

# BIAŁYSTOK

Białystok developed within a strongly multicultural setting. The land surrounding the city was owned by Polish gentry and was worked by Polish and White Russian peasants. The city itself was settled to a large extent by German traders and Jews. From the late eighteenth century until World War I, it was part of the Russian Empire; between the wars, it was Polish. By the twentieth century, Białystok was distinguished as one of the few cities in Eastern Europe whose population was primarily Jewish. Many large cities had populations that were one-third Jewish; Białystok's population was three-fifths Jewish.

Somewhat like Łódź, Białystok rose to prominence in the nineteenth century as a center of textile production. By the end of the century, Białystok was producing inexpensive cloth to meet the needs of the vast Russian Empire. Białystok was also a center of the tobacco industry. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, most of the textile mills and cigarette factories were in Jewish hands. Isaac Zabłudovsky, a native son, was reputed to be the first Jewish millionaire in Russia. Białystok was also the birthplace of Ludwig Zamenhof, the creator of the "international" language Esperanto, and of Yitzhak Shamir, the Israeli prime minister. However, the overwhelming majority of Białystok Jews were neither rich nor famous; they were poor workers and small shopkeepers. Beginning in the 1880s, Białystok became a center of the Jewish labor movement; especially strong was the Jewish Socialist party known as the Bund.

In 1906, amidst the first Russian Revolution, Białystok was the site of a notorious pogrom. Violence on a vastly greater scale followed upon the German occupation of the city in June 1941. The Germans immediately burned down portions of the Jewish neighborhood, including the Great Synagogue, in which they had locked 1,500 Jews. In August, they established a ghetto. Two years later, the ghetto was liquidated and most of its 45,000 inmates were shipped to Treblinka. At that time, a revolt broke out that had been planned for months by the ghetto underground. Led by Mordechai Tenenbaum, it lasted only a few days, since the Germans, having just put down the Warsaw ghetto uprising, were better prepared to deal with resistance. A handful of Jews managed to reach the surrounding forests and link up with existing Jewish partisan units, most of which eventually joined the Soviet partisans.

