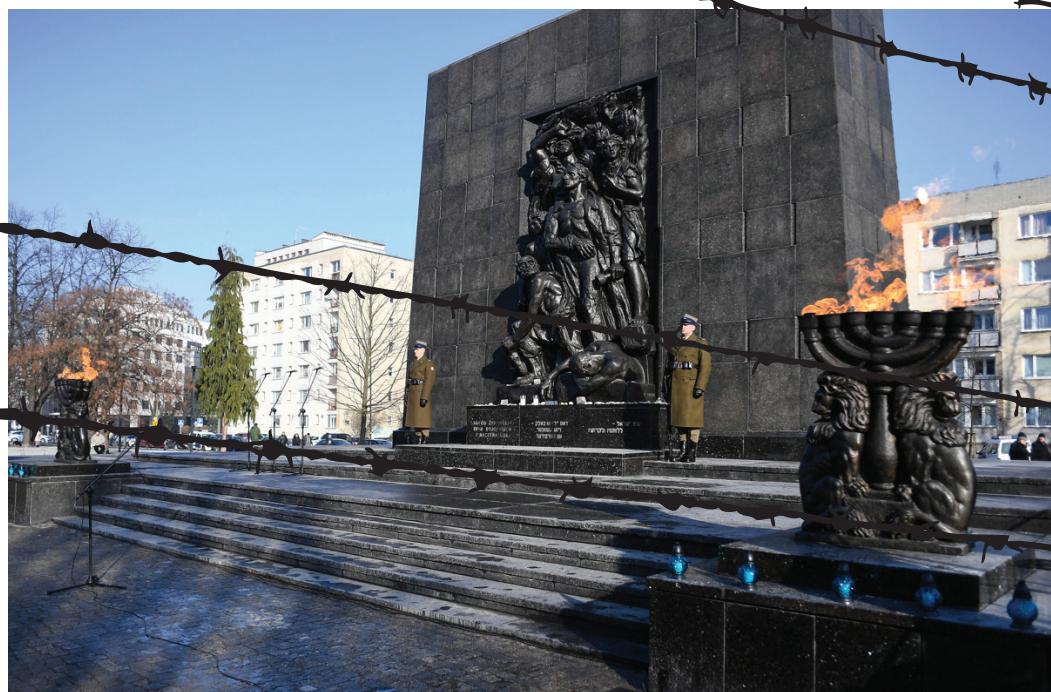


# Poland Study Guide



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## Why Poland?

In 1939, following a nonaggression agreement between the Germany and the Soviet Union known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Poland was again divided. That September, Germany attacked Poland and conquered the western and central parts of Poland while the Soviets took over the east. Part of Poland was directly annexed and governed as if it were Germany (that area would later include the infamous Nazi concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau). The remaining Polish territory, the “General Government,” was overseen by Hans Frank, and included many areas with large Jewish populations. For Nazi leadership, the occupation was an extension of the Nazi racial war and Poland was to be colonized. Polish citizens were resettled, and Poles who the Nazis deemed to be a threat were arrested and shot. Polish priests and professors were shot. According to historian Richard Evans, “If the Poles were second-class citizens in the General Government, then the Jews scarcely qualified as human beings at all in the eyes of the German occupiers.”

Jews were subject to humiliation and brutal violence as their property was destroyed or looted. They were concentrated in ghettos or sent to work as slave laborers. But the large-scale systematic murder of Jews did not start until June 1941, when the Germans broke the nonaggression pact with the Soviets, invaded the Soviet-held part of Poland, and sent special mobile units (the Einsatzgruppen) behind the fighting units to kill the Jews in nearby forests or pits. It was also in occupied Poland that the Nazis first experimented with killing Jews using gas vans. According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,

Gas vans were hermetically sealed trucks with engine exhaust diverted to the interior compartment. Use of gas vans began after Einsatzgruppe members complained of battle fatigue and mental anguish caused by shooting large numbers of women and children. Gassing also proved to be less costly. Einsatzgruppen (mobile killing units) gassed hundreds of thousands of people, mostly Jews, Roma (Gypsies), and mentally ill people. Within occupied Poland, the Germans built six of the most notorious death camps, Chełmno, Sobibór, Bełżec, Treblinka, Majdanek, and Auschwitz-Birkenau (Auschwitz as part of Germany). By 1942, Poland was the focus of the Nazis’ first factory-style killing plan, although by the time the death camps were operational, large numbers of Polish Jews had already been murdered. By the winter and spring of 1945, when Soviet and Allied troops liberated the country, Poland’s once-thriving Jewish population was decimated; by 1950, according to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, there were only about 45,000 Jews left in Poland. The actual number of Jewish survivors was higher, but postwar killings and pogroms convinced many Jews to leave. Scholars suggest that between 40,000 and 60,000 of the Jews who survived were rescued by Poles.

