

# BĘDZIN

**B**ędzin existed as a Polish colony in Silesia long before King Casimir the Great granted it a municipal charter in 1358. On the site of a thirteenth-century wooden castle, he erected a stone fortress to guard the Polish border against Germanic invaders. In 1583, King Stefan Batory allowed Jews to live in the city and to enjoy full economic rights. A Jewish cemetery was established in 1592, another in response to a cholera epidemic in 1831, and two more at the end of the nineteenth century.

The Jewish population grew as Będzin became an industrial center in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Between the world wars, Jews were active as both entrepreneurs and workers in mining and related metallurgical industries as well as in the production of chemicals, paints, candles and bakelite. Local Jewish industrialists supported modern Jewish elementary and secondary schools. Nearly 1,000 Jews belonged to the network of Jewish credit cooperatives and free-loan societies. In 1931, there were more than 20,000 Jews in Będzin, comprising nearly half the town's population.

The Germans occupied Będzin on September 4, 1939, and renamed it Bendsburg. Five days later, they burned the Great Synagogue to the ground with some 200 Jews locked inside. At first, there was no ghetto in Będzin; as a result, many Jews fleeing or expelled from other towns sought refuge there. The absence of a ghetto did not prevent the Nazis from deporting Jews to Auschwitz—several thousand in May 1942 and 5,000 more in August. A ghetto was finally established in January 1943 in the suburb of Kamionka, but it was liquidated in August in the face of Jewish armed resistance; these Jews were also shipped to Auschwitz. Several Jewish men and women from Będzin played a major role in the uprising that destroyed one of the gas chamber-crematorium units at Auschwitz in October 1944. Some survivors returned to Będzin after the war and attempted to reestablish a Jewish community, but most of them left Poland after the Kielce pogrom of July 1946.

## Location

19 km N of Katowice  
50°19' / 19°08'  
Voivodship: Katowice

## General Population, 1939

60,000 (45% Jewish)