## Location

188 km NE of Warsaw  
53° 08' / 23° 10'  
Voivodship: Białystok

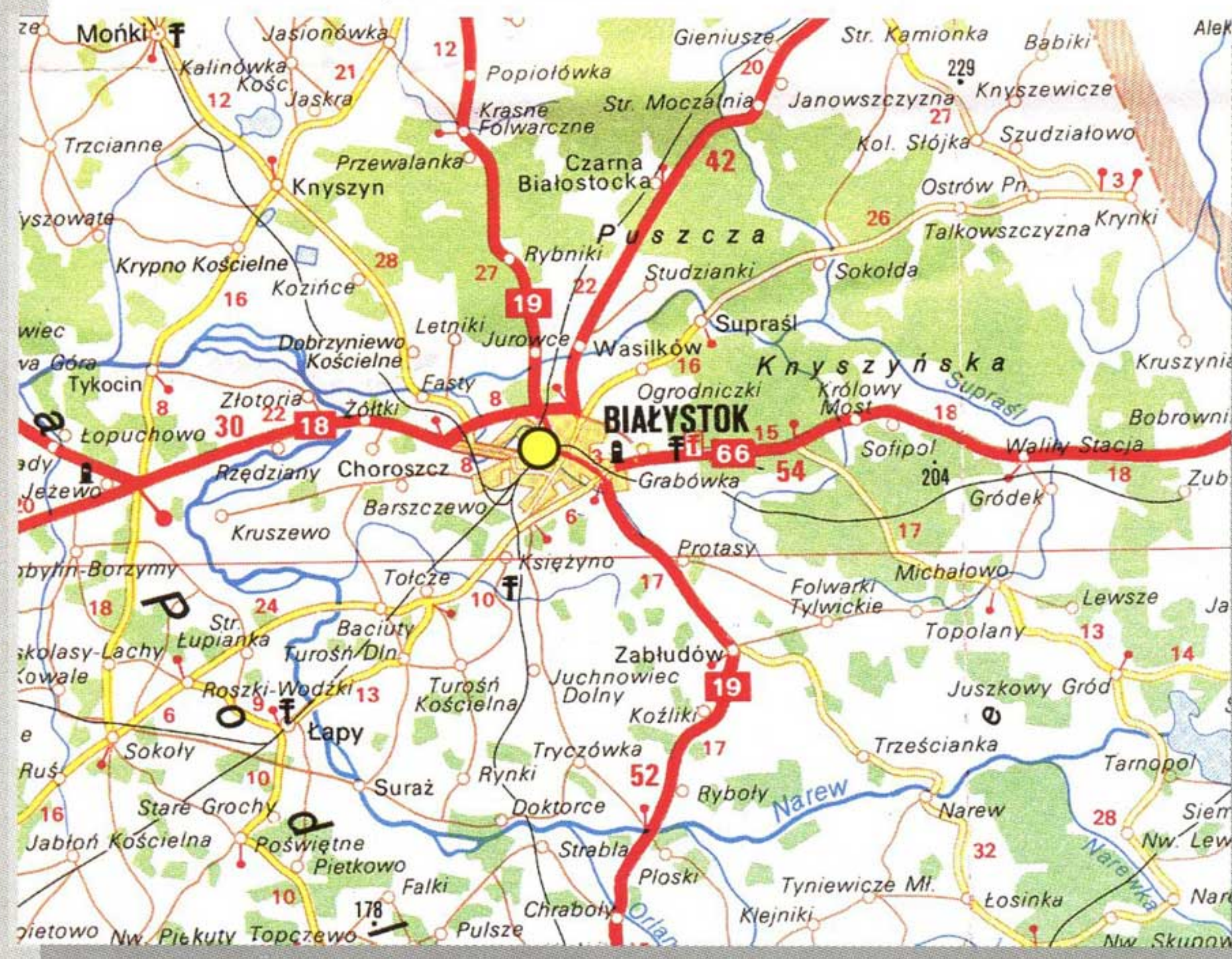
## General Population, 1939

100,000 (60% Jewish)

## General Population, 1994

276,933

## BELOSTOK, BIALISTOK



## SYNAGOGUES

ul. Suraska 1  
Site of Great Synagogue, built in 1909–1913. Memorial plaque to the 1,500 Jews burned alive on June 27, 1941; reconstruction of the wrecked Great Synagogue's dome dedicated in August 1995.

ul. Branickiego 3  
Shmuel Mogilewer Synagogue, built in 1902, was demolished by Nazis in 1941. Plaque commemorates the site of the former synagogue. Current site use: sports hall on synagogue foundation.

ul. Piękna 3  
Piaskower Bet Midrash synagogue dating from 1890. Plaque commemorates site of former synagogue. Current use: office building.

ul. Waryńskiego 24A  
Cytron synagogue dating from 1936–1937 and reconstructed in the 1970s. Current use: art gallery.



Former Cytron Synagogue, ul. Waryńskiego 24A, 1994

1





■ Entrance to Jewish cemetery, ul. Wschodnia, 1994

2



■ Jewish cemetery, today

4

## JEWISH CEMETERIES

ul. Wschodnia

Only one of six cemeteries to survive.  
5,000+ tombstones dating from 1890.

ul. Żabia

Former ghetto cemetery dating from 1941  
(3,500 Jews died here).

Current use: park (with remains of the wall that surrounded the ghetto cemetery).

ul. Bema

Cemetery dating from 1840.  
Completely destroyed.  
Current use: market place.

ul. Kalinowskiego (near ul. Grochowa)

Cemetery founded in the 1760s.  
Completely destroyed and now a park.

ul. Sosnowa

Cemetery completely destroyed.  
Current use: park.



■ Jewish cemetery with pogrom monument in background, 1994

3

## HOLOCAUST MEMORIALS

ul. Żabia (former ghetto cemetery)

Two monuments: one commemorates ghetto victims and the second honors Jewish partisans.

ul. Wschodnia (old Jewish cemetery)

Tall granite monument commemorates site of mass grave for 1906 pogrom victims.