However, the majority of the Polish population was under the brutal control of the Nazis and was not in a position to help. While 6,532 Polish rescuers have been honored at Yad Vashem, the most of any country, many more Poles were simply trying to survive, while others collaborated or were complicit with the German occupiers. Recent scholarship has revealed several instances in which Polish civilians massacred Jews without German participation.



## TERRITORIES OF POLAND OCCUPIED BY THE THIRD REICH (Lines of partition after 6/22/1941)



- Extermination camp
- Killing site  
more than 1,000 victims
- × Euthanasia center
- ▲ Concentration camp
- Slave labor camp
- ▣ Transit camp

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/map-of-concentration-camps-in-poland-and-lithuania>

“We Germans fight a twofold fight today. With regard to the non- Jewish peoples we want to accomplish our vital interests. We respect them and conduct a chivalrous argument with them. But we fight world Jewry, as one has to fight a poisonous parasite; we encounter in him not only the enemy of our people, but a plague of all peoples. The fight against Jewry is a moral fight for purity and heath of god created humanity and for a new more just order in the world.”

### Hitler’s War Against the Jews: A Young Reader’s Version of The War Against the Jews

By David A. Altshuler



## CHRONOLOGY OF THE HOLOCAUST

### JANUARY 30, 1933

German President Paul von Hindenburg appointed Adolf Hitler chancellor.

### FEBRUARY 27–28, 1933

The German parliament (Reichstag) building burned down under mysterious circumstances. The government treated it as an act of terrorism.

### FEBRUARY 28, 1933

Hitler convinced President von Hindenburg to invoke an emergency clause in the Weimar Constitution. The German parliament then passed the Decree of the Reich President for the Protection of Nation (Volk) and State, popularly known as the Reichstag Fire Decree. The decree suspended the civil rights provisions in the existing German constitution, including freedom of speech, assembly, and press, and formed the basis for the incarceration of potential opponents of the Nazis without benefit of trial or judicial proceeding.

### MARCH 22, 1933

The SS (Schutzstaffel), Hitler’s “elite guard,” established a concentration camp outside the town of Dachau, Germany, for political opponents of the regime.

### MARCH 23, 1933

The German parliament passed the Enabling Act, which empowered Hitler to establish a dictatorship in Germany.

### APRIL 1, 1933

The Nazis organized a nationwide boycott of Jewish-owned businesses in Germany. Many local boycotts continued throughout much of the 1930s

### APRIL 7, 1933

The Nazi government passed the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, which excluded Jews and political opponents from university and governmental positions. Similar laws enacted in the following weeks affected Jewish lawyers, judges, doctors, and teachers.

**MAY 10, 1933**

Nazi party members, students, teachers, and others burned books written by Jews, political opponents of Nazis, and the intellectual avant-garde during public rallies across Germany.

**JULY 14, 1933**

The Nazi government enacted the Law on the Revocation of Naturalization, which deprived foreign and stateless Jews as well as Roma (Gypsies) of German citizenship.

The Nazi government enacted the Law for the Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Diseases, which mandated the forced sterilization of certain physically or mentally impaired individuals. The law institutionalized the eugenic concept of “life undeserving of life” and provided the basis for the involuntary sterilization of the disabled, Roma (Gypsies), “social misfits,” and black people residing in Germany.

**JUNE 30–JULY 1, 1934**

In what came to be called “the Night of the Long Knives,” on Hitler’s orders members of the Nazi party and police murdered members of the Nazi leadership, army, and others. Hitler declared the killings legal and necessary to achieve the Nazi party’s aims.

**AUGUST 2, 1934**

German President von Hindenburg died. Hitler became Führer in addition to his position as chancellor. Because there was no legal or constitutional limit to Hitler’s power as Führer, he became **absolute dictator of Germany**.

**JUNE 28, 1935**

The German Ministry of Justice revised Paragraphs 175 and 175a of the criminal code to criminalize all homosexual acts between men. The revision provided the police broader means for prosecuting homosexual men.

**SEPTEMBER 15, 1935**

The Nazi government decreed the Reich Citizenship Law and the Law for the Protection of the German Blood and Honor. These Nuremberg “racial laws” made Jews second-class citizens.

**JULY 12, 1936**

Prisoners and civilian workers began construction of the concentration camp Sachsenhausen at Oranienburg near Berlin. By September, German authorities had imprisoned about 1,000 people in the camp.

