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**Antisemitism in Eastern Poland from
the 18th to the 20th Century**
An Historical Overview

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Nútímafræðibraut
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Ágrip

Saga gyðingaandúðar og tengsla Pólverja og pólskra gyðinga innan pólsk-litáíska samveldisins, rússneska keisaraveldisins, og sjálfstæðs Póllands felst að miklu leyti í aukinni andúð og verri tengslum frá 18. öld fram á þá 20. Árásir á gyðinga urðu af og til í gegnum tíðina, yfirleitt í bylgjum. Gyðingaandúð óx hægt ásmegin eftir því sem leið á og hún varð æ meira áberandi eftir aldamótin 1900 þegar ýtt var undir hana af fulltrúum kaþólsku kirkjunnar og þjóðernishneigðum stjórn málaöflum sem höfðu föðurlandsást í hávegum. Hin aukna andúð fékk útrás sumarið 1941 eftir innrás nasista í Sovétríkin þegar árásir voru gerðar á gyðinga víðsvegar í Austur-Póllandi með lítilli eða engri aðkomu nasista.

Lykilorð: Gyðingaandúð, gyðingar, Pólverjar, Pólland, pólsk-litáíska samveldið, rússneska keisaraveldið, fyrri heimsstyrjöldin, seinni heimsstyrjöldin

Abstract

The history of antisemitism and relations between Poles and Polish Jews inside the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Russian Empire, and independent Poland consists primarily of increased hostility and antagonistic relations from the 18th century until the 20th. Pogroms took place occasionally through the years, usually in waves. Antisemitism slowly grew as time passed and became ever more apparent after 1900 when it was upheld by representatives of the Catholic Church and patriotic, nationalistic political forces. This increased antisemitism found release in the summer of 1941 following the invasion of the Soviet Union by Nazi Germany when pogroms took place in various locations in Eastern Poland with little or no Nazi involvement.

Keywords: Antisemitism, Jews, Poles, Poland, Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Russian Empire, World War I, World War II

*Í minningu Ingbórs Friðrikssonar og Gísla Þorsteinssonar, sem veiða saman í
Sumarlandinu*

*In memory of Ingbór Friðriksson and Gísli Þorsteinsson, who fish together in
the Summerland*

Foreword

Heartfelt gratitude goes to Professor Giorgio Baruchello for starting out as my thesis instructor and never doubting I would finish it, Professor Páll Björnsson for taking over when Giorgio went on research leave and getting me over the finish line, my mother Anna Bryndís Sigurðardóttir for being a port in any storm, and my brother Kristinn Darri Þorsteinsson for all the support, laughter, and reality checks. All my love and sincere thanks go to my grandfather, Gísli Þorsteinsson, for his sincere belief and pride in me and his endless support before his passing. Further thanks go to Vera Illugadóttir and her radio show *Í ljósi sögunnar* which introduced me to the pogroms of 1941.

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1 Introduction

In the summer of 1941, pogroms took place throughout Białystok province in Eastern Poland following the Nazi occupation in the early days of Operation Barbarossa. The pogroms were not committed by Nazi forces themselves or with Nazi encouragement: they were committed by Polish people against their Jewish neighbours. The pogroms have been researched and debated for over two decades and they have become an increasingly controversial topic in public discussion both inside and outside of Poland since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. More pogroms followed the return of Polish Jew survivors from the Nazi camp system and most of Poland's remaining Jewish population fled the country in the 1960s, to the point that only a few thousand Jews live in Poland today. Other pogroms had happened in the 20th century, but the ones in the 1940s were the most prominent. The research questions of this thesis are the following: Why did the pogroms take place? Why did the Poles attack their Jewish neighbours? Was there recurrent conflict between Poles and Jews before the pogroms of 1941? If there was conflict, what was its basis? When did the idea of violence against Jews become acceptable among Polish people?

In this thesis, the answers to these questions will be sought by exploring the history of Eastern Poland from the 18th century during the last decades of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to the independent Poland of the interwar years. I will argue that antisemitism is the underlying cause of the pogroms, which are defined as violence against a particular minority group, most often Jews, either begun by or ignored by authorities (Klier, 2010b). Antisemitism is defined as hostility toward or discrimination against Jewish people (Berenbaum, n.d.) due to beliefs about them causing harm to Christians, including creating illnesses such as the Black Death, despite lack of evidence (Langmuir, 1990). Antisemitism began to spread following the Crusades when the importance of Christianity grew in Europe with the increased influence of the Catholic Church. Jews became the killers of Jesus in the minds of Christians and a belief in Jews wanting to overthrow Christianity became widespread (Langmuir, 1990). Jews lived throughout Europe before the 15th century, but as antisemitism grew and spread around the continent secular authorities used it as a justification for expelling them from their countries between 1290 and 1497 (Langmuir, 1990). Poland and

Eastern Europe became one of the few areas of Europe open to Jews. During the 18th and especially 19th century, antisemitism moved from being rooted in religiosity and religious differences to having national and ethnic foundations (Porter, 2000). Jews became not a religious group but a nation within a nation seeking to destroy Poland from within (Porter, 2000), and this was especially apparent in the early 20th century.

I will argue that widespread antisemitism drew from a fear of the Other, people different from oneself who could and would not be assimilated into society or the nation due to a different culture, religion, traditions, and languages. This fear, antisemitism in this case, was validated and encouraged in Eastern Poland throughout the centuries by people in positions of power, both secular and ecclesiastical. The Catholic Church took an active part in nurturing antisemitism in the 18th century as its influence in Poland and on the Polish nation increased following the Thirty Years' War in the 17th century. A nationalistic political party fighting for Polish independence also spread antisemitism with electoral slogans and political ideology in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The wave of pogroms that followed the Nazi occupation was, I will argue, a culmination of antisemitism and opportunistic in nature; Nazi forces were instructed not to interfere with violence against Jews (Bender, 2013) and thus their presence in this thesis will be limited. The attitudes of Poles towards Jews and Jews towards Poles will be examined as will the interactions between Poles and Jews and limitations placed on them. Jewish autonomy within Polish society and Polish subjection to the Russian Empire will be explored in the thesis and it will be argued that both hostility and goodwill towards Jews featured in the fight for Polish independence in the 19th century.

To avoid misunderstandings, Jews in Eastern Poland will be referred to as either Polish Jews or Jews throughout the thesis. When Poles are mentioned, this refers to Catholic Poles or ethnic Poles. Since I do not speak Polish, many sources are necessarily second or third hand. Multiple sources have been used to rectify this issue wherever possible. Population numbers and percentages are recurring in the thesis and when applicable, the page they are on in the original source will be indicated. Names of people and places will be written in their language and not adjusted to English.

Chapter 2 will explore the history of Jews and antisemitism in Eastern Poland in the 18th and 19th centuries, featuring the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the partitions of Poland, the Pale of Settlement, and Congress Poland. In the appendix, map 1 shows the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and its partitions. Chapter 3 will portray the early 20th century and the ways antisemitism grew and was inflamed by secular and ecclesiastical forces, beginning

with the years until the First World War and ending with the interwar period. Map 2 in the appendix shows Congress Poland and interwar and modern Poland. Chapter 4 focuses on the pogroms in 1941 and their consequences. The conclusion will present a synopsis of the main chapters and reiterate the arguments made.

2 Antisemitism in Poland in the 18th and 19th century

Antisemitism did not suddenly materialise in Poland in the 20th century. It had been present for centuries in various forms; sometimes active, other times latent. Poland had gone through a difficult period since its third partition in the late 18th century by the Russian Empire, Prussia, and Austria, after which it was governed by their foreign governments. Polish self-governance was limited and dependent on those governments until 1918 when the country regained its independence. This sparked feelings of uncertainty about the nature and meaning of Polish national identity and stirred questions about the status of Polish Jews in Polish society and particularly in the Polish quest for independence (Bacon, 2011).