■ Memorial to 1906 pogrom victims, 1994

5

Highway 19 (en route to Augustów)

Las Pietrasze, a forest at the northern edge of Białystok. About one-half mile into the forest is a cemetery park where 5,000 Jews were shot and buried in a mass grave on July 3 and 12, 1941. A memorial monument is located at the site.





■ Holocaust monument in Las Pietrasze Forest, 1993

6

ul. Kalinowskiego 2  
Former site of Jewish Community Center.

ul. Malmeda 10  
Memorial plaque in honor of Itzhak Malmed, resistance fighter.

ul. Malmeda (public park)  
Bust statue of Dr. Ludwik Zamenhof.

ul. Zamenhofa 26  
Plaque (in Polish and Esperanto) indicating birthplace of Dr. Ludwik Zamenhof.

## OTHER JEWISH SITES AND MONUMENTS

ul. Warszawska 8  
Plaque in Polish and Esperanto at site of school attended by Dr. Ludwik Zamenhof, creator of the Esperanto language, born in Białystok in 1859.

ul. Lipowa 41D  
Former Jewish vocational school, Wysocki, founded by O.R.T.  
Present use: trade school.



■ Former Jewish school, ul. Sienkiewicza 79, 1993

8

ul. Sienkiewicza 79 (north of ul. Jagienki)  
Former Jewish school built in 1905 and attended by former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.  
Current use: hospital.

ul. Warszawska 15  
Former Jewish hospital, constructed in 1840.  
Oldest building now standing in Białystok.  
Current use: hospital.

## DEPORTATIONS

Treblinka, Biechów, Majdanek, Prużany, Theresienstadt, Auschwitz-Birkenau.



■ Entrance to monument in forest where Jews from the ghetto were taken and killed, 1994 (see photo #6 above)

7



## SELECTED READING

Bakhrakh, Yerukham. "Materyaln tsu der geshikhte fun di eltste yidishe yishuvim in Byalistoker gegnt in 17tn, 18tn un 19tn yorhundert" (Materials for the History of the Oldest Jewish Settlements in the Białystok Region in the Seventeenth, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries). *Yivo Bleter* 28/2 (Winter 1946): 317–336. (Y)

Blumenthal, Nachman. *Darko shel yudenrat: te'udot mi-geto Byalistok* (The Workings of the Judenrat: Documents from the Białystok Ghetto). Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1962. (H)

Datner, Szymon. "Eksterminacja ludności żydowskiej w okręgu białostockim" (Extermination of Jews in the Białystok Region). *BŻIH* 60 (1966): 1–29. (P)

Eisenbach, Artur. "O sytuacji ludności żydowskiej w okręgu Białostockim w roku 1861" (On the Situation of the Jewish Population in Białystok District in 1861). *Rocznik Białostocki* 6 (1966): 459–471. (P)



■ Białystok, c. 1930

9

Frank, Herman, ed. *Natsyonale un politishe bavegunen bay yidn in Byalistok* (National and Political Movements Among Jews in Białystok). New York: Gezelshaft far geshikhte fun Byalistok, 1951. (Y)

Fuks, Marian. "Prasa żydowska w Białymstoku: 1918–1939" (Jewish Press in Białystok: 1918–1939). *BŻIH* 1–2/145–146 (1988): 145–152. (P)

Goldstein, Z. *Di yidishe prese in Byalistok* (The Jewish Press in Białystok). Białystok, 1931. (Y)

Grossman, Chaika. *The Underground Army: Fighters of the Białystok Ghetto*. New York: Holocaust Library, 1987.



■ ul. Lipowa, 1938

10

Herschberg, Abraham, and Yudel Mark, eds. *Pinkes Byalistok; grunt-materyaln tsu der geshikhte fun di yidn in Byalistok biz nokh der ershter veltmilkhome* (Pinkes Białystok: The Chronicle of Białystok; Basic Material for the History of the Jews in Białystok Until the Period After the First World War). 2 vols. New York: Białystok Jewish Historical Association, 1949–1950. (Y)

Hindes, Leibl. *Mayne kinder-yorn oyf di Pyaskes: zikhroynes fun mayn heym-shtot Byalistok fun di yorn 1882–1905* (My Childhood on the Pyaskes: Memories of My Hometown Białystok from 1882 to 1905). Boston: L. Hindes bukh-komitet, 1963. (Y)

