

# Warsaw

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## WARSAW

**WARSAW** (Pol. **Warszawa**), originally capital of the Masovia region; from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, capital of Poland. Jews were apparently living in Warsaw by the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, but the first explicit information on Jewish settlement dates from 1414. In 1423 the records show ten Jewish families paying tax in Warsaw, and about the same number exempted. The hostility of the townsmen of Warsaw to Jewish settlement in the capital was particularly strong. In 1483 the Jewish inhabitants were expelled, although some were living there three years later. There is no information about Jews in the city between 1498 and 1524; evidently they had either been driven from the city entirely or remained in the outskirts on property owned by the Polish magnates from where they could enter the city for business purposes. Eventually, in 1527, the townsmen of Warsaw obtained the privilege *de non tolerandis Judaeis*, authorizing the exclusion of Jews from the city. Because of its importance as a political and commercial center, however, their connection was not entirely severed. A number of Jews were able to continue to reside in the outskirts, and some managed to gain access to Warsaw itself. When the national Sejm (diet) transferred its sessions to Warsaw in 1572 Jews were permitted to enter the city during its conventions. The time permitted for their sojourn was subsequently extended to a period of two weeks before and after the sessions. In addition, Jewish representatives (*shtadlanim*) of the \*Councils of the Lands , empowered to negotiate with royalty and the nobility, also visited Warsaw. A number of other Jews obtained authorization by various means to enter the city temporarily even while the Sejm was not sitting. One of the customary "arrangements" was the "daily ticket" system, which gave the holder of a ticket the right to stay in Warsaw for 14 days. A census of 1765 records that there were 2,519 Jews in Warsaw.

During the \*Haidamack attacks of 1768 fugitives from the eastern districts of Poland flocked to the outskirts. The census for 1792 records 6,750 Jews in Warsaw, forming 9.7% of the total population: 30.4% of those economically active were engaged in commerce or as taverners, 26.7% in craft or industry, 41.4% in undefined occupations, and 1.5% in domestic employment or as simple laborers. Several scores of Jewish entrepreneurs engaged in flourishing business as moneylenders, court factors of royalty or the nobility, army suppliers, or agents for foreign embassies. These were the nucleus of the great Jewish bourgeoisie which subsequently formed in Warsaw; they were mainly

immigrants from abroad or from other towns in Poland.

Throughout the period of unofficial settlement the townspeople spared no efforts to drive the Jews from the capital. A partial expulsion of the Jewish residents was enforced, in conjunction with organized street attacks, in 1775 and 1790. After the first partition of Poland (1772), Warsaw Jewry, in particular the poorer sector, took an energetic part in the Polish uprising against the Russians. Many Jews volunteered for guard duties, and a number joined in the fighting in the Jewish legion formed under Berek \*Joselewicz . In their onslaught the Russian troops massacred the Jewish civilian population, in particular in the Praga suburb where resistance was fierce. Legend associates the name of Joseph Samuel \*Zbitkower with large-scale rescue operations during the massacre.

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After Warsaw passed to Prussia in 1796, Warsaw Jewry was subjected to the *Juden Reglements* of 1797. Only Jewish residents of the city prior to 1796 were allowed to stay; the others were only permitted the right of temporary domicile, in a reversion to the old "daily ticket" system. In 1805 fresh attacks on Jews in Warsaw were made by the Polish populace. Nevertheless, there was now continuous immigration of German-speaking Jews from Prussia, Silesia, and other places to Warsaw, and the Jewish population increased from 7,688 (12% of the total) in 1797 to 11,630 (17.4%) in 1804.

## Within the Duchy of Warsaw (1807–13)

After the formation of the Napoleon-sponsored duchy of Warsaw the Jews were not deprived of the rights of citizenship, but in 1808, under the "infamous decree" of \*Napoleon , restrictions were imposed on Jewish rights for ten years. During this period Warsaw Jewry was burdened with heavy taxes. In 1809 a "Jewish quarter" was established outside 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 write Polish, German or French, and sent their children to general schools. The "daily ticket" was abolished in 1811. The vicissitudes of war between 1812 and 1815, and the inimical attitude of the government of the duchy, led to a reduction of the number of Jewish residents in Warsaw, who in 1813 numbered 8,000.

From 1527 until the Prussian conquest no authorized community (*kehillah*) had existed in Warsaw. However, the Jews living in the city and environs met for prayers, established prayer houses and charitable associations, and appointed a *syndic-parnas*, to direct the tax administration, exercise judicial power, and organize the census, among other duties. He was assisted by *dayyanim* and a sworn-in *meturgeman* (interpreter). Rabbis had also officiated without authorization. The Prussian administration had appointed a representation for Warsaw Jewry with the right to exercise the *\*herem* (ex-communication) to facilitate tax collection. Thus the Warsaw community was revived and had the opportunity of appointing authorized rabbis. During the existence of the duchy of Warsaw the community extended its authority until it was transformed in practice from a local body to an institution representative of the Jewry of the whole duchy.