Prior to its partitions, Poland belonged to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth which was formed in 1569. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was ethnically diverse, and its Jewish population was around 5,8 percent of the population of Poland (Hundert, 2004, pp. 22-24). The approximation is the author's from the numbers given for 1764-1766: 750,000 Jews out of a Polish-Lithuanian population of 13 million. Most Jews lived in its eastern parts, Ruthenia-Ukraine and Lithuania-Belarus (Hundert, 2004); parts of the area are no longer within the borders of present-day Poland but were part of Poland during the interwar years. The Jewish population was mostly urban and preferred town life while most of society lived rurally but Jews did not live segregated from Christians in most towns (Hundert, 2004). Despite towns being unsegregated, the Jewish population was often fairly independent and constituted its own community within a community, administered by a Jewish council (*kahal*) under the authority of the town's owner – an aristocrat – and/or his representatives. Jewish communities also had various groups (*khevres*) that oversaw particular community matters, including burials. Around 1580, meetings of major merchants and rabbis were given official recognition by King Stefan Batory as the central authority for Jewish matters in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and became known as the Council of the Four Lands. The council spoke for Ruthenia and Volhynia in the west of modern Ukraine and the two districts of Poland, Great Poland and Little Poland (Rosman, 2011).

The employment and means of income for Jews in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth also differed from other inhabitants of Poland: Jews were prominent in trading and commerce, both domestic and foreign, while agriculture was the main trade of most others, particularly as serf labour was still dominant and most of the population were peasants. Both aristocratic

landowners and Jews benefitted from working together despite the antisemitic feelings of some aristocrats; offering Jews security and protecting their rights to trade ensured the aristocrats a lucrative cut of the Jews' profits as tax income. Dislike against anyone of different ethnicity was common among noblemen, but their dislike of Jews was generally stronger than against other ethnic minorities (Hundert, 2004). The differences in Jewish occupation and residence might explain some of the dislike against them since these dissimilarities set the Jewish population apart from others. The nobility's way of life was also different than the general population's, however, so perhaps a dislike for Jews did not lie within differences in lifestyles. As discussed in the introduction, antisemitism was in this period based mostly on religious grounds and beliefs in Jews wishing harm to Christians. The nobility were Christians like the rest of the Polish-Lithuanian population and that may have created a feeling of unity that dissimilar lives could not affect.

Antisemitism was more common among the petty gentry than among other members of the nobility, perhaps due to direct competition as they leased land from magnates as Jews did and derived their income from commerce (Hundert, 2004). Nobles had kept legal authority over Jews on their land since 1539, before the creation of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, so they had obligations to protect Jewish rights, including protecting them from attacks, though not all fulfilled those obligations (Rosman, 2011). In the 18th century, whenever Jews leased land, the usual contracts were altered as Jews were not to have authority over Christians. The same applied for Jewish administrators for Polish nobles: only Christians had direct authority over Christians and could act within the boundaries of the law and issue punishment. In the case of lessees, they had to rely on a Christian land administrator to enforce their orders if the peasants did not carry them out (Hundert, 2004). In 1740, a revolt was made against Jewish lessees which was distinctly antisemitic: the revolt's leader claimed the Jews acted against the Christians on their leased lands, were perpetrators of attacks against them, and denied them access to churches and baptism. The leader maintained his cause was defence of Christendom and its intent the destruction of the Jewish population; he did not mean harm to the aristocratic lessors (Hundert, 2004). In this uprising, antisemitism found an outlet grasped onto Christianity and the protection of Christians against religious attack to justify the attack on Jews. The leader's assertion of his aims shows an effort to align himself with the powerful against perceived outsiders in his community.

Not all members of the gentry had the same level of power and influence, however, and the direct economic competition between the petty gentry and the Jewish community led to

attempts to legislate restrictions on Jewish commercial activity. Until the mid-18th century, their attempts to legislate limits on the scope of Jewish trade and travel bans on Jews involved in wine import failed, in no small part due to the economic interests of higher aristocrats. In 1768, legislation was enacted which banned inn- and tavern-keeping by Jews without municipal agreement, following increased Jewish monopoly of the sale and production of alcohol in the prior decade (Hundert, 2004). In some municipalities, Jewish trade and economic activity, including artisan crafts, was successfully limited, following complaints by Polish people competing with Jewish merchants, usually in areas owned by the crown or the Church, which were also more likely to practice segregation. In some cities owned by the crown, Jewish residency was prohibited, but Jews were allowed access to the city on market days; to enable such legislation, Jews were classified as foreign merchants. Limitations on Jewish trade and commerce caused Jews to leave for other cities without such restrictions, usually owned by aristocrats (Hundert, 2004). The importance Polish Jews placed on their freedom to engage in trade is clearly shown by their willingness to leave and seek better conditions elsewhere. Was their place of residence less important than commercial freedom? Perhaps the security Jews enjoyed in a community was directly connected to freedom to trade as those aristocrats who guaranteed trade for Jews were also willing to ensure their safety. This could explain why they moved on so readily.

Jews and Poles were in contact despite segregation in crown lands and separate communities outside them. Doing business with a Christian partner was frowned upon within Jewish communities since any disagreement between the partners or loss of income brought risk of harassment on the community; the Jew and the Jewish community might be held solely responsible. Too much and close contact with Poles was avoided and, in some communities, subject to shaming and fines as it increased the odds of hostilities and attacks on Jews (Hundert, 2004). Jews within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth regarded themselves as strangers outside their own Jewish communities; they were not part of the Polish, Christian community but outsiders. They regarded their Polish, Christian neighbours as possible attackers and were aware of the risks they faced living among them (Rosman, 2011). The largest calamities happening to Polish Jews under the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, according to Rosman, took place in 1648 to 1649, 1654 to 1656, and 1768 (2011). The first occurred during the Cossack revolt led by Bohdan Khmelnytsky¹ when up to 20,000 Jews

¹ Name adjusted to Ukrainian spelling as shown on Encyclopaedia Britannica (n.d.b)

were killed, about as many fled, and some forcefully converted to Christianity following attacks on towns with large Jewish communities (Rosman, 2011). The second was the invasion of Swedish and Muscovian forces into Poland where many Jews ended in the paths of the armies, both offensive and defensive. The third was the biggest of numerous Cossack rebellions in the 18th century (Rosman, 2011), which took the city of Uman and killed around 3,000 Jews (Freeze, 2010). The Jewish attitudes towards Poles show a wary viewpoint and a perception of possible danger. The events of the 17th and 18th centuries and the uprising of 1740 previously mentioned confirm their distrust was substantiated, though not all the harm that befell the Jewish population during these events was intentional.

Antisemitic feeling rose in Poland during the 18th century after the Catholic Church's Counter-Reformation spread and triumphed over Reformation ideas following the Thirty Years' War. Polish national identity and thought became synonymous with Catholicism (Hundert, 2004). The Catholic Church expanded in Poland with increased construction of religious buildings such as churches and convents and the numbers of priests swelled due to influential bishops (Hundert, 2004). Segregation between Poles and Polish Jews was encouraged and enforced by Catholic bishops and included bans against Christians living and eating with Jews, eating traditional Jewish meals, and being present at Jewish weddings and other celebrations; those who did would be excommunicated. If Jews had Christians assist in the synagogue on Jewish holidays the *kahal* would be fined and the synagogue's rabbi subjected to a month in prison (Hundert, 2004). These prohibitions show that Poles and Polish Jews had intimate relationships as things that did not take place are unlikely to have been forbidden.