**AUGUST 1–16, 1936**

Athletes and spectators from countries around the world attended the Summer Olympic Games in Berlin, Germany. The Olympic games were a propaganda success for the Nazi state. The Nazis made every effort to portray Germany as a respectable member of the international community and soft-pedaled their persecution of the Jews. They removed anti-Jewish signs from public display and restrained anti-Jewish activities. In response to pressure from foreign Olympic delegations, Germany also included Jews or part-Jews on its Olympic team.

**MARCH 12–13, 1938**

German troops invaded Austria, and Germany incorporated Austria into the German Reich in what was called the Anschluss.

**NOVEMBER 9–10, 1938**

In a nationwide pogrom called *Kristallnacht* (“Night of Broken Glass”), the Nazis and their collaborators burned synagogues, looted Jewish homes and businesses, and killed at least 91 Jews. The Gestapo, supported by local uniformed police, arrested approximately 30,000 Jewish men and imprisoned them in the Dachau, Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald, and Mauthausen concentration camps. Several hundred Jewish women also were imprisoned in local jails.

**SEPTEMBER 1, 1939**

German troops invaded Poland, marking the beginning of World War II.

**SEPTEMBER 3, 1939**

Britain and France fulfilled their promise to protect Poland’s border and declared war on Germany.

**OCTOBER 1939**

Hitler initiated an order to kill those Germans whom the Nazis deemed “incurable” and hence “unworthy of life.” Health care professionals sent tens of thousands of institutionalized mentally and physically disabled people to central “euthanasia” killing centers where they killed them by lethal injection or in gas chambers.

**NOVEMBER 12, 1939**

German authorities began the forced deportation of Jews from West Prussia, Poznan, Danzig, and Lodz (also in annexed Poland) to locations in the General Government.

**NOVEMBER 23, 1939**

German authorities required that, by December 1, 1939, all Jews residing in the General Government wear white badges with a blue Star of David.

**APRIL 9–JUNE 10, 1940**

German troops invaded, defeated, and occupied Denmark and Norway.

**JUNE 30, 1940**

German authorities ordered the first major Jewish ghetto, in Lodz, to be sealed off, confining at least 160,000 people in the ghetto..

**MAY 10, 1940**

German troops invaded the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France. By June 22, Germany occupied all of these regions except for southern (Vichy) France.

**MAY 20, 1940**

SS authorities established the Auschwitz concentration camp (Auschwitz I) outside the Polish city of Oswiecim.

**NOVEMBER 15, 1940**

German authorities ordered the Warsaw ghetto in the General Government sealed off. It was the largest ghetto in both area and population. The Germans confined more than 350,000 Jews—about 30 percent of the city’s population—in about 2.4 percent of the city’s total area.

**JUNE 22, 1941**

Germany and its Axis forces invaded the Soviet Union in Operation Barbarossa. German mobile killing squads called *Einsatzgruppen* were assigned to identify, concentrate, and kill Jews behind the front lines. By the spring of 1943, the *Einsatzgruppen* had killed more than a million Jews and an undetermined number of partisans, Roma (Gypsies), and officials of the Soviet state and the Soviet Communist party. In 1941–42, some 70,000–80,000 Jews fled eastward, evading the first wave of murder perpetrated by the German invaders.

**JULY 31, 1941**

Reich Marshal Hermann Göring charged SS-Gruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich, head of the Security Police and the SD (Security Service), to take measures for the implementation of the “final solution of the Jewish question.” The “Final Solution” was a euphemism for the mass murder of the Jewish population of Europe.

**SEPTEMBER 3, 1941**

At the Auschwitz concentration camp, SS functionaries performed their first gassing experiments using Zyklon B. The victims were Soviet prisoners of war and non-Jewish Polish inmates.

**SEPTEMBER 15, 1941**

The Nazi government decreed that Jews over the age of six who resided in Germany had to wear a yellow Star of David on their outer clothing in public at all times.

**SEPTEMBER 29–30, 1941**

German SS, police, and military units shot an estimated 33,000 persons, mostly Jews, at Babi Yar, a ravine on the outskirts of Kiev (in Ukraine). In the following months, German units shot thousands of Jews, Roma (Gypsies), and Soviet prisoners of war at Babi Yar.

**OCTOBER 28, 1941**

After requiring all Kovno ghetto inhabitants to assemble at Demokratu Square, German and Lithuanian units took more than one-third of the ghetto’s population—some 9,200 people—to Fort IX and shot them in what was called the “Great Action.”

