

The Holocaust in Poland

The Holocaust in German-occupied Poland was the last and the most lethal phase of the Nazi "Final Solution of the Jewish Question" (*Endlösung der Judenfrage*) marked by the construction of death camps on German-occupied Polish soil. The genocide officially sanctioned and executed by the Third Reich during World War II, collectively known as the Holocaust, took the lives of three million Polish Jews and similar numbers of Poles, not including losses of Polish citizens of other ethnicities.^[8] The extermination camps played a central role in the implementation of the German policy of systematic and mostly successful destruction of over 90% of the Polish-Jewish population of the Second Polish Republic.^[9]

Every arm of the sophisticated German bureaucracy was involved in the killing process, from the Interior Ministry and the Finance Ministry, to German firms and state-run trains used for deportation of Jews.^{[10][11]} German companies bid for the contracts to build the crematoria in concentration camps run by Nazi Germany in the General Government as well as in other parts of occupied Poland and beyond.^{[9][12]}

Throughout the German occupation, at great risk to themselves and their families, many Christian Poles succeeded in rescuing Jews from the Nazis. Grouped by nationality, Polish rescuers represent the biggest number of people who saved Jews during the Holocaust.^{[5][13]} Already recognized by the State of Israel, the *Polish Righteous Among the Nations* include 6,706 gentiles, more than any other nation.^[13] A small percentage of Polish Jews managed to survive World War II within the German-occupied Poland or successfully escaped east beyond the reach of the Nazis into the territories of Poland annexed by the Soviet Union in 1939,^[14] only to be deported to forced labour in Siberia along with the families of up to 1 million Poland's non-Jews.^{[15][16]}

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Top, clockwise: Warsaw Ghetto burning, May 1943 • *Einsatzgruppe* shooting of women from the Mizocz Ghetto, 1942 • Selection of people to be sent directly to the gas chamber right after their arrival at Auschwitz-Birkenau • Jews captured in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising led to the *Umschlagplatz* by Waffen SS • Łódź Ghetto children deported to Chełmno death camp, 1942

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Background

Following the 1939 invasion of Poland in accordance with the secret protocol of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact,^[17] Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union partitioned Poland into occupation zones. Large areas of western Poland were annexed by Germany.^[18] The Soviets attempted to deceive the Poles into believing that they crossed the border to help Poland fight Germany;^[19] and subsequently took over some 52% of the territory of the Second Polish Republic with fewer military losses. The entire Kresy macroregion – inhabited by between 13.2 million and 13.7 million people,^{[18][20]} including 1,300,000 Jews – was annexed by the Soviet Union in the atmosphere of terror surrounding a mock referendum staged by the secret police and the Red Army.^{[21][22]} Within months, the Polish Jews in the Soviet zone, who refused to swear an oath of allegiance, were deported deep in the Soviet interior along with the Catholics. Their number is estimated at about 200,000–230,000 men, women and children among those who survived in the most extreme conditions.^{[23][24]}

Both occupying powers were equally hostile to the existence of sovereign Polish state, and endorsed the policy of genocide.^[25] However, the Soviet rule was short-lived because the terms of the Nazi–Soviet Pact signed earlier in Moscow were broken, when the German army crossed the Soviet occupation zone on June 22, 1941 (*see map*). From 1941 to 1943 all of Poland was under the control of Nazi Germany.^[26] The semi-colonial territory of the General Government set up in central and south-eastern Poland, took up 39 percent of the occupied area.^[27]



Map of the Holocaust in occupied Poland during World War II with six extermination camps marked with white skulls in black squares: Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belżec, Chełmno, Majdanek, Sobibór and Treblinka; as well as remote mass killing sites at Bronna Góra, Ponary, Połonka and others. Marked with the Star of David are selected large Polish cities with the extermination ghettos. Solid red line denotes the Nazi–Soviet frontier – starting point for Operation Barbarossa of 1941.

Overview

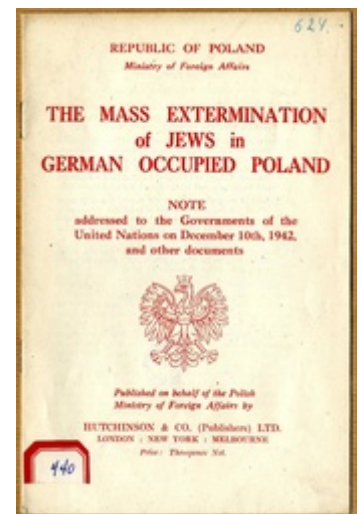
Period	September 1939 – April 1945
Territory	Occupied Poland, also present day western Ukraine and western Belarus among others
Major perpetrators	
Units	SS-Totenkopfverbände, Einsatzgruppen, Orpo battalions, Trawniki, BKA, OUN-UPA, TDA, Ypatingasis būrys ^{[1][2][3]}
Killed	3,000,000 Polish Jews and 2,500,000 ethnic Poles ^[4]
Survivors	50,000–120,000; ^[5] or 210,000–230,000; ^[6] or a total of 350,000. ^[7]
Armed resistance	
Jewish uprisings	Będzin, Białystok, Birkenau, Częstochowa, Łachwa, Łuck, Mińsk Mazowiecki, Mizocz, Pińsk, Poniatoŭa, Sobibór, Sosnowiec, Treblinka, Warsaw, Wilno

Nazi ghettoization policy

Prior to World War II, there were 3,500,000 Jews in Poland,^[7] living predominantly in the cities; about 10% of the general population. Database of the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews provides information on 1,926 Jewish communities across the country.^[28] Following the conquest of Poland, and the 1939 murder of intelligentsia,^[29] the first German anti-Jewish measures involved the policy of expulsion of Jews from the territories annexed by the Third Reich.^[30] The westernmost provinces of Greater Poland and Pomerelia were turned into brand new German Reichsgaue named Danzig-West Prussia and the Wartheland,^[31] with the intention of their complete Germanization through settler colonialism (Lebensraum).^[32] Annexed directly to the new Warthegau district, the city of Łódź absorbed the influx of some 40,000 Polish Jews forced out from the surrounding areas.^[33] A total of 204,000 Jewish people passed through the ghetto in Łódź. Initially, they were to be expelled to the Generalgouvernement.^{[34][35]} However, the ultimate destination of the massive removal of Jews was left open until the Final Solution was set in motion two years later.^[36]

Persecution of Polish Jews by the German occupation authority began immediately after the invasion particularly in major urban areas. In the first year and a half, the Nazis confined themselves to stripping the Jews of their valuables and property for profit,^[9] herding them into makeshift ghettos, and forcing them into slave labor for public works and the war economy.^[38] During this period, the Germans ordered Jewish communities to appoint Jewish Councils (Judenräte) to administer the ghettos and to be "responsible in the strictest sense" for carrying out orders.^[39] Most ghettos were set up in cities and towns where Jewish life was well organized. For logistical reasons, the Jewish communities in settlements without railway connections in occupied Poland were dissolved.^[40] In a massive deportation action involving the use of freight trains, all Polish Jews had been segregated from the rest of society in dilapidated neighborhoods (Jüdischer Wohnbezirk) adjacent to the existing rail corridors.^[41] The food aid was completely dependent on the SS.^[42] Initially, the Jews were legally banned from baking bread;^[43] they were sealed off from the general public in an unsustainable manner.^[42]