\*Hasidism spread to Warsaw toward the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. A celebrated public disputation between spokesmen of the ḥasidim and *Mitnaggedim* was held in the Praga suburb in

1781. On the other hand, a small circle of *maskilim* also formed in this period, which included a number of wealthy arrivals from abroad, physicians, and others. In 1802 Isaac Flatau founded the "German Synagogue," in which traditional services were held but sermons were delivered in German. A government-sponsored rabbinical seminary was established in 1826, which the Orthodox members of the community strongly opposed. It continued for 37 years, until the Polish uprising of 1863, and became a center for assimilationist and reformist tendencies.

## Within Congress Poland (1815–1915)

During the existence of Congress Poland, the size of the Warsaw community increased to become the largest in Europe. The Jewish population numbered 15,600 (19.2% of the total) in 1816, 72,800 (32.7%) in 1864, 130,000 (33.4%) in 1882, 306,000 (39.2%) in 1910, and 337,000 (38.1%) in 1914. Natural increase was responsible for only part of this growth, which was mainly the outcome of the migration to Warsaw beginning in the 1860s and particularly after the pogroms in Russia of 1881, when 150,000 Jews moved to Warsaw, a substantial number coming from Lithuania and Belorussia, and from the Ukraine.

From 1815 there was a sharp deterioration in the status of Warsaw Jewry. The area of the "Jewish quarter" was further restricted, the system of "daily tickets" was reintroduced, and the animosity of the general populace increased. The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century inaugurated a change for the better, and was marked by some rapprochement between certain Jewish and Polish circles. In 1862 the restrictions relating to all the Jews of Congress Poland were lifted. The Jews of Warsaw took an active part in the two Polish uprisings against Russia, especially in the second in 1863.

At the end of the 1870s there was a recrudescence of anti-Jewish feeling in Warsaw and throughout Poland. In December 1881 a pogrom broke out in Warsaw in the wake of the Russian pogroms, motivated in particular by the notion that the "Litvaks" (Lithuanian Jews) were the promoters of russification in Poland. The elections to the fourth Imperial Duma of 1912, in which Warsaw Jewry returned a left-wing candidate, further aggravated anti-Jewish hostility.

Throughout this period, the Warsaw Jews considerably extended their activities in the economic sphere, and the social and economic differences within the community grew more marked. Jews played an important role in finance and all sectors of commerce and also in industry. Of the 20 bankers in Warsaw in 1847, 17 were Jews. Jewish bankers initiated and developed various industries in the state, participated in the construction of railroads, held the monopoly for the sale of salt and alcoholic beverages, leased the Jewish taxes, and engaged in other activities. In 1849 Jews formed 52% of the total persons engaged in commerce. Nevertheless this *haute bourgeoisie*, despite its economic importance, formed a negligible percentage in the total Jewish population of Warsaw, in 1843 forming 2.2% of the number of Jews actively employed there. In this year about 30% of the Jews earned a livelihood from commerce, mainly as shopkeepers or peddlers, about one-third as artisans and laborers, 13.5% as carters, porters or day laborers, and 12.5% as domestic workers. The proportion of Jews engaged in commerce increased until the 1870s but afterward dropped in face of growing Polish competition.

In 1862 the main source of livelihood for the Jewish proletariat was commerce and crafts: 31.7% were employed in commercial

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establishments, 27.9% in crafts, and 4.5% in industry; the number in industry later increased, although mainly in small or medium industry, large industries, even under Jewish ownership, taking

a smaller number of Jewish workers; 2.8% of the Jews were employed in finance, 1.9% in transportation, and 1.9% in the liberal professions. The large percentage of domestic workers (29.3%) reflects the migration of unemployed women to the metropolis. Later, part of this number was absorbed into the garment and tobacco industries.

## Social and Cultural Developments

Hasidism spread rapidly in Warsaw. In 1880 two-thirds of the 300 approved synagogues, and many prayer rooms, were ḥasidic, and this also reflected the proportion of Ḥasidim to the total Jewish population in the city. The *Mitnaggedim* were augmented by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the advent of the "Litvaks."

The tendency to \*assimilation in Warsaw began with the penetration of German cultural influences, in which an important role was played by the wealthy arrivals from the West at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup>, whose ranks were reinforced by wealthy Jews of Polish birth. Later the attachment of the assimilationists became closely orientated to Polish culture and society, and in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the tendency spread to the youth of wider circles. The assimilationists took an active role in the leadership and cultural life of the community. The incidence of conversion in Warsaw became the highest in Eastern Europe: in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century 70 bankers, industrialists and large-scale merchants, 15 printers, and 20 officials adopted Christianity.

In 1883 the society of She'erit Israel of the Ḥovevei Zion was established in Warsaw, led by Israel Jasinowski and Saul Phinehas \*Rabinowitz, and in 1890 the society Menuḥah ve-Naḥalah was founded, led by Eliyahu Ze'ev \*Lewin-Epstein, which established the moshavah of \*Reḥovot in Erez Israel. The Geulah Company, formed in 1904, participated in acquiring land for the society of Aḥzzat Bayit which pioneered the building of Tel Aviv. The circles of Ḥovevei Zion in Warsaw concentrated in particular in the synagogue of Ohel Moshe, founded in 1885, and subsequently in the Moriah synagogue founded in 1908, at which Isaac \*Nissenbaum served as preacher.