Kaplan, Pesach. "Eksterminacja Żydów w Białymstoku" (Extermination of Białystok Jews [Feb. 1943]). *BŻIH* 60 (1966): 121. (P)

Kaplan, Pesach, et al., eds. *Byalistoker leksikon: biografye fun Byalistoker yidishe perzenlekhkeytn* (Białystok Lexicon: Biographies of Białystok Jewish Personalities). Białystok, 1935. (Y)

Klementynowski, David. *Lebn un umkum in Byalistoker geto* (Life and Death in the Białystok Ghetto). New York, 1946. (Y)



■ ul. Lipowa, today

11



Klibański, Bronia. "The Underground Archives of the Białystok Ghetto Founded by Marsik and Tenenbaum," *Yad Vashem Studies* 2 (1958): 295–329.

Korzec, Paweł. "Rzemiosło żydowskie w Białymstoku na przełomie wieku XIX i XX" (Jewish Handicraft in Białystok at the Turn of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries). *BŻIH* 50 (1964): 23–35. (P)



ul. Grochowa, Nowolipie Bet Midrash, c.1918, destroyed

12

Kot, Srolke. *Khurbn Byalistok* (The Destruction of Białystok). Buenos Aires, 1947 (Y)

Linder, Menakhem. "Der khurbn funem yidishn handl in Byalistoker rayon" (The Jewish Trade in Białystok Region). *Yidishe Ekonomik* 1/2-3 (1937): 13–33. (Y)

Maḥteret geto Byalistok u-mefakdah (The Underground of the Białystok Ghetto and Its Leader). Bet Lohame Ha-Getaot, 1985. (H)

Mark, Bernard. *Der oyfshtand in Byalistoker geto* (The Uprising in the Białystok Ghetto). Warsaw: Jewish Historical Institute, 1950. (Y)

———. *Megilat Byalistok; ha-mered ba-geto* (The Białystok Scroll: Rebellion in the Ghetto). Tel Aviv, 1945. (H)

Nof, Noomi. *Ha-etmol be-afar* (Yesterday in Ashes). Haifa, 1979. (H)



ul. Nikolayska, c. 1917

13

Raizner, R. *Umkum fun Byalistoker yidntum: 1939–1945* (The Destruction of Białystok Jewry: 1939–1945). Melbourne, Australia: Białystoker Centre, 1948. (Y)