**OCTOBER–NOVEMBER 1941**

SS functionaries began preparations for Einsatz Reinhard (Operation Reinhard; often referred to as Aktion Reinhard), with the goal of murdering the Jews in the General Government. Preparations included construction of the killing centers Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka in the territory of the General Government.

**NOVEMBER 26, 1941**

SS authorities established a second camp at Auschwitz, called Auschwitz-Birkenau or Auschwitz II. The camp was originally designated for the incarceration of large numbers of Soviet prisoners of war but later was used as a killing center.

**DECEMBER 7, 1941**

Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The next morning, the United States declared war on Japan.

**DECEMBER 8, 1941**

Gassing operations began at Chelmno, one of six Nazi killing centers. Situated in the Polish territory annexed by Germany..

**MARCH 17, 1942**

At the Belzec killing center, an SS special detachment began using gas chambers to kill people. Between March 17 and December 1942, approximately 600,000 people, mostly Jews but also an undetermined number of Roma (Gypsies), were killed at Belzec.

**MAY 1942**

After trial gassings in April, an SS special detachment began gassing operations at the Sobibor killing center in early May. By November 1943, the special detachment had killed approximately 250,000 Jews at Sobibor.

**MAY 4, 1942**

SS officials performed the first selection of victims for gassing at the Auschwitz-Birkenau killing center. Weak, sick, and “unfit” prisoners were selected and housed in an isolation ward prior to being killed in the gas chambers. Between May 1940 and January 1945, more than one million people were killed or died at the Auschwitz camp complex. Close to 865,000 were never registered and most likely were selected for gassing immediately upon arrival. Nine out of ten of those who died at the Auschwitz complex were Jewish.

**JULY 15, 1942**

German authorities began deportations of Dutch Jews from the Westerbork transit camp in the Netherlands to Auschwitz. By September 13, 1944, over 100 trains had carried more than 100,000 people to killing centers and concentration camps in the German Reich and the General Government.

**JULY 22, 1942**

Between July 22 and September 12, German SS and police authorities, assisted by auxiliaries, deported approximately 300,000 Jews from the Warsaw ghetto to killing centers and concentration camps. Of that number, about 265,000 Jews were sent to the Treblinka killing center where they were murdered.

**JULY 23, 1942**

Gassing operations began at the Treblinka killing center. Between July 1942 and November 1943, SS special detachments at Treblinka murdered an estimated 750,000 Jews and at least 2,000 Roma (Gypsies).

**AUGUST 4, 1942**

German authorities began systematic deportations of Jews from Belgium. The deportations continued until the end of July 1944. The Germans deported more than 25,000 Jews, about half of Belgium’s Jewish population, to the Auschwitz-Birkenau killing center in occupied Poland, where most of them perished.

**JANUARY 18–22, 1943**

SS and police units deported more than 5,000 Jews from the Warsaw ghetto to the Treblinka killing center.

**APRIL 19–MAY 16, 1943**

In what is called the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Jewish fighters resisted the German attempt to liquidate the ghetto. German SS and police units deported many of those who survived the armed revolt to Treblinka, and sent others to Majdanek and forced labor camps at Trawniki and Poniatowa in the General Government. Some resistance fighters escaped from the ghetto and joined partisan groups in the forests around Warsaw. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was the first mass revolt in Nazi-occupied Europe.

(<http://www.nrg.co.il/online/3/ART2/545/152.html>)

**JUNE 21, 1943**

Heinrich Himmler, leader of the SS, ordered the liquidation of all ghettos in the Baltic states and Belorussia (Reich Commissariat Ostland) and the deportation of all Jews to concentration camps.

**AUGUST 2, 1943**

Jewish prisoners revolted at the Treblinka killing center. Although more than 300 prisoners escaped, most were caught and killed by German SS and police units assisted by army troops.

**SEPTEMBER 23, 1943**

SS authorities ordered the final deportation of Jews from the Vilna ghetto. SS and police units in Vilna deported 4,000 Jews to the Sobibor killing center and evacuated approximately 3,700 to labor camps in German-occupied Estonia.

**OCTOBER 14, 1943**

Jewish prisoners at the Sobibor killing center began an armed revolt. Approximately 300 escaped. German SS and police units, with assistance from German military units, recaptured more than 100 and killed them.

**NOVEMBER 3–4, 1943**

German SS and police units implemented Operation Harvest Festival. The purpose of Harvest Festival was to liquidate several labor camps in the Lublin area. During Harvest Festival, German SS and police units killed at least 42,000 Jews at Majdanek, Trawniki, and Poniatowa.

**MARCH 19, 1944**

German military units occupied Hungary.