The Warsaw ghetto contained more Jews than all of France; the Łódź ghetto more Jews than all of the Netherlands. More Jews lived in the city of Kraków than in all of Italy, and virtually any medium-sized town in Poland had a larger Jewish population than all of Scandinavia. All of southeast Europe – Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Greece – had fewer Jews than the original four districts of the General Government.^[44]



The Mass Extermination of Jews in German Occupied Poland (1942),^[37] by the Polish government-in-exile addressed to the wartime allies of the United Nations

The plight of Jews in war-torn Poland could be divided into stages defined by the existence of the ghettos. Before their formation,^[45] the escape from persecution did not involve extrajudicial punishment by death.^[46] Once the ghettos were sealed off from the outside, death by starvation and disease became rampant, alleviated only by the smuggling of food and medicine, described by Ringelblum as "one of the finest pages in the history between the two peoples".^[46] In Warsaw, up to 80 percent of food consumed in the Ghetto was brought in illegally. The food stamps introduced by the Germans, provided 9 percent of the calories necessary for survival.^[47] In two and a half years, between November 1940 and May 1943, some 100,000 Jews died in the Warsaw Ghetto of starvation and disease; and around 40,000 in the Łódź Ghetto in the four-and-a-quarter years between May 1940 and August 1944.^[47] By the end of 1941, most ghettoized Jews had no savings left to pay the SS for further bulk food deliveries.^[47] The 'productionists' among the German authorities – who attempted to make the ghettos self-sustaining by turning them into enterprises – prevailed over the 'attritionists' only after the German attack on the Soviet positions in eastern Poland, codenamed Operation Barbarossa.^[48] The most prominent ghettos were stabilized through the production of goods needed at the front,^[42] and death rates among the Jewish population began to decline (at least temporarily).^[48]

The Holocaust by bullets



Bodies of Jews from the Tarnopol Voivodeship shot face down in an open pit near Złoczów

Following the German attack on the USSR in June 1941, Himmler assembled a force of about 11,000 men to pursue a programme of physical annihilation of the Jews for the first time.^[49] Also, during Operation Barbarossa, the SS had recruited collaborationist auxiliary police from among Soviet nationals.^{[1][50]} The local Schuma provided Nazi Germany with manpower and critical knowledge of the local region and language.^[51] In what became known as the Holocaust by bullets, the German police battalions (Orpo), SiPo, Waffen-SS and special-task Einsatzgruppen along with the Ukrainian and Lithuanian auxiliaries, operated behind the front lines systematically shooting tens of thousands of men, women and children independently of the army.^[52]

Massacres were committed in over 30 locations across the formerly Soviet-occupied parts of Poland,^[53] including in Brześć, Tarnopol, and Białystok, as well as in prewar provincial capitals of Łuck, Lwów, Stanisławów, and Wilno (see Ponary).^[54] The survivors of mass killing operations were incarcerated in the new ghettos of economic exploitation,^[27] and starved slowly to death by artificial famine at the whim of German authorities.^[55] Because of sanitation concerns, the corpses of people who had died as a result of starvation and mistreatment were buried in mass graves in the tens of thousands.^[56] Gas vans were made available in November 1941.^[57] By December, over 439,800 Jewish people had been murdered, both in the eastern half of Poland and in the Soviet westernmost republics. The 'war of destruction' policy in the east against 'the Jewish race' became common knowledge among the Germans at all levels.^[58] Within two years, the total number of shooting victims in the east had risen to between 618,000 and 800,000 Jews.^{[59][60]} Entire regions behind the German–Soviet Frontier were reported to Berlin by the Nazi death squads to be "Judenfrei".^[61]

Final Solution and liquidation of Ghettos

On January 20, 1942, during the Wannsee conference near Berlin, State Secretary of the Government General, Josef Bühler, urged Reinhard Heydrich to begin the proposed "final solution to the Jewish question" as soon as possible.^[62] The industrial killing by exhaust fumes was already tried and tested over several weeks at the Chełmno extermination camp in the then-Wartheland, under the guise of resettlement.^[63] All condemned Ghetto prisoners, without exception, were told they were going to labour camps, and asked to pack a carry-on luggage.^[64] Many Jews believed in the transfer ruse, since deportations were also part of the ghettoization process.^[5] Meanwhile, the idea of mass murder by means of stationary gas chambers was discussed in Lublin already since September 1941. It was a precondition for the newly drafted Operation Reinhard led by Odilo Globocnik who ordered the construction of death camps at Belzec, Sobibór, and Treblinka.^[65] At Majdanek and Auschwitz, the work of the stationary gas chambers began in March and May respectively, preceded by experiments with Zyklon B.^[65] Between 1942 and 1944, the most extreme measure of the Holocaust, the extermination of millions of Jews from Poland and all over Europe was carried out in six extermination camps. There were no Polish guards at any of the Reinhard camps, despite the sometimes used misnomer Polish death camps. All killing centres were designed and operated by the Nazis in strict secrecy, aided by the Ukrainian Trawniki.^[66] Civilians were forbidden to approach them and often shot if caught near the train tracks.^[67]

Systematic liquidation of the ghettos began across General Government in the early spring of 1942. At that point the only chance for survival was the escape into the "Aryan side". The German round-ups for the so-called resettlement trains were connected directly with the use of top secret extermination facilities built for the SS at about the same time by various German engineering companies including HAHB,^[68] I.A. Topf and Sons of Erfurt, and C.H. Kori GmbH.^{[69][70][71]}

Unlike other Nazi concentration camps where prisoners from all across Europe were exploited for the war effort, German death camps – part of secretive Operation Reinhardt – were designed exclusively for the rapid elimination of Polish and foreign Jews, subsisting in isolation. The camp's German overseers reported to Heinrich Himmler in Berlin, who kept control of the extermination program, but who has delegated the work in Poland to SS and police chief Odilo Globocnik of the Lublin Reservation.^[72] The selection of sites, construction of facilities and training of personnel was based on a similar (Action T4) "racial hygiene" program of mass murder through involuntary euthanasia, developed in Germany.^{[73][74]}

The "resettlement" program

The scale of the Final Solution would not have been possible without the Reichsbahn.^[75] The extermination of Polish and foreign Jews depended on the railways as much as on the secluded killing centres. The Holocaust trains sped up the scale and duration over which the extermination took place; and, the enclosed nature of freight cars also reduced the number of troops required to guard them. Rail shipments allowed the Nazi Germans to build and operate bigger and more efficient death camps and, at the same time, openly lie to the world – and to their victims – about a "resettlement" program.^{[10][76]} In one telephone conversation Heinrich Himmler informed Martin Bormann about the Jews already exterminated in Poland, to which Bormann screamed in response: "They were not exterminated, only evacuated, evacuated, evacuated!"^[77]



