transformed into a giant organisation by Heinrich Himmler. Although various SS units were assigned to the battlefield, the organisation is best known for carrying out the destruction of European Jewry.

Stalag German term used for prisoner-of-war camps.

St. Louis The steamship St. Louis was a refugee ship that left Hamburg in the spring of 1939, bound for Cuba. When the ship arrived, only 22 of the 1128 refugees were allowed to disembark. Initially no country, including the United States, was willing to accept the others. The ship finally returned to Europe where most of the refugees were finally granted entry into England, Holland, France and Belgium.

Struma Name of a boat carrying 769 Jewish refugees which left Romania late in 1941. It was refused entry to Palestine or Turkey, and was tugged out to the Black Sea where it sank in February 1942, with the loss of all on board except one.

Der Stürmer (The Attacker) An anti-Semitic German weekly, founded and edited by Julius Streicher, which was published in Nuremberg between 1923 and 1945.

Szmalcownik Pejorative Polish slang word used during World War II that meant a person blackmailing Jews who were hiding, or blackmailing Poles who protected Jews during the Nazi occupation.

Terezin (Czech), Theresienstadt (German) Established in early 1942 outside Prague as a "model" ghetto, Terezin was not a sealed section of town, but rather an 18th century Austrian garrison. It became a Jewish town, governed and guarded by the SS. When the deportations from central Europe to the extermination camps began in the spring of 1942, certain groups were initially excluded: invalids, partners in a mixed marriage and their children and prominent Jews with special connections. They were sent to the ghetto in Terezin. They were joined by old and young Jews from the Protectorate and later, by small numbers of prominent Jews from Denmark and Holland. Its large barracks served as dormitories for communal living; they also contained offices, workshops, infirmaries, and communal kitchens. The Nazis used Terezin to deceive public opinion. They tolerated a lively cultural life of theatre, music, lectures and art. Thus, it could be shown to officials of the International Red Cross. Terezin, however, was only a station on the road to the extermination camps; about 88,000 were deported to their deaths in the East. In April 1945 only 17,000 Jews remained in Terezin where they were joined by 14,000 Jewish concentration camp prisoners evacuated from camps threatened by the Allied armies. On 8 May 1945, Terezin was liberated by the Red Army.

Treblinka Extermination camp in northeast Poland. Established in May 1942 along with the Warsaw- Bialystok railway line, 870,000 people were murdered there. The camp operated until the autumn of 1943 when the Nazis destroyed the entire camp in an attempt to conceal all traces of their crimes.

Typhus An infectious disease, characterised by a purple rash, headaches, fever, and usually delirium. There are several forms, transmitted by vectors such as lice, ticks, mites, and rat fleas. Typhus killed millions of prisoners in Nazi concentration camps during World War II.

Umschlagplatz (German) Collection point. It was a square in the Warsaw Ghetto where Jews were rounded up for deportation to Treblinka.

Wannsee Conference (20 January 1942) Lake near Berlin where the Wannsee Conference was held to discuss and coordinate the “Final Solution”. It was attended by many high-ranking Nazis, including Reinhard Heydrich and Adolf Eichmann.

Wallenberg, Raoul (1912-19???) Swedish diplomat who, in 1944, went to Hungary on a mission to save as many Jews as possible by handing out Swedish papers, passports and visas. He is credited with saving the lives of at least 30,000 people. After the liberation of Budapest, he was mysteriously taken into custody by the Russians and his fate remains unknown.

Warsaw Ghetto Established in November 1940, the ghetto, surrounded by a wall, confined nearly 500,000 Jews. Almost 45,000 Jews died there in 1941 alone, due to overcrowding, forced labour, lack of sanitation, starvation and disease. From 19 April to 16 May 1943, a revolt took place in the ghetto when the Germans, commanded by General Jürgen Stroop, attempted to raze the ghetto and deport the remaining inhabitants to Treblinka. The uprising, led by Mordecai Anielewicz, was the first instance in occupied Europe of an uprising by an urban population.

Wehrmacht The unified armed forces of Nazi Germany from 1935 to 1945. It consisted of the Heer (army), the Kriegsmarine (navy) and the Luftwaffe (air force).

Wiesenthal, Simon (1908-2005) Famed Holocaust survivor who dedicated his life since the war to gathering evidence for the prosecution of Nazi war criminals.

YIVO YIVO is an organisation that preserves, studies, and teaches the cultural history of Jewish life throughout Eastern Europe, Germany and Russia, as well as orthography, lexicography, and other studies related to Yiddish. It was founded at a Berlin conference in 1925, but headquartered in Wilno, a city with a large Jewish population that had been annexed to Eastern Poland in 1922. The early YIVO also had branches in Berlin, Warsaw and New York City. During the war, Jews were put to sorting books and other documents in the YIVO building in Warsaw, where the Nazis established a sorting centre for Jewish cultural treasures. Members of this sorting team risked their lives to smuggle out and hide materials, some of which were recovered after the war.

Zegota Also known as the “Konrad Zegota Committee” was a codename for the Polish Council to Aid Jews, an underground organisation of Polish resistance in German-occupied Poland active from 1942 to 1945.

Zyklon B The trade name of a cyanide-based pesticide used by the Nazis as an agent of mass annihilation in the gas chambers of extermination camps.

Righteous Among the Nations

Righteous Among the Nations

Thousands of Righteous Among the Nations risked their lives during World War II to save their Jewish compatriots. Nine thousands such cases have been meticulously documented by Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, Israel's national Holocaust museum. At the memorial, all of the Righteous Gentiles are honoured with a tree planted in their memory and a plaque inscribed with the Talmudic dictum: "He who saves a single life saves the world entire".

EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

Oskar Schindler, the German industrialist who saved 1200 Jewish labourers from certain death at the hands of the Nazis by employing them in his factory and refusing to turn them over to the S.S.

Irena Adamowicz, the member of the Catholic scout movement in Warsaw who assisted the Jewish underground in the ghettos and convinced members of her movement to work with the Jewish underground.

Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who saved approximately 100,000 Hungarian Jews in 1944 only to disappear into the Stalinist gulag after the Red Army liberated Budapest.

Senpo Sugihara, the Japanese Consul in Lithuania who defied orders and signed transit visas enabling 6,000 Jews to flee to safety in Shanghai.

The nuns of the Benedictine Convent in Vilnius, Lithuania who provided sanctuary to members of the Jewish underground and dressed them in their habits to disguise them from the Nazis.

Mother Maria of France who, after being deported to Ravensbruck for rescuing Jewish children, exchanged her identity papers with a Jewish woman to save that woman's life.

The Dutch village of Nieuwlinde, all of whose inhabitants agreed to hide at least one Jew - if not an entire family - from the Nazis. (Everyone of the 117 villagers is honoured at Yad Vashem.)

The Danish people. When the Nazis ordered the deportation of Denmark's Jews, Danish bishops published condemnations of the decree, pastors used their pulpits to encourage resistance and universities went on a week long strike. Within three weeks of the deportation order nearly all of Danish Jewry had been successfully hidden and secretly ferried to neutral Sweden. (The entire Danish people are honoured at Yad Vashem for their collective bravery.)

The Encyclopaedia on the Holocaust writes: "The Righteous Gentiles saved not only Jewish lives but the honour of humanity in the terrible period of the Holocaust."

A person recognized as a “Righteous Among the Nations” is awarded a specially minted medal bearing his or her name, a certificate of honor, and the privilege of his or her name being added to those on the Wall of Honor in the Garden of the Righteous at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. (This list is in lieu of tree planting, which was discontinued for lack of space.) To date, almost 29,000 men and women have been recognized as Righteous Among the Nations.

Albania	75	Netherlands	6,137
Armenia	24	Norway	68
Austria	115	Peru	3
Belarus	683	Poland	7,318
Belgium	1,819	Portugal	3
Bosnia	49	Romania	69
Brazil	2	Russia	231
Bulgaria	20	Serbia	141
Chile	2	Slovakia	639
China	2	Slovenia	16
Croatia	133	Spain	9
Cuba	1	Sweden	10
Czech Republic	129	Switzerland	49
Denmark**	22	Turkey	1
Ecuador	1	Ukraine	2,713
Egypt	1	United Kingdom	22
El Salvador	1	USA	5
Estonia	3	Vietnam	1
France	4,303		
Georgia	1		
Germany	666		
Greece	365		
Hungary	887		
Indonesia	3		
Ireland	1		
Italy	810		
Japan	1		
Latvia	138		
Lithuania	924		
Luxembourg	1		
Macedonia	10		
Moldova	79		
Montenegro	1		
		Total:	28,707

This figure includes family members who shared in the rescue of Jews and represents more than 8,000 authenticated rescue stories. Yad Vashem’s policy is to pursue the program for as long as petitions for this title are received and are supported by solid evidence that meets the criteria.

These figures are not necessarily an indication of the actual number of Righteous Among the Nations in each country, but reflect material on rescue operations made available to Yad Vashem. Many stories of the Righteous Among the Nations and the Jews they saved will never be known, as many of them were murdered during the Holocaust leaving no record of their stories.

**The Danish Underground requested that all its members who participated in the rescue of the Jewish community, not be listed individually, but as one group.

For more information about the Righteous Among the Nations/Righteous Gentiles Program, visit the Yad Vashem website at www.yadvashem.org

*“One day the Gestapo came in and the Carmelite – they were Carmelite nuns, and as you know the men cannot go there. It’s one of their rules; they cannot see men. They knocked on the door and **said** we want her – with the guns and all – we want that Jewish child. We know you have a Jewish child there. And the nuns said absolutely not. We don’t have anybody. And they broke the door. And what I will never forget is that the six nuns, they had a big basket of laundry that they carried three on the side, because there was a lot of laundry for all of these priests. And they pushed me in that laundry to hide me and they put all the linen on top. That happened like in one second. And that’s how I was saved.”*

**Rachel G. (Belgian survivor) Holocaust Testimony,
Yale University Library**

Resistance and Righteous

RESISTANCE

Once reliable substantiated evidence about the murder of the Jews began to emerge, and after the deportations from the ghettos had taken place, the undergrounds began launching armed rebellions in the ghettos and camps. In addition, they organised escapes and smuggled Jews from the ghettos to the forests in order to fight in the partisan units, as well as other rescue and hiding efforts. The largest and longest lasting of these rebellions took place in the Warsaw ghetto.

After liberation many of the survivors quickly enlisted in the Allied forces that continued to fight against Nazi Germany.

Approximately 1.5 million Jews fought in World War II in the Allied armies, in the partisan units, in the underground movements and in the ghettos. Hundreds of thousands of Jews fell in battle.

The ghettos buzzed with rumours about the murder of Jews. Most inhabitants, however, found the vague information difficult to absorb, especially in view of the unprecedented nature of the events described. Resistance groups obtained reliable information about the murders by means of couriers and liaisons outside the ghettos. As they accumulated information, a picture emerged of a terrifying campaign of systematic murder, previously unheard of in human history, being perpetrated. They then began to prepare for armed resistance.



The war of self-defense was carried out on three levels: armed uprisings in ghettos and camps; escape and smuggling of Jews from towns and ghettos to the forests for partisan warfare; and hiding by individuals in various places and collective rescue efforts and rescue of children.

Jews were active in the Belgian and French resistance and played a considerable role in the Slovakian uprising that broke out in the summer of 1944. Most Jews who fled to the mountains of Yugoslavia joined Tito's partisan army. Tens of thousands of Jews reached the forests of Belarus and the Ukraine where they helped to establish **partisan companies** and fought admirably in special Jewish units or in mixed battalions. In Belarus and the Ukraine, family camps were established in the heart of dense forests and the fugitive noncombatant Jews who lived there were fed and protected by Jewish fighters.

Daily survival in the forests was extremely difficult. Exposure and starvation posed as great a threat to the average partisan as did discovery by a Nazi patrol. Shelter was a small dugout in the ground and adequate clothing and food were scarce. The winter months meant enduring freezing temperatures, but snow was welcomed as it masked the smoke from a campfire.

In the face of these survival challenges, which often meant risking death to seek or steal food from local villages, the Jewish Partisans organised to sabotage and resist the Nazis. Their missions, carried out in military-style units, were very successful in destroying thousands of trains, sabotaging communications lines, destroying Nazi-controlled farms and power plants. They successfully rescued scores of Jews imprisoned in ghettos and camps.

Many Jewish Partisans fought alongside local groups also resisting the Nazi occupation. Making themselves known to other groups held many risks as antisemitism was widespread in the rural areas where they hid and carried out their missions. Many thousands of Russian soldiers, trapped in Eastern Europe after Hitler invaded Poland, escaped and formed partisan groups. These Russian partisan groups greatly aided many Jewish Partisans in their struggle to fight and survive in the forests. Among the Russians, however, there was also antisemitism.

Rebellions also took place in the death camps. In August 1943, the uprising in **Treblinka** broke out. Three groups of prisoners who had been put to work burning bodies and sorting the many victims' belongings killed some of the camp commanders and guards, took over the armory, and set the gas chambers and the camp barracks ablaze. In **Sobibor**, prisoners rose up and several managed to escape. In **Auschwitz-Birkenau**, a group of prisoners blew up one of the crematoria.

RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS

Of the 8.86 million Jews who lived in Europe before the Holocaust, it is generally believed that six million perished as a result of Nazi genocide. Hundreds of thousands of others would have joined them were it not for the courageous intervention of a few world leaders and thousands of individuals who risked their lives in order to save Jews from the gas chambers. Many of these men and women paid for their heroic efforts with their lives.

Attitudes towards the Jews during the Holocaust mostly ranged from indifference to hostility. The mainstream watched as their former neighbours were rounded up and killed; some collaborated with the perpetrators; many benefited from the expropriation of the Jews' property.

In a world of total moral collapse there was a small minority who mustered extraordinary courage to uphold human values. These are known as the Righteous

Among the Nations. They stand in stark contrast to the mainstream of indifference and hostility that prevailed during the Holocaust. Contrary to the general trend, these rescuers regarded the Jews as fellow human beings who came within the bounds of their universe of obligation.

Most rescuers started off as bystanders. In many cases this happened when they were confronted with the deportation or the killing of the Jews. Some had stood by in the early stages of persecution, when the rights of Jews were restricted and their



The medal of the Righteous bears the Jewish saying: "Whosoever saves a single life, saves an entire universe" (Mishnah, Sanhedrin 4:5).

property confiscated, but there was a point when they decided to act, a boundary they were not willing to cross. Unlike others, they did not fall into a pattern of acquiescing to the escalating measures against the Jews. In many cases it was the Jews who turned to the non-Jew for help. It was not only the rescuers who demonstrated resourcefulness and courage, but also the Jews who fought for their survival. Wolfgang Benz, a German historian, who did extensive research on rescue of Jews during the Holocaust claims that when listening to rescue stories, the rescued persons may seem to be only objects for care and charity, however *"the attempt to survive in illegality was before anything else a self-assertion and an act of Jewish resistance against the Nazi regime. Only few were successful in this resistance"*.

Faced with Jews knocking on their door, bystanders were faced with the need to make an instant decision. This was usually an instinctive human gesture, taken on the spur of the moment and only then to be followed by a moral choice. Often it was a gradual process, with the rescuers becoming increasingly involved in helping the persecuted Jews. Agreeing to hide someone during a raid or roundup – to provide shelter for a day or two until something else could be found – could evolve into a rescue that lasted months and years.

The price that rescuers had to pay for their action differed from one country to another. In Eastern Europe, the Germans executed not only the people who sheltered Jews, but their entire family as well. Notices warning the population against helping the Jews were posted everywhere. Generally speaking, punishment was less severe in Western Europe, although there too the consequences could be formidable and some of the Righteous Among the Nations were incarcerated in camps and killed. Rescuers and rescued lived under constant fear of being caught; there was always the danger of denunciation by neighbours or collaborators.

Most rescuers were ordinary people. Some acted out of political, ideological or religious convictions; others were not idealists, but merely human beings who cared about the people around them. In many cases they never planned to become

rescuers and were totally unprepared for the moment in which they had to make such a far-reaching decision. They were ordinary human beings, and it is precisely their humanity that touches us and should serve as a model. So far, Yad Vashem has recognised Righteous from 44 countries and nationalities; there are Christians from all denominations and churches, Muslims and agnostics; men and women of all ages; they come from all walks of life; highly educated people as well as illiterate peasants; public figures as well as people from society's margins; city dwellers and farmers from the remotest corners of Europe; university professors, teachers, physicians, clergy, nuns, diplomats, simple workers, servants, resistance fighters, policemen, peasants, fishermen, a zoo director, a circus owner and many more.

Scholars have attempted to trace the characteristics that these Righteous share and to identify who was more likely to extend help to the Jews or to a persecuted person. Some claim that the Righteous are a diverse group and the only common denominator is the humanity and courage they displayed by standing up for their moral principles. Samuel and Pearl Oliner (sociologists) defined the altruistic personality by comparing and contrasting rescuers and bystanders during the Holocaust. They noted that those who intervened were distinguished by characteristics such as empathy and a sense of connection to others. Dr. Nehama Tec who also studied many cases of Righteous, found a cluster of shared characteristics and conditions of separateness, individuality or marginality. The rescuers' independence enabled them to act against the accepted conventions and beliefs.

Bystanders were the rule, rescuers were the exception. However difficult and frightening, the fact that some found the courage to become rescuers demonstrates that some freedom of choice existed, and that saving Jews was not beyond the capacity of ordinary people throughout occupied Europe. The Righteous Among the Nations teach us that every person can make a difference.

THE MAIN FORMS OF HELP EXTENDED BY THE RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS

Hiding Jews in the rescuers' home or on their property: In the rural areas of Eastern Europe, hideouts or bunkers were dug under houses, cowsheds and barns, where the Jews would be concealed from sight. In addition to the threat of death that hung over the Jews' heads, physical conditions in such dark, cold, airless and crowded places over long periods of time were very hard to bear. The rescuers, whose lives were terrorised too, would undertake to provide food – not an easy feat for poor families in wartime – removing excrement and taking care of all their wards' needs. Jews were also hidden in attics, hideouts in the forest and in any place that could provide shelter and concealment, such as a cemetery, sewers, animal cages in a zoo, etc. Sometimes the hiding Jews were presented as non-Jews, as relatives or adopted children. Jews were also hidden

in apartments in cities, and children were placed in convents with the nuns concealing their true identity. In Western Europe Jews were mostly hidden in houses, farms or convents.

Providing false papers and false identities: In order for Jews to assume the identity of non-Jews they needed false papers and assistance in establishing an existence under an assumed identity. Rescuers in this case would be forgers or officials who produced false documents (see Biographies Sugihara), clergy who faked baptism certificates, and some foreign diplomats who issued visas or passports contrary to their country's instructions and policy. Diplomats in Budapest in late 1944 issued protective papers and hung their country's flags over whole buildings, so as to put Jews under their country's diplomatic immunity. Some German rescuers, like Oskar Schindler, used deceitful pretexts to protect their workers from deportation claiming the Jews were required by the army for the war effort.

Smuggling and assisting Jews to escape: Some rescuers helped Jews get out of a zone of special danger in order to escape to less dangerous locations. Jews were smuggled out of ghettos and prisons and helped to cross borders into unoccupied countries or into areas where the persecution was less intense. For example: to neutral Switzerland, into Italian controlled parts where there were no deportations, or Hungary before the German occupation in March 1944.

The rescue of children: Parents were faced with agonising dilemmas of separating from their children and handing them over to others in the hope of increasing their chances of survival. In some cases families or convents would take in children who were left alone after their parents had been killed. In many cases it was individuals who decided to take in a child; in other cases and in some countries, especially Poland, Belgium, Holland and France, there were underground organisations that found homes for children, provided the necessary funds, food and medication, and made sure that the children were well cared for.

Irena Sendler

1910–2008



“My parents taught me, that if a man is drowning, no matter what his religion or nationality, you must help him, whether or not you can swim yourself.” These are the words of Irena Sendler, an exceptional woman who coordinated an Underground Network of rescuers that enabled many Jewish children to escape the Warsaw Ghetto.

Here is her story:

Irena was born in 1910 and grew up in Otwock, a town about 25km south of Warsaw. Her father was a doctor who died during the typhus epidemic of 1917 while tending to sick Jewish families who were too poor to afford treatment. Consequently, members of the community offered to support Irena’s family, cementing the bond of friendship that existed with their Jewish neighbours. As a result, Irena could speak Yiddish, a skill that was invaluable in her later work.

Irena joined Warsaw’s Social Services department on leaving university. She quickly demonstrated her leadership skills, becoming the heart of a network of like-minded women who were determined to help alleviate the suffering of Warsaw’s poorest residents.

Under German occupation Warsaw’s Social Services department was forbidden from helping Jews. Yet despite the risks involved in disobeying this edict, Irena and her network falsified records by replacing Jewish names with Christian ones, thus enabling much needed support to continue.



During the first year of the occupation Irena established close connections with many Jewish self-help networks, clandestinely supplying food, medicines and money. Out of solidarity, and in order to remain inconspicuous in predominantly Jewish areas of the city, she chose to wear the same blue-star armband that Jews were forced to wear. When the Warsaw Ghetto was created Irena managed to gain entry by obtaining a ‘Health Inspector’ pass, enabling her to continue to smuggle in much needed supplies.



As conditions inside the ghetto deteriorated Irena became increasingly distressed at the sight of so many children suffering from starvation. When the mass deportations to Treblinka started in the summer of 1942, spreading panic throughout the ghetto, Irena's network decided to smuggle as many children as they could to the "Aryan" side of the city. Some were hidden in ambulances or ferreted out through the sewer system. Babies were sedated and concealed in tool boxes or shoulder bags. Some children were even led out of the ghetto in open sight, past guards who were known to be sympathetic or could be bribed to turn a blind eye.

Once out of the ghetto these traumatised children were taken to 'safe houses', given a non-Jewish identity and helped to acclimatise to their new circumstances. This involved learning Christian prayers and receiving guidance on how to behave appropriately in church. Most of these children were eventually taken to monasteries or convents, where sympathetic priests and nuns agreed to provide shelter. But total safety could never be guaranteed; if it was suspected that a hidden child's real identity had been discovered by Poles who could not be trusted with that secret, they would have to be relocated. This happened quite frequently. "How many mothers do most children have?" one such child asked Irena. "So far I've had three."