**JUNE 6, 1944**

D Day. British and American troops launched an invasion of France.

**JULY 22, 1944**

SS authorities evacuated most of the remaining prisoners from Majdanek westward to evade the advancing Soviet army.

**JULY 23, 1944**

Soviet troops liberated Majdanek. Surprised by the rapid Soviet advance, the Germans failed to destroy the camp and the evidence of mass murder.

**NOVEMBER 25, 1944**

The SS began to demolish the gas chambers and crematoria at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

**JANUARY 17, 1945**

As Soviet troops approached, SS units evacuated prisoners in the Auschwitz camp complex, marching them on foot toward the interior of the German Reich. The forced evacuations came to be called “death marches.”

**JANUARY 27, 1945**

Soviet troops liberated about 8,000 prisoners left behind at the Auschwitz camp complex.

**APRIL 11, 1945**

U.S. troops liberated more than 20,000 prisoners at Buchenwald.

**APRIL 30, 1945**

Hitler committed suicide in his bunker in Berlin.

**MAY 2, 1945**

German units in Berlin surrendered to Soviet forces.

**MAY 7–9, 1945**

German armed forces surrendered unconditionally in the West on May 7 and in the East on May 9. Allied and Soviet forces proclaimed May 8, 1945, to be Victory in Europe Day (V-E Day).

**SEPTEMBER 2, 1945**

Japan surrendered. World War II officially ended.

<https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20000321-holocaust-chronology.pdf>



## The Final Solution: Estimated Number of Jews Killed

Country	Pre-Final Solution Jewish Population	Jewish Population Killed in Final Solution	Percent Killed
Poland	3,300,000	3,000,000	90%
Baltic Countries	253,000	228,000	90%
Germany/Austria	240,000	210,000	88%
Protectorate	90,000	80,000	89%
Slovakia	90,000	75,000	83%
Greece	70,000	54,000	77%
The Netherlands	140,000	105,000	75%
Hungary	650,000	450,000	70%
White Russia	375,000	245,000	65%
Ukraine*	1,500,000	900,000	60%
Belgium	65,000	40,000	60%
Yugoslavia	43,000	26,000	60%
Romania	600,000	300,000	50%
Norway	1,800	900	50%
France	350,000	90,000	26%
Bulgaria	64,000	14,000	22%
Italy	40,000	8,000	20%
Luxembourg	5,000	1,000	20%
Russia *	975,000	107,000	11%
Denmark	8,000	--	--
Finland	2,000	--	--
			%

(<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/estimated-number-of-jews-killed-in-the-final-solution>)

## Warsaw (Polish- Warsazwa) - An Introduction

Capital of Poland since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Jews were living in Warsaw by the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century but in 1483 they were expelled. After the first partition of Poland (1722), Warsaw Jewry, in particular the poorer sector, took an energetic part in the Polish struggle against the Russians. In 1808, under the “Infamous Decree” of Napoleon, restrictions were imposed on Jews’ rights for ten years. In 1809 a “Jewish Quarter” was established in which the only persons permitted to reside were Jewish owners of real estate, wholesale merchants, manufacturers, bankers, army suppliers and doctors, on condition that they wore European dress, were able to read and were able to write in Polish, German and French and send their children to general schools.

Between 1815-1915 the size of the Warsaw community increased, becoming the largest in Europe. Jews played an important role in finance and all sectors of commerce and industry. In the year of 1847, Warsaw had 20 bankers, 17 of which were Jews. Jewish bankers initiated and developed various industries, held a monopoly on the sale of salt and alcoholic beverages, leased the Jewish taxes and engaged in other activities.

The tendency to assimilate in Warsaw began with the penetration of German Cultural influences. The rate of conversion in Warsaw became the highest in Eastern Europe.

The main trend of Jewish education was Orthodox, and by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, 90% of all Jewish children of school age attended “cheder” schools. By 1820 three state schools for Jewish children were opened, but the Orthodox opposition curbed the development of general schools. In the 1880’s, Warsaw became the center for Hebrew publishing in Poland and throughout Russia. The first Yiddish (and Polish) weekly was published in 1823 by an assimilationist circle. During WWI thousands of refugees arrived in Warsaw and by the year of 1917 there were 343,000 Jews (41% of the total population). The German occupation brought improvement from the political standpoint, but the concentration of refugees, and the havoc brought on by the war increased the economic distress.

During the period of renewed Polish independence (1918-39) the Jewish population of Warsaw marked growth- despite anti-Semitism and economic difficulties.