Further restrictions were enacted to Jewish activities by the Catholic Church in the 18th century. During Lent, Jews were prohibited from celebrations, including wedding processions, and could not noisily celebrate events in the streets or call people to prayer. The lists of prohibitions were reproduced and repeated in multiple mediums, including school lessons and church sermons (Hundert, 2004), seemingly aimed at disseminating and reinforcing the idea of segregation. Catholic Church officials, both bishops and Pope Clement XI, attempted conversion of Jews to the Catholic faith, including preaching in synagogues and founding nunneries meant to convert Jewish women. Some congregations kidnapped Jewish children to baptise them and convert to Christianity, which was condemned by the primate of Poland in 1785 (Hundert, 2004). The religious traditions and festivities of Polish Jews were thus suppressed by law in an attempt to stop them practising their religion. Catholicism was

the religion of the Polish people and in order to be Polish, Jews would have to convert. Segregation between Poles and Polish Jews was pressed by the Catholic Church, perhaps to avoid the dissemination of ideas or information between the groups, such as the true religious practices of Judaism.

Accusations of blood libel, the sacrifice of children for blood for flatbread-making during Passover, against Jews first surfaced among the ancient Greeks after 200 BCE but the association with Christianity and the sacrifice of Christian children began in the 12th century CE (Britannica, n.d.a; United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, n.d). Accusations began to spread through the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 18th century and led to over a 100 deaths, mostly of Polish Jews, though less than 30 cases went to trial. Catholic bishops were involved in the prosecution of some of the cases and other members of the clergy supported various blood libel cases. After torture was abolished by the Sejm (the Polish parliament) in 1776, the number of deaths associated with judicial processes decreased significantly (Hundert, 2004). Deaths becoming less frequent shows the effect torture had on defendants in court cases regardless of the outcome of their trials or whether the cases ended up going to trial. It was not the only legislative act of the Sejm that had a direct effect on the Jewish community.

Between 1788 and 1792, the Sejm came together to fully revise the Polish law. Among the considerations of the Sejm was the status and rights of Jews in Poland (Rosman, 2011), which was discussed in a committee and a proposal made which did not proceed to the Sejm due to disagreement between the committee members (Hundert, 2004). No further progress was made towards legislation on Jewish status in Poland despite petitions by Jewish communities and meetings between a Jewish delegation and representatives of the Crown; Jews continued to be subject to municipal authorities and did not have autonomy outside their communities, overseen by the *kahals* (Hundert, 2004). Polish Jews continued to be dependent on their municipality's government without having legal protection at the state level in case of disagreement or hostility.

2.1 The 19th century

Following the third and final partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1795, Polish Jews became more urban than ever before though rural communities continued to exist. Eastern Poland came under the rule of the Russian Empire as can be seen on map 2 in the

appendix and was divided into the Kingdom of Poland or Congress Poland (after 1815) and the Pale of Settlement. The expanded territory and population led to the Russian Empire having the largest Jewish population in the world following the Congress of Vienna in 1815 (Bacon, 2011; Polonsky, 2009). In 1897, the Jewish population of the Russian Empire, including Congress Poland was over 5,2 million (Polonsky, 2010) and close to 3 million Jews had emigrated to the West by this time (Stanislawski, 2010). The Pale of Settlement was under the direct government of the Russian monarchy and the majority of Jews who had lived within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth lived there. The Tsar's governmental policy aimed at assimilating the Jewish population into the Russian nation and removing any differences between the two; restrictions on Jewish autonomy were not revoked within the Pale of Settlement (Polonsky, 2009). In 1865, legislation was enacted that allowed master craftsmen to leave the Pale by fulfilling certain regulations, but many left without going through judicial avenues. Their residence elsewhere was therefore illegal, but offenders were rarely chased after or persecuted (Klier, 2010a). After the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881, pogroms spread through modern Kropyvnytskyi, formerly Elizavetgrad, in Kirovohrad, formerly Kherson, province in modern Ukraine to Nizhny Novgorod in western Russia until March 1882, and the tsarist authorities did not step in to put an end to the violence (Polonsky, 2009). The Jews of the Pale of Settlement became further convinced of the necessity of Jewish separation from the Russian nation and authorities following these events and began to consider themselves Jews first and foremost (Polonsky, 2009). The push to assimilate thus had the opposite effect and made Polish Jews within the Pale of Settlement feel more Jewish and strengthened their community.

The failed legislation of the 1788-1792 Sejm continued to reflect the status of Polish Jews in Congress Poland until 1862. In the 19th century, some cities continued to be segregated with Jews only allowed to live in certain areas or on certain streets and municipal authorities were responsible for Jews within their boundaries; Jewish autonomy only existed within their communities (Bacon, 2011). The *kahals* were replaced with boards for congregations responsible for community matters in 1822 (Polonsky, 2009). The board members were elected by the congregation, but electability rested disproportionately on economic status. Many leaders thus had different social standing than members of their congregations and had more interest in matters of policy and autonomy (Bacon, 2011). Though Jews generally

wanted to have political autonomy² and economic freedom³ and their leaders advocated for it, many among the masses felt the process of emancipation was a slippery slope. The primary concern among the Jewish population was that in the process of emancipation the demand for assimilation would become too strong and Polish Jews would have to either convert to Christianity or change their religious practices and traditions in order to become acceptable as Polish nationals (Polonsky, 2009; Bacon, 2011). The importance of culture, religion, and traditions cannot be understated as part of identity, both for individuals and for groups, and having to give up part of one's core values is a sacrifice few are willing to make. The unwillingness of the Jewish population to abandon their faith, which has followed the Jewish people for thousands of years (Gaster et al., n.d.), is unsurprising; Poles would undoubtedly have been unwilling to give up Catholicism to become part of the Russian nation and the Russian Orthodox Church if pushed to do so.

Polish political leaders were generally against Jews being emancipated as they believed Jews were too different from Poles to become full Polish nationals due to their separate religion, language, and culture and the size of the Jewish population; it would be difficult or impossible to assimilate them (Bacon, 2011). The only way for Jews to become Poles was for them to leave behind their culture, including their languages (Yiddish and Hebrew) and ways of dress (Polonsky, 2009), which was exactly what many Jews had feared. A proposed law in 1816 meant to ban Jews not literate in Polish from marrying and working in trades; to remove communal autonomy in Jewish communities; and to persuade Jews to move from commerce to agriculture (Polonsky, 2009). Those who did so would get full political rights. The law did not pass through the Council of State – a council composed of Congress Poland's ministers – and another bill in a similar vein which had been accepted by the Council was rejected by the tsar in 1817 (Polonsky, 2009), perhaps because it did not push conversion to Christianity hard enough. The tsar thus stopped Polish attempts to force the Jewish population of Congress Poland to assimilate and become more like the Polish by curtailing their right to marry and work in their preferred fields. Jewish emancipation and autonomy were not procured until after the middle of the century, but due to the tsar's action they were not further impinged upon.

On 4th June 1862, the Jews of Congress Poland received emancipation from the Congress's viceroy, Count Aleksander Wielopolski, who hoped to enlist Jewish support in a

² Here defined as being able to vote, give one's opinion publicly, and join a political party

³ Here defined as being able to freely choose a profession, buy property, and engage in commerce

struggle to maintain self-rule within the Russian Empire in cooperation with the tsarist authorities. Jews gained the right to own property and serve as witnesses and no restrictions applied to their residences and movement (Polonsky, 2009). Meanwhile, there were calls for revolt to free Poland from the Russian Empire (Polonsky, 2009) and some Polish leaders strove for Jewish participation in the uprising as the Jews should also fight for their country. A minority of the Jewish population answered the call for Jewish aid and either helped supply the Polish fight for independence or participated directly as fighters (Bacon, 2011). Among them were the rabbis Markus Jastrow and Dov Berush Meisels, who were both expelled from the Congress of Poland because of their activities against the tsarist authorities and support of the fight for Polish independence (Galas, 2010; Guesnet, 2011). The planned uprising took place and failed in 1863, but Jewish emancipation remained in place. The Jewish elite and leaders of the community of Polish Jews felt their victory in gaining emancipation justified their positive stance towards Jewish integration into Polish society and continued to advocate for it (Polonsky, 2009). Many of the Jews who took part in the fight for Polish independence felt that after Polish victory, Poles would be gracious to their fellow fighters (Bacon, 2011). Jewish hopes for better relations between Poles and Jews and tolerance towards different customs in independent Poland were dashed in the early 20th century as will be discussed later. The Jewish emancipation of 1862 had an impact on Polish-Jewish relations through the remainder of the 19th century due to its influence on industry and production and the political question it raised of whether it should remain in effect in independent Poland.