Liquidation of the Kraków Ghetto
Families walk to Prokocim railway station for the "resettlement". Point of destination: Auschwitz, March 1943

Unspecified number of deportees died in transit during Operation Reinhard from suffocation and thirst. No food or water was supplied. The Güterwagen boxcars were only fitted with a bucket latrine. A small barred window provided little ventilation, which oftentimes resulted in multiple deaths.^[78] A survivor of the

Treblinka uprising testified about one such train, from Biała Podlaska. When the sealed doors flew open, 90 percent of about 6,000 Jewish prisoners were found to

have suffocated to death. Their bodies were thrown into smouldering mass grave at the "Lazaret".^[79] Millions of people were transported in similar trainsets to the extermination camps under the direction of the German Ministry of Transport, and tracked by an IBM subsidiary, until the official date of closing of the Auschwitz-Birkenau complex in December 1944.^{[80][81]}

Death factories were just one of a number of ways of mass extermination. There were secluded killing sites set up further east. At Bronna Góra (the Bronna Mount, now Belarus) 50,000 Jews died in execution pits; delivered by the Holocaust trains from the ghettos in Brześć, Bereza, Janów Poleski, Kobryń, Horodec (pl), Antopol and other locations along the western border of Reichskommissariat Ostland. Explosives were used to speed up the digging process.^{[82][83][84]} At the Sosenki Forest on the outskirts of Równe in prewar Wołyń Voivodeship, over 23,000 Jews were shot, men, women, and children.^[85] At the Górka Połonka forest (see map) 25,000 Jews forced to disrobe and lay over the bodies of others were shot in waves; most of them were deported there via the Łuck Ghetto.^{[86][87]} The execution site for the Lwów Ghetto inmates was arranged near Janowska, with 35,000–40,000 Jewish victims killed and buried at the Piaski ravine.^[88]

While the Order Police performed liquidations of the Jewish ghettos in occupied Poland, loading prisoners into railcars and shooting those unable to move or attempting to flee, the collaborationist auxiliary police were used as a means of inflicting terror upon the Jewish people by conducting large-scale massacres in the same locations.^{[89][90]} They were deployed in all major killing sites of Operation Reinhard (terror was a primary aim of their SS training).^[91] The Ukrainian Trawniki men formed into units took an active role in the extermination of Jews at Belzec, Sobibór, Treblinka II; during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (on three occasions, see Stroop Report), Częstochowa, Lublin, Lwów, Radom, Kraków, Białystok (twice), Majdanek, Auschwitz, the Trawniki concentration camp itself,^[1] and the remaining subcamps of KL Lublin/Majdanek camp complex including Poniatowa, Budzyń, Kraśnik, Puławy, Lipowa, and also during massacres in Łomazy, Międzyrzec, Łuków, Radzyń, Parczew, Końskowola, Komarówka and all other locations, augmented by members of the SS, SD, Kripo, as well as the reserve police battalions from Orpo (each, responsible for annihilation of thousands of Jews).^[92] Mass executions of Jews (as in Szebnie) was part of regular training of the Ukrainian Waffen-



Entrance to Camp I at Auschwitz
(top) with the sign on the gate
reading *Arbeit macht frei* compared
with the real death factory nearby
(bottom) at Auschwitz II-Birkenau

SS Division soldiers from the SS-Heidelager troop-training base in Pustków in south-eastern Poland.^{[93][94]} In the north-east, the "Poachers' Brigade" of Oskar Dirlewanger trained Belarusian Home Guard in murder expeditions with the help of Belarusian Auxiliary Police.^[95] By the end of World War II in Europe in May 1945, over 90% of Polish Jewry perished.^[5]

Death camp at Chełmno

The Chełmno extermination camp (German: *Kulmhof*) was built as the first-ever, following Hitler's launch of Operation Barbarossa. It was a pilot project for the development of other extermination sites. The experiments with exhaust gases were finalized by murdering 1,500 Poles at Soldau.^[96] The killing method at Chełmno grew out of the 'euthanasia' program in which busloads of unsuspecting hospital patients were gassed in air-tight shower rooms at Bernburg, Hadamar and Sonnenstein.^[97] The killing grounds at Chełmno, 50 kilometres (31 mi) from Łódź, consisted of a vacated manorial estate similar to Sonnenstein, used for undressing (with a truck-loading ramp in the back), as well as a large forest clearing 4 kilometres (2.5 mi) northwest of Chełmno, used for the mass burial as well as open-pit cremation of corpses introduced some time later.^[98]



Jews delivered to Chełmno death camp were forced to abandon their bundles along the way. In this photo, loading of victims sent from the ghetto in Łódź (1942)

All Jews from the Judenfrei district of Wartheland were deported to Chełmno under the guise of 'resettlement'. At least 145,000 prisoners from the Łódź Ghetto perished at Chełmno in several waves of deportations lasting from 1942 to 1944.^{[99][100]} Additionally, 20,000 foreign Jews and 5,000 Roma were brought in from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia.^[101] All victims were killed with the use of mobile gas vans (*Sonderwagen*), which had exhaust pipes reconfigured and poisons added to gasoline (see Chełmno Trials for supplementary data). In the last phase of the camp's existence, the exhumed bodies were cremated in open-air for several weeks during Sonderaktion 1005. The ashes, mixed with crushed bones, were trucked every night to the nearby river in sacks made from blankets, to remove the evidence of mass murder.^{[102][103]}

Auschwitz-Birkenau



Auschwitz II Birkenau prisoners

The Auschwitz concentration camp was the largest of the German Nazi extermination centers. Located 64 kilometres (40 mi) west of Kraków,^[104] Auschwitz processed an average of 1.5 Holocaust trains per day.^[77] The overwhelming majority of prisoners deported there were murdered within hours of their arrival.^[105] The camp was fitted with the first permanent gas chambers in March 1942. The extermination of Jews with Zyklon B as the killing agent began in July.^[106] At Birkenau, the four killing installations (each consisting of coatrooms, multiple gas chambers and industrial-scale crematoria) were built in the following year.^[107] By late 1943, Birkenau was a killing factory with four so-called 'Bunkers' (totaling over a dozen gas chambers) working around the clock.^[108] Up to 6,000 people were gassed and cremated there each day, after the ruthless 'selection process'

at the Judenrampe.^{[109][110]} Only about 10 percent of the deportees from transports organized by the Reich Main Security Office (RSHA) were registered and assigned to the Birkenau barracks.^[110]