A number of Zionist youth and student circles, whose leadership included Jan Kirshrot, Yiẓḥak \*Gruenbaum, and Yosef \*Sprinzak, combined in the society Ha-Teḥiyah in 1903. Its ranks included supporters of differing national and socialist ideologies who soon separated. Some of its members joined the Zionist Democratic Fraction, under the leadership of Gruenbaum. Another group became a formative influence in the Po'alei Zion, under the leadership of Yiẓḥak \*Tabenkin and Ben-Zion Raskin, and in Ze'irei Zion, led by Sprinzak. After the split in the Sixth Zionist Congress over the \*Uganda scheme (1903), the supporters of Theodor \*Herzl and the political Zionists joined in the Meginnei ha-Histadrut which established its headquarters in Warsaw.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jewish socialist societies and workers' circles were consolidated into the \*Bund, under the leadership of Leo Goldman, John Mill, and Ziviah Hurvitz, originally from Vilna. The Bund conducted its activities among the Jewish workers, organized strikes and May 1<sup>st</sup> demonstrations, and promoted Yiddish culture: it was opposed to Zionism and the movement to revive Hebrew.

Until the end of the 1860s the Warsaw community leadership was mainly Orthodox, excepting for the periods 1841–44 and 1856–58, when the president of the community was Matthias Rosen, an assimilationist who was acceptable to all groups of the community. After a financial criterion was established in the elections, the assimilationists assumed the leadership of the community by agreement with the Ḥasidim, and controlled its affairs for over 50 years, between 1871 and 1926.

Zionist opposition to the assimilationists was organized for the first time in 1899.

Four rabbis served for the whole of Warsaw and its vicinity, all *Mitnaggedim* : Solomon Zalman \*Lipshitz , 1819–39; Hayyim \*Dawidsohn , 1839–54; Dov Berush \*Meisels , 1854–70; and Jacob \*Gesundheit , 1870–73, who was not accepted by the Ḥasidim and was removed from office with the help of the assimilationists. The rabbis served in conjunction with *dayyanim*. Attempts to establish a \*Reform synagogue in Warsaw were unsuccessful. The only innovation introduced by the "modernized" congregations was that sermons in their synagogues were preached in German or Polish. Rabbis in these synagogues were Abraham Meir Goldschmidt, Isaac Kramsztyk, Mordecai \*Jastrow , Isaac Cylkow, Samuel Abraham \*Poznanski , and Moses \*Schorr .

The main trend of Jewish education in Warsaw was Orthodox. In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, 90% of all Jewish children of school age attended *heder*. Subsequently the percentage decreased, and by the end of the century only 75% attended *hadarim*. In 1896 there were 433 authorized *hadarim*, in Warsaw and a large number of unauthorized ones. In 1885 circles of Ḥovevei Zion established the first *heder metukkan*, or modern *heder*, in Warsaw. In 1820 three state schools for Jewish children had been opened under the supervision of Jacob \*Tugendhold , but the Orthodox opposition curbed the development of general schools. On the threshold of World War I there were 20 elementary schools in Warsaw in which the language of instruction was Russian. Attempts to open private schools for boys met only with limited success. On the other hand, the girls' secondary schools, which disseminated Polish culture, were more popular; even Ḥasidim, who normally insisted on an extreme Orthodox education for their sons, sent their daughters to them. In 1895, 19 schools of this type existed in Warsaw. Vocational training courses, a secondary school with a scientific trend (1878–88), and a trade school were also opened. The first Hebrew kindergarten was founded by Jehiel Heilperin in 1909, in conjunction with a course for kindergarten teachers, opened in 1910.

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## Jewish Press

The Haskalah literature in Warsaw was of an inferior standard and made little impact. However, in the 1880s, Warsaw became the center for Hebrew publishing in Poland and throughout Russia. The daily and weekly press, the many literary organs, and other periodicals which now began to burgeon, marked the transition from the world of Haskalah to the new Hebrew literature. They provided a platform for the elite of the writers, poets, scholars, and journalists. In 1862 the Hebrew periodical *\*Ha-Zefirah* was established as a weekly by Ḥayyim Selig \*Slonimski , which after a series of intervals and setbacks became a daily in 1886 and the central organ for Russian Jewry. Other daily or weekly Hebrew newspapers also published in this period did not continue for long, generally for lack of readership; the heavy hand of the censor also proved a stumbling block. The pioneer of Hebrew publishing in Warsaw was A.L. Ben Avigdor (see \*Shalkovich ) while the most active personality in journalism and literature was Nahum \*Sokolow .

The first Yiddish (and Polish) weekly was *Der Beobakhter an der Weykhsel*, published in 1823–24 by assimilationist circles. The transition in \*Yiddish literature to new forms and contents originated with Y.L. \*Peretz and his circle and the literary publications which they founded, *Yidishe Bibliotek* (1891–95) and *Yontev Bletlakh* (1894–96). After a number of unsuccessful attempts, two Yiddish periodicals became established which soon began to overtake the Hebrew press: Samuel Jacob

Jackan began to publish the daily *Yidishes Tageblatt* in 1906, changed in 1908 into *\*Haynt*. Zevi *\*Prylucki* established the daily *\*Moment* in 1911. Polish periodicals also appeared, first sponsored by the assimilationists, among them the weekly *Jutrzenka*. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century national newspapers were also published in Polish.