Irena was well aware of the agony Jewish families went through when deciding to give their children away in order to save their lives. She tried to explain to the children in her care that such a desperately difficult sacrifice represented their parents' final act of love. In later life she said that the real heroes in all this were the mothers who agreed to hand over their children.

In October 1943 her apartment was raided by the Gestapo and she was arrested. As she was driven away for interrogation she was relieved that none of the incriminating evidence that had been hidden in her home had been uncovered.



Although she was brutally tortured, Irena refused to provide any information. Her life was saved when *Zegota*, the underground organisation which was dedicated to helping Polish Jews that she was a part of, bribed one of the prison guards to facilitate her release.

Irena had hoped to reunite the hidden children with their families



after the war and kept meticulous records of their real identities. These lists were buried in jars next to a friend's apple tree, but sadly practically none of the children's real parents survived.

Many hundreds of children lived because of Irena Sendler and her network. The exact number will never be known (and is the cause of much debate between historians) but what is certain is that there are thousands of direct descendants of "Sendler's Children" alive today because of what she and her network did.

Irena was recognised as Righteous Among the Nations in 1965 and the tree that was planted in her honour stands alone at the entrance of Yad Vashem's Garden of Remembrance.

Irena died in 2008.

**HEROES DO EXTRAORDINARY THINGS.
WHAT I DID WAS NOT AN EXTRAORDINARY
THING. IT WAS NORMAL.**

- IRENA SENDLER -

Raoul Wallenberg

RAOUL WALLENBERG (1912 -?), Swedish diplomat who saved the lives of tens of thousands of Jews in BUDAPEST. Wallenberg was born into a distinguished family of bankers, diplomats, and officers; his father, who died before he was born, was an officer in the Swedish navy. Wallenberg grew up in the house of his stepfather, Frederik von Dardell. He studied architecture in the United States, but then took up banking and international trade, which brought him to Haifa in 1936 for a six months' stay.

On the recommendation of the Swedish branch of the WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS and with the support of the American WAR REFUGEE BOARD, the Swedish Foreign Ministry, in July 1944, sent Wallenberg to Budapest, in order to help protect over 200,000 Jews who were left in the Hungarian capital after the deportation of 437,000 Hungarian Jews to AUSCHWITZ.



The Swedish legation in Budapest initiated its operation on behalf of the persecuted Jews a short while after the German occupation of Hungary, on March 19, 1944. At that time, Adolf EICHMANN and a special detachment under him, together with the Hungarian authorities, began organizing the deportation of the Jews to their death. The Swedish foreign minister, Ivar Danielsson, had proposed giving provisional Swedish passports to Hungarian Jews who had family ties or commercial connections with Swedish citizens. By the time Wallenberg arrived in Budapest, several hundred such "protective passports" had been issued. His arrival, on July 9, 1944, coincided with the stoppage of the deportations, a decision taken by the Hungarian government as a result of international pressure, including intervention by King Gustav V of Sweden.

The protective operation carried out by the Swedish legation, in conjunction with other diplomatic missions, was nevertheless maintained, and Wallenberg, the new legation attache, was put in charge of a section created expressly for this purpose. Before taking up his post he had been given special authority, at his request, for certain arrangements to be left in his hands, such as the transmission of funds by means of the War Refugee Board (which in turn received the money from Jewish organizations in the United States).

The summer of 1944 was relatively quiet, but this quiet came to an end when the coup d'état of October 15 took place and the anti-semitic fascist ARROW CROSS PARTY, headed by Ferenc SZALASI, seized power in the country. The Jews of Budapest now faced mortal danger, both from the Arrow Cross murder actions and from Eichmann's deportations. From that moment on, Wallenberg displayed his courage and heroism in the rescue actions he undertook. Over the course of three months he issued thousands of "protective passports." Most of the time, both the Hungarian authorities and the Germans honored the signature of the Swedish legation, and the protective documents afforded protection for many Jews.

When Eichmann organized the DEATH MARCHES of thousands of Jews to the Austrian border, Wallenberg pursued the convoy in his car and managed to secure the release of hundreds of bearers of such passports and take them back to Budapest. His impressive and self-assured manner enabled him even to remove persons from the trains in which they were about to be sent to Auschwitz, or to release them from the MUNKASZOLGALAT (Labor Service System), into which they had been drafted.

The Jews were also in danger of being killed by Arrow Cross men, and to prevent this, Wallenberg set up special hostels accommodating fifteen thousand persons—an operation in which other diplomatic missions were also involved by issuing protective documents of their own. There were thirty-one protected houses, which together formed the "international ghetto," a separate entity, quite apart from Budapest's main ghetto. The management of these houses posed many complicated problems, since it involved the provision of food as well as sanitation and health services, all requiring much money; as many as six hundred Jewish employees were engaged in the administration and maintenance of the houses.

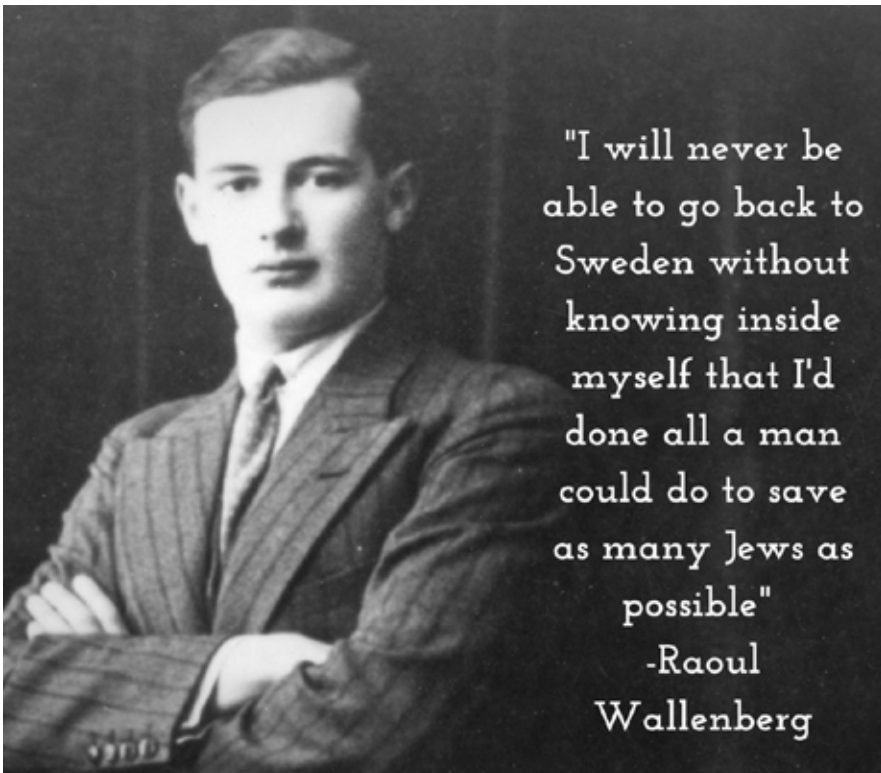
Both the "international ghetto" and the main ghetto were situated in Pest, which was the first part of Budapest to be occupied by the Soviets. Wallenberg made efforts to negotiate with the Soviets and to ensure proper care for the liberated Jews. The Soviets were highly suspicious of the Swedish mission and charged its staff with spying for the Germans. The large number of Swedish documents in circulation also raised doubt in their minds. When the Soviets requested him to report to their army headquarters in Debrecen, Wallenberg must have believed that he would be protected by his diplomatic immunity, especially since the Swedish legation had represented Soviet interests vis-a-vis the Germans, and he made his way to the Soviet headquarters. He returned to Budapest on January 17, 1945, escorted by two Soviet soldiers, and was overheard saying that he did not know whether he was a guest of the Soviets or their prisoner. Thereafter, all trace of him, and of his driver, Vilmos Langfelder, was lost. The other staff members of the Swedish legation were also held by the Soviets, but within a few months they all returned to Stockholm, via Bucharest and Moscow.

In the first few years following Wallenberg's disappearance, the Soviets claimed that they had no knowledge of a person named Wallenberg and were not aware that a person of that name was being held in any of their prisons. German prisoners of war, however, coming back from Soviet imprisonment, testified that they had met Wallenberg in prisons and camps in various parts of the Soviet Union. In the mid-1950s, on the basis of these accounts, Sweden submitted a strong demand to the Soviets

for information on Wallenberg, to which the Soviets replied, in 1956, that they had discovered a report of Wallenberg's death in 1947 in a Soviet prison. Wallenberg's family, and especially his mother, did not accept this claim, which conflicted with testimonies from other sources.

As the years went by, public opinion, in Sweden and all over the world, became increasingly critical of the manner in which the Swedish government had handled the issue. The subject of Wallenberg came up time and again, and with even greater force after the death of his mother in 1979. Books were published about Wallenberg and public committees were set up to deal with the case, especially in Britain, the United States, and Israel. The reports that were published revealed that in the final days preceding Budapest's liberation, Wallenberg, with the help of Hungarians and the Zsidó Tanács (Jewish Council), was able to foil a joint SS and Arrow Cross plan to blow up the ghettos before the city's impending liberation. Through this act—the only one of its kind in the Holocaust—some 100,000 Jews were saved in the two ghettos.

In recognition of this rescue action on Wallenberg's part, the United States Congress awarded Wallenberg honorary American citizenship. Memorial institutions were created in his honor, streets were named after him, and films were produced about his work in Budapest. Wallenberg's name and reputation as a **RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS** have become a legend.



Poland Honours Righteous Gentile

Woman saved Jewish children Declared national heroine

By Harry De Quetteville, National Post Published: Thursday, March 15, 2007

POZNAN, Poland — For most Jewish children imprisoned behind the walls of the Warsaw ghetto, the only exit led to concentration camps and the gas chambers. However, thousands did find salvation in the form of Irena Sendler, who smuggled them out in workmen's bags or through the sewers, before taking them to safety and hiding them with friendly families around the city.

Yesterday Ms. Sendler, now 97, was honoured as a national heroine by the Polish parliament for saving 2,500 Jewish children during the Second World War. The ceremony, which Ms. Sendler was too frail to attend, marked another step in Poland's recent attempts to efface a long-standing reputation for anti-Semitism largely fostered by the post-war communist regime.

In the Polish senate, politicians gathered to hear one woman who was saved by Ms. Sendler read out a letter on her behalf.

"Every child saved with my help is the justification of my existence on this Earth, and not a title to glory," Ms. Sendler said in the letter, read out by Elzbieta Ficowska, who was just six months old when she was saved from the ghetto by Ms. Sendler's resistance group. "Over a half-century has passed since the hell of the Holocaust, but its spectre still hangs over the world and doesn't allow us to forget."

Poland's President Lech Kaczynski described Ms. Sendler, who has been nominated for this year's Nobel Peace Prize, as a "great hero who deserves respect from our entire nation."

But it was in the years after the Nazi occupation of Poland that Ms. Sendler began the dangerous work for which she was finally honoured yesterday — establishing a network of friends and acquaintances to help some of the half million Jews forced into the ghetto.

Some 400,000 of those died, either through disease in the ghetto or at the death camps where a total of three million Polish Jews perished.

Until 1943, Ms. Sendler used her status as a Warsaw municipal welfare officer to roam the ghetto, ostensibly to combat contagious diseases.

But according to Yad Vashem, the Israeli Holocaust memorial centre which has already honoured Ms. Sendler as a “righteous gentile” for her actions, she used her visits to hand out money, clothes and medicines.

She disguised herself by donning a Star of David armband used by the Nazis to mark out Jews, and organized escape plans for thousands of children.

Some were carried out in bags, while others were saved by crawling through the network of sewers common to the ghetto and the rest of Warsaw.

Once free, the children were sent by Ms. Sendler to Warsaw families, orphanages or convents where they were hidden. For each success, Ms. Sendler buried a jar containing the child’s name, to help families reunite after the war.

Sadly, for most Jewish families that was not to be after SS chief Heinrich Himmler visited the Polish town of Poznan in 1943, and told fellow SS officers they were to achieve “the extermination of the Jewish people.”

The Warsaw ghetto originally contained more than 450,000 people, but by January, 1943, deportations to death camps, summary executions, starvation and disease had reduced it to just several tens of thousands.

On Oct. 20, 1943, six months after the failed Warsaw ghetto uprising, Ms. Sendler was arrested by the Nazi secret police, the Gestapo.

She was tortured, her arms and legs broken, but she refused to give up the names of those she had saved, and she was scheduled for execution.

However, members of the resistance managed to bribe a Gestapo officer and she escaped, officially listed as dead, and hid for the rest of the war.

“She’s a great lady, very courageous, and I think she’s a model for the whole international community,” Israel’s ambassador to Poland, David Peleg, said at the ceremony.

“Her courage is a very special one,” Mr. Peleg added.

Ms. Sendler has said she does not consider herself a heroine.

“I still have a bad conscience for having done so little,” she has said.

יזכור

לחסידי אמות העולם

יזכר עם ישראל את חסידי אמות העולם,
אשר שמו נפשם בככם
למען אחינו ואחיותינו הנרדפים והמעונים
בשנות השואה ת"ש-תש"ה
והיו ככוכבים מאירים באפילת הרשע הרובצת.

את שהשמיעו קול בעת דממה,
את שהציעו מקלט ותעודת חיים בעין סערת הרצח,
את שסמכו נופלים והושיטו יד, מזון ולבוש,
את שפענו לאנשים, נשים וטף בעת שועם.

גברים ונשים,
עובדי אדמה ויושבי עיר,
פשוטי עם ורמי מעלה,
אנשי אמונה ומצפון -
בגיא צלמות עמדו כל אלה עם בני עמנו
והצילו מן התפת יחידים, מאות ואף רבבות.
במקום שלא היה איש היו הם אנשים.

יזכר עם ישראל את גדלת רוחם, גבורתם וטוהר לבם,
יצרור אלהים בצרור החיים את נשמותיהם,
ויתמם בהם ובנו הכתוב:
"כעבור סופה ואין רשע, וצדיק יסוד עולם" (משלי י, כח).

Remember

Remember, People of Israel,
the Righteous Gentiles,
who have placed their own lives in
danger for the sake of our persecuted
and tortured brothers and sisters during
the Shoah, 1939-1945, and who were
as shining stars in the overwhelming
darkness of evil.

Those who spoke out at a time of silence,

Those who offered sanctuary and a lease
on life in the eye of the murderous storm,

Those who upheld those who were
falling and extended a helping hand,
food and clothing,

Who answered the cry of men,
women and children:

Men and women, workers
of the land and city-dwellers

Of humble standing and of high rank,

People of faith and conscience.

In the very valley of the shadow of death,
these men and women stood by our
people, and from the fiery inferno they
saved the few and the many.

They kept the beacon of humanity alight
when all around them humanity dimmed.

Remember, People of Israel, their grandness
of spirit, their heroism and their pure hearts.
May God bind their souls in the bundle
of life, and may it come to pass as it was
written: "As the whirlwind passes, so is the
wicked no more: but the righteous is an
everlasting foundation" (Proverbs 10, 25)



Jewish Life After Holocaust

Country	Estimated Pre-War Jewish Population	Estimated Jewish Population Annihilated	% Killed
Denmark	8,000	52	< 1
Finland	2,000	22	1
Russian SFSR	975,000	107,000	11
Luxembourg	5,000	1,000	20
Italy	40,000	8,000	20
Bulgaria	64,000	14,000	22
France	250,000	90,000	26
Norway	2,173	890	41
Romania	600,000	300,000	50
Yugoslavia	43,000	26,000	60
Ukrainian SSR	1,500,000	900,000	60
Belgium	65,000	40,000	60
Byelorussian SSR	375,000	254,000	65
Netherlands	140,000	105,000	75
Greece	70,000	54,000	77
Slovakia	90,000	75,000	83
Hungary	720,000	600,000	83
Bohemia & Moravia	90,000	80,000	89
Poland	3,300,000	3,000,000	90
Germany & Austria	240,000	210,000	90
Baltic Countries	253,000	228,000	90
Total	8,931,800	6,083,900	68%

Rebirth of Jewish Life in Poland After 1989

After 1968 and the wave of emigration that occurred at that time, just three thousand Jews remained in Poland, for the most part older people. They were grouped around two organizations, the Social and Cultural Association of Jews in Poland and, in the Communities, in the Religious Union. Young and middle-aged people did not openly claim their Jewish background and did not take part in either religious or cultural life.

This state of affairs arose from a variety of factors, the most important of which was the post-March trauma associated with the fear of losing either one's chance to study or one's job, and with the hostility of one's acquaintances. Another reason for the absence of young people in those organizations was because the Association had been heavily infiltrated by the Ministry of the Interior. People knew that joining the Association meant a file would be kept on them.

As a result, the Association was engaged in activities that were geared only toward older people, which discouraged young people from having any interest whatsoever in taking part. A breakthrough of sorts occurred in the late 1980's, when the Association began organizing Yiddish courses and lectures about the culture and history of the Polish Jews. Young people increasingly began to participate in these activities, interested in things that had been taboo for nearly two decades. As a result, the Association's board organized the first summer camp for young people in the Srodoborowianka villa near Otwock for the first time since 1968. It took place during the summer of 1988, gathering nearly thirty people from all over Poland. For many of them, this was their first contact with Jewish culture, their first observation of the Sabbath, and their first discussions about national and religious identity.

Above all, it was their first meeting with other Jews of their own age. After this summer session, many of them began participating in Jewish organizations, forcing the Association's leaders to admit that young Jewish people did exist in Poland. They insisted on their right to have a free hand in organizing activities. In many branches, youth sections were founded that organized their own discussions, meetings and observations of religious holidays. It must be stressed that this cultural revival occurred during a period of political change in Poland, when it became possible to sponsor such activities without political supervision, with freedom to express one's beliefs and, most importantly, when it was already possible to emphasize one's Jewish background.

In 1991, the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation launched its activities in Poland. For the most part, it is involved in educational activities for the Jewish community. The Foundation also seeks to aid those who wish to return to the faith who had not had the opportunity to do so previously. For this purpose, the Foundation runs religious education camps. The first took place in the Warsaw suburb of Komorow. Guests from the United States taught participants the foundations of Judaism, basic prayers and blessings, as well as the principles of kashrut (Jewish dietary laws) and the proper way of running a Jewish home. The first Lauder camp had about twenty participants. Because of the large number of applicants-120 people-the next was held in Zaborow; the camp was later moved to the holiday center in Rychwald, near Zywiec. Since that time, summer and winter sessions have been organized regularly.

The Ronald S. Lauder Foundation runs several cultural centers in Poland. They are located in Warsaw, Krakow, Lodz and Gdansk, and serve as centers for individuals interested in becoming acquainted with Jewish culture and religion. With time, a Jewish preschool was organized, as well as elementary and middle schools. Poland today has two Jewish schools funded by the Lauder Foundation in Wroclaw and Warsaw. In Krakow, the first Jewish religious school, the Pardes Lauder Yeshiva, has been opened as well.

Important changes have taken place in the field of publishing as well. Three publications for the Jewish audience are published: *Dos Yidishe Vort/Slowo zydowskie*, a bilingual, Polish-Jewish magazine published under the auspices of the Jewish Social and Cultural Association; the cultural and literary magazine *Midrasz*, and *Szternlech*, which is for young children. For a time, *Yidele* was also published for young people of high school and college age.

This image of contemporary Jewish life in Poland would not be complete without a mention of the Festival of Jewish culture, organized yearly in Kraków. It includes lectures and concerts, as well as courses in Yiddish and dance, and workshops on calligraphy and traditional paper cutouts. For several years, a several day series of events and concerts known as "Meetings of Four Cultures"-including Jewish culture-has been organized. In Warsaw, a Jewish Book Fair is held during which meetings with authors are held. In addition, various cities also organize film, theater and music reviews.

Poland and Israel after 1989

On the fifth day of the six-day war, on June 9, 1967, the states of the Warsaw pact broke diplomatic and economic ties with the state of Israel. Although the decision itself was made in Moscow, the rest of the Warsaw pact members (except Romania) supported and implemented it.

This step was meant to be a protest against the "Israel's imperialistic policies towards the Arab states". It should be recalled that those states, financed and armed by the USSR, suffered a crushing defeat in the conflict with Israel. This demonstrated the weakness of both the Soviet military doctrine and weapons in the face of the

Israeli armaments and military tactics.

This conflict had an impact in the international diplomatic arena, and resulted in a number of UN decrees aimed against the policies of the state of Israel, such as the resolution of the UN General Assembly dated November 10, 1975, recognizing Zionism as a form of racism.

It was only in the late 1980-s when Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in the USSR that a thaw came in relations between the Soviet bloc and Israel. As the secretary general of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, he attempted to implement reforms. An unintended side-effect was the mobilization of the dissident movement, which was fighting for

human rights, including the right to freedom of religion and cultivation of national traditions. As a result, for the first time in the history of the Soviet Union, a revolution from below was underway to revise inter-national policy.

Polish-Israeli contacts grew closer. In 1989, a Representation of the Interests of the Israeli State was opened at the embassy of the Kingdom of Holland. On February 27, 1990, an Israeli Embassy was opened in Warsaw. This is the date that marks the establishment of full diplomatic ties between the two countries.

Ten months later, on December 26, 1990, diplomatic ties are established between Israel and the USSR, which became a symbol that the hostilities between the two countries had abated-something that had characterized international relations for the previous two decades.

A full dialogue between Poland and Israel was initiated by a visit to Israel by the Polish president, Lech Walesa, in May 1991. In his speech, he referred to the many centuries of common history, and also to the wrongs that had been inflicted on Jews by Poles in the past.

A year later, in May 1992, the president of Israel, Chaim Herzog, came to Poland on an official state visit. During his speech to the Sejm, he said: "In our relations there have been praiseworthy periods of fair weather. There have also been tragic periods marked by dark clouds. Together we have created a mosaic, whose complicated structure is reflected in the mirror of both our histories. The ties between us are real and tangible."