Auschwitz II extermination program resulted in the death of 1.3 to 1.5 million people.^[111] Over 1.1 million of them were Jews from across Europe including 200,000 children.^{[105][112]} Among the registered 400,000 victims (less than one-third of the total Auschwitz arrivals) were 140,000–150,000 non-Jewish Poles, 23,000 Gypsies, 15,000 Soviet POWs and 25,000 others.^{[111][113]} Auschwitz received a total of about 300,000 Jews from occupied Poland,^[114] shipped aboard freight trains from liquidated ghettos and transit camps,^[115] beginning with Bytom (February 15, 1942), Olkusz (three days of June), Otwock (in August), Łomża and Ciechanów (November),^[116] then Kraków (March 13, 1943),^[117] Sosnowiec, Będzin, Dąbrowa (June–August 1943),^[118] and several dozen

other metropolitan cities and towns,^[28] including the last ghetto left standing in occupied Poland, liquidated in August 1944 at Łódź.^[119] Auschwitz-Birkenau gas chambers and crematoria were blown up on November 25, 1944, in an attempt to destroy the evidence of mass killings, by the orders of SS chief Heinrich Himmler^[120]

Treblinka

Designed and built for the sole purpose of killing people, Treblinka was one of only three such facilities in existence; the other two were Belżec and Sobibór.^[121] All of them were situated in wooded areas away from population centres and linked to the Polish rail system by a branch line. They had transferable SS staff.^[122] There was a railway platform constructed alongside the tracks, surrounded by an 2.5 m (8 ft) high barbed-wire fencing. Large barracks were built for storing belongings of disembarking victims. One was disguised as a railway station complete with a fake wooden clock and signage to prevent new arrivals from realizing their fate.^[123] Passports and money were collected for "safekeeping" at a cashier's booth set up by the "Road to Heaven", a fenced-off path leading into the gas chambers disguised as communal showers. Directly behind were the burial pits, dug with a crawler excavator.^[124]

Located 80 kilometres (50 mi) northeast of Warsaw,^[125] Treblinka became operational on July 24, 1942, after three months of forced labour construction by expellees from Germany.^[126] The shipping of Jews from the Polish capital – plan known as the *Großaktion Warschau* – began immediately.^{[127][128][129]} During two months of the summer of 1942, about 254,000 Warsaw Ghetto inmates were exterminated at Treblinka (by some other accounts, at least 300,000).^[130] On arrival, the transportees were made to disrobe, then the men – followed by women and children – were forced into double-walled chambers and gassed to death in batches of 200, with the use of exhaust fumes generated by a tank engine.^{[131][132][133]} The gas chambers, rebuilt of brick and expanded during August–September 1942, were capable of killing 12,000 to 15,000 victims every day,^[134] with a maximum capacity of 22,000 executions in twenty-four hours.^[135] The dead were initially buried in large mass graves, but the stench from the decomposing bodies could be smelled up to ten kilometers away.^[136] As a result, the Nazis began burning the bodies on open-air grids made of concrete pillars and railway tracks.^[137] The number of people killed at Treblinka in about a year ranges from 800,000 to 1,200,000, with no exact figures available.^{[138][139]} The camp was closed by Globocnik on October 19, 1943 soon after the Treblinka prisoner uprising^[140] with the murderous Operation Reinhard nearly completed.^[138]

Belżec

The Belżec extermination camp, set up near the railroad station of Belżec in the Lublin District, began operating officially on March 17, 1942, with three temporary gas chambers later replaced with six made of brick and mortar, enabling the facility to handle over 1,000 victims at one time.^[141] At least 434,500 Jews were exterminated there. The lack of verified survivors however, makes this camp much less known.^[142] The bodies of the dead, buried in mass graves, swelled in the heat as a result of putrefaction making the earth split, which was resolved with the introduction of crematoria pits in October 1942.^[143]

Kurt Gerstein from Waffen-SS, supplying Zyklon B from Degesch during the Holocaust,^[144] wrote after the war in his Gerstein Report for the Allies that on August 17, 1942 at Belżec, he had witnessed the arrival of 45 wagons with 6,700 prisoners of whom 1,450 were already dead inside.^[145] That train came with the Jewish people of the Lwów Ghetto,^[145] less than a hundred kilometers away.^[146] The last shipment of Jews (including those who had already died in transit) arrived in Belżec in December 1942.^[147] The burning of



Treblinka II burning during the prisoner uprising, 2 August 1943: barracks and tank of petrol set ablaze. Clandestine photograph was taken by Franciszek Żabecki



The SS Death-Head Unit from Belżec extermination camp 1942

exhumed corpses continued until March.^[148] The remaining 500 *Sonderkommando* prisoners who dismantled the camp, and who bore witness to the extermination process,^[142] were murdered at the nearby Sobibór extermination camp in the following months.^{[149][150]}

Sobibór



Top secret document, the so-called Höfle Telegram, confirms at least 101,370 train deportations of Jews to Sobibór extermination camp in 1942

The Sobibór extermination camp, disguised as a railway transit camp not far from Lublin, began mass gassing operations in May 1942.^[151] As in other extermination centers, the Jews, taken off the Holocaust trains arriving from liquidated ghettos and transit camps (Izbica, Końskowola) were met by an SS-man dressed in a medical coat. *Oberscharführer* Hermann Michel gave the command for prisoners' "disinfection".^[152]

New arrivals were forced to split into groups, hand over their valuables, and disrobe inside a walled-off courtyard for a bath. Women had their hair cut off by the *Sonderkommando* barbers. Once undressed, the Jews were led down a narrow path

to the gas chambers which were disguised as showers. Carbon monoxide gas was released from the exhaust pipes of a gasoline engine removed from a Red Army tank.^[153] Their bodies were taken out and burned in open pits over iron grids partly fueled by human body-fat. Their remains were dumped onto seven "ash mountains". The total number of Polish Jews murdered at Sobibór is estimated at a minimum of 170,000.^[154] Heinrich Himmler ordered the camp dismantled following a prisoner revolt on October 14, 1943; one of only two successful uprisings by Jewish *Sonderkommando* inmates in any extermination camp, with 300 escapees (most of them were recaptured by the SS and killed).^{[155][156]}

Lublin-Majdanek



The original ovens inside the crematorium, on display at the Majdanek State Museum

The Majdanek forced labor camp located on the outskirts of Lublin (like Sobibór) and closed temporarily during an epidemic of typhus, was reopened in March 1942 for Operation Reinhard; first, as a storage depot for valuables stolen from the victims of gassing at the killing centers of Belzec, Sobibór, and Treblinka.^[157] It became a place of extermination of large Jewish populations from south-eastern Poland (Kraków, Lwów, Zamość, Warsaw) after the gas chambers were constructed in late 1942.^[158] The gassing of Polish Jews was performed in plain view of other inmates, without as much as a fence around the killing facilities.^[159] According to witness's testimony, "to drown the cries of the dying, tractor engines were run near the gas chambers" before they took the dead away to the crematorium. Majdanek was the site of death of 59,000 Polish Jews (from among its 79,000 victims).^{[160][161]} By the end of Operation Harvest Festival conducted at Majdanek in early November 1943 (the single largest German massacre of Jews during the entire war),^[89] the camp had only 71 Jews left.^[162]