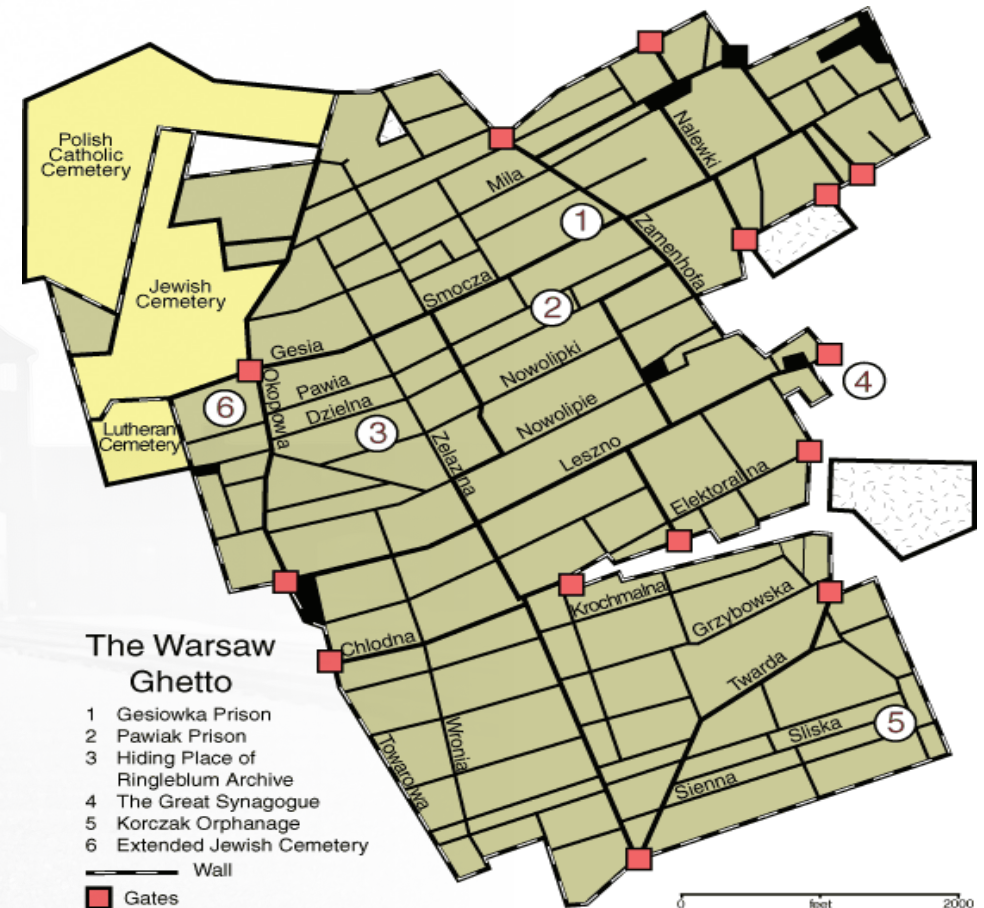
When German forces entered the city on 29 September 1939, there were 393,950 Jews living in Warsaw, comprising about a third of the city’s population. Between October 1939 and January 1940 the German Occupation authorities issued a series of anti-Jewish measures against the Jewish population. The ghetto suffered from mass unemployment and epidemics. It is estimated that by the summer of 1942, over 100,000 Jews died within the ghetto. Nevertheless, the morale of the ghetto inhabitants was not broken, and continual efforts were made to overcome the German decrees. A network of schools, both religious and secular, as well as trade schools, functioned in the ghetto. Despite the closing down of all synagogues and the prohibition of public worship, clandestine services were held at the Yeshivot functioned secretly.

The main forms of resistance were by the Zionist groups- Po'alei Zion, Ha- Shomer Ha-Tzair. Dror. Beitar, Gordania as well as the Bund and the communist inspired "Spartakus" organization. The political underground movements in the ghetto engaged in such activities as disseminating information, collecting documents on German crimes, sabotaging German factories and preparing for armed resistance.