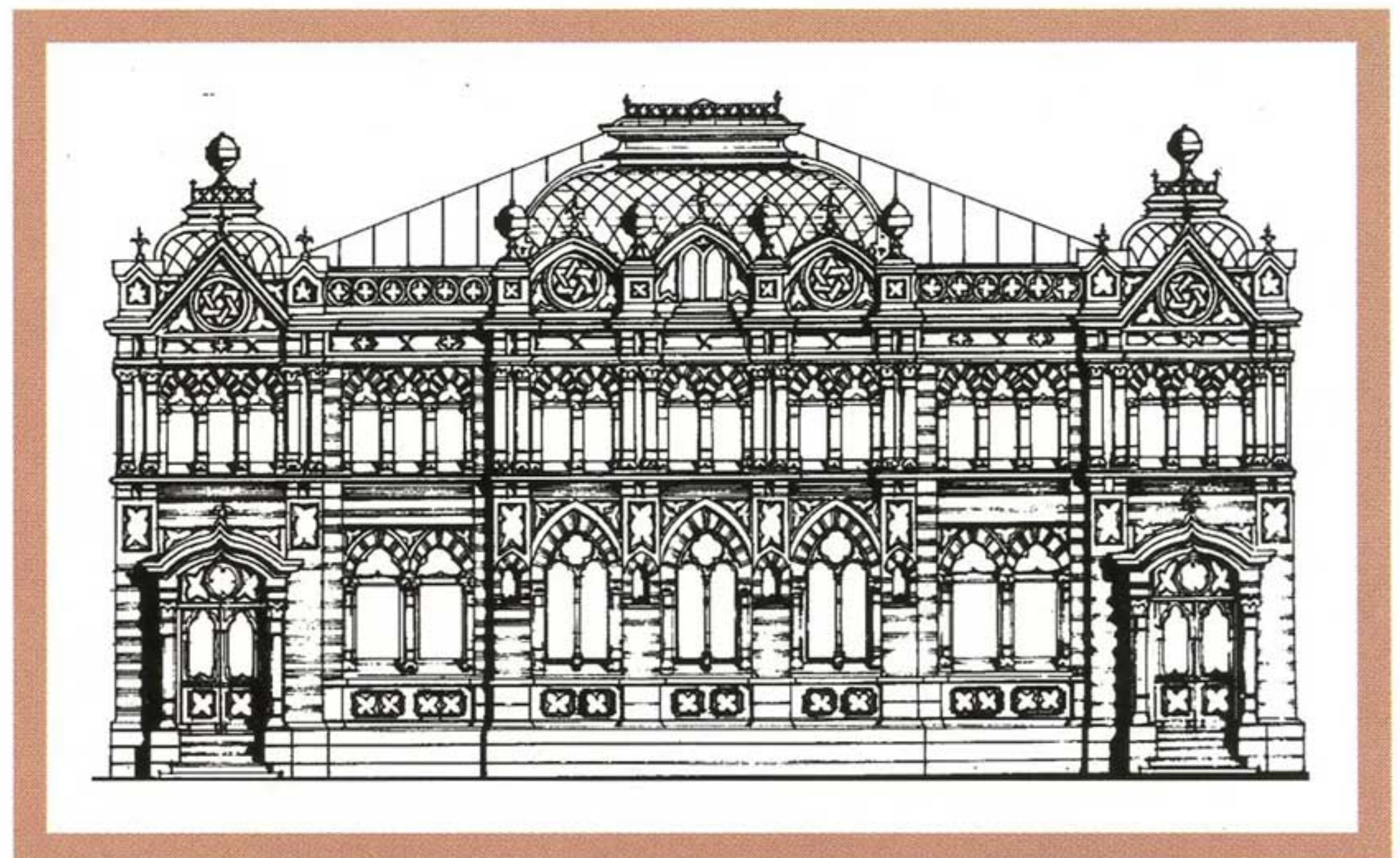
Samid, Yacov, ed. *Ha-Gimnasyah ha-ivrit be-Byalistok* (Polin) 1919–1939 (Białystok Hebrew Gymnasium). Haifa, 1991. (H)

Shmulewitz, I., ed. *Der Byalistoker yisker-bukh* (The Białystoker Memorial Book). New York: Białystoker Center, 1982. (Y, E)

Sohn, David, ed. *Byalistok bilder-album* (Białystok: Photo Album). New York: Białystoker Album Committee, 1951. (Y, E)

———. *Di tetigkeyt fun der Byalistoker landsmanshaft in Amerika* (The Activities of the Białystoker Landsmanshaft in America). New York, 1934. (Y)

Sokół, Zofia. "Publiczne bibliotekarstwo żydowskie w Białymstoku, 1918–1939" (Jewish Public Librarianship in Białystok, 1918–1939). *BŻIH* 3/103 (1977): 15–26. (P)



Sketch of Shmuel Mogilewer Synagogue, ul. Branickiego 3

14





■ Town hall and part of market square, today

15

Tennenbaum-Backer, Nina. *Ha-adam veba-lohem: Mordekhai Tenenboim-Tamarof, gibor ha-getaot* (The Man and the Fighter: Mordekhai Tenenbaum-Tamarof, Hero of the Ghettos). Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1974. (H)