## World War I and the Polish Republic

During World War I thousands of refugees arrived in Warsaw. In 1917 there were 343,400 Jews (41% of the total population). The German occupation brought improvement from the political standpoint, but the concentration of refugees and the havoc wrought by war increased the economic distress.

During the period of renewed Polish independence (1918–39) the Jewish population of Warsaw showed marked growth, but a decrease compared with the general population. In 1918 the total was 320,000 (42.2%), and in 1938, 368,400 (29.1%). The tendency of the Polish state to centralize economic activity in its own institutions, the antisemitic direction of its policy and the antisemitic feelings rife among the Polish public, as well as the economic action taken against the Jews (see *\*Poland*), severely affected Jewish life in Warsaw. The number of Jewish unemployed reached 34.4% in 1931, while that of those without means of livelihood was even greater. In 1933 half of the members of the Warsaw community were exempted from the communal tax as they were unable to furnish the minimal payment of five zlotys a year. Consequently the pressure of emigration increased, in particular to Palestine.

Warsaw was the headquarters of Jewish parties and movements in Poland, the arena of the struggle for Jewish representation in the state Sejm and Senate, and the center of Jewish cultural and educational activities, of the arts, scholarship and literature, and of the Jewish national press. A fierce political struggle was waged over the character that Jewish life in Warsaw should assume. Hasidism continued to be an important factor in Jewish affairs. Many of the hasidic *admorim* of various dynasties settled in Warsaw. Assimilation became a less important issue, and the chief political struggle was between the Zionist factions and the Orthodox-hasidic groups, which combined in the *\*Agudat Israel*. Between 1926 and 1936 the direction of Warsaw communal affairs was in the hands of *Agudat Israel* and the Zionists, either in coalition or alternately. However, in 1936 the Bund gained the lead in both the elections to the communal leadership and the Jewish representation on the Warsaw municipality. The Polish government annulled the results of the democratically held communal elections and appointed another community board (*kahal*) which continued in office until the German occupation in World War II.

### JEWISH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

During the inter-war period a number of Jewish school systems existed: six Hebrew-national elementary schools, established by the Zionist Tarbut organization; four Yiddish secular schools established by the CYSHO supported by the Bund and the left Po'alei Zion; a Yiddish-Hebrew school of the Shulkult organization, separated from the CYSHO; an Orthodox school of *Agudat Israel* (*Horev* for boys and *\*Beth Jacob* for girls) – the exact number of their schools is not known but the number of the pupils exceeded that for other schools; two bilingual (Polish-Hebrew) elementary schools and one secondary school of the Yavneh founded by *\*Mizrachi*; and numerous private secondary schools. Most Jewish children attended the state schools. In neighborhoods where there were Jewish concentrations, some of these schools were solely intended for Jewish pupils: lessons were held on Sundays instead of the Sabbath, and the schools were known as *szabatówki*. In 1928 the Institute for Jewish Studies, *Makhon le-Hokhmat Yisrael*, was opened, and the name was

subsequently changed, as its sphere of activity expanded, to Makhon le-Madda'ei ha-Yahadut. Moses Schorr, Meir \*Balaban , Abraham \*Weiss , and Menahem (Edmund) Stein served as principals.

During this period Hebrew literature and press declined. Many of the Hebrew writers emigrated to Erez Israel. Attempts to continue publication of Hebrew dailies were unsuccessful; not one lasted for an appreciable time. The most important publishing house of Hebrew books in Warsaw was that of A.J. \*Stybel . On the other hand, the Yiddish and Polish Jewish press increased its output. Other Yiddish dailies were published alongside the *Haynt* and *Moment*, including party organs and unaffiliated papers, with a wide public and considerable influence on their readers. In 1917 *Nasz Kurjer* was published under the editorship of Jacob Apenszlak, which

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changed to *Nasz Przegląd* in 1920, a national independent daily. Other weeklies and periodicals were also published.

[Avraham Rubinstein]

## Hebrew Printing

The beginning of Hebrew printing in or near Warsaw was due to the desire of the government to stem the outflow of capital abroad for the import of Hebrew books. In Warsaw the first Hebrew book (Zevi Hirsch b. Hayyim's notes on the Yalkut Shimoni *Zemah le-Avraham*) was printed by Peter Zawadzki in 1796. After his death his widow continued printing – mainly anti-hasidic literature – until 1801. Another non-Jewish Hebrew printer was V. Dombrowsky (to 1808). The first Jewish-owned press was that of Zevi Hirsch Nossonowitz of Lutomirsk, who printed, with Krueger's Novydwor type, from 1811, in partnership with Avigdor Lebensohn 1818–21, and afterward the two of them separately, Nossonowitz now changing his name to Schriftgiesser ("type-caster"). He died in 1831, succeeded by his son Nathan; the firm continued for another century, printing a Talmud edition (1872). Lebensohn and his descendants were active to 1900. More than 30 additional presses were established in Warsaw during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including that of S. Orgelbrand and sons, who printed Talmud editions as well as *Turim*, Maimonides' *Yad*, the Shulḥan Arukh, and a Mishnah edition.