Industry began having an impact in Congress Poland after 1850 and mechanised textile production became especially important. Polish Jews were among those who owned and operated factories and the 1862 emancipation was influential in the transformation Congress Poland went through after 1865 as restrictions were loosened on Jewish property ownership. Polish Jews living rurally were quick to move to towns and cities during the 19th century and by 1865 91,5% of all Jews in Congress Poland were part of urban populations (Bacon, 2011). Some cities had Jewish populations of more than 50% (Bacon, 2011). Jews from the Pale of Settlement also moved to Congress Poland after the emancipation decree of 1862 and began working in industry and trade. The immigrant Jews received a cold welcome on their arrival, from fellow Jews and Poles alike; they were seen as mercantile competitors by the Jewish community and as bringing Russian values and more Jewishness by the Polish (Bacon, 2011). Despite this urban-living tendency of Polish Jews, most Jews avoided factory work (Bacon, 2011). Small businesses and crafts were the most common means of income for Polish Jews,

usually done either in the home or at a small store. Poles were much more likely to work in the factories, but despite this industrial output grew quickly, and Congress Poland was by the end of the century the most industrially and economically developed area of the Russian Empire (Bacon, 2011). The increased Jewish urban population resulted in the creation and growth of city quarters in Congress Poland predominantly housing Jews and Jewish-owned facilities. Polish Jews were educated in Polish schools and universities more and more and some even began stating Polish was their first language though Yiddish continued being the dominant Jewish language. Publications in Polish meant for a Polish Jewish audience began to proliferate. Many Jews did not equate the Polish language with a Polish identity which was difficult for Poles to understand (Bacon, 2011). Jews did therefore learn Polish as Polish political leaders had pushed for earlier in the 19th century but used it within their communities and for their own purposes, not just as a way of connecting with Poles or becoming Polish.

A pogrom occurred in Warszawa⁴ in 1881, following a Christmas Day rush in a church leading to the deaths of approximately 20 people. The panic which caused the event was attributed to a Jew picking pockets and violence erupted against the Jewish population without the Russian military and police taking action for two days (Polonsky, 2010a). Another pogrom took place in Łódź in 1892 after a major strike. Restrictions on Jewish purchase and leasing of peasant-owned land were legalised in 1891, but other restrictions were not enacted (Polonsky, 2010a). The question of assimilation became more urgent; Polish leaders and thinkers were increasingly of the opinion that Jews retaining their culture and religion was not feasible and they should become fully Polish; waiting for it to happen was no longer possible (Polonsky, 2010a). The Jewish leaders and intelligentsia saw assimilation as inevitable and perhaps the only way to stop attacks against the Jewish population and encouraged their people to fully join the Polish nation and stop standing outside it (Polonsky, 2010a). The rise of industrialism and expanded city living increased feelings of antisemitism due to the perception of Jews as harbingers of continued industrialisation and changes to traditional ways of life. The difficulties and challenges many faced in the cities were blamed on Jews as they were regarded as responsible for the shortcomings of capitalism due to their contributions to it (Polonsky, 2010a). Societal difficulties and communal tragedies therefore inflamed dislike against those seen as outsiders which led to attacks. The Jewish leaders responded by removing the cause of their population's outsider status in the community in an

⁴ Name updated to Polish spelling according to Dawson, Durko and Davies (n.d.)

attempt to avoid further attacks. The question of the status of Jews within the Polish nation influenced popular politics when they came to the fore in the 1890s.

After 1890, political parties became a mass movement in Poland. Leaning towards the left was the Polish Socialist Party which wanted to unite the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as independent Poland. They proposed that minorities of certain areas, such as Ukrainians, would get autonomy within their territories but other minorities, including Polish Jews, would have full rights but not autonomy (Bacon, 2011). The Polish Socialist Party believed Polish Jews would become Polish over time and assimilate; many Jews became members of the party, and a group was created to promote the party among the Jewish population (Bacon, 2011). A right-leaning party, the National Democrats, fought for independent Poland on a smaller scale than the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and emphasized the rights of Poles; national minorities would have Polish citizenship but not recognised as a separate nation (Bacon, 2011). Jews were an exception among minorities to the National Democratic Party: there was no place for Jews in Poland (Bacon, 2011). There were multiple Jewish political parties active in Poland in the 1890s. One of them was the Jewish Workers party, known as the Bund, which was founded in 1897 and fought for increased economic and political rights for Jews and especially Jewish labourers (Blatman, 2010). Zionism, the belief in the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine, was also spreading in Poland and there was a Jewish party campaigning for it as any attempts of Jews to become Polish or live in Poland long-term were doomed (Polonsky, 2010a). Other Jewish political parties campaigned for Jewish rights within Poland and wanted Jews to be recognised as a national group with autonomy when Poland became independent (Bacon, 2011). Political parties were thus very divided on the position of Polish Jews in independent Poland and would continue to be so into the 20th century.

3 The 20th century until 1941

At the beginning of the 20th century, antisemitism was widespread in Congress Poland, especially among the adherents of the National Democratic Party, but not always perceptible. It could lay low for years before erupting into violence, as it would continue to do until the middle of the 20th century. Jews numbered 5,6 million within the Russian Empire in 1910 (Polonsky, 2009). The National Democratic Party (ND; Bender, 2013) was antisemitic but their discussion about Jews became more hateful around the turn of the century (Porter, 2000). The NDs believed Poland and the Polish were superior to the other peoples within the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Lithuanians and Ukrainians) and argued that the areas of Lithuania and Ukraine that had belonged to the Commonwealth should continue to belong to Poland when the Polish regained their independence (Porter, 2000).

The National Democratic Party spread antisemitism and was one of the primary impetuses of the spread of antisemitism according to Porter (2000). To create a Polish nation for an independent Poland, the National Democrats believed that the peoples living within Congress Poland had to assimilate or be able to assimilate, but assimilation was only possible for peoples with a similar ethnolinguistic background as Poles (Porter, 2000). An independent Poland could not exist if the population was diverse and thus divided; national solidarity and unity was key and could not continue without it (Porter, 2000). The Jewish population of Poland came to be viewed as parasites by the ND, both due to their commercial ventures and their religion; they were not a nation themselves, but they were a distinct community separate from Polish society (Porter, 2000). Jews who had assimilated were no different than Jews who had not; it was impossible for Jews to become Poles or change their Jewishness because they had a quality that always marked them as different (Porter, 2000). The National Democratic Party felt Jews had an inborn desire for destruction and vengeance due to their history of victimhood and the ND was convinced the Jews were attempting to weaken the Polish nation and hinder its fight for freedom (Porter, 2000).

Despite the deep antisemitism of the National Democratic Party, they did not advocate for pogroms. The NDs planned their political activities carefully and wanted to be in control of

events they organised; pogroms were sudden occasions of chaotic and spontaneous violence and this made them difficult to control or manage (Porter, 2000). The National Democrats believed that attacks against Jews caused unnecessary panic and loss of reputation for the Polish people, which could be used against them by the Russian authorities (Porter, 2000). Antisemitism thus increasingly became a political matter at the turn of the 20th century in Congress Poland and was advocated for by a single political party, the National Democrats. The narrative turned from Jews being a group that needed to accept Polish customs and become Polish to Jews being parasites that could never become Polish and wanted to ruin the Polish nation and the fight for Polish independence.