Another occasion for Polish-Israeli meetings were the anniversaries associated with the Holocaust and the fiftieth anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising in

April 1993. Guests were the Prime Minister of Israel, Itzhak Rabin and the Vice President of the United States, Al Gore. In January 1995, the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp was observed. An official Israeli delegation took part, as well as the speaker of the Kneset, Shevach Weiss, who in 2000 became ambassador to Poland.

In January 1999, Polish president Aleksander Kwasniewski visited Israel several days, having been invited by the Peres Center for Peace. Currently, contacts between Israel and Poland are maintained between the prime ministers and foreign ministers. Decisions are made about further legal regulations and cooperation projects between the two states.

Since Polish-Israeli contacts were renewed over a decade ago, many important treaties have been signed regulating relations between the two countries. Most important have regarded trade and economic cooperation; the avoidance of double taxation; support for and mutual protection of investment; economic, scientific and technological cooperation in the field of agriculture.

For Poles and Israelis, projects for youth cooperation and exchange have been especially important in bringing these two nations together in a spirit of mutual understanding. Also helpful has been the increased tourism between the two countries in both directions: Poles to the Holy Land, and Jews to Poland, the country where so many Israeli citizens have their roots.

Following the lead of the USSR, in other east bloc states, attempts were made to reestablish ties with Israel. The first talks were informal and related to the organization of conferences and access to academic publications. The first international conference of historians, including Poles, took place in 1988 in Jerusalem. Later, trade and technological exchanges were discussed.

Jewish Life in Poland today

Population: 38,115,000

Jewish population: estimated at 10,000

On the eve of the *Shoah*, Poland was home to over three million Jews, the second-largest Jewish community in the world at the time. Warsaw, the capital, had a population of over 300,000 Jews, more than 30% of the population of the city and a larger Jewish community than in most European countries. They formed 10% of the general population.

Following the German onslaught in 1939, about 90% of Polish Jewry was destroyed. Many Jews from other countries were deported to Nazi death camps in German-occupied Poland and murdered there. After World War II, most of the survivors refused to return to, or remain in Poland, which was convulsed by civil war and anti-Semitic violence. Emigration accelerated after pogroms and other outrages, and the Jewish population continued to shrink through successive waves of emigration.

Since the fall of Communism in 1989, the small Jewish community in Poland has been able to reassert its identity and has a very high profile in public life today. Most of the country's Jews live in Warsaw, but smaller communities also exist in Krakow, Wroclaw, Lodz, Katowice, Szczecin, Gdansk and several other cities. The vast number of historical Jewish sites has proved a magnet for foreign visitors to Poland. The new Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw was opened to the public in 2014.

It is now 30 years since the fall of the communist regime in Poland. This important milestone has allowed Poles to explore their own history as well as the place of Polish Jews within this post communist era. Many Jews around the world have deep roots in Poland and its neighbours. Today, however, the resurgence of Jewish life is about young Jews finding their identity. There has been a rebirth of Jewish institutions, among them the Jewish Community Centres in Warsaw and Krakow, the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute, the Galicia museum in Krakow and the new Museum of the History of Polish Jews.

The fall of communism and the creation of a democracy have had a profound effect on Polish society and a deep influence on Polish-Jewish relations. The restoration of diplomatic ties between Poland and the State of Israel in 1990 was the beginning of a cordial relationship.

This gradual revival of Jewish life and culture has grown on a scale that was not anticipated. Both Orthodox and Reform communities are burgeoning and many young people are comfortable, indeed proud of their Jewish identity as Polish Jews.

Contemporary Poland is not the country that people remember for its tragic past. It has been difficult for the international community to let go of Polish stereotypes because of this past, however, both the state and international institutions have made dramatic strides in changing this image and there is no more hiding the past atrocities. More and more young people are discovering their Jewish ancestry; one that their grandparents had to recant. High-ranking members of the Jewish community estimate there are now 30,000 Jews among Poland's 38 million citizens, up from 10,000 in 2007 – and say there could be many more still unaware of their ancestry. Jonathan Ornstein, executive director of JCC Krakow says, "thousands of people are walking around Poland with Jewish roots they still don't know they have", estimating there may be as many as 100,000. The Jewish revival in Poland is flourishing and thriving.

IMPORTANT MILESTONES FOR POLISH JEWRY POST COMMUNISM

1988 First ever March of The living is organized

1989 Communism falls, first in Poland. The first Chief Rabbi of Poland, Menachem Joskowitz is appointed. He is a Holocaust Survivor from Poland. The last Chief Rabbi was in 1961

The new Polish democratic government makes its first foreign policy decision to renew ties with Israel. It makes Warsaw the main transit point for Soviet Jews leaving for Israel

Poland's first Jewish kindergarten since 1968 opens

The Krakow Jewish Culture Festival is born

1990 Pope John Paul II visits Poland and meets the Jewish community. He delivers a sermon in Kielce commemorating the victims of the 1946 pogrom

A Jewish 'boom' is experienced as thousands of Poles with Jewish origins start to investigate their roots

1991 Polish President, Lech Walesa is the first Polish leader to visit Israel and apologises in a speech to the Knesset for "wrongs committed against Jews in Poland"

The Polish Catholic Church publishes a letter deploring antisemitism

1992 Israeli President Chaim Herzog visits Poland

Poland co-sponsors a successful drive to repeal the UN's 'Zionism is Racism' resolution of 1975

- 1993** The 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is a Polish State event
Pope John Paul II makes a personal request to the Carmelite nuns at Auschwitz to move to a new location- they agree
- 1994** The Lauder-Morasha School, the first school under Jewish auspices in Warsaw since 1949, opens with a first grade of 18 students. Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek participates in the dedication ceremony of the school's permanent home in 1999, quoting the Talmud in his remarks
- 1996** The Polish Prime Minister attends a commemorative ceremony in Kielce on the 50th anniversary of the pogrom
- 1997** A Law on the "Relations between the State and Jewish Religious Congregations" is passed by Parliament, guaranteeing Jewish rights and making possible the partial restitution of prewar congregational property
Midrasz, Poland's first postwar Jewish opinion monthly is launched
- 1998** Extreme right wing activists set up hundreds of crosses on the site of the former convent at Auschwitz
- 1999** Polish Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek and Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu lead the March of the Living together
Beit Warszawa, Poland's first Reform congregation since WWII is launched in Warsaw
- 2000** 'Neighbours', a book by Jan.T. Gross, a sociologist and historian, documents for the first time the massacre in 1941 of Jewish inhabitants of the small town of Jedwabne by their Polish neighbours. The book generates possibly the most important public debate in post Communist Poland
- 2001** Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski leads the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the *Jedwabne massacre*. He is the first Polish President to officially recognise atrocities against Jews by Poles in WWII. The church and local residents boycott the event
- 2002** The Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland (FODZ) is established
- 2003** Two Jewish film festivals are launched in Warsaw.
The Jewish Agency for Israel in Poland takes responsibility for Taglit Birthright Poland
The Professor Moses Schorr Foundation is established to support the expanding adult education programmes of the Moses Schorr Centre in Warsaw. The Centre, Poland's largest Hebrew-language programme, also offers lecture series and seminars, an intensive summer school and an e-platform "Makledet"

- 2004** The Taube Foundation for Jewish Life and Culture starts the Jewish Heritage Initiative in Poland, designed to support and sustain the revival of the Jewish community
- Michael Shudrich becomes Poland's Chief Rabbi
- 2005** Chabad Lubavitch open centres in Warsaw and Krakow
- Centre for Jewish Research established at the University of Lodz
- 2006** Jan T. Gross' second book 'Fear', is published and again generates soul-searching debates about the fate of Polish Jewry in the immediate postwar era
- Opening of the Ec Chaim – Reform synagogue operating within the Jewish Religious Community of Warsaw. Ec Chaim continues and develops the work of a havura group formed in 2006 within the Jewish Religious Community of Warsaw with the aim of initiating and cultivating in it other than Orthodox and secular activities. In 2009 the Community's General Assembly adopts a resolution requiring the Board to employ a non-Orthodox rabbi. In October 2010, Rabbi Stas Wojciechowicz becomes the first Reform Rabbi of the Warsaw Community.
- 2008** Righteous gentile Irene Sendler dies at age of 98. She was a social worker and anti-Nazi partisan who had rescued Jewish children from the Warsaw Ghetto. The Taube Foundation creates a memorial award in her name to be given to Polish civilians who rescue Jewish heritage
- The first JCC in Poland is opened in Krakow
- 2009** Marek Edelman, deputy commander of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and veteran of the 1944 Warsaw Uprising passes away in Warsaw and is given a State Funeral in the Jewish Cemetery with military honours
- 2010** A tragic air crash kills Polish President Lech Kaczyński and the First Lady together with a 94-person delegation. There is a special service held in the Warsaw synagogue for the victims
- Rabbis, with the support of the Union of Polish Jewish Communities serve communities in Warsaw, Krakow, Katowice, Lodz and Wrocław. There is further outreach and learning in Gdansk and Lublin
- 2011** The FODZ (Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland) dedicates an education centre in the renovated Renaissance synagogue in Zamosc
- The 2011 Polish census lists 7,353 Polish citizens who declare Jewish ethnicity

- 2012** Poland celebrates the life and work of Janusz Korczak. This includes a number of events and publications
- 2013** The Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum opens a new exhibition in block 27, entitled "Shoah"

Warsaw's first ever Jewish Community Centre is opened, funded by the JDC, The Taube Foundation and Koret Foundation. It is home to cultural, education and community programmes

- 2014** The Museum of the History of Polish Jews officially opens

The Galicia Jewish Museum in Krakow celebrates its tenth anniversary

The Jewish Heritage Initiative in Poland celebrates its tenth anniversary

Makabi Warsaw Sport Club is relaunched by young Polish Jews. Makabi continues the pre-war tradition it established in 1915 in Warsaw

The Ride for the Living, an annual fundraising event under the patronage of Chief Rabbi of Poland Michael Schudrich, is launched. The 55-mile bicycle ride from Auschwitz to JCC Krakow, following the path of JCC Krakow member Robert Desmond who rode his bicycle 1,350 miles from London to Auschwitz visiting WWII sites of liberation along his journey. The ride draws participants from Poland and around the world

The Marek Edelman Centre for Dialogue, in Lodz, opens in its permanent space in the Park of Survivors

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

- 2015** The Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs acknowledges three Jewish community leaders with the prestigious Bene Merito Medal "For a friend of Poland, in recognition of the contributions each has made to the promotion and strengthening of the Republic of Poland in the international arena." The honourees are the Chief Rabbi of Poland, Michael Schudrich, Taube Centre Director Helise Lieberman and JCC Krakow Director Jonathan Ornstein

The Museum of Independence Traditions opens an exhibit and memorial in the Radegast Station in Lodz.

Polish born Dawid Szychowski becomes the rabbi of the Jewish community in Lodz

Wladyslaw Bartoszewski dies in Warsaw. He was a prisoner of KL Auschwitz, soldier of the Home Army, activist of the Council to Aid Jews, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Plenipotentiary for International Dialogue, with a special responsibility for the development of Polish-German relations and contacts with the Jewish diaspora and Israel.

- 2016** Margalit Kordowicz graduates from the Jewish Theological Seminary and becomes first Polish born woman rabbi

Samuel Willenberg, last Survivor of Treblinka Revolt, dies at 93.

After participating in the heroic revolt and setting 'hell on fire',

Willenberg joined the Polish resistance and fought in the Warsaw Uprising against the Germans in 1944

Ulma Family Museum of Poles Saving Jews in World War II in Markowa opens. In 1995, Wiktoria and Jozef Ulma were posthumously awarded the "Righteous Among the Nations" title

Hillel International opens Hillel Warsaw

The Institute of Jewish Studies, Jagiellonian University in Krakow celebrates its 30th birthday

- 2017** Opening of the core exhibition at the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute – "What we've been unable to shout out to the world". The main subject of the exhibition is the activity of Oneg Shabbat (Hebrew: The Joy of Sabbath), a secret group active in the Warsaw Ghetto, and the story of the unique archive they created – from its beginnings until the present day. History recorded on the pages of the Archive tells the story of its authors. We want to allow them to speak after 70 years. The founder and main creator of the Archive was a historian, Dr Emanuel Ringelblum. Oneg Shabbat's work, proof of intellectual and spiritual resistance, was made according to scientific guidelines, with care for objectivity and language diligence.

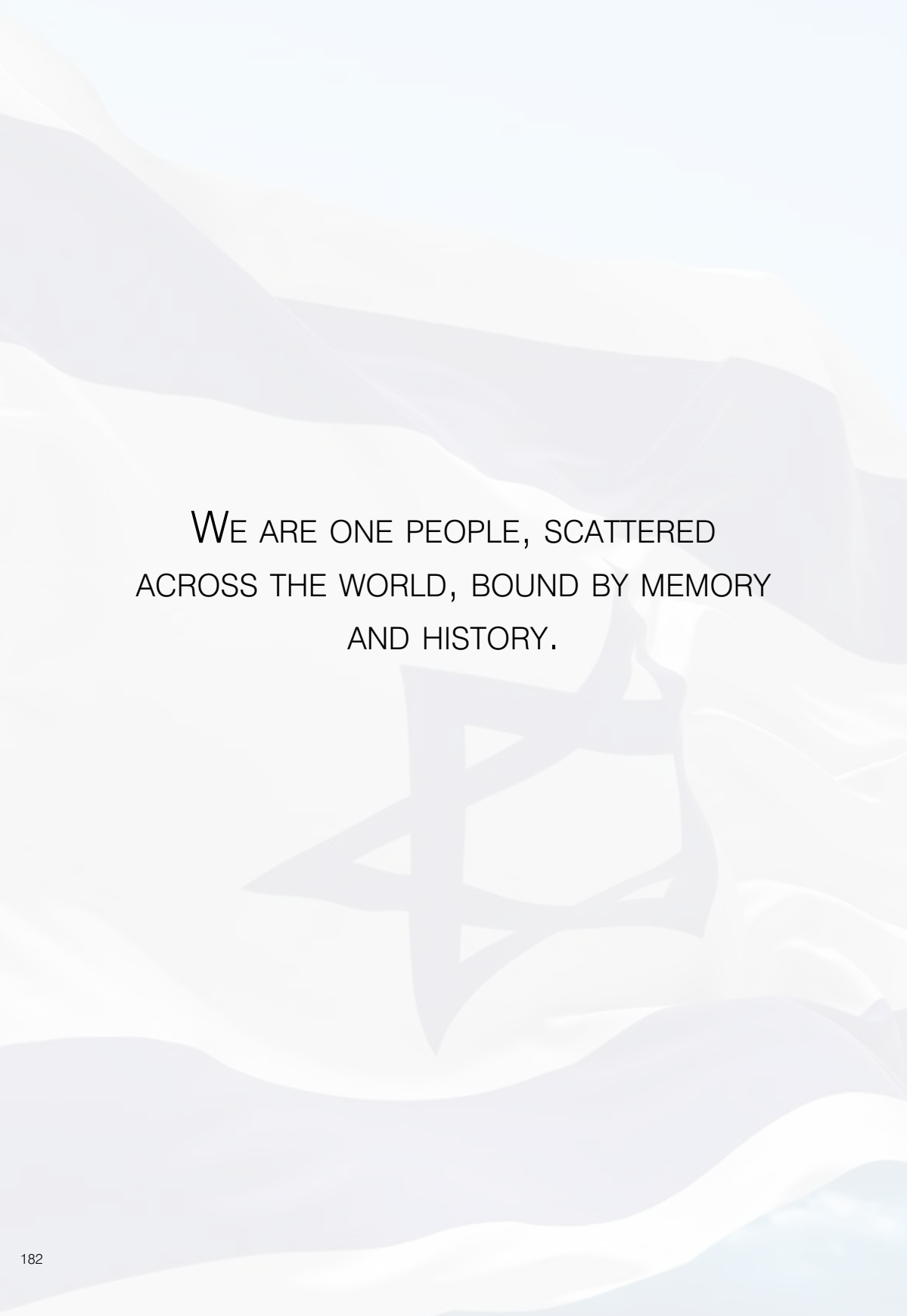
- 2018** Poland's President, Andrzej Duda, attends the Match of the Living ceremony at the Auschwitz-Birkenau site. The Warsaw Ghetto Museum is a historical museum in Warsaw currently under construction. The target site of the Museum is the historic complex of the former Bersohn and Bauman Children's Hospital at Sliska 51 St./Sienna 60 St. The opening of the facility is scheduled for the fourth quarter of 2025, a delay of 2 years.

Passage of Amendment to the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance (also known as « "Holocaust memory law") criminalizing public speech attributing responsibility for the Holocaust to Poland or the Polish nation. The legislation was part of the policy of the Law and Justice party seeking to present ethnic Poles exclusively as victims and heroes during WWII. The law was regarded by many as threatening freedom of expression and academic freedom, and led to a major diplomatic crisis. After international protests, the criminal provisions were removed later that year.

- 2019** POLIN Museum receives the European Museum Academy Prize; public debate over Holocaust memory legislation continues.

- 2020** COVID-19 disrupts Jewish communal life; 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau commemorated.

- 2021** 80th anniversary of the German invasion of the Soviet Union renews focus on mass shootings of Jews in Eastern Europe.
- 2022** Polish Jewish communities mobilize humanitarian assistance for refugees following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.
- 2023** 80th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising commemorated; development of the Warsaw Ghetto Museum advances.
- 2024** Continued restoration of Jewish heritage sites and expansion of cultural and educational initiatives.
- 2025** Construction of the Warsaw Ghetto Museum continues; opening projected for 2026.



WE ARE ONE PEOPLE, SCATTERED
ACROSS THE WORLD, BOUND BY MEMORY
AND HISTORY.

Where the World's Jews Live

Top 10 Countries by Jewish Population

1. Israel: 7,427,000 – 7,760,000
2. United States: 6,300,000 – 7,698,000
3. France: 440,000
4. Canada: 398,000 – 400,000
5. United Kingdom: 312,000 – 313,000
6. Argentina: 170,000 – 171,000
7. Russia: 123,000 – 132,000
8. Germany: 125,000
9. Australia: 117,000 – 118,000
10. Brazil: 90,000 – 90,500

Other Countries with Significant Populations (2024–2026)

- South Africa: 49,500 – 50,000
- Hungary: 45,000 – 46,000
- Mexico: 40,000 – 41,000
- Ukraine: 32,000 – 33,000
- Netherlands: 29,700 – 35,000
- Belgium: 29,000
- Italy: 26,800 – 26,900
- Switzerland: 18,500 – 20,500
- Uruguay: 16,000 – 16,200
- Chile: 15,700 – 16,000
- Sweden: 14,900 – 15,000
- Turkey: 14,200 – 14,500
- Spain: 13,000
- Austria: 10,300
- Poland: 10,000
- Panama: 10,000
- Iran: 9,100 – 9,500
- Romania: 8,600 – 8,900
- New Zealand: 7,500
- Azerbaijan: 6,800
- Denmark: 6,400
- Belarus: 5,400 – 8,500
- India: 4,500 – 4,800

Testimonies & Reflections

Testimonies, poems and readings

CATASTROPHE

A Jew I know sat down next to me on a bench in Krasinski Park and wanted to know why I was looking sad.

"Graetz has died," I told him. (*Heinrich Graetz, along with Simon Dubnow, the father of modern Jewish History*).

"God rest his soul!" he responded. "Someone from these parts?"

This question – which 90% of Jews would have asked in his place – is the measure of the gulf into which we have fallen...

"Let's call it (the Jewish People) a sugarloaf... It's (Jewish History) one of the foundations on which the whole sugarloaf, our entire Jewishness stands. We are an ancient People, yet in this respect other peoples are wiser than we are. Not only the European peoples, who write and read and study history, not only the Romans, the Greeks, the ancient civilised peoples who gave a lot of attention to recording their history, not only the Egyptians, the Persians, and the Medes who chiselled their history on stone, on walls, on the pyramids, but even the primitive peoples, even the savages, knew the value of history..."

"But what use is history?"...

"If a man has no memory at all, was born without a memory?"

"Does it happen?"

"Suppose!"

"It would be terrible! Such a man could never learn anything. No memory, no experience!"

"So that a boy of six with a memory would know more than he does?"

"Sure!"

"Now you see! That applies not only to an individual, but to a whole people, to a nation. The memory of a nation is its history. Without history a nation is like a man without his memory – it can't learn from experience. Where would a person learn how to act in difficult times, to overcome a crisis, to prepare for and to have faith in the future if each generation, with its joys and griefs, its virtues and faults were laid in the graves and forgotten?"

"Take my advice! Buy Graetz!"

I. L. Peretz, (1852 – 1915) Concerning History, (quoted in J. Leftwich, Great Yiddish Writers of the Twentieth Century, Aronson 1969)

"The ghetto was very overcrowded. There was a typhoid epidemic. Many buildings, including the one in which I lived with my grandfather, were under quarantine. From our windows I could see the inside of the ghetto wall.

During the winter I was very cold; to keep warm I stayed in bed covered by whatever I could find. I was continuously hungry. Because of flour shortages the meagre bread rations that we received contained sawdust. I was dreaming of the white Kaiser rolls that I had for breakfast before the war in Katowice. In the ghetto, young starving children were begging for food, dead bodies were just lying in the streets."

Ed Herman, Warsaw Ghetto Winter 1940

"In the desolate ghetto one hears each night the howling of the last dog – a hoarse, choked bark. This orphaned cry of the last dog sends shivers down one's spine. While, at night, a man tosses in his sleep, the dog's cry echoes like the howl of a thousand desolations. The cry of an orphaned dog against the backdrop of an abandoned city. And what is even more terrifying? When the dog stops wailing for a moment, the ceaseless train whistles can be heard and they are no less intimidating. These are not trains bearing greetings from faraway, from the freedom of the open fields; they come, rather, from the fields of murder, from the slaughterhouse. The trains seem to howl their loneliness, even as the last dog in the ghetto is howling his".