Among the moving spirits of Hebrew printing in Warsaw was Isaac Goldmann (1812–1887), who ran his own press from 1867 producing more than 100 books, among them Talmud tractates. In 1890 the brothers Lewin-Epstein established a Hebrew printing house, which is still active in Israel. A dozen or so more presses were set up in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the outbreak of World War II in 1939 more than 1,000 workers were engaged in the Hebrew printing works in Warsaw.

## Holocaust Period

When German forces entered the city on Sept. 29, 1939, there were 393,950 Jews, comprising approximately one-third of the city's population, living in Warsaw. Between October 1939 and January 1940 the German occupation authorities issued a series of anti-Jewish measures against the Jewish population. These measures included the introduction of forced labor; the order that every Jew should wear a white armband with a blue star of David, and the special marking of Jewish-owned businesses; confiscation of Jewish real estate and other property; and a prohibition

against Jews using the railway and other public transportation.

## THE GHETTO

In April 1940 the Germans began constructing a wall to enclose the future Warsaw ghetto. On October 2, the Germans established a ghetto for all Warsaw Jews and Jewish refugees from the provinces. Within six weeks all Jews or persons of Jewish origin had to move into the ghetto, while all "Aryans" residing in the assigned area had to leave. The ghetto originally covered 340 hectares (approximately 840 acres), including the Jewish cemetery. As this area was gradually reduced by the Germans, the walls were moved, and the number of gates changed. In the autumn of 1941 the ghetto was divided into two parts, joined by a bridge over Chlodna Street. The gates were guarded by German and Polish police from the outside and by the Jewish militia (*Ordnungsdienst*) from the inside and only those with a special permit could enter or leave the ghetto. In the beginning, the Warsaw city hall, German political authorities, and a special office, the "*Transferstelle*," responsible for financial affairs, dealt with the ghetto's administration. However, from April 1941 a German commissioner, Heinz Auerswald, was appointed over the ghetto. The head of the Jewish community council was Adam Czerniakow, an engineer who had been appointed by the mayor of Warsaw during the siege (Sept. 23, 1939). By order of Hans Frank (Sept. 28, 1939), a *Judenrat* was created, consisting of 24 members, and presided over by Czerniakow. Czerniakow carried out his functions for the general good under trying conditions, often interceding with the German authorities to ameliorate the repressive regulations. He tirelessly supported social and cultural institutions in the ghetto and provided relief wherever possible.

Originally some 400,000 Jews were crowded into the area of the ghetto. The reductions in its size necessitated internal shifting and further overcrowding, so that thousands of families were often left without shelter. The situation was further aggravated when some 72,000 Jews from the Warsaw district (see *Poland*) were transferred to the ghetto, bringing the total number of refugees to 150,000 (April 1941). The average number of persons per room was 13, while thousands remained homeless. The ghetto population during various periods prior to July 1942 is estimated to have been between 400,000 and 500,000. The confiscation and plunder of Jewish property was conducted by the "*Transferstelle*." In January 1942, Jewish goods valued at 3,736,000 zlotys (\$747,200) were confiscated; in February – 4,738,000 zlotys (\$947,600); in March – 6,045,000 zlotys (\$1,209,000); and in April – 6,893,000 zlotys (\$1,378,000). The ghetto population received a food allocation amounting to 184 calories per capita a day, while the Poles received 634, and the Germans 2,310. The price per large calorie was 5.9 zlotys (about \$1) for Jews, 2.6 zlotys (50 cents) for Poles, and 0.3 zlotys (\$.06) for Germans. The average allocation per person in the ghetto was four pounds of bread and a half pound of sugar a month. The dough was mixed with sawdust and potato peels.

The ghetto suffered from mass unemployment. In June 1941, 27,000 Jews were active in their professions, while 60% of the Jewish population had no income at all. A small number of Jews who had their own tools and machines found employment in factories taken over by Germans. Wages were minimal. For 10–12 hours of strenuous labor, a skilled worker earned 2½–5 zlotys (\$0.50–1.00) daily. There was an acute shortage of fuel to heat the houses. In the winter of 1941–42, 718 out of the 780 apartments investigated had no heat. These conditions led to epidemics, especially typhoid. The streets were strewn with corpses due to starvation and disease.

Bands





*Plan of Warsaw ghetto, 1940–43,*

*after J. Ziemian, The Borders of Warsaw Ghetto, Jerusalem, 1971.*

of children roamed the streets in search of food. A few women and children occasionally slipped across to the "Aryan" side, in an attempt to find food or shelter. The Polish police usually seized them and turned them over to the Germans. In October 1941 the authorities declared that leaving the ghetto without permission was punishable by death.

From time to time the authorities rounded up able-bodied people in the streets and sent them to slave labor camps. In April 1941 some 25,000 Jews from the Warsaw ghetto lived in these camps under conditions that rapidly decimated their numbers. After the outbreak of the German-Soviet War (June 1941), many of the inmates in the camps were executed.

