

For most of its history, this was the Baltic port city of Danzig. Populated primarily by Germans, for centuries it was a center of trade between Eastern and Western Europe. During the interwar period, it was located in the so-called Polish Corridor, a strip of land that gave the new Polish state access to the sea; Danzig itself was officially a Free City under the League of Nations, with special rights for Poland. With Hitler's rise to power, the Nazis became increasingly powerful in the city; on September 1, 1939, the same day he invaded Poland, Hitler annexed Danzig. After the war, as a result of territorial changes that shifted the boundaries of Poland considerably to the west, Danzig became the Polish city of Gdańsk. Accordingly, its remaining German population was expelled and replaced by Poles. In 1980, Gdańsk was the birthplace of the Solidarity movement, which, nine years later, helped to overthrow communism in Poland.

Until the mid-fifteenth century, Jews were not allowed to settle in Danzig, but they were granted the right to trade. This situation did not change significantly under Polish rule (1454-1793). Although Jews were permitted to enter the city during the semiannual fairs, those who tried to stay afterward were expelled by the city council. Under Prussian rule, after 1793, a Jewish community was established and was granted full legal equality in 1869.

In early 1939, the Jewish community of Danzig reached an agreement with local authorities whereby the Great Synagogue and the Jewish cemetery were sold for a fraction of their actual value in exchange for 2,800 passports that enabled Jews to travel to Palestine. Many ritual objects were shipped to the United States; most of these treasures are now at the Jewish Museum in New York. By the time the Germans annexed Danzig, only 1,600 Jews remained.

Location

181 km N of Toruń
 54°22' / 18°38'
 Voivodship: Gdańsk

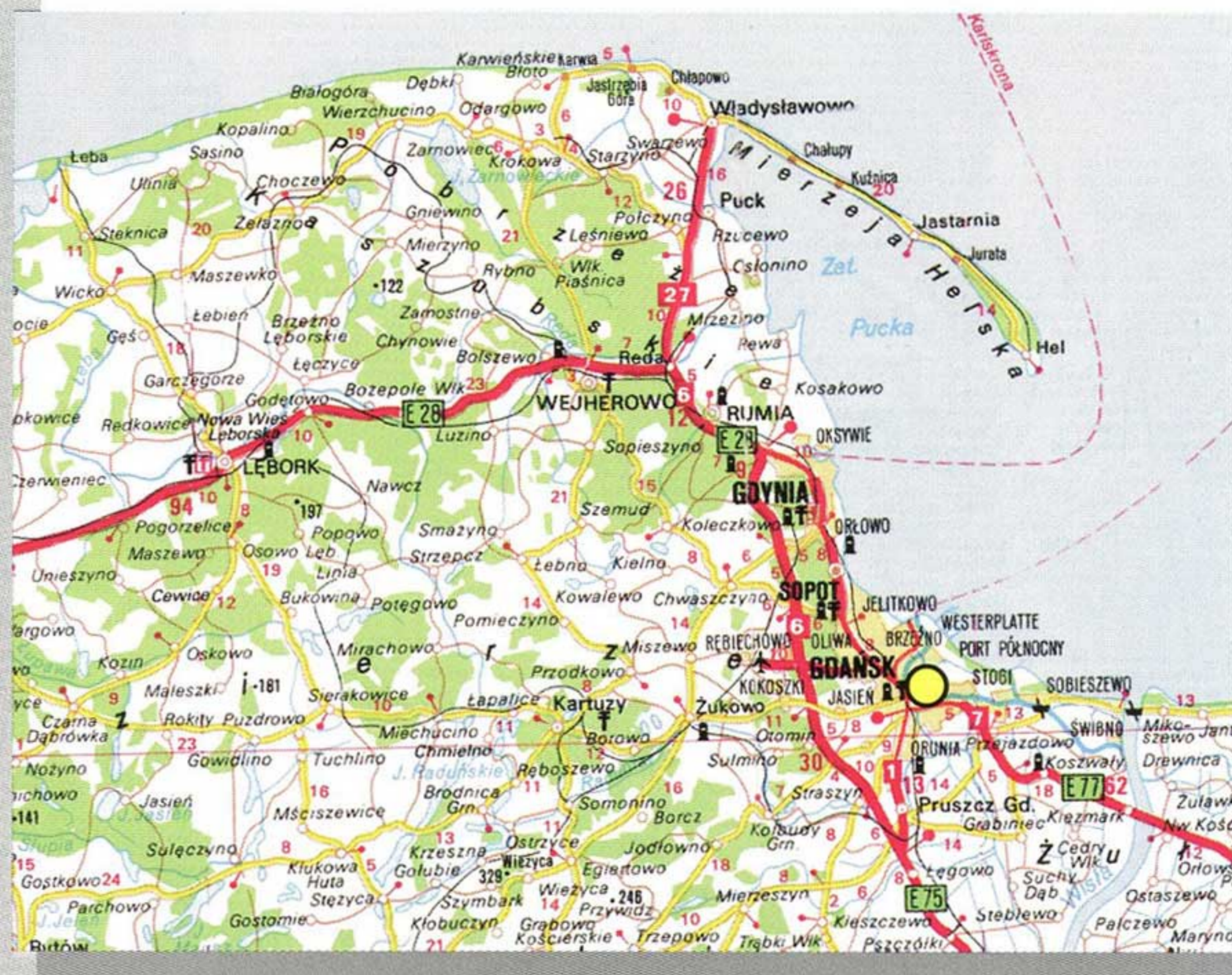
General Population, 1937

390,000 (3.2% Jewish)