Peretz Opoczynski, Warsaw Ghetto 9 October 1942

"...One of the most surprising side-effects of this war is the clinging to life, the almost total absence of suicides. People die in great numbers of starvation, the typhus epidemic or dysentery, they are tortured and murdered by the Germans in great numbers, but they do not escape from life by their own desire. On the contrary, they are tied to life by all their senses; they want to live at any price and to survive the war. The tensions of this historic world conflict are so great that all wish to see the outcome of the gigantic struggle and the new regime in the world, the small and the great, old men and boys. The old have just one wish: the privilege of seeing the end and surviving Hitler.

I know a Jew who is all old age. He is certainly about 80. Last winter a great tragedy befell the old man. He had an only son who was about 52. The son died of typhus. He has no other children. And the son died. He did not marry a second time and lived with his son. A few days ago I visited the old man. When I left – his mind is still entirely clear – he burst out crying and said: "I want to see the end of the war, even if I live only another half an hour!"

Why should the old man wish so much to stay alive? There it is: even he wants to live, "if only half an hour" after the last shot is fired. This is the burning desire of all the Jews."

from 'The Warsaw Ghetto Diary' of Avraham Levin, 5 June 1942

"I don't know if I succeeded in describing how much we tried to live up to those values. I did mention how we were almost obsessed at times with preserving the unblemished personal morality of each of our members as individuals, and of the Movement as a whole.

What gave us this moral strength? We were able to endure the life in the ghetto because we knew that we were a collective, a movement. Each of us knew that he wasn't alone. Every other Jew faced his fate alone, one man before the overpowering, invincible enemy. From the very first moment until the bitter end, we stood together, as a collective, as a movement. The feeling that there was a movement, a community of people who cared about each other, who shared ideas and values in common, made it possible for each of us to do what we did.

The greatest tragedy was that the Jews did not know what to do. From the very first days of demoralisation in the ghetto until the final days of destruction and death, they did not know what to do. We knew. Our movement values showed us our goals and how to achieve them. This was the source of our strength to live. It is the very same source which keeps the survivors alive even today."

**Zivia Lubetkin (see Biographies)
from her Book: 'In the Days of Destruction and Revolt'**

"The words were bitter, heavy, decision-laden words. There will not be any resistance by Jews. It is too late. The Jewish people are lost. If we failed to organise a Jewish force among the hundreds of thousands in Warsaw, how can we succeed when there are only tens of thousands of us left?

The masses did not believe us. There are no arms, and it seems we will not get away. We have no strength to start anew. The people are being exterminated – trampled. This small group can still save it. Let us go out tomorrow into the streets, let us put fire to the ghetto and attack the Germans with knives. We will die. It is our duty to die. And Israel's honour will have been saved. Days will come and it will be told: this poor nation had youth which saved its honour as best it could. Comrades added what each of them thought he had to say. One idea prevailed: despair controlled emotion, and emotion commanded action.

In this atmosphere of despair, it was impossible to say anything else. Nevertheless, one of the comrades plucked up his courage and said: the emotions are true; the conclusions are mistaken. The disaster is great, and so is the shame. But the deed being discussed here is a deed of despair. It will leave no echo. There will be no revenge on the enemy. Our youth will disappear... It is necessary to start from scratch... On that night, we decided the fate of the January and April Uprisings."

Yitzchak (Antek) Zuckerman (see Biographies)

IT'S ABOUT TIME*by Wladyslaw Szlengel (see Biographies)*

It's about time! About time!
 He has frightened us for so long with the
 day of reckoning!
 Now we have had enough of prayers
 and penances.
 Today you shall face our judgment
 And shall await the verdict humbly.
 With a mighty stone we'll throw onto your heart
 The blasphemous, horrendous and blood
 stained accusation.
 – With the edge of a battleaxe, with the
 blades of sabres
 It shall burst into the heaven like the Tower
 of Babel.
 And you, up there, the great convict,
 You up there in the horrific interstellar silence,
 Will be able to hear every word of ours,
 How the chosen people are bringing
 charges against you
 – No pay back, no pay back!!!
 This that once you, so many years ago,
 Had led us out from Egypt into our land,
 Will change nothing! It will change nothing!
 Now we shall not forgive you any longer
 That you have been turning us in into the
 hands of thugs –
 That, for the millennia,
 We have been to you like faithful children.
 With your name each of us was dying
 In the arenas of the Caesars, in Nero's circus.
 On the crosses of the Romans, on the
 stakes of Spain

We, the beaten and reviled, the manhandled.
 And you turned us in to the Cossacks
 Who ripped your Holy Covenant to shreds.
 For the agony of the Ghetto, for the spectre
 of gallows
 We the humiliated, we the tormented –
 For the death in Treblinka, we the bent under
 the whip,
 We will pay back! We will pay you back!
 – Now you will not escape your end!
 When we bring you to the slaying place,
 You will not be able to bribe the bathhouse
 guard
 With a 100-dollar golden disc of sun.
 And when the hangman will have driven
 and forced you
 And dragged, pushed you into the steam
 chamber
 And hermetically closed the hatch behind you,
 The hot steam will begin to suffocate, to
 suffocate you,
 And you will scream, you will try to escape –
 And after the torture of dying will have
 ended
 They will drag your body along and throw it
 into a monstrous pit,
 They will pull your stars out – the gold teeth
 out of your jaw –
 At the end they will burn you
 And you will become but ashes.

*Warsaw, The Ghetto, December 1942.
 Translated from Polish to English by Halina Birenbaum.
 The translation edited by Andrew Kobos.*

THE NEW HOLIDAY

by Wladyslaw Szlengl

A Jews need a holiday for every event
The purpose of each somewhat different;
For each is a token
Of past glory, so oft spoken:
A miracle, rebellion, incident:

A gragger, a costume
Is the doom of Hamman;
Matzah is Egypt's Pharaoh.
We recall the holy day
Of our foe and adversary
And the miracle for which we had prayed.

The Holocaust will end,
And from the pits will portend
Dark shadows of death and destruction.
They all herald good cheer
Of yomtov so near,
And the nostalgia of hiding in dread.

So many guests to invite
To the depths of burial sites,
And in bunkers, they huddle in silence.
In reverence they stand
A day of fast will be planned
To recall the starvation and fright.

The aged recount
While the young ones will tout:
"Again, Gramps is telling inconceivable
tales.
His story's too wild,
Man, woman and child
Without cause their lives were assailed"?

And candles we'll light
As lost spirits take flight
And recall: "Umschlagplatz", "Aktzia",
"blokada".

Children will enquire,
What precisely transpired;
As we ask at the Seder:

"Ma nishtana"?

And at the guests will depart
With new truths they'll impart

'round a table with honey and apples;
And in memory of devastation,
Of horror and obliteration,
They'll dip in the honey, a swastika.

THE COUNTERATTACK (EXCERPT)

by Wladyslaw Szlengl

Feb 1943, 2 months before he died

On Mila Street the first bullet fell –
 A guard wobbled in the door –
 Looked astonished...
 - incredible –
 - something isn't right here...
 On Mila Street BLOOD
 He backed away from the doorway
 And swore. I'm bleeding...
 And meanwhile Brownings barked
 On Niska
 On Dzika
 On Pawia
 On twisting stairs where a mother
 Was dragged down by the hair
 Lies SS – man Hantke...
 Strangely tensed as though
 He found death indigestible
 This revolt like a bone in his throat...
 Like purple blossoms of blood From Niska
 and Mila and Muranowska
 Flames from our gun barrels flower
 This is our spring, this is our counterattack
 This wine of battle pounds in our heads
 These alleys of Dzika and Ostrowska
 Are like the partisan's forests –
 Block numbers on our chests,
 Our medals in the Jewish War
 The shriek of six letters flashes with red
 Like a battering ram it beats: REVOLT...

SHIPMENT TO MAJDANEK

by Ephraim Fogel

Arrived from scattered cities, several lands
 Intact from sea land mountain land
 and plain

Item: six surgeons, slightly mangled hands
 Item: three poets hopelessly insane

Item: a Russian mother and child
 The former with five gold teeth and
 usable shoes,
 The latter with seven dresses,
 peasant style.

Item: another hundred thousand Jews.

Item: a crippled Czech with a handmade
 crutch.

Item: a Spaniard with a subversive laugh;
 Seventeen dozen Danes, nine gross
 of Dutch.

Total: precisely a million and a half.

They are sorted and marked – the method
 is up to you.

The books must be balanced,
 the disposition stated.

Take care that all accounts are neat
 and true.

Make sure that they are thoroughly
 cremated.

"It is impossible to put into words what we have been through. One thing is clear, what happened exceeded our boldest dreams. The Germans ran twice from the ghetto. One of our companies held out for 40 minutes and another – for more than 6 hours. The mine set in the "brushmakers" area exploded. Several of our companies attacked the dispersing Germans. Our losses in manpower are minimal. That is also an achievement. Y. (Yechiel) fell. He fell a hero, at the machine-gun. I feel that great things are happening and what we dared do is of great, enormous importance...

Beginning from today we shall shift over to the partisan tactic. Three battle companies will move out tonight, with two tasks: reconnaissance and obtaining arms. Do you remember, short-range weapons are of no use to us. We use such weapons only rarely. What we need urgently: grenades, rifles, machine-guns and explosives.

It is impossible to describe the conditions under which the Jews of the ghetto are now living. Only a few will be able to hold out. The remainder will die sooner or later. Their fate is decided. In almost all the hiding places in which thousands are concealing themselves it is not possible to light a candle for lack of air.

With the aid of our transmitter we heard the marvellous report on our fighting by the "Shavit" radio station. The fact that we are remembered beyond the ghetto walls encourages us in our struggle. Peace go with you, my friend! Perhaps we may still meet again! The dream of my life has risen to become fact. Self-defence in the ghetto will have been a reality. Jewish armed resistance and revenge are facts. I have been a witness to the magnificent, heroic fighting of Jewish men in battle."

**The Last Letter from Mordecai Anielewicz (see Biographies)
Warsaw Ghetto Revolt Commander, 23 April 1943**

SHE WAITED FOR ME

by Halina Birnebaum (1986)

She waited for me there, near the pathway.
She did know one day I would come
And would perceive her with all my senses
My mother, beautiful and young

She waited for me there, near the pathway
in Majdanek

Across from the "disinfection" barrack
– the crematorium's ovens

After forty years I have come here from afar
And see her standing like Then
– despite Death
Like on that night we were separated forever:

Dark-haired, not too tall
A long curl swaying over her forehead
And hair braided around her head
Red cheeks, large eyes still enlarged
by the lack of sleep
White teeth like pearls unveiling a smile –
The most wonderful smile on Earth –
a mother's –
That attempts to comfort her child
In front of the gate to gas chamber
and ovens...

A large shepherd's plaid coat covers
her body
And she clasps me into it, in order to
Embed in me the strength of human warmth
In this one but last moment
A ray of consolation
In this inferno
The place one could exit only
Through a chimney as a smoke

I have come here again
From another country,
A grownup woman
Yet the same girl I was Then
Whom she did love so much
And over whose fate she agonised.

Entering this gravel road I felt her presence
I ran to her with all my breath
And like Then, I suddenly stooped.

Anguished in pain and helplessness
I realised:

They had wrestled her away from me
I shall never have her again!
Majdanek – today a sleepy kingdom
of death
We were brought here together
Now I am standing here alone

I try to embrace her silhouette, touch it
While drowned in horrible pain.
Small and helpless I stand here again
In front of the gas chamber and the
crematorium
That was extinguished too late.
Powerless like Then though now free...

I sit on the ground near the pathway,
Put my head in my hands
Cry aloud almost to unconsciousness
With no self control, no embarrassment.
I cling to the shadow of my Mother killed here
Hold to it with all my strength
Decide to take it home with me overseas
Even though I would prefer to remain here
Along with my tears that permeate the ground

I will never know how I went back
While she remained there in that deadly
silence
I all grew numb
My body was shaking with spasms

A stranger, a Polish museum worker,
passed by
From a nearby hill he shouted to me:
"Whom of yours had they killed here
so that you're in such despair?"
Getting no reply – he left.
He addressed me in the language of the
living people
While I was with my vision of my dead Mother
With her shadow in the emptiness
With her death at Majdanek – and perhaps
with mine own too.

GOOD NIGHT WORLD

by Jacob Glatstein

Good night, wide world,
big stinking world.
Not you but I slam shut the gate.
With a long gabardine,
with a fiery yellow patch,
with a proud stride,
because I want to,
I'm going back to the ghetto.
Wipe away, stamp put every vestige
of conversion.
I roll around in your garbage –
praise, praise, praise, –
hunchbacked Jewish life.
Damn your dirty culture, world.
I wallow in your dust
even though it's forsaken,
sad Jewish life.
German pig, cutthroat Pole,
Romania, thief, land of drunkards
and gluttons.
Week-kneed democracy, with your cold
sympathy-compresses.
Good night, electrified arrogant world.
Back to my kerosene, candle shadows,
eternal October, candle stars,

to my crooked streets, humped lanterns,
my sacred pages, my Bible,
my Gemorra, to my backbreaking
studies, to the bright Yiddish prayerbook,
to law, profundity, duty, justice, –
world, I walk gladly towards quiet
ghetto light.
Good night. I'll make you, world, a gift
of all my liberators.
Take back your Jesus-Marxes, choke
on their courage.
Croak over a drop of our christianized
blood.
For I have hope, even if He is delaying,
day by day my expectation rises.
Green leaves will yet rustle
on our sapless tree.
I don't need any consolation.
I'm going back to my very beginnings,
from Wagner's pagan music to melody,
to humming.
I kiss you, disheveled Jewish life,
I cry with the joy of coming back.

Jacob Glatstein (1896-1971) was born in Lublin, Poland. Although his family identified with the Jewish Enlightenment movement, he received a traditional education until the age of 16 and an introduction to modern Yiddish literature. In 1914, due to increasing antisemitism in Lublin, he emigrated to New York City, where his uncle lived. He worked in sweatshops while studying English. He started to study law at New York University in 1918 and he worked briefly at teaching before switching to journalism.

His Holocaust poems are meant to confront, shock, understand, give solace and mend a shattered Jewish world. His poetry is informed by an authenticity that is anguished by memory and reflection. His striking imagery, ear for folk idiom, and ability to divest and invest words, sounds, and structure enhance his verse. His "Good Night World" (written in Yiddish) is a shattering rejection of European culture, state and church included, in whose bosom the Shoah was thought, prepared and executed.

FAREWELL, MY KRAKOW

*by Mordechai Gebirtig,
Krakow, October 1940*

Farewell, my Krakow!
 So I wish you well!
 The wagon's waiting at my house
 The wild enemy drives me out
 As one drives out a stray dog –
 Without mercy, far away from you

Farewell, my Krakow!
 Perhaps this day I'll see
 For the last time all that's dear to me
 At my mother's gravesite
 My heart cries out in pain –
 It was not so hard to part from her

My eyes are crying too,
 Till I've no more tears to shed

My father's cold wet gravestone is wet
 with them
 And my grandfather's gravestone,
 I cannot find at all –
 It must have turned to sand by now

Farewell, my Krakow!
 Holy is your earth;
 There my beloved parents rest
 To lay with them eternally
 Will not be my fate –
 A grave awaits me somewhere else

Farewell, my Krakow!
 So, I wish you well
 The wagon's waiting at my house
 The wild enemy drives me out
 As one drives out a stray dog –
 Without mercy, far away from you.

TO THE TEACHERS

*by Heta Blumengrabner,
Krakow Ghetto, 1942*

You taught us to strive for a life of ideals
 You exhorted through verses and poems
 To soar on the wings of enthusiasm
 To unravel life's innermost secrets

You taught us to love the magic of words
 To go into raptures, weeping with awe
 To press ever onward and search
 unrelentingly
 For the truth and the cosmos unrevealed

You enchanted our spirits with 'humanist'
 phrases
 You taught us to worship the glory of genius
 For this I am now bowed with suffering
 I face the cruel world, all helpless and lost

We should have been taught to spring
 from a crouch
 To seize hold of a neck with an iron
 strong grip
 To strike at the forehead with fist
 Until lifeless he crumbles and falls!

You should have taught us to shriek till
 we're heard
 How to crash through a gate that
 is cracked
 How to kill to avoid getting killed
 And get used to the glitter of blood

O' erudite teachers, men of vast
 knowledge!
 Did you really and truly not know
 That the earth has no place for
 a humanist?
 Why did you plant yearning in our hearts?

"I must confess it: after only one week of prison, the instinct for cleanliness disappeared in me. I wander aimlessly around the washroom when I suddenly see Steinlauf, my friend aged almost fifty, with nude torso, scrub his neck and shoulders with little success (he has no soap) but great energy. Steinlauf sees me and greets me, and without preamble asks me severely why I do not wash. Why should I wash? Would I be better off than I am? Would I please someone more? Would I live a day longer? I would probably live a shorter time, because to wash is an effort, a waste of time energy and warmth. Does Steinlauf not know that after half an hour with the coal sacks every difference between him and me will have disappeared? The more I think about it, the more washing one's face in our condition seems a stupid feat, even frivolous; a mechanical habit, or worse, a dismal repetition of an extinct rite. We will all die, we are all about to die; if they give me ten minutes between the reveille and work, I want to dedicate them to something else, to draw into myself, to weigh up things, or merely to look at the sky and think that I am looking at it perhaps for the last time; or even to let myself live, to indulge myself in the luxury of an idle moment.

But Steinlauf interrupts me. He has finished washing and is now drying himself with his cloth jacket which he was holding before he wrapped it up between his knees and which he will soon put on. And without interrupting the operation he administers me a complete lesson.

It grieves me now that I have forgotten his plain outspoken words, the words of ex-sergeant Steinlauf of the Austro-Hungarian army, Iron Cross of the 1914 – 18 war. It grieves me because it means I have to translate his uncertain Italian and his quiet manner of speaking of a good soldier into my language of an incredulous man. But this was the sense, not forgotten either then or later; that precisely because the Lager was a great machine to reduce us to beasts, we must not become beasts; that even in this place one can survive, and therefore one must want to survive, to tell the story, to bear witness; and that to survive we must force ourselves to save at least the skeleton, the scaffolding, the form of civilization. We are slaves, deprived of every right, exposed to every insult, condemned to certain death, but we still possess one power, and we must defend it with all our strength, for it is the last – the power to refuse our consent. So we must certainly wash our faces without soap in dirty water and dry ourselves on our jackets. We must polish our shoes, not because the regulation states it, but for dignity and propriety. We must walk erect, without dragging our feet, not in homage to Prussian discipline but to remain alive, not to begin to die."

from Primo Levi "Survival in Auschwitz", 1961

Q: How many were you in the barracks?

A: The barracks? There were about three hundred.

Q: And you were sleeping next to your sister?

A: Okay. The barracks were three bunks and six women in each bunk and one cover only. My sister was with me and my Auntie Fortuné and two other girls. One night, Mattie, one of the girls started to scream. She woke up screaming and screaming and screaming. She was very strong in Rhodes. She started to scream and we wanted to help her, we tried to help her because if she screamed, the Nazis were going to come and they were going to kill her. We tried to hold her the most we can, but she didn't want it. We also didn't want for her to run out because we saw in the morning bodies electrocuted against the wire. She kept on screaming and then all of a sudden she died. She died and we kept her all night there with us.

Q: How old was she?

A: She was twenty-one.

Q: So she screamed and then died?

A: She screamed very much. This can happen. Some people who have a lot resistance and lot of willing to live, when they find themselves in a situation like that, they cannot take it. They know that they won't be able to make it and they die. So Mattie was gone.

Testimony of Laura Varon, Yad Vashem Archives 0.3-10423

So one of the infractions for which you got killed was to sing and that night when we came back to the barracks, a girl who claimed that she was born in Oswiecim which was Auschwitz and who had a beautiful voice started to sing 'A Yiddishe Mamme'. Now that song was forbidden for two reasons. First of all, the prisoners themselves couldn't take it because everyone started to cry and become hysterical because they had all lost their mothers. Now Marlot and I never called our mother 'Mutt', never during the camp. We always called her by her first name. It would have been suicide to call her 'Mutt'. So everybody had lost their mothers and the song was forbidden by the Germans and was forbidden by the prisoners. And she started to sing and the entire barracks started to sing 'A Yiddishe Mamme'. I shall never forget that. And the next morning, of course, they made us stand in appell (roll call) for double time, but they didn't kill us. It was late in the day because this was already late in the time. It was already December of 1944 and they knew they were going to lead us out to the Death March.

Testimony of Judith Becker, Yad Vashem 0.3-9416

The very blunt words **Dolek Liebskind** used in the last Shabbat dinner in November 1942 with his Akiva Youth Group before going underground, "Jews must fight for Jewish dignity and whoever is worried here about staying alive doesn't belong with us. We are fighting over three lines of history just so that it not be said that our youth went like sheep to the slaughter. These three line will salvage our honour, the honour of the Jews."

Rivka Liebskind planned and undertook many underground military operations against the Germans. The most successful of these operations was at the Zigyners cafe where they managed to injure many Germans. Some of the participants were caught and imprisoned by the Germans. Liebskind managed to escape and hid in Adek Tannenbaum's apartment. On 24 December 1942, apparently tipped off by an informant, the Germans surrounded the apartment. Liebskind and Tannenbaum defended themselves and injured several Germans. However, with no way out, they killed themselves. His wife Rivka was captured and imprisoned, first in Birkenau and then in Auschwitz where she participated in Resistance. She eventually made her way to Israel and testified at the Eichmann trial.

NEVER SHALL I FORGET

by Elie Wiesel

Never shall I forget that night, the first night
in camp, that turned my life into one long
night seven times sealed.

Never shall I forget that smoke.

Never shall I forget the small faces of the
children whose bodies I saw transformed
into smoke under a silent sky.

Never shall I forget those flames that
consumed my faith for ever.

Never shall I forget the nocturnal silence
that deprived me for all eternity of the
desire to live.

Never shall I forget those moments that
murdered my God and my soul and turned
my dreams to ashes.

Never shall I forget those things, even
were I condemned to live as long as
God Himself.

Never.

Extract from 'Night' by Elie Wiesel

"And as the train stopped, we saw this time that flames were gushing out of a tall chimney into the black sky. Madame Schachter was silent herself. Once more she had become dumb, indifferent, absent and had gone back to her corner.