## General Population, 1994

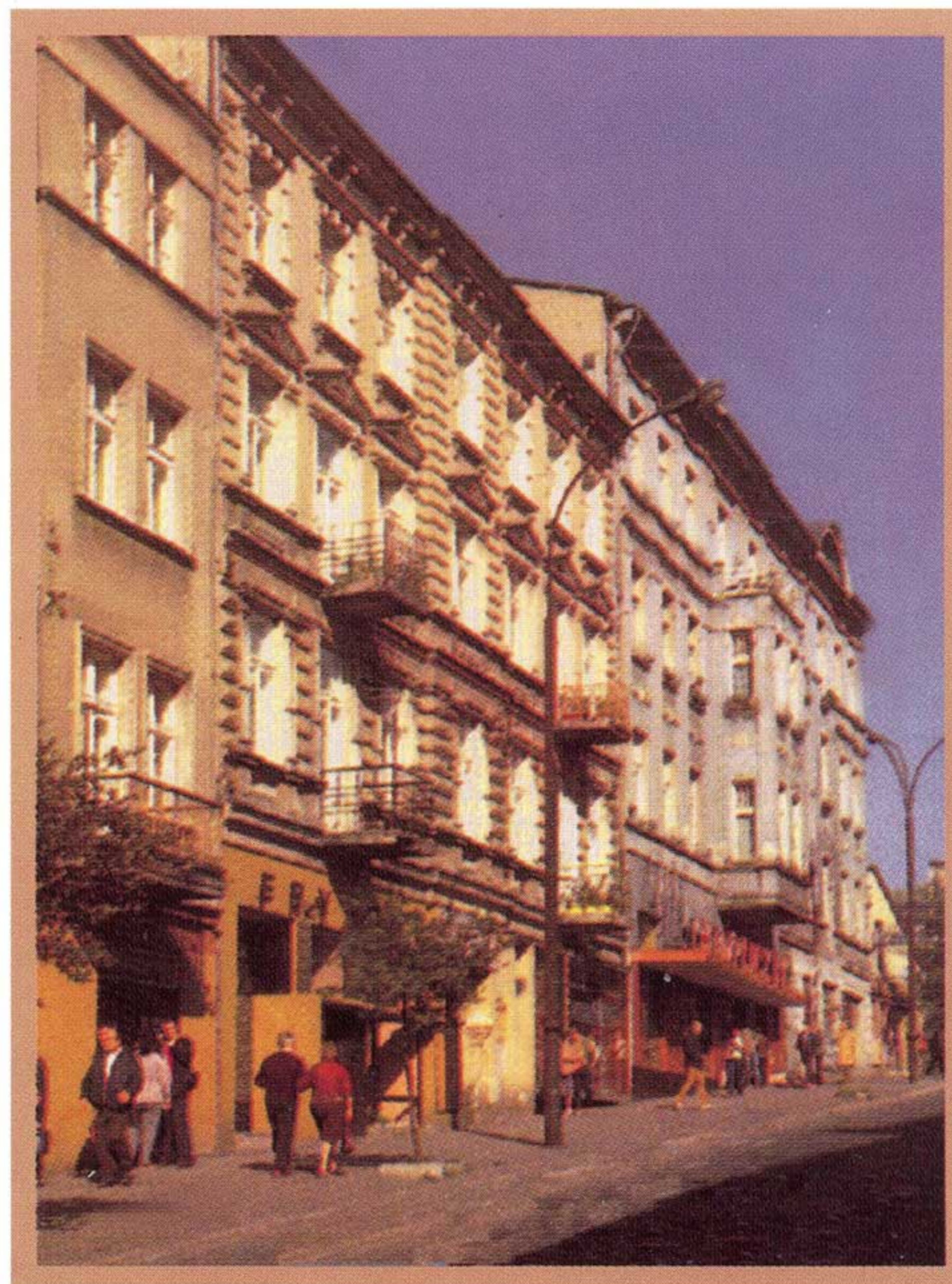
63,599

## BENDIN, BENDZIN



## SYNAGOGUE

Great Synagogue, near Góra Zamkowa (Castle Mountain)  
Built in 1881 and burned by the Germans on September 9, 1939.



ul. Stanisława Małachowskiego, today



1 Old cemetery, ul. Podzamcze, 1992



2 New cemetery, ul. Będzińska 64 in Czeladź, 1992

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## JEWISH CEMETERIES

ul. Podzamcze

300 tombstones dating from 1831.

ul. Zawale

Cemetery founded in 1592; destroyed by the Nazis.

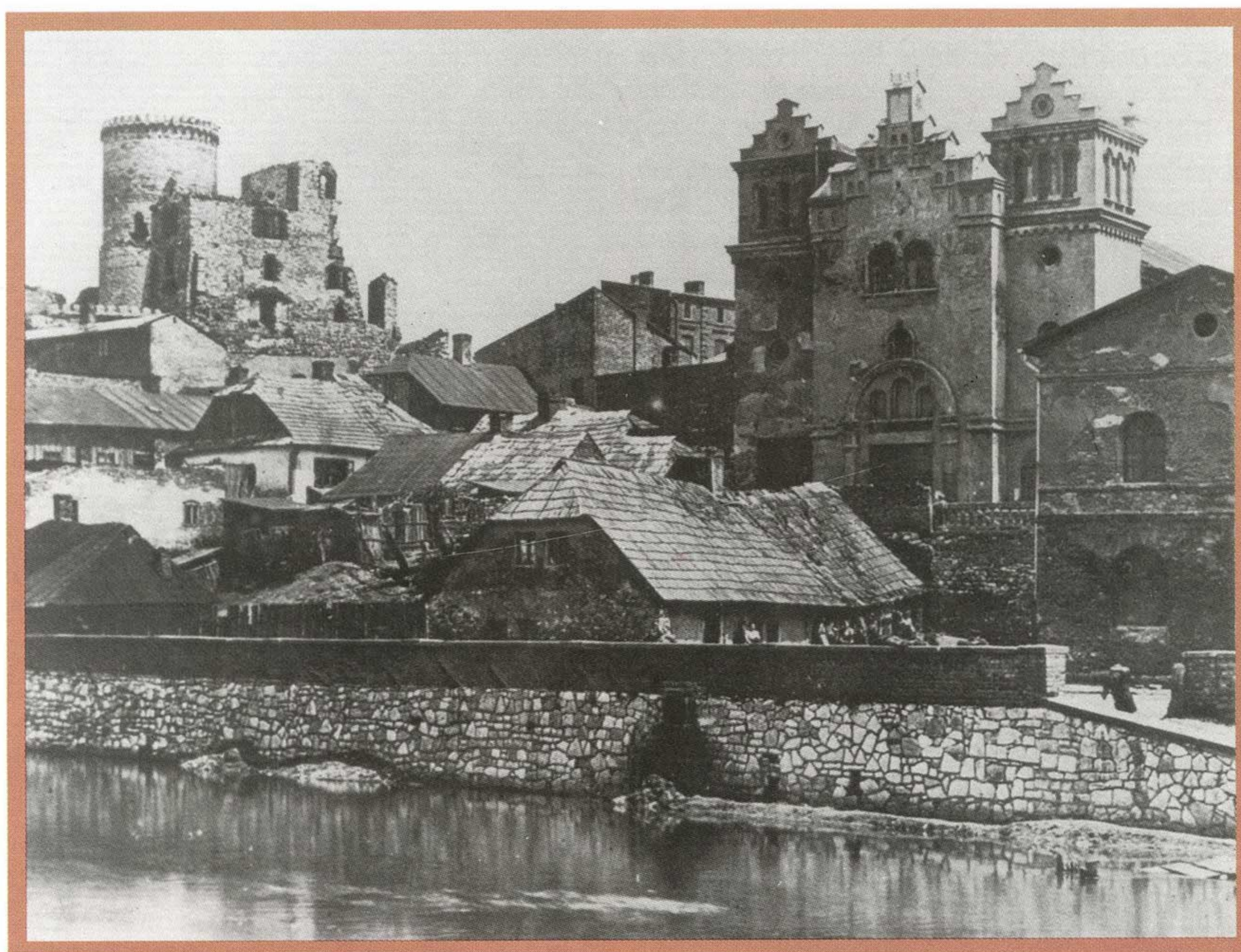
Current use: park.

ul. Będzińska 64 in town of Czeladź

Some restoration, with 5,000 tombstones dating from 1880s.

ul. Sielecka

Cemetery founded in 1900; completely destroyed.