General Population, 1994

463,644

DANZIG



SYNAGOGUES

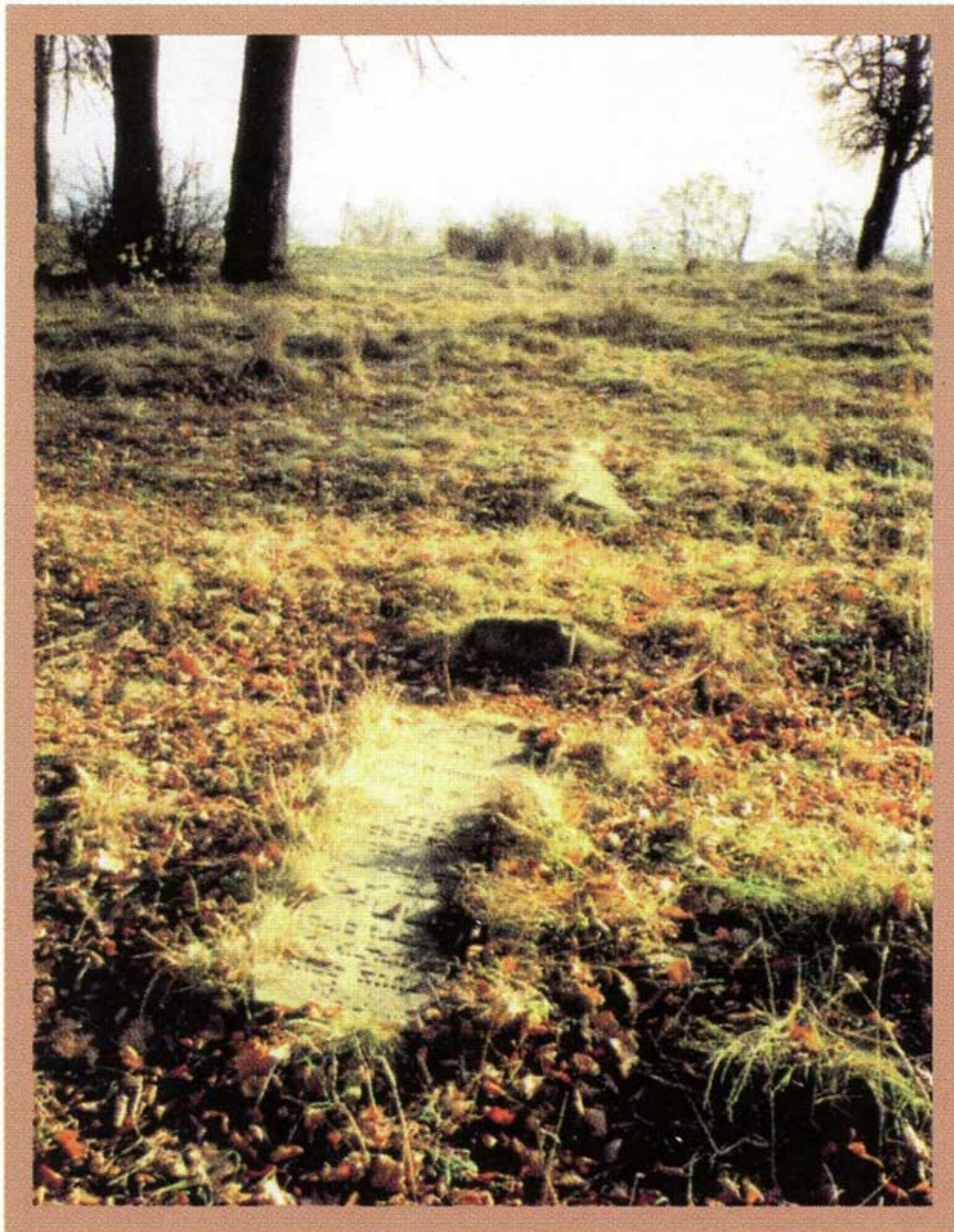
ul. Bogusławskiego (formerly ul. Ujeżdżalnia)
 Great Synagogue built in 1887.
 Dismantled in early 1939 (the last service was held on April 15).

ul. Partyzantów 7, Wrzeszcz
 Former synagogue, constructed in 1927.
 Current use: music school.

ul. Rycerska 2
 Former Synagogue, built in 1849.
 Current use: store.



Former synagogue, ul. Partyzantów 7, in Wrzeszcz



■ Jewish cemetery, ul. Cmentarna, 1991

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JEWISH CEMETERIES

Wrzeszcz quarter of Gdansk
 Żydowska Górka (ul. Traugutta)
 Cemetery was founded in 1823.
 Fewer than ten tombstones remain.

ul. Cmentarna
 Cemetery was founded in 1786; it still existed
 immediately after the war and then was heavily damaged
 by neglect and vandalism.
 Remaining tombstones: 100.

DEPORTATIONS

Theresienstadt, Warsaw ghetto.



■ River view, c. 1919

3



■ River view, today

4

SELECTED READING

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FILM

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