In 1904, a crisis began in the Russian Empire during the Russo-Japanese war. The crisis lasted until 1907 but is known as the Revolution of 1905. The upheaval within the empire led to violence in many cities, particularly during strikes, and pogroms took place in many areas (Ascher, 2010), particularly in the cities of Odesa and Kyiv in modern Ukraine and Białystok in Congress Poland (Klier, 2010b). The formerly mentioned Bund was among organisations and societies calling for strikes within the empire, organising strikes in sixty cities and trained some of its members to fight (Ascher, 2010). The fighting men were trained with the goal of stopping law enforcement and soldiers from disturbing party meetings and coming to the defence of the Jewish communities if necessary (Ascher, 2010). The fighters of the Bund were particularly involved in a battle in Łódź in June 1905 following an attack on protestors and were looked upon by the Polish with admiration for their bravery (Ascher, 2010). During the crisis, unrest and political demonstrations were common among students at Jewish canonical and legal schools, *yeshivas*, and violence occasionally broke out during student demonstrations (Ascher, 2010). The charged political atmosphere during the revolution also affected the Jewish population of Congress Poland and it created an environment where some Jewish groups became willing to protect themselves and their fellow Jews if necessary.

The tsarist government made some concessions to the populace in 1905, including religious tolerance and removal of restrictions on other nationalities than Russians. Ethnic minorities within the Russian Empire now had the right to vote, to form associations, to be educated in their own language, and to some press freedom (Polonsky, 2010a). The Duma, the Russian parliament, was formed following the crisis and elections for the first one took place in March 1906. Multiple parties campaigned for election and Jews were active in some of them, much to the disgust of the National Democratic Party which claimed the election of a Jew to the Duma on behalf of Poland would be humiliating for the Polish nation (Polonsky,

2010a). This antisemitic strategy seems to have worked for the National Democratic Party as it won all the available Duma seats for Congress Poland that year. Elections to the Duma the following year had a similar conclusion; the ND formed an alliance with two other parties and won 31 seats of the 34 available (Polonsky, 2010a). The election of the National Democratic Party to the Duma secured their place in speaking for Congress Poland on the matter of Polish issues within the Russian Empire. The rights and freedoms conceded to ethnic minorities within the empire did not only apply to Poles, however, they also applied to Jews.

The equal political and civil status of Jews and Poles within the Russian Empire following the concessions of 1905 caused conflict between Poles and Polish Jews. The media freedom awarded to ethnic minorities within the empire led to increased publications among the Jewish community and daily newspapers for a Jewish audience gained popularity (Polonsky, 2010a). This enabled an easy spread of ideas among the Jews of Congress Poland and many of them supported Zionist ideals; Jews were a nation and should have the status and rights of a nation, whether that was within the Russian Empire or elsewhere (Polonsky, 2010a). Assimilation with the Polish nation was a rare argument in the Jewish press following the revolution and the rise of the National Democratic Party; it was no longer regarded as a feasible option (Polonsky, 2010a). The immigration of Jews from the Pale of Settlement, particularly the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, into Congress Poland was on the rise following the revolution and the immigrants were received warmly by their fellow Jews; the dislike from their fellows that had met Jewish immigrants a few decades before was gone (Polonsky, 2010a). The National Democratic Party reacted to the immigrants in a similar way as their ancestors had: with suspicion and dislike. The Polish politicians regarded the immigrant Jews as Russian troublemakers who would advocate for Russian culture and language among the Polish nation in an attempt to increase their Russianness just as the Polish were seeking their independence from the Russian Empire (Polonsky, 2010a). The Jewish immigrants spoke Russian (Polonsky, 2010a), but as previously mentioned they believed in the existence of a Jewish nation and felt that a Jewish state was the best thing to ensure the safety and integrity of the Jewish people. The rising immigration did not lead to increased Russianness among Polish Jews or Poles, but it strengthened the already existing feelings of nationhood among Polish Jews and their calls for increased rights and autonomy.

Within the National Democratic Party, the Jewish press was disliked. The dissemination of ideas of Jewish autonomy and nationhood was frowned upon, but the rise of Yiddish media within Congress Poland was to many a confirmation of the Jewish outsider status (Polonsky,

2010a). The emergence of popular Jewish media showed the size of the Jewish community in Congress Poland and supported the Jewish sense of culture and ethnicity which did not align with the united Polish national identity created by the National Democratic Party. Polish Jews were strengthening their sense of community and the National Democrats saw it as dangerous; a strong, united Jewish community fighting for its rights was likely to cause irreparable harm to the Polish nation's culture and economy, especially due to the size of the Jewish population in Congress Poland (Polonsky, 2010a).

Legislative changes to the electoral system of the Duma in 1912 caused conflict within Polish politics because Jews became the biggest group of electors in Warszawa (Polonsky, 2010a); the Jewish community in Warszawa numbered 337,000 in 1914 of 885,000 total inhabitants (Polonsky, 2010b) and were thus 38% of the population. Polish politics were cleaved into three groups: the National Democratic Party which was still fervently antisemitic but regarded by some as too sympathetic to the tsarist authorities; the National Concentration which felt Jews were too many and too influential but was against the National Democrats because of their pro-Russian lean; and the Jewish separationist party which wanted Jews to have as much political influence as Poles (Polonsky, 2010a). The Jewish party got 46 electors, the National Concentration 23, and the National Democrats 11 (Polonsky, 2010a). Any happiness following this electoral victory was short-lived; the National Democratic Party put into action a boycott of Jewish businesses and the services of Jewish artisans, which led to increased violence towards Jews within Congress Poland (Polonsky, 2010a). The National Democrats urged their followers not to do business with Jews and only trade with Polish merchants and craftsmen (Polonsky, 2010a). Their followers did so and it created an atmosphere of unity with Jews as scapegoats; the Jews had won the election of 1912, but the National Democrats made them out to be the enemy of the Polish nation (Polonsky, 2010a). The boycott organised by the National Democrats following the elections of 1912 was a harbinger of the future and it consolidated ideas of Jews as outsiders.

3.1 The First World War

During the First World War, the Russian Empire lost the majority of the Polish territory it had gained in the partition of 1795 and most Jews within the Russian Empire became subjects of the Central Powers (Engel, 2010). Jews within the Pale of Settlement were evacuated to other parts of the empire (Engel, 2010; Polonsky, 2012) before it was officially abolished in 1917

(Klier, 2010a). Over 80,000 Jewish refugees had settled in Warsaw by 1915 (Engel, 2010). The National Democratic Party supported the tsarist authorities in the war, but many Jews had more sympathy for the Central Powers (Polonsky, 2012), who offered Jewish populations within their countries and, later, within their occupation zones more political freedom than the tsarist authorities did (Engel, 2010). Despite complicated feelings towards the tsarist government, many Jews within the Russian Empire fought for the empire (Engel, 2010). The war caused immense suffering throughout Eastern Europe and many relief organisations were created to help those in need; Jewish relief organisations sent help to Jews within war zones from abroad and others were created during the war within the Russian Empire or by expatriates from the empire (Engel, 2010).

During the summer of 1915, Congress Poland had become occupied by the German forces and on 5th November that year the governments of Germany and Austria-Hungary created the Kingdom of Poland as a semi-autonomous state within the occupation zone. A Department of Jewish Affairs was created by the German Foreign Office and a Committee for the East was created by Jewish activists in Germany under the auspices of the German Foreign Office (Polonsky, 2012). The Committee supported a multiethnic state in Eastern Europe with autonomy and equality for all ethnic groups, which Poles took as confirmation of Jewish hostility towards Polish independence (Polonsky, 2012). Few changes were made to the lives of Jews living within the quasi-independent Kingdom of Poland and autonomy within Jewish communities did not increase (Engel, 2010). The Jews who had harboured hope for increased opportunities and independence under the Central Powers were disappointed, but in March 1917 events in Petrograd, which had been renamed from St Petersburg at the beginning of the war, had unexpected consequences.