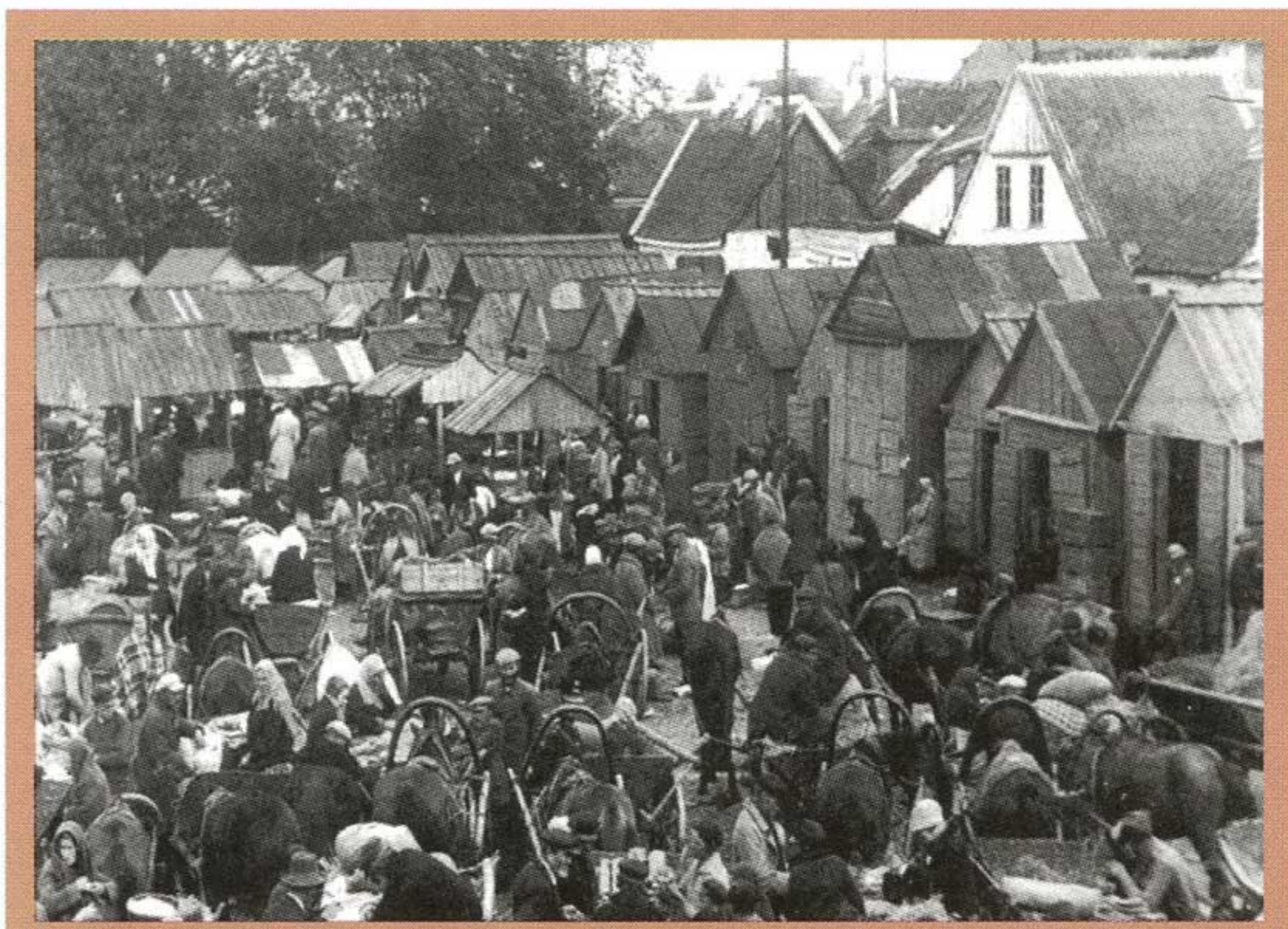
Wiśniewski, Tomasz. *Bóżnice Białostoczczyzny: Żydzi w Europie wschodniej do roku 1939* (Synagogues in the Białystok Region: Jews in Eastern Europe Before 1939). Białystok: David, 1992. (P, E)

Zable, Arnold. *Jewels and Ashes*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1991.