A series of illegal periodicals appeared in Hebrew, Yiddish and Polish. The first Jewish military underground organization was formed in December 1939 by Jewish veterans of the Polish army; most of its members revisionists. None of the three military organizations in the ghetto succeeded in acquiring arms prior to July 22, 1942, when the Nazis initiated mass deportations to the Treblinka death camp. Three days later, the president of the Judenrat, Adam Czerniakow, committed suicide, following a demand by the Nazis that he cooperate with them throughout the deportations to the death camps. The number of deportees averaged 5,000-7,000 on a daily basis, while sometimes reaching 13,000. Some of the victims resigned to their fate as a result of starvation in the ghetto, and reported voluntarily to the 'Umschlagplatz', lured by the sight of food which the Germans offered to the volunteers, and by the promise that their transfer to the 'east' meant that they were able to work freely. The leaders of the underground movements decided to form a Jewish fighting organization called the Z.O.B and took active steps to oppose further deportation. The second wave of deportations began on January 18, 1943, when the Nazis broke into the ghetto surrounded many buildings and forcibly deported its inhabitants to the Treblinka death camp. They destroyed the ghetto's hospital, shot the patients, and deported the personnel. The underground organizations insufficiently equipped and ill-prepared, nevertheless offered armed resistance, which turned into 4 days of fighting throughout the streets of the ghetto. This was the first case of rioting in occupied Poland.

The Germans, fearing the impact of this outburst in other parts of Poland, stopped the deportations and attempted to carry out their aim by "peaceful" means, namely by voluntary registration for alleged labor camps.

## Map of Warsaw Ghetto



## Announcement of the Evacuation of the Jews From The Warsaw Ghetto, July 22, 1942

### The Judenrat is informed of the following:

1. All Jewish persons living in Warsaw, regardless of age and sex, will be resettled in the East.
2. The following are excluded from the resettlement:
  1. All Jewish persons employed by German Authorities or enterprises, and who can show proof of this fact.
  2. All Jewish persons who are members or employees of the Judenrat (on the day of the publication of this regulation).
  3. All Jewish persons who are employed by a Reich-German company and can show proof of the fact.
  4. All Jews capable of work who have up to now not been brought into the labor process are to be taken to the barracks in the Jewish quarter.
  5. All Jewish persons who belong to the staff of the Jewish hospitals. This applies also to the members of the Jewish Disinfection Team.
  6. All Jewish persons who belong to the Jewish Police (*Juedischer Ordnungsdienst*).
  7. All Jewish persons who are first-degree relatives of the person listed under a) through f). Such relatives are exclusively wives and children.
  8. All Jewish persons who are hospitalized in one of the Jewish hospitals on the first day of the resettlement and are not fit to be discharged. Fitness for the discharge will be decided by a doctor to be appointed by the Judenrat.
3. Every Jew being resettled may take 15 kgs. of his property as baggage. All valuables such as gold, jewelry, money, etc., may be taken. Food is to be taken for three days.
4. The resettlement will begin at 11:00 o'clock on July 22, 1942. In the course of the resettlement the Judenrat will have the following tasks, for the precise execution of which the members of the Judenrat will answer with their lives....

*Eksterminacja*, pp. 300-302.

\* The Regulation and detailed instructions for carrying it out were dictated to the Judenrat in Warsaw by Hoefle, who was in charge of the evacuation.

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## The Last Letter From Ghetto Revolt Commander Mordecai Anielewicz, Warsaw

April 23, 1943

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. [Yecheil] 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 marvelous 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-defense 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.

M. Anielewicz

Ghetto, April 23, 1943

[M. Kann], *Na oczach swiata* ("In the Eyes of the World"), Zamosc, 1932 [i.e., Warsaw, 1943], pp. 33-34.

## KRAKOW (CRACOW)

### JEWISH POPULATION OF KRAKOW

Founded before the end of the first millennium, the city of Krakow (Cracow), located today in southern Poland, served as the seat of the Piast Dynasty and eventually as the capital of the Polish Kingdom until the early 17th century. After the third partition of Poland in 1795, Krakow became the seat of Galicia province in the Austrian Empire. In 1918, with the reestablishment of the Polish state, Krakow became and remains one of its most important cities.

The first recorded presence of Jews residing in Krakow dates from the early 13th century. 55,515 Krakow residents identified themselves as Jews in the Polish census of 1931; on the eve of the war some 56,000 Jews resided in Krakow, almost one-quarter of a total population of about 250,000.

By November 1939, the Jewish population of Krakow had grown to approximately 70,000. This increase reflected the concentration of Jews who fled or were driven from the countryside into the city and its suburbs, and the arrival of Jews deported east from the District Wartheland (a part of German-occupied Poland that was directly annexed to the so-called Greater German Reich).

### GERMAN OCCUPATION OF KRAKOW

Upon the German invasion of Poland, the German army occupied Krakow in the first week of September 1939. The German military authorities initiated immediate measures aimed at isolating, exploiting and persecuting the Jews of the city. On October 26, 1939, that part of German-occupied Poland which the Germans did not annex directly came under rule of civilian occupation authorities under the leadership of Hans Frank, the former legal counsel to the Nazi Party. Appointed Governor General by Adolf Hitler, Frank established his headquarters in the Wawel Castle in Krakow, which the Germans designated as the capital of the Generalgouvernement. On Frank's staff was SS General Friedrich-Wilhelm Krüger who as Higher SS and Police Leader commanded all SS and police personnel stationed in the Generalgouvernement.