We looked at the flames in the darkness. There was an abominable odour floating in the air. Suddenly, our doors opened. Some odd looking characters dressed in striped shirts and black trousers leapt into the wagon. They held electric torches and truncheons. They began to strike out to the left and right, shouting: "Everybody get out! Everybody out of the wagon! Quickly!"

We jumped out. I threw a last glance towards Madame Schachter. Her little boy was holding her hand. In front of us flames. In the air that smell of burning flesh. It must have been about midnight. We had arrived – at Birkenau, the reception for Auschwitz.

... The cherished objects we had brought with us this far were left behind in the train and with them, at last our illusions. Every two yards or so an SS man held out his Tommy gun trained on us. Hand in hand we followed the crowd. An SS non-commissioned officer came to meet us a truncheon in hand. He gave orders:

"Men to the left! Women to the right!"

Eight words were spoken quietly, indifferently, without emotion. Eight short, simple words. Yet that was the moment when I parted from my mother. I had not had time to think, but already I felt the pressure of my father's hand; we were alone. For a part of a second I glimpsed my mother and my sister moving away to the right. Tzipora held my mother's hand. I saw them disappear into the distance; my mother was stroking my sister's fair hair, as though to protect her, while I walked on with my father and the other men. And I did not know that in that place, at that moment, I was parting from my mother and Tzipora forever. I went on walking, my father held on to my hand."

Elie Wiesel (1928 – 2016) was born in 1928 in Sighet, Transylvania, which is now part of Romania. He was fifteen years old when he and his family were deported by the Nazis to Auschwitz. His mother and younger sister perished, his two older sisters survived. Elie and his father were later transported to Buchenwald, where his father died shortly before the camp was liberated in April 1945.

After the war, he studied in Paris and later became a journalist. During an interview with the distinguished French writer, Francois Mauriac, he was persuaded to write about his experiences in the death camps. The result was his internationally acclaimed memoir, *Night (La Nuit)*, which has since been translated into more than thirty languages.

He is the author of more than sixty books of fiction and non-fiction and has received numerous awards for his literary and human rights activities. In 1986, he won the Nobel Prize for Peace, and soon after, Marion and Elie Wiesel established The Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity.

Elie took part in the March of the Living in 1990 and 2005.

Extract from 'This Way for the Gas Ladies and Gentlemen' by Tadeuz Borowski

The heaps grow. Suitcases, bundles, blankets, coats, handbags that open as they fall, spilling coins, gold, watches; mountains of bread pile up at the exits, heaps of marmalade, jams, masses of meat, sausages; sugar spills on the gravel. Trucks, loaded with people, start up with a deafening roar and drive off amidst the wailing and screaming of the women separated from their children, and the stupefied silence of the men left behind. They are the ones who had been ordered to step to the right – the healthy and the young who will go to the camp. In the end, they too will not escape death, but first they must work...

Here is a woman- she walks quickly, but tries to appear calm. A small child with a pink cherub's face runs after her, and, unable to keep up, stretches out his little arms and cries: 'Mama! Mama!'

'Pick up your child, woman!'

'It's not mine, sir, not mine!' she shouts hysterically and runs on, covering her faced with her hands. She wants to hide, she wants to reach those who will not ride the trucks, those who will go on foot, those who will stay alive. She is young, healthy, good-looking, she wants to live...

Andrei, a sailor from Sevastopol, grabs hold of her. His eyes are glassy from vodka and the heat. With one powerful blow he knocks her off her feet, then, as she falls, takes her by the hair and pulls her up again...

'Ah, you bloody Jewess! So you're running from your own child! I'll show you, you whore!' His huge hand chokes her, he lifts her in the air and heaves her on to the truck like a sack of grain.

'Here! And take this with you, bitch!' and he throws the child at her feet...

Several other men are carrying a small girl with only one leg. They hold her by the arms and the one leg. Tears are running down her face and she whispers faintly: 'Sir, it hurts, it hurts...' They throw her on the truck on top of the corpses. She will burn alive along with them.

"We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."

Viktor Frankl M.D., Ph.D.,

Frankl (1905-1970) was an Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist as well as a Holocaust survivor. Frankl was the founder of logotherapy, which is a form of Existential Analysis, the "Third Viennese School" of psychotherapy.

Yehiel De-Nur was born in Poland in 1909. After losing his entire family to the Nazis, mother, father, wife, sister and brother. He spent two years in Auschwitz. Several days before the evacuation of the camp, De-Nur found himself among a group of men whom the Nazis were taking outside the camp to be shot. Suddenly he bolted and ran for the forest. Thus he escaped from Auschwitz and eventually made his way to Italy, where he ended up in a hospital just as the war was coming to a close. When the doctors told him he was about to die, he asked for pencil and paper, so that he could repay a debt to the dead. Two weeks later he had completed the novel.

Having accomplished his task he entrusted the manuscript to a Jewish soldier. The soldier looked at the manuscript and said, "There is no author's name here. Who shall I say wrote it?"

"Who wrote it?" De-Nur answered. "They wrote it. Put their name on it: Ka-tzetnik."

Thus the great author of Holocaust literature was anonymously born, taking the name Ka-tzetnik which means "camp inmate". By having had the dead speak through him, Ka-tzetnik made what was described as a miraculous recovery; soon he was on his way to Israel.

"You can't claim that this is God's issue. I don't know who God is. I have not made His acquaintance... that is the doctrine I learned from the Holocaust. It is both the lesson I learned and the moral I understood; neither God nor Satan created Auschwitz – we did – human beings. When I left Auschwitz, I was young and I learned that Man had created two things during the war: the atom bomb and penicillin. I had no idea how the two were connected; the events occurred here while I was there. The human brain is an indescribable machine, which alas, has been perfected, like God, who builds universes and destroys them...let's say, "and you chose life", meaning there is penicillin whose role is to heal human beings, and then there's the finger that can press the button. It is not God that can destroy the world, but Man, and the general rehearsal was Auschwitz.

It is not a pen name. I do not see myself as a writer of literature. This is a chronicle from the planet Auschwitz. I was there for about two years. There, time is different from time here, on the planet Earth. Every fraction of every moment runs on a different time line. The residents of planet Auschwitz were nameless. They had no parents, and they had no children. They did not dress the way they dress here. They were not born there, nor did they give birth... they did not live or die according to the rules of the world. Their names were a number."

Ka Tzetnik from his testimony at the Eichmann Trial, when asked why he chose the pen name "Ka Tzetnik"

"Auschwitz will turn into an ephemeral cloud of smoke if Man doesn't learn its lesson, and indeed if Auschwitz becomes a thing that never was, Man will not be worthy of the continuance of his existence in any case."

Extract from 'God who created Auschwitz' by Ka-Tzetnik

And I, in this truck rolling along, a naked frame among naked frames, am being sent now by a yawning German to the crematorium. I watch him and his yawn, and suddenly ask myself: Does he hate me? It would seem that he doesn't even know me. He doesn't even know my name, just as I don't know the names of all of us, being brought now to the crematorium. All I know for certain about this German is that he now wants, on this cold morning, to stay in his warm bed, without having to waken with the dawn because this truck loaded down with raw materials has to get to the crematorium. At the same moment, I am shocked as never before in my life: If that is who he is, he could be standing here instead of me, a naked frame in a truck, while I, I could be up there in his place, on this cold morning, looking after this delivery, and millions like it, bound for the crematorium – and like him I would also yawn, since I would prefer, like him, to remain laying in bed on a cold morning such as this. And he, like me now, would watch me in the truck as it drives away? And would he, the wretch, think then of me, the SS man, as I think of him now? Oh dear God, compassionate and forbearing, am I him, am I the one who created Auschwitz?! Isn't it enough that this German in my vision, with the symbol of the skull of death on his helmet, his tattooed hands in a black SS jacket, could he be in my place, while I – and that is the real shock – I could be in his place?!

Oh dear God, the supreme being of Auschwitz, light up your countenance to the works of thy hands, so that I can know, who is it that dwells in me and is being sent now to the crematorium – and why? And who is it that dwells in me and sends me to the crematorium – and why? You who know that at this moment, the both of us, the sender and the package, that we are equal as men, the works of your hands, in your likeness, and in your image.

Sonderkommando, Salmen Gradowski, dedicated his notes to the six members of his family, including his mother Sara and his wife Sonia, who were, he wrote, "burned alive at Birkenau". In a covering letter discovered after the war together with his notes, he wrote:

"Dear finder, search everywhere, in every inch of soil. Tens of documents are buried under it, mine and those of other persons, which will throw light on everything that happened here. Great quantities of teeth are also buried here. It was we, the Kommando works, who expressly have strewn them all over the terrain, as many as we could, so that the world should find material traces of the millions of murdered people. We ourselves have lost hope of being able to see the moment of liberation."

"I was writing this at the time when I was in the "Sonderkommando." I had been brought from the camp at Kielbasin near Grodno. I wanted to leave this as also other numerous notes as memento for the future world of peace, so that it may learn what had happened here. I have buried this under the ashes deeming it the safest place, where people will certainly dig to find the traces of millions of men who were exterminated."

from 'The Holocaust' by Martin Gilbert

ASH AND DUST

by Yaakov Gilad

performed by Yahuda Poliker

A spring day the smell of lilac
 Between the ruins of your city
 A beautiful day to fish in the river
 Inside me my heart is broken
 There it was and it wasn't
 Your child is a small woman
 People that no-one knows
 There isn't even a house that you'll
 remember

And if you're going, where are you going
 Forever is just ashes and dust
 Where are you going, where are you going
 Years and nothing is erased...

Take a coat, it'll be cold
 Money in your pocket, sugar crystal
 If the days are hard
 Remember me sometimes
 And if it's a more desperate journey
 To the hut, to the plot
 On the path of the old city
 No one will wait in the station...

Chorus...

Who will sweeten your nights
 Who will listen to your crying
 Who will stay by your side [while you are]
 on your way

Take a coat, it'll be cold.

THE SURVIVORS

by Survivor, Michael Etkind

What will remain
 And last
 To tell the future
 Of its past
 When we are dead and gone

Auschwitz museum
 And Treblinka stones

And words

A CARTLOAD OF SHOES

by Abraham Sutzkever

The wheels hurry onward, onward.
 What do they carry?
 They carry a cartload
 Of shivering shoes.

The wagon like a canopy
 in the evening light;
 The shoes – clustered
 Like people in a dance.

A wedding, a holiday?
 Has something blinded my eyes?
 The shoes – I seem
 To recognise them.

The heels go tapping
 With a clatter and a din.
 From our old Vilna streets
 They drive us to Berlin.

I should not ask
 But something tears at my tongue
 Shoes, tell me the truth
 Where are they, the feet?

The fleet from those boots
 With button like dew –
 And here, where is the body
 And there, where is the bride?

Where is the child
 To fill those shoes
 Why has the bride
 Gone barefoot?

Through the slippers and the boots
 I see those my mother used to wear
 She kept them for the Sabbath
 Her favorite pair.

And the heels go tapping:
 With a clatter and a din.
 From our old Vilna streets
 They drive us to Berlin.

Julian Tuwim

(1894-1953 Poland)

Tuwim is considered one of the greatest Polish writers of the 20th century. As a Polish Jew, he dealt in many of his works with the tension and duality arising from the two components of his identity – the Polish and the Jewish one. For him, while he saw himself first and foremost as Polish, his Jewishness always loomed large, influencing his perception of his Polish homeland and his place within it.

Tuwim began writing in 1913. During the thirties he became critical towards the Polish government, especially towards its capitalist inclinations and its treatment of the lower echelons of society. In the late thirties he spoke out against the Nazi regime. Among his main works are “We, the Jews of Poland”, “Words in Blood” and “The Ball at the Opera”.

During World War II, Tuwim escaped from Poland to South America and later to the USA.

extract from ‘We Polish Jews’, August 1944, London

Part 2

However, if I did ever have to justify my nationality, or rather my national feelings, then I would say I am a Pole for the simplest, almost the most primitive of reasons, generally rational, frequently irrational, but without a ‘mystical’ addition. To be a Pole, it is neither an honour, nor glory, nor a privilege.

It is the same as breathing. I have not yet met a person that is proud of the fact that he breathes. A Pole – because I was born in Poland, grew up, was educated, taught, because it was in Poland that I was happy and unhappy, because from my exile I necessarily want to return to Poland, though they may promise me Paradisiacal delights elsewhere.

A Pole – because through a loving superstition which no reasoning or logic can explain, I desire that after my death, it shall be Polish soil that will absorb and consume me and none other. A Pole – because that is what I was told in Polish in my family home; because I was suckled on the Polish language as a new-born, because my mother taught me Polish poems and songs, and when my first great poetic tremor came, it was in Polish words, because all that, which became most important in life – poetic creativity – is unimaginable in any other language, no matter how fluently I may speak it.

A Pole – because it was in Polish that I confessed my first love and its fears, and it was Polish in which I sobbed of its joys and storms.

A Pole also because the birch and the willow are closer to me than a cypress or a palm, and Mickiewicz and Chopin dearer than Shakespeare and Beethoven. Dearer for reasons that no reasoning can justify.

A Pole – because I have absorbed a certain number of their national faults. A Pole – because my hatred of Polish Fascists is greater than of Fascists of other nationalities. Moreover, I believe this to be a major trait of my Polishness. But above all – a Pole because it pleases me.

...continued on next page

Part 3

In response to this, I hear voices: 'Good. But then if a Pole, why then 'We, Jews'? To this I respond: BECAUSE OF BLOOD – 'Therefore racism?' No. Most certainly not racism. In fact the converse. Blood is twofold: that in our veins and that from our veins. The first is the juice of our bodies and thus undergoes testing by physiologists. Whoever ascribes any special properties other than organic to this blood, or secret powers, he, as can be seen, as a consequence turns cities into smouldering hulks, massacres millions of people and as we will see, brings destruction upon his own kind. The second blood – that is the one which, that chieftain of international fascism drains from humanity, so as to document the triumph of the blood of his ilk over my kind – the blood of those millions of innocents beings murdered, their blood not secreted in their arteries but their blood disclosed. As long as the world exists, there has not been such an inundation of martyr's blood, and the blood of Jews (not 'Jewish blood') flows through the deepest and the widest streams. Its blackening torrents conjoin into a stormy, foaming river – AND IT IS IN THIS NEW JORDAN THAT I ACCEPT THE CHRISM (an anointing) ABOVE ALL CHRISMS: MY BLOODY, HOT, PASSIONLIKE BROTHERHOOD WITH JEWS. Accept me, my brothers, to this honoured communion of the Innocently Shed Blood. It is in this community, and of this church that I wish to be a member of, from today on. This ranking – that of the Jew Doloris Causa (the cause of pain) – let it be granted to the Polish poet by the nation which begat him. Not because of any special merits, because I have none to display before you. I will consider this a promotion and the highest reward for these few Polish poems which may survive me and the memory of which will be entwined with my name – the name of a Jewish Pole.

"I have never felt as totally free from being a part of a nation as I do today, as I stand before the memorial to the victims of The Warsaw Ghetto, which is to say before the giant grave of the nation which bore me.

I have not come forth as a Jew or as a Pole or a son of Europe. If so my appreciation would have been too easy and small, and my mourning too shallow.

On my way to this place Nations and beliefs ran out of me, and tribal bonds were torn apart.

Even though I am as far possible from being "Cosmopolitan", for that is a word which completely lacks content, I come here as a man with no homeland."

from, 'The Grave Memorial', April 1948, Julian Tuwim

TURN OF THE CENTURY

by Wislawa Szymborska

It was supposed to be better than the
others, our 20th century,
But it won't have time to prove it.
Its years are numbered,
its step unsteady,
its breath short.

Already too much has happened
that was not supposed to happen.
What was to come about
has not.

Spring was to be on its way,
and happiness, among other things.

Fear was to leave the mountains and
valleys.
The truth was supposed to finish before
he lie.

Certain misfortunes
were never to happen again
such as war and hunger and so forth.

These were to be respected:
the defenselessness of the defenseless,
trust and the like.

Whoever wanted to enjoy the world
faces an impossible task.

Stupidity is not funny.
Wisdom isn't jolly.

Hope
Is no longer the same young girl
et cetera. Alas.

God was at last to believe in man:
good and strong,
but good and strong
are still two different people.

How to live--someone asked me this
in a letter,
someone I had wanted
to ask that very thing.

Again and as always,
and as seen above
there are no questions more urgent
than the naive ones.

Maria Wislawa Anna Szymborska (1923 – 2012) was a Polish poet, essayist, translator and recipient of the 1996 Nobel Prize in Literature. Born in Prowent, which has since become part of Kornik, she later resided in Krakow until the end of her life.

We Polish Jews...We, everlasting, who have perished in the ghettos and camps, and we ghosts who, from across seas and oceans, will some day return to the homeland and haunt the ruins in our unscarred bodies and our wretched, presumably spared souls...

We who sit and weep upon the shores of distant rivers, as once we set on the banks of Babylon. All over the world does Rachel bewail her children, and they are no more. On the banks of the Hudson, of the Thames, of the Euphrates and the Nile, of the Ganges and Jordan we wander, scattered and forlorn, crying, "Vistula! Vistula! Vistula! Mother of ours! Grey Vistula turned rosy not with the rosiness of dawn but that of blood!"

Julian Tuwim,

"We Polish Jews" (My Zydzi Polscy), translated from Yiddish R. Langer, in Free World, New York July, 1944

"Oaths were sworn aloud: Never again shall the Germans move us from here with impunity, we shall die, but the cruel invaders will pay with their blood for ours. Our fate is sealed, people were saying. Every Jew carries a death sentence in his pocket, handed him by the greatest murderers of all time. Thus we must think not so much of saving our lives, which seems to be a very problematic affair, but of dying an honourable death, dying with weapons in our hands."

**Emmanuel Ringelblum (see Biographies)
from, Little Stalingrad Defends Itself, Oneg Shabbat Archive**

Jacob Wiernik's testimony about Treblinka at the Eichmann Trial 1961

Jankiel Wiernik was a master builder and he along with others built many of the structures in Treblinka, which he described at the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem in 1961:

"When I came there, there were only three gas chambers. The large kitchen was not there yet. I constructed various barracks, I built the guardroom. I built the door, the entrance gate."

He described the arrival process:

"This is where they remained standing. In the courtyard, there were the two large barracks. They brought the women in to the left, and the men were kept outside. They made the women remove all their clothes.

The men remained standing outside. On either side, there were two large written notices to the effect that money and valuables had to be handed over, and whoever failed to do so would be put to death.

The women's hair was cut off. At the end, a small area where their hair was cut off and then they were taken to the gas chambers.

Here (points to it) was a building with three gas chambers, in the large building there were ten gas chambers. The doors were closed and it lasted some forty to forty-five minutes).

Yankiel Wiernik was asked more questions about the layout of Treblinka:

"There were the ten gas chambers which they built when I was there, and these were the three gas chambers. The machines stood at the edge.

That was the front, the side where people entered. The Shield of David was made by the metal workers of the first camp."

Wiernik was asked how the two camps were divided.

"Here was the entrance- here is the first camp (points to it). All this belongs to the first camp. This was the Schlauch (the tube) the path along which people walked.

And here people went through the side, they went into the gas chambers. When the gas chambers were not yet in existence they went in this way (he indicates the spot).

This is what they called the Lazarett – they used to bring elderly people there, and underneath they put timber. They would seat the people on a bench, the back of their necks facing this way, and shoot them, so they would fall inside.

continued on next page

Here we made an entrance for the members of the SS and all those who were there on behalf of the SS. They made use of the entrance only. Above the gate, there was still a sign, "The Jewish State."

Yankiel Wiernik recalled the larger gas chambers built in the late summer, early autumn of 1942:

"The gas chambers of the large building were seven by seven. The entire building was thirty –six metres in length and eighteen metres wide.

When the doors were open I did see them, the doors were open, they were open almost completely, and when they were opened, the dead bodies fell out, since they had been lying there crowded together. Into a room of 1.90 metres, they forced many inside.

It was a room. The floor was somewhat sloping when the people inside were suffocated, they used to wash the floor with a hosepipe or a bucket of water. When they removed the bodies, they had been suffocated.

Here was the gas engine, the engine that forced the gas in. And there were pipes with valves. They would open the valve into the chamber where the people were.

There was an engine of a Soviet tank standing there, and in this way the gas was introduced. Here were the doors where people entered from one side, and on the other, this was the large door which opened along almost the entire wall.

And after forty to forty-five minutes had passed, they would stop, they would open the door and the dead bodies would fall out. And here was a spare engine next to the three numbers 1, 2, 3 and 26 were the engines that generated the electricity, and there too, there was a motor.

Until the end of 1942 they did not burn those who had been gassed, but they would bury them in enormous pits. The bodies were placed inside. Only at the beginning of 1943 did they make various experiments of how to burn them and they did not succeed."

Chana Senesh (1921 – 7 November 1944) was one of 37 Jews from Mandatory Palestine parachuted by the British Army into Yugoslavia during the Second World War to assist in the rescue of Hungarian Jews about to be deported to the German death camp at Auschwitz. She was arrested at the Hungarian border, then imprisoned and tortured, but refused to reveal details of her mission. Chana was eventually tried and executed by firing squad. She is regarded as a national heroine in Israel, where her poetry is widely known and the headquarters of the Zionist youth movement's Israel Hatzeira, a kibbutz and several streets are named after her.

TO SEEK A HUMAN

(Yom Kippur, 1940)

In the fires of war, in the flame, in the flare,
In the eye-blinding, searing glare
My little lantern I carry high
To search, to search for true Man.

In the glare, the light of my lantern burns
dim, In the fire glow my eyes cannot see;
How to look, to see, to discover, to know
When he stands there, facing me?

Set a sign, O Lord, set a sign on his brow
That in heat, fire and burning I may Know
the pure, the eternal spark
Of what I seek: true Man.

FROM ELI ELI

(Caesarea, 1942)

My God, My God, I pray that these things
never end:
The sand and the sea,
The rush of the waters,
The crash of the heavens,
The prayer of Man.

AN EMISSARY

Among the peoples of the world – I shall be
Jewish
Among the Jews I shall be a Zionist
Among the Zionists I shall be socialist
Among the socialists I shall be
a Kibbutz member
In the kibbutz – I am what I am – Shlichah
(an emissary)

AT THE CROSSROADS

(Caesarea, 1942)

A voice called. I went.
I went, for it called.
I went, least I fall.