4 Synagogue (upper right), c. 1910

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Dedication of Holocaust memorial at site of former synagogue, 1993

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## HOLOCAUST MEMORIALS

Site of former synagogue (near castle)  
Monument dedicated in 1993.

ul. 22 Lipca 23

Memorial plaque at courthouse for the 200 Jews who were burned alive by Nazis in the synagogue on September 9, 1939.

## DEPORTATIONS

Auschwitz-Birkenau.



Jewish street, c. 1906

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Plac Wolności, today

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Market square, c. 1917

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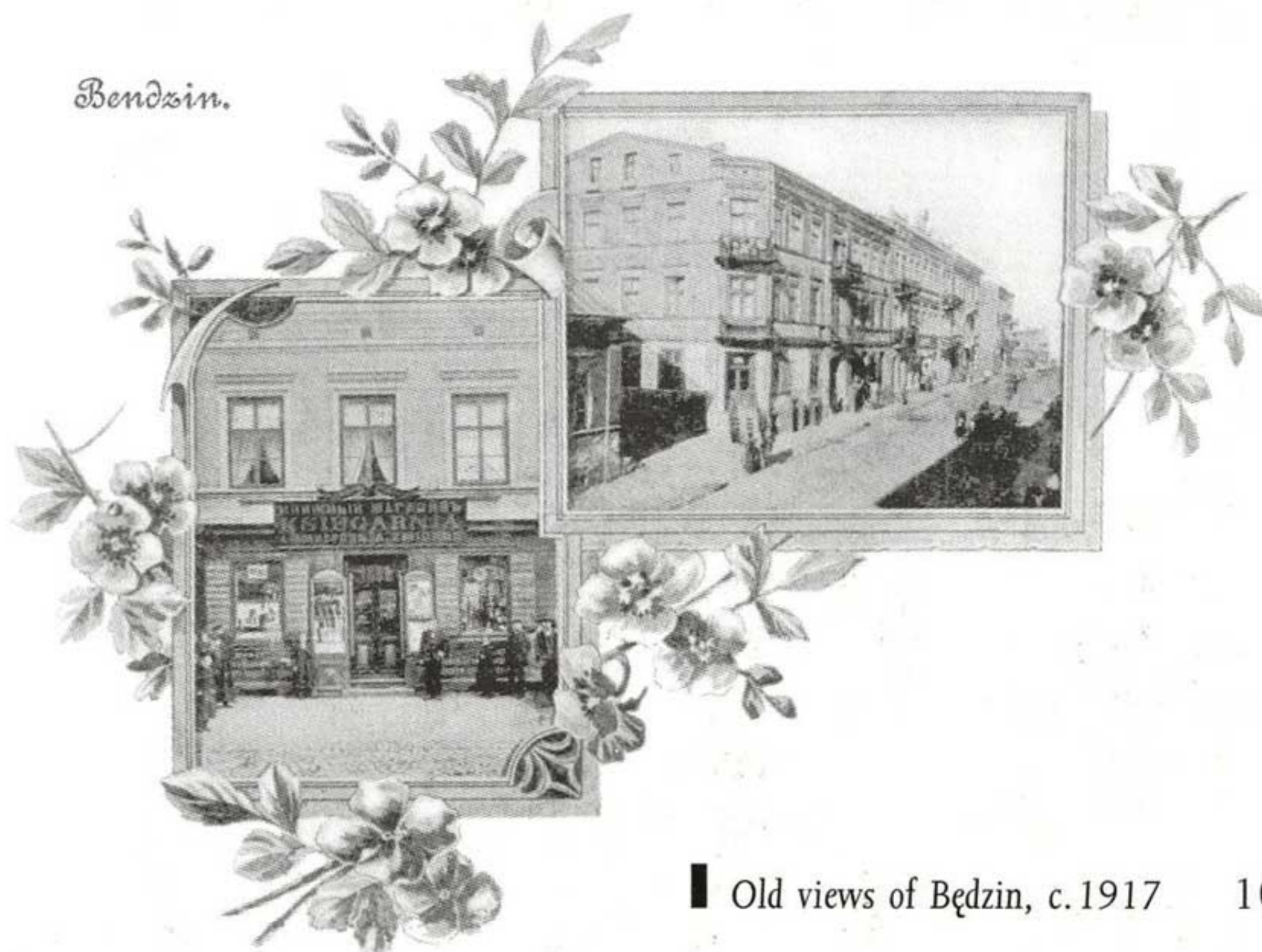
Old market square, today

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Będzin.



Old views of Będzin, c.1917 10

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Fortress, dating from c.1834

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