On 15th March 1917, Tsar Nikolai II abdicated following riots in Petrograd. In the tsarist government's place, a provisional government was created with the aim of establishing a constituent assembly to make a foundation for a democracy. The provisional government eliminated the restrictive legislation on minorities within the Russian Empire and all Jews within its borders had equal rights with the rest of the population for the first time (Gitelman, 2010). The provisional government did not last long, and in October-November the same year the Bolsheviks seized power. In March 1918, the Bolshevik government signed the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, in which they gave up their claims to Ukraine, Finland, Poland, and the Baltic states and formally made peace with Germany. During the Paris Peace Conference, beginning in November 1918, the creation of an independent Polish state was a topic of contention due

to the fall of Germany and Austria-Hungary and differing opinions among the Allied States on how to proceed (Polonsky, 2012). Among the big questions was how to approach Jewish rights and equality in Eastern Europe and within an independent Poland, especially as violence towards Jews had increased within Poland following the collapse of Germany and Austria-Hungary (Polonsky, 2012). Jewish delegations played a part in the conference and worked towards guaranteeing political and economic rights (Polonsky, 2012). On 28th June 1919, the representatives of the Polish government were forced to sign a treaty created at the conference to protect minority rights (Polonsky, 2012). Other newly created, independent countries in Eastern Europe had to sign similar treaties, but the Allied States and Germany did not have to sign any treaties making them protect minority rights, which caused deep dislike and anger within Poland (Polonsky, 2012). The forced signing of the minority rights treaty was not conducive to good relations between Poles and Jews within Poland.

3.2 The interwar period

During the interwar years, relations between Poles and Jews would go further downhill and culminate in the pogroms in Eastern Poland during the summer of 1941. Jews were the second biggest and most visible of the ethnic groups living in independent Poland (Charnysh, 2015); Jews were 3,1 million in Poland in 1931 according to Bacon and 9,8% of the total population (2011); this places the total population at around 30,4 million. The distinct culture, religion, and dress of Jews set them apart from others in Poland and other ethnic groups were not considered outsiders in the same way as Polish Jews because these groups were considered more like the Poles (Charnysh, 2015). The most numerous ethnic group in interwar Poland were Ukrainians, and it was believed they would assimilate and become Polish unlike the Jews (Charnysh, 2015). Germans and Belarusians were the largest minority groups in interwar Poland after Ukrainians and Jews (Mendelsohn, 1983).

Between 1919 and 1920, the Polish government and Soviet Russia engaged in a brief war following Polish attempts to annex Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine (Polonsky, 2012). At least 350 Jews lost their lives in pogroms during the war, usually due to attempts to remain neutral or perceived support for the Soviets (Polonsky, 2012). The borders of independent Poland continued to be contested diplomatically and were not agreed upon until 1923. At its final size in 1923, Poland encompassed modern Lithuania, parts of modern Ukraine, and parts of modern Belarus as can be seen on map 2 in the appendix. In 1926, there was a coup against

the Sejm, the Polish Parliament, by Józef Piłsudski, who had been a leader of Polish legions in World War I and was influential in the Polish Socialist Party (Mendelsohn, 1983).

Piłsudski's reasons for the coup were the Polish government's failure to provide political stability and ensure prosperity (Mendelsohn, 1983). Piłsudski had acted against the National Democratic Party before the coup and been against their fervent nationalism, but his regime did not attempt to consolidate or unite the various ethnic groups in the country (Mendelsohn, 1983). Piłsudski was in power until his death in 1935 and his rule was autocratic with a focus on foreign affairs and the army, not changes within the country (Mendelsohn, 1983).

Following Piłsudski's regime, the government of Poland remained authoritarian and was in the hands of army officers interested in fascism (Mendelsohn, 1983). The Polish government was involved in the partition of Czechoslovakia in 1938 but did not have the military might to counter the synchronised Soviet and Nazi invasions of Poland in 1939 (Mendelsohn, 1983).

The economic situation in Poland during the interwar years was difficult. The collapse of the Russian Empire, the formation of the Soviet Union, and the Russian Civil War meant a cut off from the Russian markets Poland had previously depended on (Bacon, 2011). The monumental task of rebuilding the economy was made more difficult by a tendency by Poles to employ other Poles rather than Jews, both in private and public enterprises; Jewish lawyers and doctors were not hired by government offices and hospitals due to discriminatory policies (Bacon, 2011). In some cases, Jews were not refused work because they were Jews but because they could not work on Saturdays, the Sabbath, which was expected and working on Sundays was prohibited by law (Mendelsohn, 1983). Banks were also hesitant to lend money to Jews, and consequently poverty became common among Polish Jews, particularly tradesmen (Bacon, 2011). Around 250,000 Jews chose to emigrate from Poland to the Americas and Palestine between 1926 and 1937 (Bacon, 2011).

From the 1930s on, hostility and violence towards Jews increased. Poverty among Polish Jews increased as the economic situation in Poland deteriorated (Bacon, 2011). Organisations were formed to assist Jewish families, both within Poland and outside it (Bacon, 2011). In 1934, Poland and Nazi Germany signed a nonaggression pact and Joseph Goebbels visited Poland in July that year, giving a lecture at the University of Warsaw (Mendelsohn, 1983). The Polish government advocated for Jewish emigration from Poland after Piłsudski's death in 1935 and attempted to get Britain to allow Jewish emigration to Palestine (Mendelsohn, 2013). When this failed, Madagascar was suggested as a colony for Polish Jews (Mendelsohn,

2013). However, the Jewish population of Poland did not support migration to Palestine or Madagascar (Mendelsohn, 2013).

The Catholic Church's representatives were staunch supporters of the National Democratic Party (Bender, 2013; Mendelsohn, 2013). Throughout the country, some of the Church's officials were the biggest propagators of antisemitism (Mendelsohn, 2013). Among them was the bishop of Łomża district in Białystok province (where the pogroms of 1941 were to take place), Stanisław Łukomski, who made an official statement to his congregation in August 1930 that not voting for the National Democratic Party was a sin (Bender, 2013). The Cardinal of the Catholic Church, August Hlond, published a pastoral letter in 1936 condemning Jews as revolutionaries and atheists (Mendelsohn, 1983). Cardinal Hlond also supported economic measures against Jews and advocated for them in the name of the Church (Mendelsohn, 1983). Bishop Stanisław of Łomża district continued to make antisemitic claims and act on antisemitic beliefs: in 1934 and 1935, he attempted to have school classes segregated by ethnicity due to his conviction that Jewish teachers could be a bad influence on Catholic children and should be prohibited from teaching; and in 1935 Catholic congregations were exhorted to trade only with Poles following a church conference as bishop Stanisław considered trade in Poland to be impeded by Jewish traders (Bender, 2013). Media outlets associated with the Catholic Church in Łomża district and the district's official paper disseminated antisemitic ideas and claimed Jews were criminals (Bender, 2013). Jews were also accused of being Marxists and voting for communism, which the supporters of the National Democrats abhorred (Charnysh, 2015). Many Jews supported minor parties, which did not align with the Church's insistence on voting for the National Democratic Party (Kopstein and Wittenberg, 2011). Over 100 pogroms occurred in Poland between 1933 and 1937 following this stoking of antisemitism (Charnysh, 2015), including in the towns of Radziłów, Wizna, and Grajewo (Bender, 2013), which would all experience pogroms in the summer of 1941.