At the crossroads
I blocked both ears with white frost
And cried
For what I had lost.

BLESSED IS THE MATCH

(Yugoslavia, May 1944)

Blessed is the match consumed
In kindling flame.

Blessed is the flame that burns
In the secret fastness of the heart.

Blessed is the heart with strength to stop
It's beating for honors sake.

Blessed is the match consumed
In kindling flame.

The following lines were found in Chana's
death cell after her execution:

One – two – three... eight feet long
Two strides across, the rest is dark...
Life is a fleeting question mark
One – two – three... maybe another week.
Or the next month may still find me here,
But death, I feel is very near.
I could have been 23 next July
I gambled on what mattered most,
The dice were cast. I lost.

GOD OF MERCY

by Kadya Molodovsky 1894 – 1974

Kadya left Europe in 1935 settling in New York. During WWII she wrote much about the tragedy befalling Jews back home, including her brother and other family still trapped in Poland.

O God of Mercy
 For the time being
 Choose another People
 We are tired of death, tired of corpses,
 We have no more prayers.
 For the time being
 Choose another People.
 We have run out of blood
 For victims,
 Our houses have been turned into desert,
 The earth lacks space for tombstones,
 There are no more lamentations
 Nor songs of woe
 In the ancient texts

God of Mercy
 Sanctify another land,
 Another Sinai.
 We have covered every field and stone
 With ashes and holiness.
 With our crones
 With our young

With our infants
 We have paid for each letter in your
 Commandments

God of Mercy
 Lift up your fiery brow,
 Look on the peoples of the world,
 Let them have the prophecies and
 Holy Days
 Who mumble your words in every tongue.
 Teach them the Deeds
 And the ways of temptation

God of mercy
 To us give tough clothing
 Of shepherds who tend sheep
 Of blacksmiths at the hammer
 Of washerwomen, cattle slaughters
 And lower still.

And O God of Mercy
 Grant us one more blessing –
 Take back the divine glory of your genius.

(Translated from the Yiddish by Irving Howe)

LETTERS FROM THE GHETTO

by Kadya Molodowsky (1941)

Your brief letters:
 Three lines on a card, no more- from far
 away as if each mile had added a stone.
 That is how heavy they are.

A line on everybody's health,
 mentioning each by name. No worries,
 there isn't anything to fear.
 And the white blankness begs on the
 paper for mercy.

That's how it probably is, the script of tears.

These brief letters
 are gathered all unto me,
 They shall remain until the end
 of generations.

I see the quivering hand that writes them
 now in horror's cursive,
 I know the fiery Hand
 that shall inscribe the blankness with mercy.

(Translated by A.Z. Foreman)

ELEGY FOR THE LITTLE JEWISH TOWNS

by Antoni Słonimski Polish Poet 1895-1976

Gone now are, gone are in Poland those little Jewish towns
Hrubieszow, Karczew, Brody, Falenica
You look for candlelight in the windows
And for song in the wooden synagogue in vain

Vanished the last leftovers, Jewish tatters
Blood was buried by sand, traces were cleared
And walls were lucidly whiten by glaucous lime
Just like after a plague or for big holiday

Here glitters one moon, cold, pale, alien
Already out of town, on the street, when night lights up
My Jewish relatives, poetic boys
Will not find two golden moons of Chagal

The moons are now above other planet
They flew away frightened by grim silence
Gone now are those little towns where the shoemaker was a poet,
The watchmaker a philosopher, the barber a troubadour

Gone now are those little towns where the wind joined
Biblical songs with Polish tunes and Slavic rue
Where old Jews in orchards in the shade cherry trees
Lamented for the holy walls of Jerusalem.

Gone now are those little towns, they went away by shadow
And the shadow will fall between our words
Until will come closer brotherly and will join again
The two nations fed by centuries of suffering

(1947, translation: P. Dorman)

THE STORY OF THE FOREST – A CHASSIDIC STORY

When the great Rabbi Israel Baal Shem-Tov saw misfortune threatening the Jews, it was his custom to go into a certain part of the forest to meditate. There he would light a fire, say a special prayer, and the misfortune was averted. Later, when his disciple... had occasion... to intercede with heaven, he would go to the same place in the forest and say 'Master of the Universe, listen! I do not know how to light the fire, but I am still able to say the prayer.' Again calamity was averted.

Still later, Rabbi Moshe-Lieb of Sasov, in order to save his people once more, would go into the forest and say: 'I do not know how to light the fire, I do not know the prayer, but I know the place and this must be sufficient.' It was sufficient and the tragedy averted.

Then it fell to Rabbi Israel of Rizhyn to overcome misfortune. Sitting in his armchair, his head in his hands, he spoke to God: 'I am unable to light the fire and I do not know the prayer; I cannot even find the place in the forest. All I can do is to tell the story, and this must be sufficient.' Once again the misfortune was averted.

THE RIGHTEOUS

*by Chayim Chefer, Israeli poet and
songwriter 1925-2012*

I hear this title and it makes me think
About the people who saved me.
I ask and ask, "Oh, my dear God,
Could I have done the same thing?"
In a sea of hate stood my home,
Could I shelter a foreign son in my home?
Would I be willing along with my family
Constantly be threatened by certain evil?
Sleepless dark nights watching out for
noise
Hearing footsteps of certain evil.
Would I be able to understand every sign,
Would I be ready for this, could I walk
like this
Among those who would betray
Not one day, not one week, but so
many years!
There a suspicious neighbour, there a look,
and here a sound –
For that one – warm – brotherly clasping
of my hand...
Not having any pension – not having
anything for this.
Because a person to person must be
a people.
Because a people comes at this time
through –
So I ask you and ask you once more
– Could I have done the same if I was
in their place?
It was they who went to war every day.
It was they who made the world a place
for me.
It was they, the pillars, the Righteous
brother,
Who this day this world is founded by.
For your courage, and for your warm
extended hand
In front of you, the Righteous, I bow.

Source: Yad Vashem

CAMPO DEI FIORI

by Czesław Miłosz

Polish poet 1911 – 2004

In Rome on the Campo dei Fiori
baskets of olives and lemons,
cobblestones spattered with wine
and the wreckage of flowers.
Vendors cover the trestles
with rose-pink fish;
armfuls of dark grapes
heaped on peach-down.

On this same square
they burned Giordano Bruno.
Henchmen kindled the pyre
close-pressed by the mob.
Before the flames had died
the taverns were full again,
baskets of olives and lemons
again on the vendors' shoulders.

I thought of the Campo dei Fiori
in Warsaw by the sky-carousel
one clear spring evening
to the strains of a carnival tune.
The bright melody drowned
the salvos from the ghetto wall,
and couples were flying
high in the cloudless sky.

At times wind from the burning
would drift dark kites along
and riders on the carousel
caught petals in midair.
That same hot wind
blew open the skirts of the girls
and the crowds were laughing
on that beautiful Warsaw Sunday.

Someone will read as moral
that the people of Rome or Warsaw
haggle, laugh, make love
as they pass by the martyrs' pyres.
Someone else will read
of the passing of things human,
of the oblivion
born before the flames have died.

But that day I thought only
of the loneliness of the dying,
of how, when Giordano
climbed to his burning
he could not find
in any human tongue
words for mankind,
mankind who live on.

Already they were back at their wine
or peddled their white starfish,
baskets of olives and lemons
they had shouldered to the fair,
and he already distanced
as if centuries had passed
while they paused just a moment
for his flying in the fire.

Those dying here, the lonely
forgotten by the world,
our tongue becomes for them
the language of an ancient planet.
Until, when all is legend
and many years have passed,
on a new Campo dei Fiori
rage will kindle at a poet's word.

Warsaw, 1943

Translated by David Brooks & Louis Iribarne

WE REMEMBER THEM

by Sylvan Kamens & Rabbi Jack Riemer

At the rising of the sun and at its going down
We remember them.
At the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter
We remember them.
At the opening of the buds and in the rebirth of spring
We remember them.
At the blueness of the skies and in the warmth of summer
We remember them.
At the rustling of the leaves and in the beauty of autumn
We remember them.
At the beginning of the year and when it ends
We remember them.
As long as we live, they too will live;
for they are now a part of us
as we remember them.
When we are weary and in need of strength
We remember them.
When we are lost and sick at heart
We remember them.
When we have joy we crave to share
We remember them.
When we have decisions that are difficult to make
We remember them.
When we have achievements that are based on theirs
We remember them.
As long as we live, they too will live;
for they are now a part of us
as we remember them.

From Gates of Prayer, published by Central Conference of American Rabbis

WE ARE THE SHOES

By Moshe Szulsztein, Yiddish Poet

We are the shoes, we are the last witnesses.
We are shoes from grandchildren and grandfathers
From Prague, Paris and Amsterdam,
And because we are only made of fabric and leather
And not of blood and flesh,
Each one of us avoided the hellfire.

DO NOT ASK

by Avram Schaufeld who survived Auschwitz and Buchenwald concentration camps

Do not ask
How did you survive?
Because this is a question that causes me pain
and brings back memories...
I know that you mean well and are sympathetic
and would like me to talk to your youth group
or your son who is writing a paper on the Holocaust
and I could help him with the subject which is part of his exams.
You add with a smile, that no amount of reading is the same
as talking to a survivor.
From your eager expression I can guess
what you expect me to tell him.
About our bravery and how our faith in God
helped us to survive.
I lie and say I am too busy
that I have other commitments
and quickly take my leave and turn away
So that you cannot see the hurt in my eyes
Do not ask me why...

ORDINARY MEN

Reserve Police Battalion and the Final Solution in Poland
by Christopher R Browning

Pages 65 – 68

...I simply could not shoot at people anymore, which became apparent to my sergeant, Hergert, because at the end I repeatedly shot past. For this reason he relieved me. Other comrades were also relieved sooner or later, because they simply could no longer continue.

Lieutenant Drucker's Second Platoon and the bulk of Sergeant Steinmetz's Third Platoon were assigned to yet another part of the forest. Like Scheer's men, they were divided into small groups of five to eight each rather than large groups of thirty-five to forty as in Wohlauf's First Company. The men were told to place the end of their carbines on the cervical vertebrae at the base of the neck, but here too the shooting was done initially without fixed bayonets as a guide. The results were horrifying. "The shooters were gruesomely besmirched with blood, brains, and bone splinters. It hung on their clothing."

When dividing his men into small groups of shooters, Drucker had kept about a third of them in reserve. Ultimately, everyone was to shoot, but the idea was to allow frequent relief and "cigarette breaks." With the constant coming and going from the trucks, the wild terrain, and the frequent rotation, the men did not remain in fixed groups. The confusion created the opportunity for work slowdown and evasion. Some men who hurried at their task shot far more Jews than others who delayed as much as they could. After two rounds one policeman simply "slipped off" and stayed among the trucks on the edge of the forest.

Another managed to avoid taking his turn with the shooters altogether.

It was no way the case that those who did not want to or could not carry out the shooting of human beings with their own hands could not keep themselves out of this task.

No strict control was being carried out here. I therefore remained by the arriving trucks and kept myself busy at the arrival point. In any case I gave my activity such an appearance. It could not be avoided that one or another of my comrades noticed that I was not going to the executions to fire away at the victims. They showered me with remarks such as "shit-head" and "weakling" to express their disgust. But I suffered no consequences for my actions. I must mention here that I was not the only one who kept himself out of participating in the executions.

By far the largest number of shooters at Józefów who were interrogated after the war came from the Third Platoon of Second Company. It is from them that we can perhaps get the best impression of the effect of the executions on the men and the dropout rate among them during the course of the action.

Hans Dettelmann, a forty-year-old barber, was assigned by Drucker to a firing squad. "It was still not possible for me to shoot the first victim at the first execution, and I wandered off and asked...Lieutenant Drucker to be relieved." Dettelmann told his lieutenant that he had a "very weak nature," and Drucker let him go.

Walter Niehaus, a former Reemtsma cigarette sales representative, was paired with an elderly woman for the first round.

"After I had shot the elderly woman, I went to Toni [Anton] Bentheim [his sergeant] and told him that I was not able to carry out further executions. I did not have to participate in the shooting anymore...my nerves were totally finished from this one shooting."

For his first victim August Zorn was given a very old man. Zorn recalled that his elderly victim could not or would not keep up with his countrymen, because he repeatedly fell and then simply lay there. I regularly had to lift him up and drag him forward. Thus, I only reached the execution site when my comrades had already shot their Jews. At the sight of his countrymen who had been shot, my Jew threw himself on the ground and remained lying there. I then cocked my carbine and shot him through the back of the head. Because I was already very upset from the cruel treatment of the Jews during the clearing of the town and was completely in turmoil, I shot too high. The entire back of the skull of my Jew was torn off and the brain exposed. Parts of the skull flew into Sergeant Steinmetz's face. This was grounds for me, after returning to the truck, to go to the first sergeant and ask for my release. I had become so sick that I simply couldn't anymore. I was then relieved by the first sergeant.

Georg Kageler, a thirty-seven-year-old tailor, made it through the first round before encountering difficulty. "After I had carried out the first shooting and at the unloading point was allotted a mother with daughter as victims for the next shooting, I began a conversation with them and learned that they were Germans from Kassel, and I took the decision not to participate further in the executions. The entire business was now so repugnant to me that I returned to my platoon leader and told him that I was still sick and asked for my release."

Kageler was sent to guard the marketplace. Neither his pre-execution conversation with this victim nor his discovery that there were German Jews in Józefów was unique. Schimke, the man who had first stepped out, encountered a Jew from Hamburg in the marketplace, as did a second policeman. Yet another policeman remembered that the first Jew he shot was a decorated World War I veteran from Bremen who begged in vain for mercy.

Franz Kastenbaum, who during his official interrogation had denied remembering anything about the killing of Jews in Poland, suddenly appeared uninvited at the office of the Hamburg state prosecutor investigating Reserve Police Battalion 101. He told how he had been a member of a firing squad of seven or eight men that had taken its victims into the woods and shot them in the neck at point-blank range. This procedure had been repeated until the fourth victim.

The shooting of the men was so repugnant to me that I messed the fourth man. It was simply no longer possible for me to aim accurately. I suddenly felt nauseous and ran away from the shooting site. I have expressed myself incorrectly just now. It was not that I could no longer aim accurately, rather that the fourth time I intentionally missed. I then ran into the woods, vomited, and sat down against a tree. To make sure that no one was nearby, I called loudly into the woods, because I wanted to be alone. Today I can say that my nerves were totally finished. I think that I remained alone in the woods for some two to three hours.

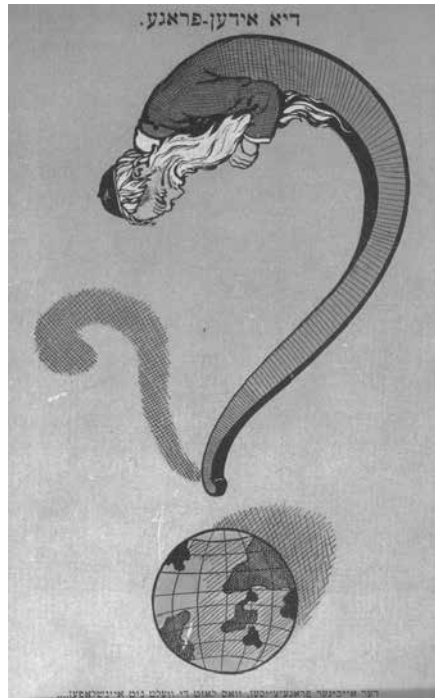
Kastenbaum then returned to the edge of the woods and rode an empty truck back to the marketplace. He suffered no consequences; his absence had gone unnoticed because the firing squads had been all mixed up and randomly assigned. He had come to make this statement, he explained to the investigating attorney, because he had had no peace since attempting to conceal the shooting action.

Most of those who found the shooting impossible to bear quit very early. But not always. The men in one squad had already shot ten to twenty Jews each when they finally asked

to be relieved. As one of them explained, "I was especially asked to be relieved because the man next to me shot so impossibly. Apparently he always aimed his gun too high, producing terrible wounds in his victims. In many cases the entire backs of victims' heads were torn off, so that the brains sprayed all over. I simply couldn't watch it any longer."

At the unloading point, Sergeant Bentheim watched men emerge from the woods covered with blood and brains, morale shaken and nerves finished. Those who asked to be relieved he advised to "slink away" to the marketplace. As a result, the number of policemen gathered on the marketplace grew constantly.

As with the First Company, alcohol was made available to the policemen under Drucker and Steinmetz who stayed in the forest and continued shooting. As darkness approached at the end of the long summer day and the murderous task was still not finished, the shooting became even less organized and more hectic. The forest was so full of dead bodies that it was difficult to find places...



Di yiden frage, "The Jewish question"

"The eternal question mark that does not let the world fall asleep." by Menachem Birnbaum
 Postcard from the Jewish Museum Vienna

“THE RIGHTEOUS NEED NO TOMBSTONES; THEIR
WORDS ARE THEIR MONUMENTS.”

— Talmud, Pesahim 119a”

Requirements for a First-Time Visitor to Poland

Dictaphone

camera

sketch book

and

diary

Gilbert's Atlas

Wiesel's Night

An open mind

a long concentration span

an obsession for detail

a capacity for grief

Instructions:

Capture the moment

hang on to every word

internalize the meaning

tell a friend

be a guardian of the past

revere our history

The Germans taught us all

about the value

of keeping records

Solomon R. Kaplinski

EACH OF US HAS A NAME
ZELDA (TRANSLATED BY MARCIA FALK)

Each of us has a name given by God and given by our parents	<i>L'khol B'riyah Yeysh Sheym</i> L'khol b'riyah yeysh sheym shenat'nah lah eyn hahayim v'nat'nu lah aviha v'imah	לְכֹל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שָׁתַן לוֹ אֱלֹהִים וְנָתַן לוֹ אָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ
Each of us has a name given by our stature and our smile and given by what we wear	L'khol b'riyah yeysh sheym shenat'nu lah komatah v'ofen biyukhah v'natan lah ha'arig	לְכֹל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שָׁתַן לוֹ קוֹמָתוֹ וְאֶפְסוֹ חֵיוֹנוֹ וְנָתַן לוֹ הָאָרִיג
Each of us has a name given by the mountains and given by our walls	L'khol b'riyah yeysh sheym shenat'nu lah heharim v'nat'nu lah k'taléha	לְכֹל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שָׁתַן לוֹ הַהָרִים וְנָתַן לוֹ כְּתֻלָּיו
Each of us has a name given by the stars and given by our neighbours	L'khol b'riyah yeysh sheym shenat'nu lah hamazalot v'nat'nu lah sh'kheynéha	לְכֹל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שָׁתַן לוֹ הַמַּזְלֹת וְנָתַן לוֹ שְׁכֵנָיו
Each of us has a name given by our sins and given by our longing	L'khol b'riyah yeysh sheym shenat'nu lah hata'éha v'nat'nah lah k'mihatah	לְכֹל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שָׁתַן לוֹ חַטָּאָיו וְנָתַן לוֹ קְמִיחָתוֹ
Each of us has a name given by our enemies and given by our love	L'khol b'riyah yeysh sheym shenat'nu lah son'éha v'nat'nah lah ahavatah	לְכֹל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שָׁתַן לוֹ שׂוֹנְאָיו וְנָתַן לוֹ אֲהָבָתוֹ
Each of us has a name given by our celebrations and given by our work	L'khol b'riyah yeysh sheym shenat'nu lah hagéha v'nat'nah lah m'lakhtah	לְכֹל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שָׁתַן לוֹ חֲגֻלּוֹ וְנָתַן לוֹ קְלוּבֵי הַשָּׂנָה
Each of us has a name given by the seasons and given by our blindness	L'khol b'riyah yeysh sheym shenat'nu lah t'kufof hashanah v'natan lah ivronah	וְנָתַן לוֹ עֲרוּגוֹ לְכֹל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שָׁתַן לוֹ הַיָּסוּד וְנָתַן לוֹ
Each of us has a name given by the sea and given by our death.	L'khol b'riyah yeysh sheym shenatan lah hayam v'natan lah motah.	מֹתוֹ. יָם שֶׁל יָמֵינוּ

The Power of the Written Word

All over Europe and especially in Poland, Jews conspired to keep a historical record. The ghetto Jews devised techniques to safeguard their documents until after the war and the defeat of the Germans. Some records were buried underground; other were hidden in secure and protected places; still others were transmitted to trustworthy non-Jews.

The most celebrated of Jewish communal archives was the Oneg Shabbat (Pleasure of the Sabbath), the code name which historian Emanuel Ringelblum gave to his clandestine undertaking to document Jewish life in Poland under the German occupation.

As early as October 1939 he began documenting German atrocities, economic conditions, the structure of ghetto institutions, youth activities, forced-labor camps, experiences in the prisons and concentration camps, religious life, ghetto poems, jokes, curses, sayings and much more. To encourage the ghetto Jews to keep diaries Oneg Shabbat (*italics*) sponsored contests and offered cash prizes.

A 19 year-old youth described his feelings on hiding documents in an underground hiding place in August 1942:

..."my work was primitive, perhaps risky, but it was worth doing. We used to say while working 'we can die in peace, we have safeguarded our rich heritage.' I don't want any thanks. It will be enough for me if the coming generations will recall our times. We did not fear the risk. We reckoned that we were creating a chapter of history and that was more important than several lives. What we could not cry out to the world, we buried in the ground. May this treasure be delivered into good hands, may it live to see better times, so that it can alert the world to what happened in the twentieth century."

Another extraordinary archive was created and buried at Auschwitz. It consisted of eyewitness testimonies written by members of the Sonderkommando ("special commando"). Knowing they would not survive they buried their records in the ashes that covered the ground at Auschwitz. These were found after the war. One testimony began:

"Dear finder, search everywhere, in every inch of soil. Dozens of documents are buried under, mine and those of other persons, which will throw light on what happened here. We, the commando workers deliberately spread great quantities of teeth all over the ground, as many as we could, so that the world should find material traces of the millions of murdered people. We ourselves have lost hope of being able to live to see the moment of liberation."