Krakow was also the capital of Krakow District in the Government General. The first District Governor was SS Major General Otto Wächter. When Wächter took over Galicia District in 1942, SS Major General Richard Wendler, SS chief Heinrich Himmler's brother-in-law, was the District Governor until his reassignment to District Lublin in July 1943. The SS and Police Leaders for District Krakow were: SS Lieutenant General Karl Zech until 1940, SS Colonel Julian Scherner from 1941 until February 1944, and SS General Theobald Thier from February 1944 until the German evacuation in January 1945. The Commander of Security Police and SD for District Krakow was SS-Lieutenant Colonel Max Grosskopf. The German Security Police established their headquarters near the Montelupich Prison.

Like elsewhere in the Generalgouvernement, the German occupation authorities required Jews in Krakow city and the surrounding areas to report for forced labor (October 1939), form a Jewish Council (November 1939) identify themselves by means of a white armband with a blue Star of David to be worn on the outer clothing (December 1939), register their property (January 1940-March 1940), and to be concentrated in ghettos (September 1940-March 1941).

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## THE KIELCE POGROM: A BLOOD LIBEL MASSACRE OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

The term “Kielce Pogrom” refers to a violent massacre of Jews in the southeastern Polish town of Kielce on July 4, 1946.

### INTRODUCTION

*Pogrom* is a Russian word meaning “to wreak havoc, to demolish violently.” Historically, the term refers to violent attacks by local non-Jewish populations on Jews in the Russian Empire. During the Kielce incident, a mob of Polish soldiers, police officers, and civilians murdered at least 42 Jews and injured over 40 in the worst outburst of anti-Jewish violence in postwar Poland.

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 postwar 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.

In 1939 there were approximately 24,000 Jewish inhabitants in Kielce or one-third of the town’s population. Almost all of them were murdered during the Holocaust. By the summer of 1946, about 200 Holocaust survivors had returned to or settled in Kielce. A minority were able to reclaim some property which had been confiscated by non-Jews during the German occupation.

### THE POGROM

On July 1, 1946, a nine-year-old non-Jewish boy, Henryk Blaszczyk, left his home in Kielce, without informing his parents. When he returned on July 3, the boy told his parents and the police, in an effort to avoid punishment for wandering off, that he had been kidnapped and hidden in the basement of the local Jewish Committee building on 7 Planty Street. The Committee building sheltered up to 180 Jews, and housed various

Jewish institutions operating in Kielce at the time. The local police went to investigate the alleged crime in the building, and even though Henryk’s story began to unravel (the building, for example, had no basement), a large crowd of angry Poles, including one thousand workers from the Ludwikow steel mill, gathered outside the building.

Polish soldiers and policemen entered the building and called upon the Jewish residents to surrender any weapons. After an unidentified individual fired a shot, officials and civilians fired upon the Jews inside the building, killing some of them. Outside, the angry crowd viciously beat Jews fleeing the shooting, or driven onto the street by the attackers, killing some of them. By day’s end, civilians, soldiers and police had killed 42 Jews and injured 40 others. Two non-Jewish Poles died as well, killed either by Jewish residents inside the building or by fellow non-Jewish Poles for offering aid to the Jewish victims.

### AFTER THE POGROM

Three days after the pogrom, surviving Jews and local residents buried the victims in a mass grave in the Jewish cemetery. Government authorities ordered military units and local residents to attend the funeral as a sign of respect for the victims. Although the government executed nine of the attackers on July 14, following a hasty judicial investigation, the Kielce Pogrom sparked intense fear in the already traumatized postwar Polish Jewish community. In the three months following the pogrom, over 75,000 Jews streamed out of Poland, part of a mass westward migration of Holocaust survivors known as the *Brihah*.

In September and October 1946, Polish authorities in Kielce indicted civilians, soldiers and police officers for their participation in the pogrom and complicity in the killings. Among the defendants were the commander of the Kielce Office of the Security Service, Major Wladyslaw Sobczynski, and the Chief of Police, Colonel Wiktor Kuznicki, as well as his deputy, Major Kazimierz Gwiazdowicz; of the three, only Kuznicki received a one year sentence, while the other two were acquitted.

The Kielce Pogrom has become a symbol of the precarious state of Jewish life in Eastern Europe in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust.

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# Poland Study Guide