## FILM

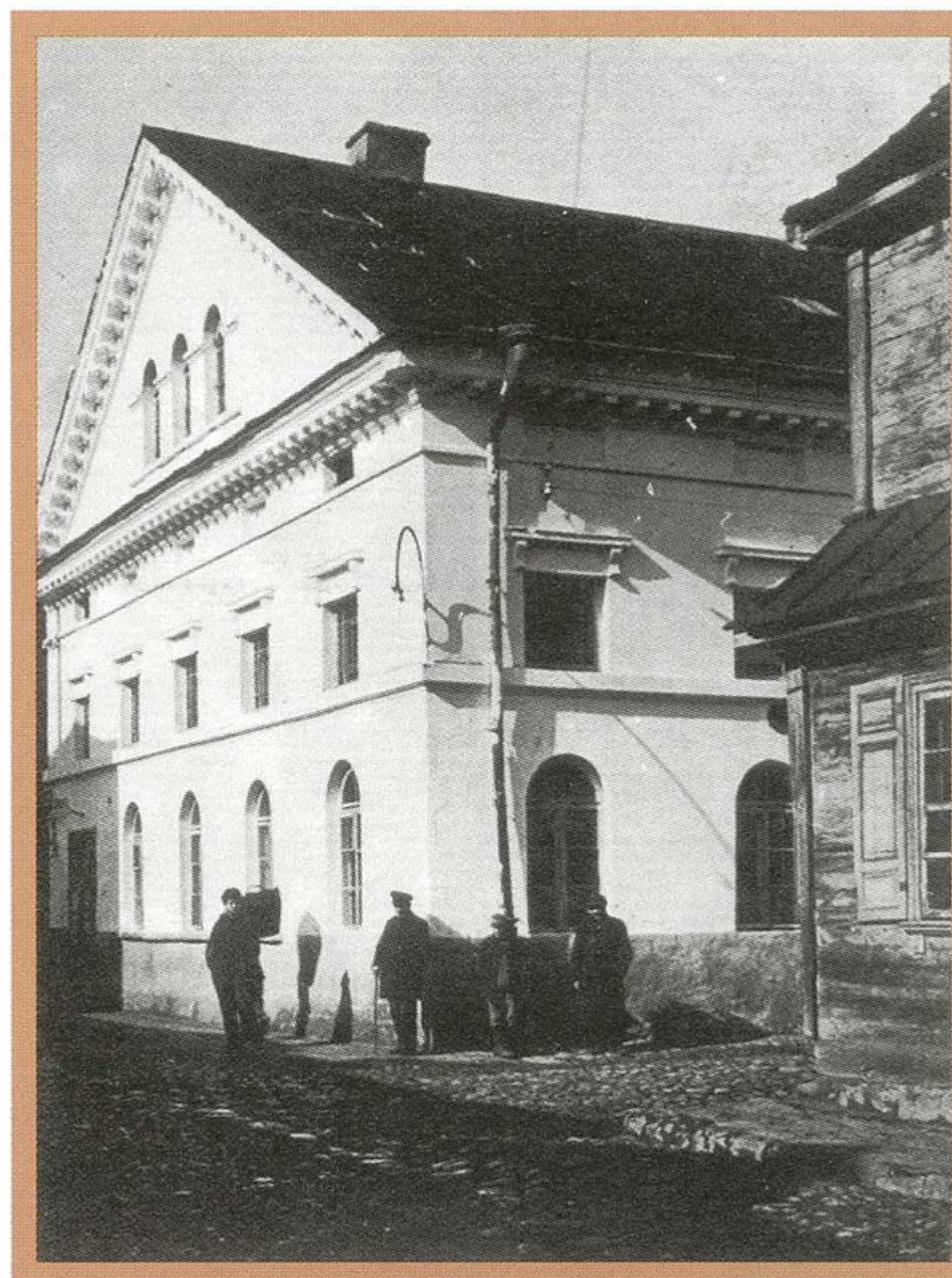
*The Jews of Poland: Five Cities*. Spielberg Jewish Film Archives, 1988.

*Not Like Sheep to the Slaughter: The Story of the Białystok Ghetto*. Jerusalem: Israel Film Service, 1990.