The Holocaust at the Mercy of Human Memory

Shlomo Breznitz

Question: "How many?"

Answer: "Six million."

Question: "Is it a lot?"

Answer: "Yes, a lot."

Here now is a different answer: "Imagine that every single word in the Torah represents the name of a Jew killed during the Holocaust. Unlike the Torah, which by tradition is read by Jews everywhere from beginning to end during one full year, this Holy Book of Names will take seventy-five years to read just once."

And yet another answer: "Imagine a great multitude of people forming a line, each given just one meter of space. The line starts in Jerusalem, leading from among the olive trees of the Judean hills down to the citrus groves of the Sharon, reaching the Mediterranean, entering the sea, passing by the islands of Cyprus and Crete, reaching the Peloponneses, crossing all of ancient Rome, this endless line of Jews, young and old, standing there, given just one meter each, turning now north to cross the Alps and reaching what was the German Reich, still compact, still packed, the line finally finding its way to Auschwitz, and there, impossible to believe, turns around and winds its way through bloody Europe all the way back to Jerusalem. The line has now formed a closed circle of people. Their number—six million."



The Third Generation

(an excerpt)

My grandmother gave me my bath before hers in her warm pink bathroom. I would stand, barefoot, on the fuzzy toilet seat cover and watch as she filled the tub. When I stepped into the water it was always perfect – the lukewarm water a child likes to play in, never too hot or cold. She washed my hair and soaped my back, kneeling by the tub, telling me stories of her childhood in Czechoslovakia. I would ask to hear the story of how she rode her bicycle straight into the river near her home. We would laugh as she'd tell me about her scolding sisters, her tired mother, and her stern father. She had five sisters and three brothers, some of whom I knew as my aunts and uncle; I would listen solemnly as she whispered that one brother had died young of an illness, another in the War. The eldest sister, Sarah, died with her two children in Auschwitz.

I would stop for a moment when she said this, staring at the soapy water but seeing my grandmother's house and the store attached to it, as I imagined it must have been. By the house I saw her sister Sarah, a sorrowful woman with two small children at her side. The children were my age, and they stared at me sadly as I soaked in the pink tub. I continued to watch the water but my grandmother would quickly reach to drain the tub, wrapping me in a towel. She would begin to laugh again, forgetting what she had just mentioned so quietly and secretively, and tell of the hay they played in and their walk across the frozen river to school.

I would sit on the fuzzy cover, dripping but warm, as she filled the tub for herself. The mirrors became steamy and began to sweat when she took her bath; when I tried to touch the flowing water she would grab my arm, warning me that her water was too hot – I would burn my hand.

I turned to my mother with questions about Sarah. I had wanted to ask my grandmother, but the look in her eyes when she spoke of her sister was the same as when she stopped me from burning myself; this was not to be discussed. Unlike her sisters who came to America after surviving Auschwitz or her parents who had died in the gas chambers, my grandmother escaped the horrors of the Holocaust, taking the last train that left her village. Grandmother rarely spoke of their deaths or their suffering. She told me only of the place she knew before its colors turned to grey and she was forced to come to America. My mother told me that Grandmother felt guilty that she had left her family. Grandmother's suffering was the memory of her weeping mother, who was too stubborn to leave home.

At first I had trouble connecting the image of my happy aunts with the textbook photos I had seen and the stories I was told in grade school. There I forced myself to picture them as we lit candles and sang songs in memory of the Six Million. I could not relate my aunts' experience to what was to me a chapter in history, another subject in class.

Grandmother stopped bathing me when I began to grow older, and I did not hear much about her childhood anymore. But as I grew, my grandmother's sisters began to tell me of the camps. They told me how they had to undress for the doctors, and how they held their boots in front of them to cover their bodies. They

were young women; only twenty, even less. They could work in the camps so they survived. Sarah was strong and young, but the Nazis would not keep her children. And a bereaved mother was of no use to them.

Aunt Helen is my grandmother's younger sister. She rubs the number on her arm as she too laughs, telling me about her sister Sarah's children, a boy and a girl. Helen left school to sew for her family. She made clothes for her little niece and nephew. The niece was especially spoiled, she said, admitting that it was her fault. But they were beautiful children.

Helen had always wanted a doll. She had sewn doll's clothes and had given them to Sarah's daughter, but she could not afford a doll of her own. When she came to America she found a doll in the window of a shop, and used some of the money she had earned as a seamstress to buy it. She laughs again as she tells this. "It was a silly doll, you know. I still have it...in my basement somewhere."

Helen told me this on a porch in Florida. I went to visit my aunts there once, and I spent time being a teenager with them. I saw as they watched me as I swam or talked with others my age. They were not old women longing for a time that had long since passed; they longed for a time they were deprived of by Hitler. I listened as they told me not to take anything for granted; a sentimental message I would have shrugged off, if it had not been for the sad sincerity in their voices.

A month does not go by that I do not have a nightmare about the Holocaust. I've had them since I was a child, even when I slept at my grandmother's house, after she had given me my bath. I dream that they have come to take me and my family away. I hide, I plead, I try to escape. I actually wonder about death and whether it matters when you're gone as I cry or scream in my sleep. I wake up, my eyes burning and my throat dry. I wonder why I have these dreams – dreams in which I must experience my aunts' and my grandmothers' nightmare.

When I awake from the dream, I rise to take a shower. As I undress I remember my grandmother's pink bathroom. I am no longer the little girl who splashed in her tub and reminded her of her home in Czechoslovakia, and the river nearby. I am as old as my aunts were when they hid helplessly behind their boots. I turn the water on and make it as hot as I can stand it. The steam fills the room as it did when my grandmother took her bath. But now I can reach out and touch the stream. Grandmother is not here to try to protect me from it, and I let it rush down my back, feeling the burden of my family's past pounding on my shoulders. Excerpted from an article by the granddaughter of Holocaust survivors.

The Butterfly

The last, the very last,
 So richly, brightly, dazzingly yellow.
 Perhaps if the sun's tears would sing
 against a white stone...

Such, such a yellow
 Is carried lightly 'way up high.
 It went away I'm sure because it wished to
 kiss the world goodbye.

For seven weeks I've lived in here,
 Pinned up inside this ghetto
 But I have found my people here.

The dandelions call to me
 And the white chestnut candles in the court.
 Only I never saw another butterfly.

That butterfly was the last one.
 Butterflies don't live in here,
 In the ghetto.

Pavel Freidmann 4.6.1942

The Last to Sing

The last to sing before the Ark is dead.
 Padlocks hang in the house of the Jews.
 The windows are boarded, and shadows
 huddle in shame in the pews.

Bereavement without end
 creeps on the naked walls,
 and blazoned crown and priestly hands
 lie broken above the Scrolls.

The last to sing before the Law is dead.
 There is no one now to go up to the Ark.
 The eternal flame, alone in its nook,
 struggles and sputters to dark.

And soundless on the steps of the Ark
 the abandoned Shekhina rests,
 her head bowed down in sorrow,
 black as night her dress.

And her lips seem to shudder
 a last hushed plea,
 as if the Ark from its arras had spoken:
 Too late, too late O you who are faithful
 to Me!

by Dovid Einhorn
 translated by Cynthia Ozick

“The last wish of my life has been granted...”

This letter was written by Mordecai Anilewitz, age 23, the commander of the Warsaw Ghetto, on April 23, 1943 in the middle of the revolt. It was a last call for help from the dying Ghetto to the outside world.

Now it is clear that everything that has happened is far greater than we had anticipated. We did more than we could in resisting the Germans.

But our strength is being exhausted. We are on the threshold of oblivion. Twice we forced the Germans to retreat, but they have returned in greater force.

One of our groups held out for forty minutes; another fought for six hours. The mine we planted in the area of the brush factory had exploded. Then we attacked the Germans and inflicted heavy casualties, while our own losses were slight. This, too, is an achievement. I feel that we have dared to do great things, which are of enormous value.

Of necessity, we are changing our tactics today to partisan methods. Tonight, six patrols are going out to accomplish two tasks: reconnaissance, and capture of arms. Remember, short-range weapons are of no use to us. We use such weapons only rarely. We need a lot of rifles, grenades, machine guns and explosives.



German soldiers watch as the Warsaw Ghetto burns.

I cannot describe to you the conditions in which the Jews of the Ghetto now live. Only a few could possibly withstand such suffering. The rest will die, sooner or later. Their fate is sealed. For although thousands are hiding in nooks and ratholes, their is not enough air in those places to light a candle.

You who are outside-are blessed. Perhaps we shall yet see each other by some miracle. This is very, very doubtful. The last aspiration of my life has been fulfilled. Jewish fighting resistance is a fact. Jewish self-defense and Jewish revenge are a reality. I am happy and contented that I have been among the first fighters of the Ghetto. Whence will salvation come?

Resistance in the Camps

Under the most adverse conditions, Jewish prisoners succeeded in initiating resistance and uprisings in some Nazi camps. Even in the extermination camps of Treblinka, Sobibor, and Auschwitz-Birkenau, the surviving Jewish workers launched uprisings.

On October 7, 1944, prisoners assigned to Crematorium IV at Auschwitz-Birkenau rebelled. The Germans crushed the revolt and murdered almost all of the several hundred prisoners involved in the rebellion.

Other camp uprisings took place in the Kruszyna (1942), Minsk-Mazowiecki (1943), and Janowska (1943) camps. In several dozen camps prisoners organized escapes to join partisan units. Successful escapes were made, for example, from the Lipowa Street labor camp in Lublin.

On October 14, 1943 prisoners in Sobibor, where 250,000 Jews were killed from 1942 to 1943, a Jewish Soviet prisoner named Alexander Peczorski organized an uprising. Eleven SS guards and police auxiliaries were killed and the camp was set on fire. About 300 prisoners escaped, breaking through the barbed wire and risking their lives in the minefield surrounding the camp. Over 100 were recaptured and later shot. Two days after the rebellion, Himmler ordered Sobibor dismantled.

Peczorski survived along with about 60 others and joined the Soviet partisans. He recounted his experience on that day:

...as though in response to an order, several axes that had been hidden under coats appeared and were brought down on his head...A few women who were frightened by what they saw began to scream, some even faint-ed. Some began to run crazily, without thinking and without purpose. In that situation there was no question of organizing or maintaining order, and therefore I shouted at the top of my voice: "Forward comrades!" "Forward," someone echoed behind me on the right. "For the Fatherland, for Stalin, forward!"

The proud cries came like thunder from clear skies in the death camp. In one moment these slogans united the Jews of Russia, Poland, Holland, Czechoslovakia, Germany. Six hundred men who had been abused and exhausted broke into cries of "Hurrah!" for life and freedom.

The assault on the arms store failed. [But they did succeed in cutting phone wires which delayed the detachment of Nazi reinforcements. ed.] Machine-gun fire barred our way.

Most of the people who were escaping turned in the direction of the main gate. There, after they finished off the guards, under cover of fire from the rifles that a few of them had, they threw stones and scattered sand in the eyes of the Fascists who stood in their way, broke through the main gate and hurried in the direction of the forest.

Resistance – One Man's Way

Below is but one example of resistance in the camps. Untold numbers of similar acts of Jewish resistance in the camps, no doubt, took place throughout the war.

"Made to Measure"

Jack Hirsh had volunteered to be a tailor when he first arrived at Auschwitz. While he was no tailor he figured he could learn quickly as he had grown up around the trade.

The German commander of the tailors ordered him to make a suit for him. When Jack's first effort did not satisfy him, he broke Jack's thumb. Eventually, the commandant ordered the tailors to perform their duties and at the same time deliver excess fabric back to him for sale on the black market in town. And of course he kept insisting on more and more fabric to sell. In return the tailors got an extra slice of bread from the black market.

Jack Hirsh figured out a way to deliver significantly more fabric to the commander and to perform an act of resistance at the same time. The tailor shop was charged with making heavy flannel uniforms for the German army on the Russian front. Jack had the tailors make one legged pants. Imagine the surprise of the German soldiers freezing in the winter and opening their newly supplied uniform to find there was only one leg!

(as told by Michael Hirsh, Jack's son)

Resistance:

To smuggle a loaf of bread – was to resist
To teach in secret – was to resist
To cry out warning and shattering illusions – was to resist
To rescue a Torah Scroll – was to resist
To forge documents – was to resist
To smuggle people across borders – was to resist
To chronicle events and conceal the records – was to resist
To hold out a helping hand to the needy – was to resist
To contract those under siege and smuggle weapons – was to resist
To fight with weapons in streets, mountains amid forests – was to resist
To rebel in death camps – was to resist
To rise up in ghettos, among the crumbling walls, in the most desperate
revolt – was to resist

(Jewish Resistance Exhibition, Beit Lohamei Haghetat)

The Scar

Janusz Korczak

No one wanted to sit beside him on the bench. And because that's how they felt, they didn't sit beside him, and that was all there was to it. Little Jasiiek is a quiet boy. If he were told to sit beside that person he would do it, even if he really didn't want to. Only he'd feel very upset.

To be sure, they wouldn't let a third person onto the bench.

Besides, that was against the rules even if they had wanted to.

Still, there was no other vacant seat left anywhere. So what was he to do?

He sat down on the bench beside that person.

He isn't crying because he knows that if he did, they would all start to laugh at him. They don't take pity on you in the playground if you start crying.

"Cry baby," they would call.

Adults often laughed at children's tears. That's probably how they learned themselves – through children's tears. Then one is able to hold back the tears so that the others wouldn't see.

It's the first day of school.

Little Jasiiek is sitting. He inched his way to the very edge of the bench.

But as soon as he glances up, he recalls everything. He has to be on his guard. If only to last through the day. And when he goes home, he'll tell his mother everything. What could be done so as not to have to sit together with that boy?

Well, little Jasiiek is listening – how pupils are supposed to study diligently, that they shouldn't tear their notebooks, to brush their teeth regularly, and not to interrupt during the lesson.

Seemingly he's listening, but he's sniffing too.

The teacher doesn't yet know the boys, so she says:

"Please come here, you in the last row. What's your name? Why are you crying?"

At this, everybody turned around to look. Then they begin to shout:

"Because he doesn't want to sit with a Jew."

"And why did a Jew come here anyway?"

"Little Jew, Rabbi Moishe!"

The teacher suddenly stood up. The boys quieted down a bit, because they weren't sure it was allowed. But again:

"He smells of onions."

"Let him go to the synagogue, to the heder, on the Sabbath! Go to your Moishes!

We don't want him here."

The teacher is standing and waiting and the boys are curious as to what she will say. She doesn't say anything. She only takes the pins from her hair

and lets her hair run down. And she has beautiful hair – long, light coloured and carefully combed.

“What’s going to happen?”

Silence.

“Well,” the teacher began, “have you finished?”

“What should we have finished?” says the one who was throwing stones in the playground. “We’ll pelt the Jew and drive him away.”

“No, he won’t leave,” says the teacher. “Even if you were to hit him all day, he will stay here. That’s the law. And now, quiet down. I’ll tell you the story about this scar. Do you know what a scar is?”

The teacher leaned over and showed an empty spot on the back of her scalp – such a scar it was. You could not see it before because of her hair.

“Do you see?”

“Was it from a stone?”

“Or did a horse kick you?”

“Not a horse, but people. Little people, ignorant, malicious.”

She then tied her hair back as it was and is looking at the class, but somehow high up as if she were looking at a picture.

“I was a child then, just as you are now. My mother lived in a little town.

There were very few Poles there, only Germans. My father died. There were only the two of us. Mama and I. And that part of Poland belonged to the Germans then. And the Germans had such a law too, that all the children had to attend school. And so my mother enrolled me because if she didn’t there was a fine to pay, or worse, jail. I understood very little then. When I was to go to that German school for the first time, my mother gave me a kiss and began to cry. And she said: “My poor little child.” And I was surprised because I felt glad that I was going to school. So why was my mother afraid or feeling sorry?

“Well? I stopped being surprised. You can guess yourselves why...”

“When you yelled at the boy that he was a Jew, I recalled my first sad day in school. And I recalled that when my mother saw the cut she said: ‘God will punish them for that.’ Them – the Germans.

“Well, that’s enough children. That happened a long time ago. That all passed. It’s unpleasant to recall.”

She didn’t want to continue her story, but they all begged her to go on.

“Please tell us how it was.”

“How was it? No one wanted to sit on the same bench with me. They

said: 'Polish swine. Dammed Pollack. Your father's a drunkard.' But my father never drank. Not even beer. I understood very little German than.

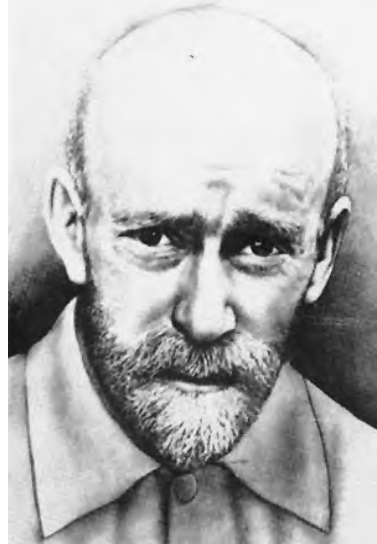
"And so, I didn't know what they said. But they were so angry. They had such hatred. Only four of them didn't give me any trouble: three boys and one girl. Her name was Erna. I asked her afterwards not to defend me, to pretend that she didn't like me either, because they began to pick on her too. They asked her how much did I pay her to take my side. It was bad, very bad for me in that German school."

But then the bell interrupted the story.

A pity.

And after the bell they continued to beg her to tell them who and how they threw the stone. But the teacher was resolute. She did not want to tell them.

"It was a long time ago. It's unpleasant to recall. It isn't worth it. And what of it. It was a stone; it was hard; it hurt and the cut healed. You wouldn't understand anyway, children. A scar on the head doesn't hurt, but there's a scar left from that stone on my soul and the ache caused by that scar is still present in my soul to this day." She paused for a moment and then continued. "Don't bully anyone children, neither him nor anyone. Defend the honour of this school. Let no one from a Polish school carry into the world, into life, such a scar as mine, neither on one's head nor on one's soul."



From the newspaper "In the Sunshine" – June, 1928.
Translated from the Polish by E.P. Kulawiec

Ballad of the Seven

As told by Abba Kovner, the commander of the Vilna Ghetto Partisans, who coined the phrase "Let us not go like sheep to the slaughter."

Translated from the Hebrew by Sam E. Bloch

- A wanderer, lost in a dense forest on a stormy night
sees at a distance a light
dimly shining out of a lonely hut.
- He knocks on the door,
enters and sees
a young boy, age nine,
sitting at a fireplace
- Greetings, my child!
— Greetings, stranger-replies the boy.
— Are you alone here?
- And here the dialogue between the two begins:
- No, sir, we are seven:
father, mother, two brothers, two sisters and myself.
- Where is mother?
— Mother died.
— Oh, then you are only six, my child?
— No, sir, we are seven:
father, mother, two brothers, two sisters and myself.
- Where is father?
— Father was killed in the war.
— Oh, then you are five only?
— No, sir! I told you, we are seven:
father, mother, two brothers, two sisters and myself.
- And your brothers, where are they?
— One died in an accident,
the other one was taken prisoner and never returned.
- Then you are three, only three?
— No, sir, we are seven:
father, mother, two brothers, two sisters and myself.
- Your sisters, where are they, poor child?
— One drowned in the lake;
the younger one, coming to her rescue,
drowned too and perished in the water.
- Then, you are one only, my boy, alone - aren't you?
— No, sir, we are seven in this hut:
father, mother, two brothers, two sisters and myself.
- How can a man, like myself, and all other fellow survivors and our friends and people of good will everywhere grown in years and mature, preserve that thing which the young boy kept to himself and expressed in his own childish way.
- Perhaps, it is this memory that gives us the right to live and to go on..
- As long as there are somewhere such huts in the world. such hearts that beat with remembrance we can turn again to field and sky, to beauty and joy and say that our dear ones are here, living among us not as shadows but as an essence of our lives

Midstream — January, 1992

The Jewish Cemetery

The cemetery is a sacred place. The rabbis require that the behavior of those who visit a cemetery must be decorous and appropriate. Eating and drinking and even smoking are not permitted. The cemetery may not be used as a shortcut, nor may any-one step on a grave or lean against a gravestone. Reverence and respect for the deceased mark all these customs.

There are two basic principles which can serve as a guide to correct Jewish etiquette in a cemetery. These are:

Kalut Rosh: The holiness of the cemetery is equivalent to the holiness of the sanctuary. Our actions within its confines must be consonant with the high degree of this holiness. Also, because the graves in the cemetery are places from which we may derive no benefit at all, we are restricted from lounging in the area. Kalut Rosh is a spirit of levity and undignified behavior.



Lo'eg Larash: As noted previously, indulging in pleasurable activities, even religious observances, that the deceased of any of the occupants of the graves once enjoyed participating in, but now cannot, represents a slight of the dead. Thus:

- One should not study Torah, or recite the psalms, or conduct formal, daily services within approximately six feet of a grave.
- One should not carry tefillin or a Torah into the cemetery.

The Washing of Hands: It is an ancient custom of the Jewish people to cleanse themselves after being in close proximity to the deceased. This is done symbolically by washing the hands before entering the apartment. A container of water should be prepared for this purpose at the entrance.

The custom of hand washing is traced to many different origins. One is that it is a symbolic cleansing from the impurity associated with death. This impurity which is in the spiritual-legal category, and has no relation to physical or hygienic cleanliness, under-scores Judaism's constant emphasis on life and the value of living.

Another reason often given is that it stems from the practice ordained by the Bible when a person was found dead and the cause of his death was unknown. The elders of the city washed their hands and proclaimed, on behalf of the residents of the city, that none of the citizens have directly or indirectly caused this person's death. A third

reason some commentaries offer is that the washing is testimony that these individuals participated in the interment services and did not shrink from performing burial honours due the dead.

Whatever its origin, the custom of washing the hands is universally observed among Jews. The cup of water is not transferred directly from one person to another. This is a symbolic expression of hope that the tragedy should not continue from person to person, but should end where it unfortunately began.