It is estimated that by the summer of 1942, over 100,000 Jews died in the ghetto proper. Nevertheless, the morale of the ghetto inhabitants was not broken, and continual efforts were made to overcome the German decrees and organize relief. Illegal workshops were gradually established for manufacturing goods to be smuggled out and sold on the "Aryan" side. These included leather products, metals, furniture, textiles, clothing, and millinery. At the same time raw materials were smuggled in. In this way thousands of families were sustained. The

smuggling of foodstuffs into the ghetto, carried out by Jewish children, was especially intensive. In December 1941 the official import of foodstuffs and materials into the ghetto was valued at 2,000,000 zlotys (\$400,000) while illegal imports totaled 80,000,000 zlotys (\$16,000,000). Social welfare institutions were active to combat hunger and disease. The \*Centos for social welfare, the \*Toz for health services, and other organizations re-formed and established hospitals, public kitchens (daily providing over 100,000 soup rations), orphanages, refugee centers, and recreation facilities. In each block of houses a committee for charitable work functioned and also engaged in cultural and educational activities, such as reading groups, lectures, and musical evenings. A network of schools, both religious and secular, as well as trade schools functioned in the ghetto. Some of these schools were illegal and could operate only under the guise of soup kitchens. Similarly, medical, technical, and scientific training was given under the guise of trade courses. By the end of 1940 the Jewish historian, Emmanuel \*Ringelblum , established a secret historical and literary society under the code name of *Oneg Shabbat*. This group set up secret archives on the life and martyrdom of the Polish Jews under the Nazis. These archives, which were hidden in several places, were discovered after the war. Despite the closing down of all synagogues and the prohibition against public worship, clandestine services were held, especially on holidays. Yeshivot secretly functioned. The *zaddikim* of \*Aleksandrow and \*Ciechanow were hidden and cared for by their followers. Many religious Jews held the view that their sufferings were preliminary to the coming of the Messiah. There were many instances of heroism by ultra-Orthodox Jews in the face of death. Hillel \*Zeitlin , the famous religious writer, arrived at the "*Umschlagplatz*" (assembly point) during the 1942 deportation, proudly dressed in his religious garb. Janusz \*Korczak , the director of the Jewish orphanage, continued to give hope and courage to his wards until he boarded the death train together with the children.

## FORMATION OF RESISTANCE

The main form of resistance in the ghetto revolved around the underground political life which existed throughout the German occupation. The most active were the Zionist groups – \*Po'alei Zion , \*Ha-Shomer ha-Ẓa'ir , Deror, \*Betar , \*Gordonia , as well as the Bund and the Communist-inspired Spartakus organization. As early as Passover 1940 the Germans, with the cooperation of Polish hooligans, provoked a pogrom in the Jewish district. Underground Jewish groups organized effective self-defense. After the ghetto was established, underground activity increased, as the purely Jewish environment offered better security against denunciations and infiltration of German police agents into the ranks of the underground. 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. Among the best known were the following Hebrew publications: *Deror*, circulated by the \*He-Halutz organization ; *El Al*, *Itton ha-Tenu'ah*, and *Neged ha-Zerem* by Ha-Shomer ha-Ẓa'ir; *Magen David* by Betar; *Sheviv* by the General Zionists; Yiddish publications: *Bafrayung* by He-Halutz; *Morgenfray* and *Biuletin* by the Bund; and Polish publications: *Awangarda* by Po'alei Zion; *Jutrznia* and *Plomienie* by Ha-Shomer ha-Ẓa'ir.

The first Jewish military underground organization, Swit, was formed in December 1939 by Jewish veterans of the Polish army. Most of its members were Revisionists. The organization was headed by David Apelbaum and Henryk Lipszyc, aided by a Polish major, Henryk Iwanski.

Early in 1942 a second underground fighting organization emerged, created by four Zionist groups: Po'alei Zion, Ha-Shomer ha-Ẓa'ir, Zionist Socialists, and Deror, as well as the Communist organization. It soon became known as the anti-Fascist bloc. Its leaders were Szachna Sagan, Aron Lewartowski, Josef Kaplan, and Josef Sak. Four commanders were appointed: Mordecai \*Anielewicz , Pinkus Kartin, Mordecai Tenenbaum, and Abram Fiszelson. The Bund did not join the

bloc but created its own fighting organization "Samo obrona" (self-defense) under the command of Abraham Blum. None of the three military organizations of the ghetto succeeded in acquiring arms prior to July 22, 1942, when mass deportations to \*Treblinka death camp were initiated by the Nazis.