Armed resistance and ghetto uprisings

There is a popular misconception among the general public that most Jews went to their deaths passively.^[163] Nothing could be further from the truth.^[164] Jewish resistance to the Nazis comprised not only their armed struggle but also spiritual and cultural opposition which gave the Jews dignity despite the inhumane conditions of life in the ghettos.^{[165][166]} Many forms of resistance were present, even though the elders were terrified by the prospect of mass retaliation against the women and children in the case of anti-Nazi revolt.^[167] As the German authorities undertook to liquidate the ghettos, armed resistance was offered in over 100 locations on either side of Polish-Soviet border of 1939, overwhelmingly in eastern Poland.^[168] The uprisings erupted in 5 major cities, 45 provincial towns, 5 major concentration and extermination camps, as well as in at least 18 forced labor camps.^[169] Notably, the only rebellions in Nazi camps were Jewish.^[163]

The Nieśwież Ghetto insurgents in eastern Poland fought back on July 22, 1942. The Łachwa Ghetto revolt erupted on September 3. On October 14, 1942, the Mizocz Ghetto followed suit. The Warsaw Ghetto firefight of January 18, 1943, led to the largest Jewish uprising of World War II launched on April 19, 1943. On June 25, the Jews of the Częstochowa Ghetto rose up. At Treblinka, the Sonderkommando prisoners armed with stolen weapons attacked the guards on August 2, 1943. A day later, the Będzin and Sosnowiec ghetto revolts broke out. On August 16, the Białystok Ghetto uprising erupted. The revolt in Sobibór extermination camp occurred on October 14, 1943. At Auschwitz-Birkenau the insurgents blew up one of Birkenau's crematoria on October 7, 1944.^[168]^[169] Similar resistance was offered in Łuck, Mińsk Mazowiecki, Pińsk, Poniatowa, and in Wilno.^[170]

Poles and the Jews

Only 10 percent of Poland's Jews survived the genocide, less than in any other country; and yet, Poland accounts for the majority of rescuers with the title of 'Righteous Among the Nations', i.e. people who risked their lives to save Jews. The Poles honored by Yad Vashem are a fraction of the true number of deserving individuals and: "so far represent only the tip of the iceberg," according to Paulsson.^[171] The nature of this paradox was debated by historians on both sides for more than fifty years often with preconceived notions and selective evidence.^[171]

Many Jews, persecuted by the Nazis, received help from the Poles; help ranging from major acts of heroism, to minor acts of kindness involving hundreds of thousands of helpers acting often anonymously. This rescue effort occurred even though ethnic Poles themselves were the subject to capital punishment at the hands of the German police (since October 1941) if found offering any kind of help to a person of Jewish faith or origin.^[172] Poland was the only occupied country in Europe in which such a death penalty was imposed and frequently used.^[171]^[173]

On November 10, 1941, the death penalty was expanded by Hans Frank to apply to Poles who helped Jews "in any way: by taking them in for a night, giving them a lift in a vehicle of any sort" or "feeding runaway Jews or selling them foodstuffs."^[174] The law was made public by posters distributed in all major cities. Capital punishment meted out to entire families, was the most draconian penalty ever imposed.^[175]^[176] In total, some 30,000 Poles were executed by the Nazis for hiding Jews.^[177]^[178] Over 700 Polish Righteous among the Nations received their award posthumously having been murdered by the Germans for aiding or sheltering their Jewish neighbors.^[179] Many of the Polish Righteous awarded by Yad Vashem came from the capital. In his work on the Jews of Warsaw, Gunnar S. Paulsson has demonstrated that despite the much harsher conditions, Polish citizens of Warsaw managed to support and hide the same percentage of Jews as did the citizens of cities in reportedly *safer* countries of Western Europe under the German occupation.^[180]

Difficulties in rescue attempts

Vast majority of Polish Jews were a 'visible minority' by modern standards, distinguishable by language, behaviour and appearance.^[181] In the national census of 1931 only 12 percent of Jews declared Polish as their first language, while 79 percent listed Yiddish and the remaining 9 percent Hebrew as their mother-tongue.^[182] For hundreds of thousands of Jews the Polish language was barely familiar.^[183] By contrast, the overwhelming majority of German Jews of this period spoke German as their first language.^[183] In the labour market of many cities and towns, including Poland's provincial capitals, the presence of such large, mostly non acculturated minority^[181] was a source of competitive tension.^[184] Here is where the temptation to jump to conclusions with regard



Young Jewish insurgents captured by the SS, Warsaw.
 Stroop Report original caption: "HeHalutz women captured with weapons."
 Jewish resistance women, among them Malka Zdrojewicz (right), who survived the Majdanek extermination camp



German Nazi poster announcing the death penalty for any Pole giving help to Jews (Warsaw, 1942).



Children of the Warsaw Ghetto

to Polish-Jewish relations in wartime should be resisted, wrote Gunnar Paulsson: "leaving aside acts of war and Nazi perfidy, a Jew's chances of survival in hiding were no worse in Warsaw, at any rate, than in the Netherlands" once the Holocaust began.^[171]

Toward the end of the ghetto-liquidation period, the largest number of Jews managed to escape to the "Aryan" side,^[171] and to survive with the aid of their Polish helpers. During the Nazi occupation, most ethnic Poles were themselves engaged in a desperate struggle to survive. They were in no position to impede the German extermination of Jews. Between 1939 and 1945, nearly 2.8 million gentile Poles died at the hands of the Nazis, and 150,000 due to Soviet repressions.^[185] About one fifth of the prewar population of Poland perished.^[186] Their deaths were the result of deliberate acts of war,^[187] mass murder, incarceration in concentration camps, forced labor, malnutrition, disease, kidnappings, and expulsions.^[188] There were,

however, many Poles who risked death to hide entire Jewish families or otherwise help Jews on compassionate grounds.^[189] Polish rescuers of Jews were sometimes exposed by those very Jews if the Jews were found by the Germans, resulting in the murder of entire helper networks in the General Government.^[190] The number of Jews hiding with gentile Poles, quoted by Żarski-Zajdler, was about 450,000.^[189] Possibly a million gentile Poles aided their Jewish neighbors.^[191] Historian Richard C. Lukas^[5] gives an estimate as high as three million Polish helpers; an estimate similar to those cited by other authors.^{[192][193][194][195]}

Coordinated and organized efforts

The Polish Government in Exile was the first (in November 1942),^[196] to reveal the existence of German-run concentration camps and the systematic extermination of the Jews. The genocide was reported to the Allies by Lieutenant Jan Karski, as well as Captain Witold Pilecki who volunteered to be imprisoned at Auschwitz in order to gather intelligence and subsequently wrote an official Report of over 100 pages for the West.^[197]