In September 1939, Poland was invaded by Nazi Germany and shortly thereafter also by the Soviet Union, marking the beginning of the Second World War in Europe. In October 1939, Poland was partitioned between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany and ceased to exist as an independent country. Eastern Poland, including Białystok province where the pogroms of 1941 occurred, came under the rule of the Soviet Union. The economic difficulties of interwar Poland were heightened by the Soviet occupation, especially in the rural areas of Eastern Poland, as troops looted and confiscated property and food as they

pleased (Bender, 2013). Poles were initially pushed out of positions of power by the Soviets as they were regarded as threats to Soviet rule, but Jews were allowed to take up government and education jobs (Bender, 2013). The annexation was a deep shock and humiliation to the Polish after their brief independence, but the Jews would rather be under the Soviet Union than Nazi Germany, whose antisemitic beliefs were well-known (Bender, 2013). The Soviet period also offered relief to the Jews from hostility from the Polish (Bender, 2013). In 1940, the Soviet government sent Soviet officials to take over the administration of the annexed area and many Jews who had gotten employment lost their jobs (Bender, 2013). Soviet attitudes towards the Poles also changed between 1940 and 1941; the Soviets no longer saw the Poles as a threat (Bender, 2013). The Poles resented the Soviet occupation and felt the Jews had aided the Soviets during their rule with intent to harm Poles and Polish culture (Bender, 2013). Deportations of Poles to Siberia during the Soviet occupation were also seen as a result of Jewish denunciations (Bender, 2013). This perceived Jewish collaboration with the Soviet authorities was seen as betrayal of Poland and the Polish nation (Bender, 2013) and led to increased hatred of and anger towards Jews, which found an outlet following the Nazi invasion of Poland during the summer of 1941.

4 The pogroms of 1941

In early July 1941, Nazi Germany had taken control of Eastern Poland following its invasion of the Soviet Union on the 22nd of June. In preparation for the invasion, SS leader Reinhard Heydrich gave orders to the Einsatzgruppen officials on how to proceed against Jews and communists in Eastern Europe: these orders were to use existing troubled relations to destroy the Jewish populations by directing communities to violence against Jews in their midst (Bender, 2013; Polonsky, 2012). Heydrich emphasised that SS forces were not to be involved in the pogroms they would incite; their only role was to make them happen (Bender, 2013). On 31st July 1941, Heydrich was sent a letter by Hermann Göring where he was given permission to ‘solve the Jewish question’ in the areas of Eastern Europe taken over during Operation Barbarossa (Polonsky, 2012). It is unknown whether Hitler was directly involved in this decision or whether he implied what he wanted and Göring (and others) made the decisions and gave the orders (Polonsky, 2012).

Ten villages and towns in Białystok province experienced pogroms in the early days of the Nazi invasion; Szcuczyn, Kolno, Goniądz, Grajewo, Wąsosz, Stawiski, Rajgród, Wizna, Radziłów, and Jedwabne (Bender, 2013; Gross, 2012). Jedwabne and Radziłów were the worst and most violent pogroms: between 800 and 2,000 Jews were killed in Radziłów (Bender, 2013, pp. 25) from a Jewish population of at least 1,700 (Bender, 2013, pp. 24) and around 1,600 Jews died in Jedwabne, which had a total population of about 2,170 (Fox, 2001, pp. 77). All the pogroms took place between the 24th of June and the 24th of July, within the span of a month, but in some of the villages multiple pogroms took place during the period, and torture of remaining Jews was drawn out until German troops returned in early August (Bender, 2013). Attacks against Jews continued after the pogroms, but in many cases, they were committed by both Germans and Poles (Bender, 2013). The number of Jews who died in the pogroms of 1941 are hard to pinpoint, but according to Polonsky they were several thousand (2012, pp. 419). Ghettos for Jews were formed in Poland in September 1941 and deportations to Nazi death camps started in 1942. Many of those who survived the pogroms of July and August 1941 did not survive the ghettos or the Holocaust; only eight Jews survived the war from the village of Goniądz, which had a Jewish population of nearly 1,000 (Bender,

2013, pp. 16). In Kolno, 80 Jews survived the initial pogroms from a population of around 2,000, and all the survivors were craftsmen deliberately saved to work for the Germans (Bender, 2013, pp. 16). Grajewo had 1,600 survivors out of a population of 3,000 Jews (Bender, 2013, pp. 20). In Wąsosz and Stawiski, no Jews survived out of a population of around 500 in Wąsosz and 2,000 in Stawiski (Bender, 2013, pp. 20). Numbers for Rajgród and Wizna are uncertain; Rajgród had a Jewish population of 2,000 and Wizna 600 (Bender, 2013, pp. 22-23). At least 200 of Wizna's Jews moved to Jedwabne where they died (Bender, 2013, pp. 23). Most of the Jews who survived the war were hidden by local Poles (Bender, 2013).

4.1 Consequences of the pogroms

Between the years of 1945 and 1958, trials were held in Białystok province, examining the events of the summer of 1941. The trials were meant to prosecute the perpetrators of the pogroms and over 90 men were charged according to Bender, most of them acquitted (2013). 21 people went on to trial between 1949 and 1953 with nine acquittals and 12 sentences to prison (Fox, 2001). The Polish government viewed the trials as insufficient to investigate the pogroms of 1941 and launched a covert inspection nine years later through the district attorney's office in Białystok, though the inspection's results were not published (Bender, 2013). In 2000, a prosecutor employed at the Polish Institute of National Remembrance began an investigation into the pogrom in Jedwabne following the publication of Polish-American scholar Jan T. Gross's controversial book *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Fox, 2001). Before Gross published his book, the pogroms of 1941 were almost forgotten and in public commemoration had been framed as attacks by Nazis on Jews. Consequently, the pogroms were not debated or researched within Poland (Michlic, 2002). Poles regarded themselves as victims of Nazi Germany who had done their best to assist Polish Jews (Michlic, 2002). By casting light on the pogrom in Jedwabne in 1941, Gross showed that Poles had not only been victims during World War II but also perpetrators (Michlic, 2002). This opened fierce debate within Poland and the book is considered by some Poles to have cast a negative light on Poland by showing that the pogrom in Jedwabne was committed by Poles (Michlic, 2017).

Jewish-Polish relations have continued to be stormy into the 21st century though various efforts have been made towards reconciliation. The perceptions of Poles and Jews of the

Second World War and the Nazi occupation of Poland are distinct and dissimilar and the experiences of the two groups during the war were at odds (Wróbel, 1997). Poles who assisted Jews were punished severely by the Germans and they did not believe they could have offered the Jews more assistance than they did (Wróbel, 1997). To the Jews, Poles fared much better during the occupation than Jews did, and they believed that deaths during the Holocaust could have been avoided with more Polish assistance for the Jewish population (Wróbel, 1997). To Polish Jews, the Poles had failed their compatriots; to the Poles, the Jews were ungrateful for the assistance they had gotten and expected too much from people also suffering and fighting to survive (Wróbel, 1997). The different experiences and memories Poles and Polish Jews have of the Nazi occupation are a reflection of the very different ways they were viewed by the Nazis: Jews were meant to disappear, to die, because they were Jews, but Poles were punished for wrongdoing, real or perceived, but not killed because of their ethnicity or religion (Wróbel, 1997). The Poles fought primarily for their fatherland; Jews fought mostly to survive (Wróbel, 1997), though members of both groups fought for Poland and struggled to endure. These memories and conflicting experiences are difficult if not impossible to reconcile; they must be accepted as different ways peoples were treated by the same invading force. For those who experienced it, trying to see both sides is very difficult as is apparent in the attitudes Jews and Poles have towards each other: suffering becomes competition and grounds for a fight over supreme victimhood. It is difficult to accept the suffering of others and that two different experiences are correct and legitimate when two groups believe themselves to be the victim in a situation or circumstance. Both Poles and Jews were victims of Nazi Germany but both groups believe themselves to be the ultimate victim and that the other group did not suffer as much as they did.