## FIRST MASS DEPORTATIONS

The deportations were preceded by a series of terrorizing "actions," when scores of people were dragged out of their homes and murdered in the streets. Just one day before the mass deportations to Treblinka began (July 21, 1942), 60 hostages were taken to the Pawiak Prison. Three days later, the president of the Judenrat, Adam Czerniakow, committed suicide following a demand by the Nazis that he cooperate with them in the deportations. His successor, Maksymilian (Marek) Lichtenbaum, also an engineer, obeyed the Nazi orders. The number of deportees averaged 5,000–7,000 daily, sometimes reaching 13,000. Some of the victims, resigned to their fate as a result of starvation, 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 they would be able to live and work in freedom. In the beginning, the Germans exempted from deportation employees of the ghetto factories, members of the Judenrat and Jewish police, and hospital personnel, as well as their families. Thousands of Jews made feverish attempts to obtain such employment certificates. In the course of time even these "safe" categories were subject to deportation. The number of victims, including those murdered in the ghetto and those deported to Treblinka, totaled approximately 300,000 out of the 370,000 inhabitants in the ghetto prior to July 1942. This major *Aktion* lasted from July 22 until Sept. 13, 1942. Following the deportations, the ghetto area was drastically constricted so that some factories and several blocks of buildings were left outside the new walls and cordoned off with barbed wire to prevent anyone finding shelter there. The Germans also fixed the number

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of inhabitants allowed to remain in the ghetto at a maximum of 35,000 persons.

## ACTIVE RESISTANCE

The leaders of the underground movements appraised the new situation. At their first meeting, they decided to create the Jewish Fighting Organization (*Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa-ZOB*), and take active steps to oppose further deportation. A few members of the underground managed to escape from Treblinka, and brought to the ghetto information about the real fate that awaited the deportees, namely physical annihilation. Because of the blockade it was not even possible to pass this information on to the non-Jewish population.

Some 30,000–35,000 Jews, most of them factory workers and their families, legally remained in the ghetto and were employed within or outside the ghetto. In addition, there were between 20,000 and 30,000 Jews living on in the ghetto "illegally." By the end of 1942 there was an influx of several thousand Jews from the labor camps which had been closed. At this time some Jews hiding on the "Aryan" side were seized and returned to the ghetto. In this period intensive preparations were made for armed resistance. The Bund also joined the ZOB, while the Revisionists continued to adhere to their separate organization, Swit. Appeals were made to several Polish underground organizations for the acquisition of weapons. An emissary of the ZOB, Arie (Jurek) Wilner, succeeded in persuading the commanders of one of the Polish underground armies (*Armia Krajowa*) of the necessity of supplying weapons to the ghetto underground and, after long negotiations, about 100 firearms and some hand grenades were sent into the ghetto. Another small

quantity of arms was supplied by the Communist "People's Guard." The Revisionists also obtained several loads of arms from two Polish underground organizations led by Major H. Iwanski and Captain Szemley (Cesary) Ketling. Several secret workshops were established in the ghetto to manufacture homemade hand grenades and bombs, and some additional arms were bought on the black market. At the same time, a network of bunkers and subterranean communication channels was constructed to enable combat against the superior German forces and to protect the non-fighting population.

The second wave of deportations began on Jan. 18, 1943, when the Nazis broke into the ghetto, surrounded many buildings, and deported the inhabitants to Treblinka. They liquidated the hospital, shot the patients, and deported the personnel. Many factory workers who had been employed outside the ghetto were included among the deportees. The underground organizations, insufficiently equipped and ill-prepared, nevertheless offered armed resistance, which turned into four days of street fighting. This was the first case of street fighting in occupied Poland. The Germans, fearing the impact of this outburst on other parts of Poland, stopped the deportations, and attempted to carry out their aim by "peaceful" means, namely by voluntary registration for the alleged labor camps. The underground, in turn, conducted an intensive information campaign about the real intentions of the Nazis. As a result the second wave of deportations was suspended after four days, during which the Germans managed to send only 6,000 persons to Treblinka. About 1,000 others were murdered in the ghetto itself.

## THE GHETTO UPRISING

After this *Aktion*, daily life in the ghetto was paralyzed. Walking in the street was punishable by death. Only groups of workers marching under armed guard were to be seen. Social institutions ceased to function and the Judenrat, most of whose members were killed in the January *Aktion*, were reduced to a small office. The underground organizations, however, were preparing for armed resistance in case a further attempt would be made by the Germans to liquidate the ghetto. Mordecai Anielewicz now headed the ZOB. The members of his command were: Itzhak (Antek) \*Cukierman, Herz Berlinski, Marek Edelman, Zivia Lubetkin, and Michal Rojzenfeld. The entire force was divided into 22 fighting units, each unit affiliated with one of the political groups. Israel Kanal was commander of the units operating in the central area of the ghetto; and Eleazar Geller and Marek Edelman commanded the factory units. The ZOB underground headquarters were at 18 Mila Street. The Revisionist commanders were Leon Rodal, Pawel Frenkiel, and Samuel Luft.

On April 19, 1943, a German force, equipped with tanks and artillery, under the command of Col. Sammern-Frankennegg, penetrated into the ghetto in order to resume the deportations. The Nazis met with stiff resistance from the Jewish fighters. Despite overwhelmingly superior forces, the Germans were repulsed from the ghetto, after suffering heavy losses. Sammern-Frankennegg was relieved of his command, and Gen. Juergen \*Stroop, appointed in his stead, immediately resumed the attack. Street fighting lasted for several days, but when the Germans failed in open street combat, they changed their tactics. Carefully avoiding any further street clashes, the Germans began systematically burning down the houses. The inhabitants died in the flames, while those hiding in the canals and bunkers were killed by gas and hand grenades. Despite these conditions, the Jewish fighting groups continued to attack German soldiers until May 8, 1943, when the ZOB headquarters fell to the Germans. Over a hundred fighters, including Anielewicz, died in this battle. Several units continued to fight even after the fall of the ZOB and Revisionist headquarters. Armed resistance lasted until June 1943. With the help of the Polish "People's Guard" some 50 ghetto fighters escaped from the ghetto and continued to fight the Germans in the nearby forests as a partisan unit named in memory of Anielewicz.