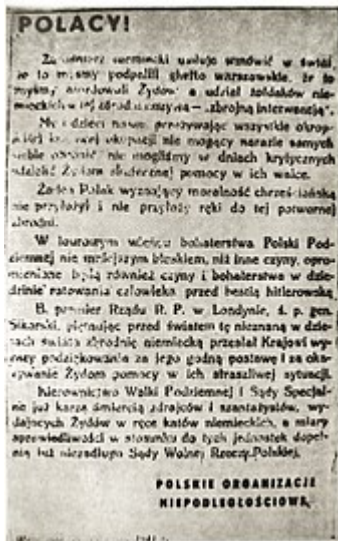
In September 1942, with financial assistance from the Underground State, the Provisional Committee to Aid Jews was founded (*Tymczasowy Komitet Pomocy Żydom*) on the initiative of Zofia Kossak-Szczucka for the purpose of rescuing Jews. It was superseded by the Council for Aid to Jews known by the code-name Żegota (*Rada Pomocy Żydom*) chaired by Julian Grobelny. It is not known how many Jews were helped by Żegota, but at one point in 1943 it had 2,500 Jewish children under its care in Warsaw alone under Irena Sendler. Żegota was granted nearly 29 million zlotys (over \$5 million) since 1942 for the relief payments to thousands of extended Jewish families in Poland.^[198] The government in exile also provided special assistance – funds, arms and other supplies – to Jewish resistance organizations like ŻOB and ŻZW.^[199]



Public execution of ethnic Poles in Przemyśl as punishment for helping Jews, 1943

Opportunism and collaboration

No Polish collaborative government was ever formed during World War II.^[200] As noted by Piotrowski, the "Poles never produced either a Quisling or any specifically Polish SS divisions. In contrast, almost all other European countries provided Nazi Germany with both."^[201] The Polish Underground State strongly opposed collaboration in anti-Jewish persecutions and threatened death to all informers against them, on behalf of the Polish military tribunals of the Home Army.^[202] However, the continued brutality of war led to the breakdown of traditional social norms and values.^{[203][204]} There were people who betrayed Jews in hiding along with the Poles who protected them.^[205] The number of notorious blackmailers is estimated at around several thousand, based on the number of death sentences for treason by Poland's Special Courts.^[206] The Holocaust testimonies confirm that, trapped in the ghettos, some Jews took advantage of inside information about the socio-economic standing of other Jews as well (see group 13).^[203]



September 1943 Żegota warning about death sentence for denunciations of Jews to the Nazis.

The phenomenon of Polish collaboration was described by John Connelly and Leszek Gondek as marginal, when seen against the backdrop of European and world history.^[200] The crossing of moral boundaries has occurred first under the Soviets with the participation of the Jewish militia (so-called *opaskowcy*) armed by the NKVD, in the mass deportations of Polish families from the east to Siberia in 1940 and 1941 after the Soviet takeover,^{[207][208][209][210]} and again, at the onset of German-Soviet war, when over 300 Jews perished in Jedwabne on July 10, 1941, locked in a barn set on fire by a group of Polish men in the presence of German *Ordnungspolizei* (IPN Final Findings).^[211] The circumstances surrounding the incident in Jedwabne are still debated, and include the ominous presence of the *Einsatzgruppe Zichenau-Schroettersburg* under *SS-Obersturmführer Hermann Schaper* deployed in *Bezirsk Białystok*,^{[212][213]} as well as German Nazi pressure, but also widespread resentment over the Jewish warm welcome given to the Red Army in 1939.^{[207][208][209][210]}

According to politician Stefan Korboński, some members of the National Armed Forces (NSZ), participated in executions of Jews who belonged to the pro-Soviet underground.^[214] Historians Richard Lukas and Tadeusz Piotrowski wrote that NSZ units rendered assistance to the Jews and included them in their ranks along with *Polish Righteous Among the Nations*.^[215] The NSZ *Holy Cross Brigade* rescued 280 Jewish women among some 1,000 persons from the concentration camp in *Holýšov*. A Jewish partisan from NSZ, Feliks Parry,

suggested that most of them "didn't have the slightest notion of the ideological underpinnings of their organization" and didn't care, focused only on resisting the Nazis.^[216] In postwar Poland, the *communist secret police* routinely tortured the NSZ insurgents in order to force them to confess to killing Jews among other alleged crimes. This was most notably the case with the 1946 trial of 23 officers of the NSZ in Lublin. The torture of political prisoners by the *Ministry of Public Security* did not stop when the interrogations were concluded. Physical torture was also ordered if they retracted in court their forced confessions of "killing Jews".^[217]

National minorities' role in the Holocaust

The Republic of Poland was a multicultural country before the Second World War broke out, with almost a third of its population originating from the minority groups: 13.9 percent Ukrainians; 10 percent Jews; 3.1 percent Belarusians; 2.3 percent Germans and 3.4 percent Czechs, Lithuanians and Russians.^[218] Soon after the 1918 reconstitution of an independent Polish state, about 500,000 refugees from the Soviet republics came to Poland in the first spontaneous flight from persecution especially in Ukraine (see, *Pale of Settlement*) where up to 2,000 pogroms took place during the Civil War.^[219] In the second wave of immigration, between November 1919 and June 1924 some 1,200,000 people left the territory of the USSR for new Poland. It is estimated that some 460,000 refugees spoke Polish as the first language.^{[218][220]} Between 1933 and 1938, around 25,000 *German Jews* fled *Nazi Germany* to sanctuary in Poland.^[221]

About one million Polish citizens were members of the German minority.^[222] Following the invasion of 1939, additional 1,180,000 German speakers came to occupied Poland either from the *Reich* or from the east with little to lose (the *Volksdeutsche*).^[223] Many hundreds of ethnically German men in Poland joined the *Nazi Selbstschutz* as well as *Sonderdienst* formations launched in May 1940 by *Gauleiter* Hans Frank stationing in occupied Kraków.^{[224][225]} Likewise, among some 30,000 Ukrainian nationalists who fled to *polnischen Gebiete*, thousands joined the *pokhidny hrupy* (pl) as saboteurs, interpreters, and civilian militiamen, trained at the German bases across *Distrikt Krakau*.^{[226][227]} The existence of *Sonderdienst* formations constituted a grave danger to the Catholic Poles who attempted to help ghettoised Jews in the cities which had a sizable German and pro-German minorities, as in the case of the *Izbica Ghetto* or the *Łuck* and the *Mińsk Mazowiecki* Ghettos among numerous others. Anti-Semitic attitudes were particularly visible in the eastern provinces which had been occupied by the Russians following the *Soviet invasion of Kresy*. Local people had witnessed the repressions against their own compatriots, and mass deportations to *Siberia*,^{[16][207]} conducted by the *Soviet security apparatus* with some of the local Jews forming militias, taking over key administrative positions,^[228] and collaborating with the NKVD. Others assumed that, driven by vengeance, *Jewish Communists* had been prominent in betraying the ethnically Polish and other non-Jewish victims.^{[210][229]}