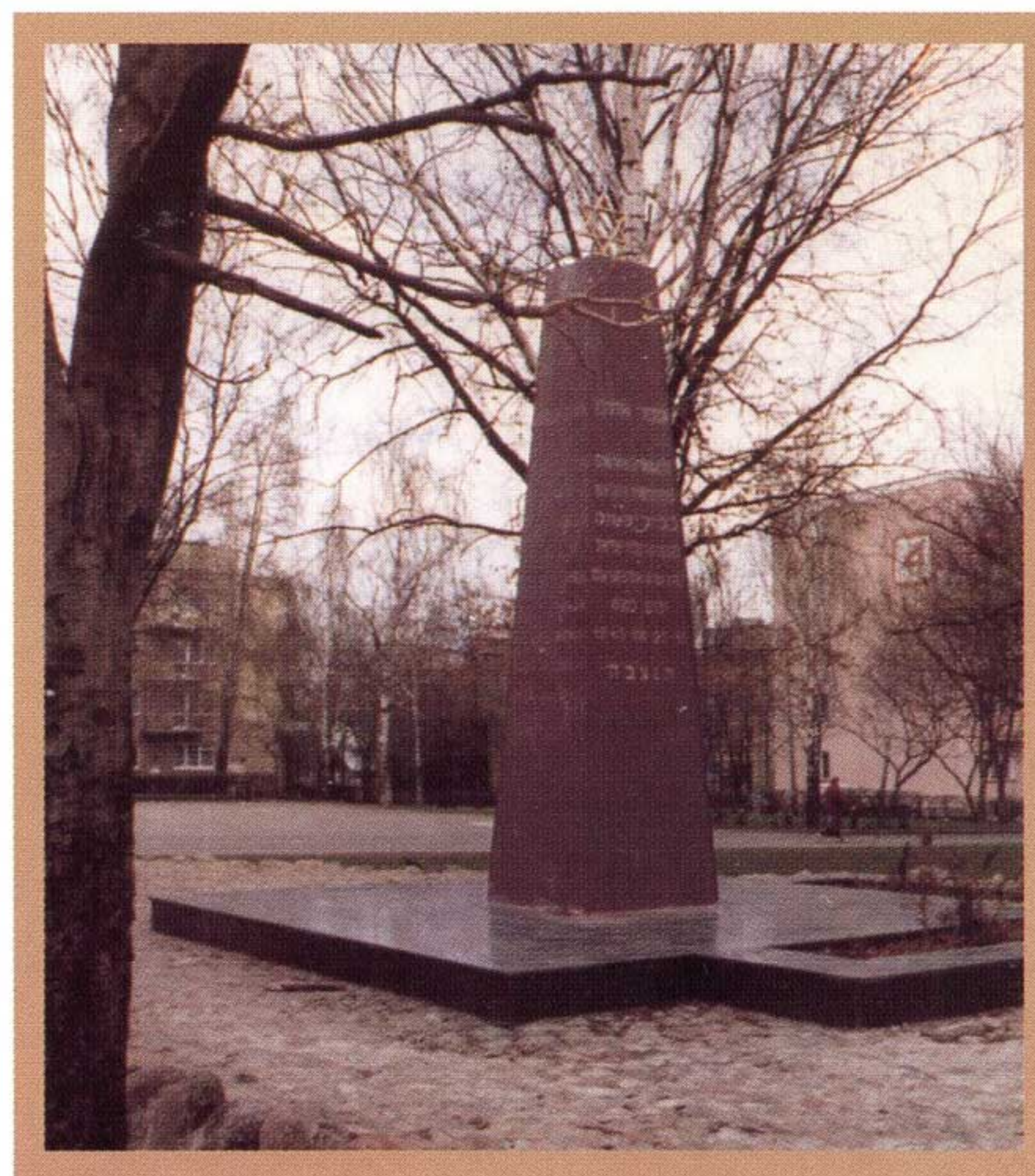
■ Market square, c. 1930

16



■ Zabłudowski synagogue dating from 1834, ul. Żydowska:  
Burned in 1943 during liquidation of ghetto (photo c. 1925)

17



■ Holocaust memorial to Jewish partisans at former ghetto cemetery, ul. Żabia, 1994

18

## BIBLIOGRAPHIC SOURCES

CAHJP; CTD; EDRD; EJ; EOH; GA; GUM3; GUM4; GUM5; GUM6; GYLA; HSL; JE; JGFF; JHT; KH; LDL; LDS; LVY; PJH; RJHS; SF