The Soviet Union's overtake of Poland during the Second World War was fiercely disliked by Poles, and Jews were believed to take active part in the subjugation of the Polish people (Wróbel, 1997). The idea of Jews being in high positions within the Soviet intelligence networks in Poland became popular and the positions Jews occupied within the intelligentsia and in cultural institutions were resented by Poles (Wróbel, 1997). The Holocaust and the memory of the Nazi invasion faded among Poles as a new reality within the Soviet Union became clear (Wróbel, 1997). The Jews did not forget the Holocaust and the Nazi invasion, and they hoped that the future within the Soviet Union would introduce democracy and decrease antisemitism (Wróbel, 1997). These hopes were dashed, and pogroms, vandalisms, and antisemitism began to get more common in the late 1940s, causing most Polish Jews to

leave the country (Wróbel, 1997). In 1946, the Jewish population of Poland counted 230,000 people, but it was down to 70,000 by 1951, to 31,000 by 1960, and 9,000 in 1970 (Tolts, 2010). In 2000, the number of Jews in Poland was only around 3,500 and had never been lower (Tolts, 2010). Due to the Nazi final solution and local antisemitic upheavals, a total demographic transformation of the Jewish population had taken place in Poland.

5 Conclusion

Antisemitism took many forms in the period from late 16th century to the late 20th century. Hostile attitudes, forbidden residence, restrictive legislation, attempted conversion, child abduction, and pogroms are among the ways antisemitism manifested. The Catholic Church took part in spreading antisemitism and its representatives pushed dislike for Judaic practices, real and imagined as in the case of blood libel, onto the Polish population. The National Democratic Party also worked hard to disseminate hatred for Jews and instil in the Polish population a feeling of resentment and hate towards their Jewish neighbours, beginning with the boycott of Jewish merchants and craftsmen in 1912.

Pogroms happened repeatedly long before the summer of 1941; in Warsaw 1881, in Łódź 1892, during the Revolution of 1905, and in various areas of Poland between 1935 and 1937. In all these cases, Poles attacked their Jewish neighbours because of dislike or perceived wrongdoing, such as going on strike in the case of Łódź. The basis for the dislike of Jews among the Polish population seems to have been a feeling of them as outsiders; people who did not belong to their community and should therefore go elsewhere. The National Democrats had pushed for Jews to collectively leave Poland due to their belief that Jewish business and commerce was destroying the business of Poles and creating too much competition; it would be easier for Poles to engage in commerce without Jews crowding the marketplaces. The different customs and culture of the Jewish population was viewed by the National Democratic Party as anathema and incompatible with Polish life and culture; to be Polish was to speak Polish, to dress like a Pole, and to be Catholic. The dialogue of the National Democrats and the Catholic Church created an atmosphere of hatred and intolerance which led to the pogroms of 1941. Following the end of the war and the Holocaust, the number of Jews in Poland decreased from a post-war peak of 230,000 to a low of 3,500 in 2000.

Comparisons between the pogroms in Poland in 1941 and pogroms in other countries in Eastern Europe, particularly across the borders of Poland in Lithuania and Ukraine, following the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union need more research. Also in need of further study are pogroms and political changes in the other areas of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth

partitioned in 1795, especially regarding assimilation into the existing population. The parts of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth governed by Prussia are particularly interesting when it comes to the assimilation of the Jewish population. Other areas of interest for further research are the trials in Białystok province and their outcome and possibly a comparison between the way Poles were judged in Poland to the way Nazis were judged during the Nuremberg trials.

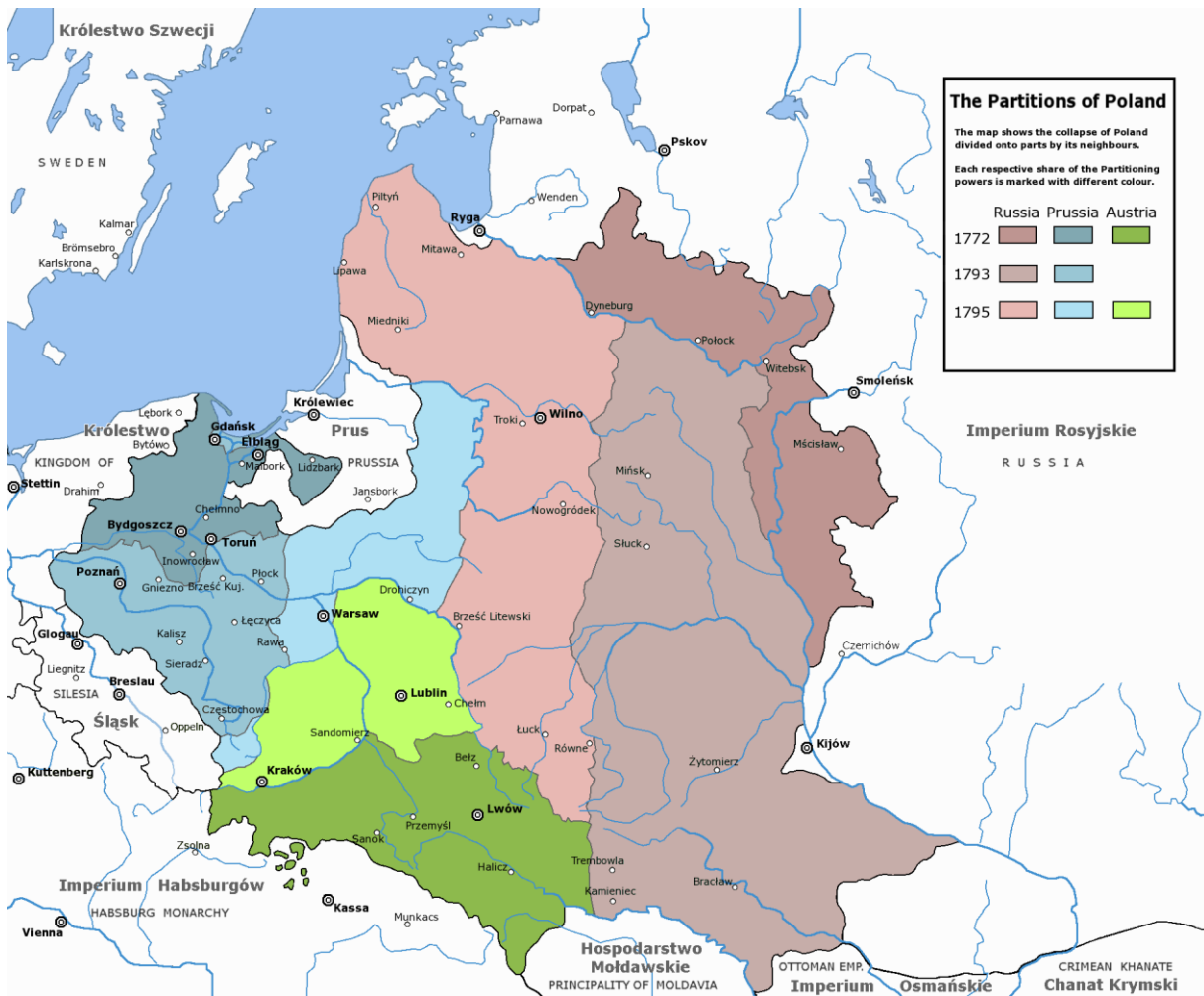
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Appendix: Maps



Map 1: Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth with the partitions of 1795. [Halibutt, CC BY-SA 3.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons



Map 2: Congress Poland with Galicia and Pale of Settlement also ruled by the Russian Empire and Prussia up to the Paris Peace Conference. The modern and inter-war borders of Poland are indicated (Jewish Gen, 2006)