German-inspired massacres

Many German-inspired massacres were carried out across occupied eastern Poland with the active participation of indigenous people. The guidelines for such massacres were formulated by Reinhard Heydrich,^[230] who ordered his officers to induce anti-Jewish pogroms on territories newly occupied by the German forces.^{[231][232]} In the lead-up to the establishment of the Wilno Ghetto in the fifth largest city of prewar Poland and a provincial capital Wilno (now Vilnius, Lithuania),^[233] German commandos and the Lithuanian Auxiliary Police Battalions killed more than 21,000 Jews during the Ponary massacre in late 1941.^[234] At that time, Wilno had only a small Lithuanian-speaking minority of about 6 percent of the city's population.^[235] In the infamous series of Lviv pogroms committed by the Ukrainian militants in the eastern city of Lwów (now Lviv, Ukraine), some 6,000 Polish Jews were murdered in the streets between June 30 and July 29, 1941, on top of 3,000 arrests and mass shootings by Einsatzgruppe C.^{[236][237]} The Ukrainian militias formed by OUN with the blessings of the SS spread terror across dozens of locations throughout south-eastern Poland.^[238]



Jewish woman chased along Medova Street during the Lviv pogroms of 1941

Long before the Tarnopol Ghetto was set up, and only two days after the arrival of the Wehrmacht, up to 2,000 Jews were killed in the provincial capital of Tarnopol (now Ternopil, Ukraine),^[239] one-third of them by the Ukrainian militias.^[240] Some of the victims have been decapitated.^[241] The SS shot the remaining two-thirds, in the same week.^[240] In Stanisławów – another provincial capital in the Kresy macroregion (now Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine) – the single largest massacre of Polish Jews prior to Aktion Reinhardt was perpetrated on 12 October 1941, hand in glove by Orpo, SiPo and the Ukrainian Auxiliary Police (brought in from Lwów); tables with sandwiches and bottles of vodka had been set up about the cemetery for shooters who needed to rest from the deafening noise of gunfire; 12,000 Jews were murdered before nightfall.^[242]

A total of 31 deadly pogroms were carried out throughout the region in conjunction with the Belarusian, Lithuanian and Ukrainian Schuma.^[243] The genocidal techniques learned from the Germans, such as the advanced planning of the pacification actions, site selection, and sudden encirclement, became the hallmark of the OUN-UPA massacres of Poles and Jews in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia beginning in March 1943, parallel with the liquidation of the ghettos in Reichskommissariat Ostland ordered by Himmler.^{[244][245]} Thousands of Jews who escaped deportations and hid in the forests were murdered by the Banderites.^[246]

Rate of survival

The question regarding the Jewish real chances of survival once the Holocaust began continues to draw attention of historians.^[171] For one, the Germans made it extremely difficult to escape the ghettos just before deportations to death camps deceptively disguised as "resettlement in the East". All passes were cancelled, walls rebuilt containing fewer gates, with policemen replaced by SS-men. Some victims already deported to Treblinka were forced to write form letters back home, stating that they were safe. Around 3,000 others fell into the German Hotel Polski trap. Many ghettoized Jews did not believe what was going on until the very end, because the actual outcome seemed unthinkable at the time.^[171] David J. Landau suggested also that the weak Jewish leadership might have played a role.^[247] Likewise, Israel Gutman proposed that the Polish Underground might have attacked the camps and blown up the railway tracks leading to them, but as noted by Paulsson, such ideas are a product of hindsight.^[171]

The exact number of Holocaust survivors is unknown. Possibly as many as 300,000 Polish Jews escaped to the Soviet-occupied zone soon after the war started. Some estimates go even higher than that.^[248] Notably, a very high percentage of the Jews fleeing east were men and women without families.^[248] Thousands of them perished at the hands of OUN-UPA, TDA and Ypatingasis būrys during Massacres of Poles in Volhynia, the Holocaust in Lithuania (see Ponary massacre), and in Belarus.^{[2][3]} The majority of Polish Jews in the Generalgouvernement stayed put.^[171] Prior to the mass deportations, there was no proven necessity to leave familiar places. When the ghettos were closed from the outside, smuggling of food kept most of the inhabitants alive. Escape into clandestine existence on the "Aryan" side was attempted by some 100,000 Jews, and, contrary to popular misconceptions, the risk of them being turned in by the Poles was very small.^[171]

It is estimated that about 350,000 Polish Jews survived the Holocaust.^[24] Some 230,000 of them survived in the USSR and the Soviet-controlled territories of Poland, including men and women who escaped from areas occupied by Germany.^{[24][20]} Right after World War II, over 150,000 Polish Jews (Berendt) or 180,000 (Engel) were repatriated or expelled back to new Poland along with the younger men conscripted to the Red Army from Kresy in 1940–1941. Their families died in the Holocaust.^[249] Gunnar S. Paulsson estimated that 30,000 Polish Jews survived in the labor camps,^[171] but according to Engel as many as 70,000–80,000 of them were liberated from camps in Germany and Austria alone, except that declaring their own nationality was of no use to those who did not intend to return.^[6] Madajczyk estimated that as many as 110,000 Polish Jews were in the Displaced Person camps.^[250] According to Longerich, up to 50,000 Jews survived in the forests (not counting Galicia)^[251] and also among the soldiers who reentered Poland with the pro-Soviet Polish "Berling army" formed by Stalin. The number of Jews who successfully hid on the "Aryan" side of the ghettos could be as high as 100,000 wrote Peter Longerich,^[251] although many were killed by the German *Jagdkommandos*^[251] Not all survivors registered with CKŻP after the war ended. Thousands of so-called Convent children hidden by the non-Jewish Poles and the Catholic Church remained in orphanages run by the Sisters of the Family of Mary in more than 20 locations,^[252] similar as in other Catholic convents.^{[253][254]} Given the severity of the German measures designed to prevent this occurrence, the survival rate among the Jewish fugitives was relatively high and by far the individuals who circumvented deportation were the most successful.^{[171][255]}



The burning Słonim Ghetto during the Jewish revolt which erupted in the course of the final Ghetto extermination action. Before the joint German-Soviet invasion of Poland in 1939 Słonim was a county seat in the Nowogródek Voivodeship. The invading Soviets annexed the city to the Byelorussian SSR in an atmosphere of terror^[21]

Border changes and repatriations

The West remained unaware of the top secret Nazi-Soviet Pact, which paved the way for World War II.^{[256][257]} German surrender was followed by a massive change of political geography of Europe.^{[5][250]} Poland's borders were redrawn by the Allies according to the demands made by Josef Stalin during the Tehran Conference confirmed as not negotiable at the Yalta Conference of 1945.^[258] The Polish government-in-exile was excluded from negotiations.^[259] The territory of Poland was reduced by approximately 20 percent.^[260] Before the end of 1946 some 1.8 million Polish citizens were expelled and forcibly resettled within the new borders.^{[258][259]} For the first time in its history Poland became a homogeneous one nation-state by force, with the national wealth reduced by 38 percent. Poland's financial system had been destroyed. Intelligentsia was largely obliterated along with the Jews, and the population reduced by about 33 percent.^[260]