The Warsaw ghetto uprising had an enormous moral effect upon Jews and non-Jews throughout the world, especially since it was prepared and carried out under conditions which practically excluded *a priori* any attempt at armed resistance. Despite the vastly unequal forces, the uprising continued for a long time and constituted the largest battle in occupied Europe before April 1943 (excepting in Yugoslavia). This battle

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also had its impact upon the Polish population, resulting in the intensification of resistance by the Poles as well as by Jews throughout the country. On May 16, 1943, Stroop reported to his superiors on the complete liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto. As a token of his victory he blew up the Great Synagogue on Tlomacka Street. According to his report, the Germans in the course of one month's fighting had killed or deported over 56,000 Jews. The Germans themselves officially suffered 16 dead and 85 wounded between April 29 and May 15, but it is conjectured that the German casualties were in fact much higher. In the course of the following months, the Germans penetrated the empty ghetto and hunted down the remnants hiding in the ruins, often using fire to overcome sporadic resistance, which continued until August 1943.

The Warsaw ghetto uprising became an event of world history when details of what happened became known after the war. Among the writers who depicted life in the ghetto and the underground fighters were Yizhak L. Katznelson, John Hersey, and Leon \*Uris .

After the liquidation of the ghetto, the surviving members of the ghetto leadership continued underground work on the "Aryan" side of Warsaw. The underground's main activity was to assist Jews living on the "Aryan" side, either in hiding or by means of forged documents. According to their figures, the number of Jews on the "Aryan" side reached 15,000 (May 1944). They also established contact with Jewish organizations abroad and received financial assistance. Among their leaders were Adolf \*Berman of Po'alei Zion and Leon Fajner of the Bund. Emmanuel \*Ringelblum continued his scientific work of collecting evidence on Nazi crimes until March 1944, when he was seized and executed. Hundreds of Jews were active in the Polish underground of Greater Warsaw, particularly Hanna Szapiro-Sawicka, Niuta Tajtelbaum, Ignacy Robb-Narbutt, Menasze Matywiecki, and Ludwik Landau. When the Polish uprising in Warsaw broke out on Aug. 1, 1944, over 1,000 Jews in hiding immediately volunteered to fight the Germans. Hundreds of them fell in the battle, among them a member of the high command of the People's Army, Matywiecki, and Pola Elster, a member of the Polish National Council. In addition, the remnants of the ŻOB, under the command of Cukierman, and a group of liberated prisoners from the city concentration camp, participated in the uprising.

[Danuta Dombrowska]

## Post-War Developments

About 6,000 Jewish soldiers participated in the battle for the liberation of Warsaw. Warsaw's eastern suburb, Praga, was liberated in September 1944, and the main part of the city on the left bank of the Vistula on Jan. 17, 1945. On that day only 200 Jewish survivors were found in underground hideouts in the ruins of destroyed Warsaw. By the end of 1945 about 5,000 Jews had settled in Warsaw. That number was more than doubled, when Polish Jews, who had survived the war in the Soviet Union, returned. Warsaw became the seat of the Central Committee of Polish Jews. On April 19, 1948 (the fifth anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising) a monument executed by N. Rapaport in memory of the ghetto fighters was unveiled in the square called "The Ghetto Heroes' Square." In 1949 a number of Jewish cultural institutions (The Jewish Historical Institute,

the Jewish Theater, editorial staffs of the Yiddish papers *Folksstime* and *Yidishe Shriften*) were transferred from Lodz to Warsaw. A club for Jewish youth, "Babel," was opened there and one synagogue was rebuilt. After the war Warsaw Jews left Poland in three main waves: in 1946–47 after the great pogrom in \*Kielce ; in 1957–58; in 1967–68 when the Polish government launched its official antisemitic campaign. After 1968 Jewish institutions, although officially not closed, had actually ceased to function. The number of remaining Jews, mostly aged people, was estimated at 5,000 in 1969.

[Danuta Dombrowska /

Stefan Krakowski]

In the following two decades Jewish life in Warsaw was dormant, as in all of Poland, with one synagogue open and no rabbi. With the fall of Communism Jewish life revived. Poland now had a chief rabbi whose seat was in Warsaw. A primary school and kindergarten were opened and Jewish courses were offered at the university. Warsaw's Jewish Historical Institute housed Emanuel \*Ringelblum 's famous ghetto archive as well as a 60,000-volume library while the Warsaw Yiddish Theater was the only regularly functioning Yiddish theater in the world, though most of the actors were non-Jews. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century the majority of Poland's 8,000 registered Jews lived in Warsaw, though it was believed that there were many more people of Jewish ancestry.

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