Placing Stones on Graves: The original custom comes from Jacob in the Bible. The Talmud relates it to the “matzeva,” the “gravestone” to be placed on a grave. Later customs related to the graves which were topped by a pile of stones. There is also the concept that by placing a stone we pay respect to the soul of the departed.

Care of Cemeteries: For Jews, the care of cemeteries is an essential religious and social responsibility. The Talmudic saying “the Jewish gravestones are fairer than royal palaces” (Sanhedrin 96b) reflects the care that is expected to be given to Jewish graves and cemeteries. The Holocaust destroyed the normal circumstances which encompass the proper care for cemeteries. Today there are about 1,040 cemetery sites which have been identified. About 400 cemeteries have gravestones with 140 having 100 or more stones.

Prayers and psalms

MOURNERS KADDISH

Yitgadal v'yitkadash sh'mei raba.
B'alma di v'ra chirutei,
v'yamlich malchutei,
b'chayeichon uv'yomeichon
uv'chayei d'chol beit Yisrael,
baagala uviz'man kariv. V'im'ru: Amen.

Y'hei sh'mei raba m'varach
l'alam ul'almei almay.

Yitbarach v'yishtabach v'yitpaar
v'yitromam v'yitnasei,
v'yit'hadar v'yitaleh v'yit'halal
sh'mei d'kud'sha b'rich hu,
l'eila min kol birchata v'shirata,
tushb'chata v'nechemata,
daamiran b'alma. V'imru: Amen.

Y'hei sh'lama raba min sh'maya,
v'chayim aleinu v'al kol Yisrael.
V'imru: Amen.

Oseh shalom bimromav,
Hu yaaseh shalom aleinu,
v'al kol Yisrael. V'imru: Amen.

יתגדל ויתקדש שמה רבה בעלמא די-ברא
כרעותה, וימליך מלכותה בחייכון
ובמיומיוכון ובחיי דכל-בית ישראל,
בעגלא ובזמן קריב, ואמרו: אמן.
יהא שמה רבא מברך לעלם ולעלמי עלמיא.
יתברך וישתבח, ויתפאר ויתרום ויתנשא,
ויתהדר ויתעלה ויתהלל שמה דקודשא,
בריך הוא, לעלא מן כל ברכתא ושירתא,
תשבחתא ונחמתא דאמירן בעלמא, ואמרו: אמן.
יהאשלמא רבא מן-שמיא וחיים עלינו
ועל-כל-ישראל, ואמרו: אמן.
עושה שלום במרומיו, הוא יעשה שלום עלינו
ועל-כל-ישראל, ואמרו: אמן

May His great Name grow exalted and sanctified (Amen.)
in the world that He created as He willed.

May He give reign to His kingship in your lifetimes and in your days,
and in the lifetimes of the entire Family of Israel,
swiftly and soon. Now respond: Amen.

(Cong Amen. May His great Name be blessed forever and ever.)

May His great Name be blessed forever and ever.

Blessed, praised, glorified, exalted, extolled,
mighty, upraised, and lauded be the Name of the Holy One, Blessed is He
(Cong. Blessed is He) beyond any blessing and song,
praise and consolation that are uttered in the world. Now respond: Amen.

May there be abundant peace from Heaven, and life
upon us and upon all Israel. Now respond: Amen.

He Who makes peace in His heights, may He make peace,
upon us and upon all Israel. Now respond: Amen.

EL MALEY RACHAMIN

E-I maley rachamim, shochayn
 bam'romim, ham-tzay m'nucha n'chona
 al kanfay Hash'china, b'ma-alot k'doshim
 ut-horim k'zo-har haraki-a meirim
 umazhirim, lenishmot shayshet hamilyonim
 acheynu veachyoteynu rivevot alphay
 Yisrael, anashim, nashim, vataf
 shenehergu, shenishchatu, shenisrafu,
 shenechneku, veshenikbaru chayim
 al yeday haGermanim hanatzim
 veozrayem yemach shemam vezichram,
 Veshehalchu leolamam al kiddush
 Hashem. Ba-avur sheanu mitpallelim leillui
 nishmoteyhem. Lechayn Ba-al
 Harachamim yastirem b'sayter k'nafav
 l'olamim, v'yitzror bitzror hachayim
 et nishmoteyhem, b'Gan Ayden t'hay
 m'nuchatam Adoniy hu nachalatam,
 v'yanuchu b'shalom al mishkevotam,
 V'nomar: Amen.

אל מלא רחמים שוכן במרומים.
 המצא מנוחה נכונה על כנפי
 השכינה. במעלות קדושים
 וטהורים כזהר הרקיע מאירים
 ומזהירים. לגשמות ששית המליונים
 אחינו ואחיותינו רבבות אלפי
 ישראל, אנשים, נשים, וטף
 שנהרגו, שנשקטו, שנשקפו,
 שנהקרו, ושנקברו חיים ע"י
 הקרמנים הנאצים ועוזריהם ימש"ו,
 ושהלכו לעולמם על קדוש השם.
 בעבור שאנו מתפללים לעלוי
 נשמותיהם. לכן בעל הרחמים
 יסתירם בסתר קנפיו לעולמים
 ויצרור בצרור הסיים את
 נשמותיהם. בגן עדן תהא מנוחתם.
 ה' הוא נחלתם. וינחו בשלום על
 משקבותם, ונאמר אמן.

FOR THE REMEMBRANCE OF VICTIMS OF THE HOLOCAUST

G-d, full of mercy, who dwells in the heights, provide a sure rest upon the Divine Presence's wings, within the range of the holy and the pure, whose shining resemble the sky's, all the souls of the six million Jews, victims of the European Holocaust, who were murdered, slaughtered, burnt and exterminated for the Sanctification of the Name, by the German Nazi assassins and their helpers from the rest of the peoples. Therefore, the Master of Mercy will protect them forever, from behind the hiding of his wings, and will tie their souls with the rope of life. The Everlasting is their heritage, the Garden of Eden shall be their resting room, and they shall rest peacefully upon their lying place, they will stand for their fate in the end of days, and let us say: Amen

TEHILLIM – SONGS OF PRAISE

Psalms Chapter 20: To the chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

May the Lord hear you in the day of trouble! May the name of the God of Jacob defend you!
 May he send you help from the sanctuary, and strengthen you out of Zion!
 May he remember all your offerings, and accept with favour your burnt sacrifice! Selah.
 May he grant you your heart's desire, and fulfil all your plans!
 May we rejoice in your salvation, and in the name of our God set up our banners! May the Lord fulfil all your petitions!
 Now I know that the Lord saves his anointed; he will answer him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand.
 Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.
 They are brought down and fall; but we shall rise, and stand upright.
 Save, Lord; the king will answer us on the day when we call.

פרק כ

א למנצח מזמור לדוד: ב יענך יהוה ביום צרה
 ישגבך שם | אלהי יעקב: ג ישלח-עזרך מקדש
 ומציון יסעדך: ד יזכר כל-מנחתך ועולתך ידשנה
 סלה: ה יתן-לך כלבבך וכל-עצתך ימלא: ו נרננה
 בישועתך ובשם-אלהינו נדגל ימלא היה
 כל משאלותיך: ז עתה ידעתי כי הושיע | יהוה
 משיחו יענהו משמי קדשו בגברות ישע ימינו:
 ח אלה ברכב ואלה בסוסים ואנחנו | בשם-יהוה
 אלהינו נזכיר: ט המה כרעו ונפלו ואנחנו קמנו
 ונתעודד: י יהוה הושיעה המלך יעננו ביום-קראנו:

Psalms Chapter 23: A Psalm of David

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
 He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters.
 He restores my soul; he leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff comfort me.
 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil;
 my cup runs over.
 Surely goodness and loving kindness shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell
 in the house of the Lord forever.

פרק כג

א מזמור לדוד יהוה רעי לא אחסר: ב בנאות דשא
 ירביצני על-מי מנחות ינהלני: ג נפשי ישובב ינחני
 במעגלי-צדק למען שמו: ד גם כי-אלך בגיא
 צלמות לא-אירא רע כי-אתה עמדי שבטך
 ומשענתך המה ינחמני: ה תעריך לפני | שלחן נגד
 צררי דשנת בשמן ראשי כוסי רויה: ו אך טוב
 וחסד ירדפוני כל-ימי חיי ושבתי בבית-יהוה לארך ימים:

GENESIS 31

- 44** "Come now, let's make a covenant, you and I, and let it serve as a witness between us."
- 45** So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar.
- 46** He said to his relatives, "Gather some stones." So they took stones and piled them in a heap, and they ate there by the heap.
- 47** Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha, and Jacob called it Galeed.
- 48** Laban said, "This heap is a witness between you and me today." That is why it was called Galeed.

DEUTERONOMY 4

- 9** Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and you children's children.
- 10** Remember the day you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb, when he said to me, "Assemble the people before me to hear my words so that they may learn to revere me as long as they live in the land and may teach them to their children."

DEUTERONOMY 24

- 17** Do not deprive the stranger or the orphan of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge.
- 18** Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do this.

DEUTERONOMY 25

- 17** Remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt.
- 18** When you were weary and worn out, they met you on your journey and attacked all who were lagging behind; they had no fear of God.
- 19** When the Lord your God gives you rest from all the enemies around you in the land he is giving you to possess as an inheritance, you shall blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget!

To read **Yizkor for the Righteous Gentiles** please see page 130

Poland Travel information

Population: 41,000,000

Religion: Catholic

Geography: Covers an area of 312,685 square kilometres and is the ninth biggest country in Europe. It borders the Baltic Sea and seven countries, namely Belarus, Czech Republic, Germany, Lithuania, the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad, Slovakia and Ukraine.

The river Vistula flows through Krakow, Warsaw and ends in Gdansk on the Baltic Sea.

Language: Polish is a Western Slavonic language with about 40 million speakers mainly in Poland. There are also significant Polish communities in Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine, and significant numbers of Polish speakers in many other countries.

Capital: Warsaw

Other facts: Poland was liberated on 17 January 1945 but it meant spending much of the following five decades under Soviet hegemony. The communist regime collapsed and in 1990 and Lech Walesa was elected the first president of post-communist Poland. Shock capitalist tactics were used to rotate Poland into a free market economy, and while this left several losers, the nation emerged stronger than before.

It is a member of the EU, and notably was the one European nation to avoid recession in the recent global crisis

During Poland's thousand-year history, its people have contributed greatly to the fields of philosophy, mathematics, physics, chemistry, astronomy, biology, medicine, engineering, linguistics, the social sciences, law, literature, the visual arts, music and film.

Currency: Polish zloty (PLN) refers to the national currency of Poland. The currency is issued and managed by the country's central bank. The **zloty** (pronounced zwoti) is abbreviated in the foreign exchange market as PLN and is represented by the symbol **zł**. It is subdivided into 100 groszy **gr**.

Approximate prices:

Bottle of water	5.60 zł
Cappuccino	12.5 zł
Coke	7 zł
Loaf of Bread	4.3 zł

Small shops, newsagents, public toilets and even the occasional restaurant will often refuse to break a large note for you. Carry small-denomination notes and coins for such moments.

Public Toilets: Generally speaking, toilets in Poland come marked with a **○ circle for women** and a **△ triangle for men**.



Archway in Warsaw's old town

Common Words & Phrases

DAYS & DAYS OF THE WEEK		
ENGLISH	POLISH	PRONUNCIATION
Monday	Poniedziałek	paw nyeh jowek
Tuesday	Wtorek	ftorek
Wednesday	Środa	shraw da
Thursday	Czwartek	chfar tek
Friday	Piątek	pyon tek
Saturday	Sobota	sobota
Sunday	Niedziela	nye jela
Today	Dziś	jeesh
Yesterday	Wczoraj	fchor aye
Tomorrow	Jutro	yoo traw
Day	Dzień	jen
Week	Tydzień	ty-jehn
Month	Miesiąc	mye-shonts
Year	Rok	rock

GREETINGS, NICETIES, ETC.		
ENGLISH	POLISH	PRONUNCIATION
Thank you	Dziękuję	jen koo-yeh
You're welcome	Nie ma za co	nyeh mah zah tso
Yes	Tak	tack
No	Nie	nyeh
Please	Proszę	prosh-eh
Hello	Dzień dobry	jen daw-brih
Goodbye	Do widzenia	daw vee-jeh-nya
Good	Dobra / Dobrze	doh-brah / dohb-zheh
Bad	Zły / Źle	zwi / zleh
Friend (male)	Przyjaciół	pshih-ya-chyell
Friend (female)	Przyjaciółka	pshih-ya-chool-kah

MEALS / FOOD

ENGLISH	POLISH	PRONUNCIATION
Breakfast	Śniadanie	shnya-dah-nyeh
Lunch	Obiad	awb yad
Dinner	Kolacja	kaw-lats-ya
Vegetarian	Wegetarianin	veh-geh-teh-rya-need
Kosher	Koszerne	kaw-sheh-neh
Bread	Chleb	hleb
Beverage	Napój	nah-pooy
Coffee	Kawa	kah-vah
Tea	Herbata	her-bah-tah
Juice	Sok	sock
Water	Woda	vo-dah
Salt	Sól	sool

TRAVEL, GETTING AROUND

ENGLISH	POLISH	PRONUNCIATION
Ticket	Bilet	bee-let
Bus	Autobus	ow-taw-boos
Airport	Lotnisko	lot-knee-sko
Hotel	Hotel	haw-tel
Room	Pokój	paw-kooy

BASIC QUESTIONS

ENGLISH	POLISH	PRONUNCIATION
What time is it?	Która godzina?	ktoo-rah gaw-jee-nah
Where is this?	Gdzie to jest?	gjuh taw yest
What is this?	Co to jest?	tso taw yest
Do you have?	Czy pan / pani ma?	chi pan / pa-ny mah
What does this cost?	Ile to kosztuje?	ee-leh taw kosh-too-yeh
Excuse me	Przepraszam	psheh prah-sham
I don't understand	Nie rozumiem	nyeh roh-zoo-myem
Do you speak English?	Czy mówi pan / pani po angielsku?	chi moo-vee pan / pa-ny po an-gyel-skoo
Where is the toilet?	Gdzie jest toaleta?	gjuh yest taw-ah-let-ah

"And so, within seven months, I lost my father, my brother, and my mother. I am the only one who survived. This is what the Germans did to us, and these are things that should never be forgotten. On the other hand, we had our revenge: the survivors were able to raise magnificent families – among them myself. This is the revenge and the consolation."

Zvi Kopolovich

"Then for the first time we became aware that our language lacks words to express this offense, the demolition of a man... We had reached the bottom. It is not possible to sink lower than this... Nothing belongs to us anymore: they have taken away our clothes, our shoes, even our hair... They will even take away our name..."

Primo Levi

“So for us even the hour of liberty rang out grave and muffled, and filled our souls with joy and yet with a painful sense of shame... and also with anguish, because we felt that this should never happen, that now nothing could ever happen good and pure enough to rub out our past, and that the scars of the outrage would remain within us forever.”

Primo Levi, The Truce

“In those times there was darkness everywhere. In heaven and on earth, all the gates of compassion seemed to have been closed. The killer killed and the Jews died and the outside world adopted an attitude either of complicity or of indifference. Only a few had the courage to care. These few men and women were vulnerable, afraid, helpless – what made them different from their fellow citizens?... Why were there so few?... Let us remember: What hurts the victim most is not the cruelty of the oppressor but the silence of the bystander... Let us not forget, after all, there is always a moment when a moral choice is made... And so we must know these good people who helped Jews during the Holocaust. We must learn from them, and in gratitude and hope, we must remember them.”

Elie Wiesel

“the road to Auschwitz was built by hate, but paved with indifference”

Ian Kershaw

General glossary

Agudat Israel (Yisroel)	Political party representing ultra-Orthodox Jews in Poland
Aliyah	The immigration of Jews from the diaspora to Palestine and then Israel
Arenda	Polish term designating the lease of fixed assets, lessees
Ark	Place where Torah Scrolls are kept in a synagogue
Ashkenazi	Descendants of Jews who emerged from the Holy Roman Empire around the turn of the first millennium and established communities in Central and Eastern Europe
Beriha	Underground operation conducted 1944-49 to move Jews from Europe to Israel largely through means of illegal immigration
Betar	Revisionist Zionist youth movement founded in 1923 in Riga, Latvia, by Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky.
Blood libel	Centuries-old false allegation that Jews murder Christians especially Christian children to use their blood for ritual purposes
B'nai B'rith	A Jewish service organisation committed to the security and continuity of the Jewish people (and later the State of Israel) and combating antisemitism and bigotry
Bund	General Jewish Workers' Union
Cheder	School
Chasidism	Jewish religious sect arising as a spiritual revival movement in 18th C Europe
Chmielnicki Massacre	Ukrainian officer, Chmielnicki with the aid of Cossaks and local peasants inflicted waves of violent antisemitism in 1648, killing 100-200,000 Jews and destroyed their communities
Chovevei Zion	'Lovers of Zion' Movement which preceded the Zionist Organisation
Dror	Zionist youth movement
Ein Harod	Kibbutz in Israel founded in 1921 located in the Jezreel valley
Hashomer Hatzair	Socialist-Zionist, secular Jewish youth movement founded in 1913
Hanoar Hatzioni	Zionist youth movement established in 1926
Haskala	Resurgence of Jewish cultural enlightenment – 18th C
Hatzohar	Revisionist Zionist movement founded by Ze'ev Jabotinsky and others in Paris in April 1925
Histadrut	General Federation of Labourers in the Land of Israel founded in 1920
Jurydykas	Privately owns settlements
Kabbalah	Jewish mysticism
Kahal	Community
Maskilim	Followers of Haskala
Menshlikhkeyt	Humanness

Mikva	Ritual bath
Mizrachi	Religious Zionist organisation founded in 1902 in Vilnius
Mitnagdim	Opponents
ORT	Jewish education and vocational training organisation established in Russia in 1880
Pale of Settlement	Western region of Imperial Russia where Jews were permitted to settle
Passover seder	Passover meal
Pilpul	Method of studying the Talmud through intense textual analysis
Po'ale Tzion	A movement of Marxist–Zionist Jewish workers
Pogrom	Violent riot aimed at massacre or persecution of an ethnic or religious group, particularly one aimed at Jews
Rabbinism	Rabbinical teachings and traditions
Reb	Yiddish – an honorific title for a teacher
Rebbe	Yiddish – master, teacher or mentor, Chassidic use
Revisionist	Zionist ideology to establish a Jewish state on both sides of the river Jordan
Ringelblum Archives	Collection of documents from the Warsaw Ghetto
Seer	A person of supposed supernatural insight
Sephardi	Descendants of Jewish settlers who trace their origins to the Israelite tribes of the Middle East, who lived in the Iberian Peninsula until their expulsion in 1492
Shoah	Hebrew term for Holocaust
Shtetl	Small town with a large Jewish population in Central and Eastern Europe
Shulchan Aruch	Code of Jewish Law
Solidarity	Polish non-governmental trade union, at the Lenin Shipyards (now Gdansk Shipyards) founded in August 1980 by Lech Walesa and others
Tallit	Prayer shawl
Talmud	Central text of Rabbinic Judaism
Tateh	Father/papa in Yiddish
Torah	The five books of the Hebrew Bible
Tzadikkim	Righteous
USHMM	United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
Va'ad Arba' Aratzot	Council of Four Lands
Yad Vashem	Museum in Jerusalem: Largest repository of Holocaust information and official memorial to victims
Yeshiva/vot	Academy for the advanced study of Jewish texts
Yiddish	High German language of Ashkenazi Jews, written in the Hebrew alphabet
Yiddishkeyt	Jewishness
Yishuv Movement	national liberation movement aspiring to establish an independent Jewish entity in Palestine
Zionist	Supporter of the creation and development of a Jewish Homeland
ZOB	Jewish combat organisation

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March of the Living

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**Credits: March of the Living Canada Handbook and March
of the Living UK Handbook**

This educational kit was based on two different March of the Living educational initiatives - one in Canada, the other in the UK.

The Canadian edition was edited by Eli Rubenstein, then National, Director of March of the Living Canada, initially working together with Stephen Schaffzin of Schaffzin & Schaffzin under the auspices of UIA Federations Canada.

The UK edition was edited by Scott Saunders then chair of the UK MOTL delegation.

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Jewish Activism

Where do you go from here?

You don't have to be Jewish to struggle for universal liberation – you don't have to live in Israel to fight the good fight, either; although it should be recalled that some of the values of universal social justice, love, and peace happened to evolve in Eretz Israel and were transmitted to the rest of the world via the Jewish people.

What is most important is that you do work for it: that you do not take this Land and what it represents for granted; that you do not take yourself for granted. Don't necessarily accept anyone else's definition of you. Begin within yourself – explore your heritage and find your place within it, and meet friends and allies who will work with you.

Your being in Israel will make important differences in how you feel about being you. The very act of travelling will distance you from who you were before you came here, and you will probably feel an amount of culture shock when you arrive back in the Diaspora. It won't last long, but it should stimulate you to active thinking and doing. Leaving Israel you might feel some anguish: for by the act of leaving the question of return becomes real – the question of where you will spend the rest of your life. We have journeyed here and found our place to live. We want to help you come back and join us.

The experience is part of your education as a child of the universe – a guide to help you toward finding your place within it and your fulfillment through the ways you find to live the universe and yourself.

Hatikva

Kol ode balevav P'nimah –
Nefesh Yehudi homiyah

Ulfa'atey mizrach kadimah
Ayin l'tzion tzofiyah.

Ode lo avdah tikvatenu
Hatikvah bat shnot alpayim:

L'hiyot am chofshi b'artzenu
Eretz Tzion v'Yerushalayim

In the Jewish heart
A Jewish spirit still sings,

And the eyes look east
Toward Zion.

Our hope is not lost,
Our hope of two thousand years,

To be a free nation in our land,
In the land of Zion and Jerusalem

כל עוד בלבב פנימה
נפשר יהודי הומיה,
ולפאתי מזרח, קדימה,
עין לציון צופיה;

עוד לא אבדה תקוותנו,
התקווה בת שנות אלפים,
להיות עם חופשי בארצנו,
ארץ ציון ירושלים.