Because of the territorial shift imposed from the outside, the number of Holocaust survivors from Poland remains the subject of deliberation.^[250] According to official statistics, the number of Jews in the country has changed dramatically in a very short time.^[261] In January 1946, the Central Committee of Polish Jews (CKŻP) registered the first wave of some 86,000 survivors from the vicinity. By the end of summer, the number had risen to about 205,000–210,000 (with 240,000 registrations and over 30,000 duplicates).^[262] The survivors included 180,000 Jews who arrived from the Soviet-controlled territories as a result repatriation agreements. Another 30,000 Jews returned to Poland from the USSR after the Stalinist repressions ended a decade later.^{[6][262]}



1946 meeting of Żegota members on the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising at the Polish Theatre

Aliyah Bet from Europe

In July 1946, right after the rigged referendum held in Poland with the intention of solidifying the communist takeover of power, forty Jews and two ethnic Poles were killed in the Kielce pogrom.^[263] Eleven of the victims died from bayonet wounds and eleven more were fatally shot with military assault rifles (official IPN findings), indicating direct involvement of the regular troops.^[263] The pogrom prompted General Spychalski of PWP from wartime Warsaw,^[264] to sign a legislative decree allowing the remaining

survivors to leave Poland without Western visas or Polish exit permits.^{[265][262]} Poland was the only Eastern Bloc country to allow free Jewish aliyah to Mandate Palestine, with Stalin's vexed approval seeking to undermine British influence in the Middle East.^{[6][261]} Most refugees crossing the new borders left Poland without a valid passport.^[262] By contrast, the Soviet Union brought Soviet Jews from DP camps back to USSR by force, along with all other Soviet citizens irrespective of their wishes, as agreed to by the Yalta Conference.^[266]

Uninterrupted traffic across the Polish borders increased dramatically.^{[267][6][268]} By the spring of 1947 only 90,000 Jews remained in Poland.^{[269][270][271]} Britain demanded from Poland (among others) to halt the Jewish exodus, but their pressure was largely unsuccessful.^[272] The massacre in Kielce was condemned by a public announcement sent by the diocese in Kielce to all churches. The letter denounced the pogrom and "stressed – wrote Natalia Aleksion – that the most important Catholic values were the love of fellow human beings and respect for human life. It also alluded to the demoralizing effect of anti-Jewish violence, since the crime was committed in the presence of youth and children." Priests read it without comments during Mass, hinting that "the pogrom might have in fact been a political provocation."^[273]

Approximately 7,000 Jewish men and women of military age left Poland for Mandatory Palestine between 1947 and 1948 as members of Haganah organization, trained in Poland. The boot camp was set up in Bolków, Lower Silesia, with Polish-Jewish instructors. It was financed by JDC in agreement with the Polish administration. The program which trained mostly men 22–25 years of age for service in the Israel Defense Forces lasted until early 1949.^[274] Joining the training was a convenient way to leave the country, since the course graduates were not controlled at the border, and could carry undeclared valuables and even restricted firearms.^[264]

Holocaust memorials and commemoration

There is a large number of memorials in Poland dedicated to the Holocaust remembrance. Monument to the Ghetto Heroes in Warsaw was unveiled in April 1948. Major museums include the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum on the outskirts of Oświęcim with 1.4 million visitors per year, and the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw on the site of the former Ghetto, presenting the thousand-year history of the Jews in Poland.^{[275][276]} Since 1988, an annual international event called March of the Living takes place in April at the former Auschwitz-Birkenau camp complex on the Holocaust Remembrance Day, with the total attendance exceeding 150,000 youth from all over the world.^[277] There are state museums on the grounds of each death camp of Operation Reinhard including the Majdanek State Museum in Lublin, declared a national monument as first in 1946 with intact gas chambers and crematoria from World War II. Branches of the Majdanek Museum include the Bełżec, and the Sobibór Museums where advanced geophysical studies are being conducted by the Israeli and Polish archaeologists.^[278] The new Treblinka Museum opened in 2006. It was later expanded and made into a branch of the Siedlce Regional Museum located in a historic Ratusz (see also the Siedlce Ghetto).^{[279][280]}



Museum of the History of the Polish Jews, Warsaw, April 2013

Footnotes

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184. Norman Davies (1979), *God's Playground* (Polish edition), Second volume, pp. 512–513; Alice Teichova, Herbert Matis, Jaroslav Pátek (2000), *Economic Change and the National Question in Twentieth-century Europe* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=8UVxY8Xk-sC&q=minorities+Nowogrodek>) pp. 342–344; Gedeon & Marta Kubiszyn, "Business environment in 1926–1929" (<http://www.sztetl.org.pl/pl/article/radom/5,historia/?action=view&page=1>) *Jewish history of Radom* (in Polish), *Virtual Shtetl*, page 2 of 6; *Lubartow during the Holocaust in occupied Poland* (<https://web.archive.org/web/20120216021119/http://www.jhi.pl/en/gminy/miasto/423.html>) Taube Foundation for Jewish Life and Culture
185. Materski & Szarota (2009) page 9.
186. Piotrowski (1998) pp. 305–, 'Poland's losses.' (<https://books.google.com/books?id=hC0-dk7vpM8C&lpg=PA305&vq=Poland's%20Losses%20Caused%20Description&pg=PA305>)
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188. Materski & Szarota (2009) page 28. Some 800,000 Poles perished in concentration camps and mass murders.
189. Żarski-Zajdler, Władysław (1968). *Martyrologia ludności żydowskiej i pomoc społeczeństwa polskiego* (https://books.google.com/books?id=_2S-ZAKA7EC&q=Zajdler+Martyrologia) [*Martyrdom of the Jewish people and their rescue by the Polish society*]. Warsaw: ZBoWiD. p. 16. [in:] Lucas (2013) p.14. Note 21 to "Introduction."
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191. Hans G. Furth *One million Polish rescuers of hunted Jews?* *Journal of Genocide Research*, June 1999, Vol. 1 Issue 2, pp. 227–232; AN 6025705.
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202. Piotr Chojnacki; Dorota Mazek, eds. (2008) *Polacy ratujący Żydów w latach II wojny światowej* [*Poles rescuing Jews during World War II*]. *Zeszyty IPN, Wybór Tekstów*. Warsaw: Institute of National Remembrance pp. 7, 18, 23, 31. "Kierownictwo Walki Cywilnej w "Biuletynie Informacyjnym" ostrzega "szmalcowników" i denuncjatorów przed konsekwencjami grożącymi im ze strony władz państwa podziemnego" [p.37 in PDF] O, widzi pan, sprawa jednej litery sprawia ogromną różnicę. Ratować i uratować! Ratowaliśmy kilkadziesiąt razy więcej ludzi, niż uratowaliśmy Władysław Bartoszewski [p.7]"
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