

RZESZÓW

Rzeszów received a municipal charter in 1354, but remained a private town, owned by Polish nobility, until the partitions of the Polish Commonwealth. There was a Jewish presence in the town from the fourteenth century onward. By the eighteenth century, the Jewish community was a large and important one. The Jewish goldsmiths, seal engravers and cloth merchants of Rzeszów were renowned throughout Europe. A non-Jewish traveler in the mid-nineteenth century called Rzeszów "Little Jerusalem." After the partitions, this Galician town passed under Austrian rule. Hasidism gained adherents, but the town also became a center of the Haskalah. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Jews of Rzeszów had civil rights, including voting privileges in local and parliamentary elections. In the twentieth century, the Zionist movement became particularly influential in Rzeszów. The town's last chief rabbi, Aaron Lewin, was repeatedly elected to the Polish Parliament.

The Germans entered Rzeszów on September 10, 1939; a ghetto was imposed in January 1942 and liquidated six months later, when more than 20,000 Jews were shipped to the Bełżec death camp. Another ghetto, established in November, became a forced-labor camp for 3,000 remaining Jews. The workers' families were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau in September 1943 and most of the workers to a labor camp at Szeged. About 600 Jews remained slave laborers near Rzeszów until July 1944, when the Germans began to retreat. Some Jews then escaped to the surrounding woods, while others were deported to Germany.

Location

165 km E of Kraków
50°03' / 22°01'
Voivodship: Rzeszów

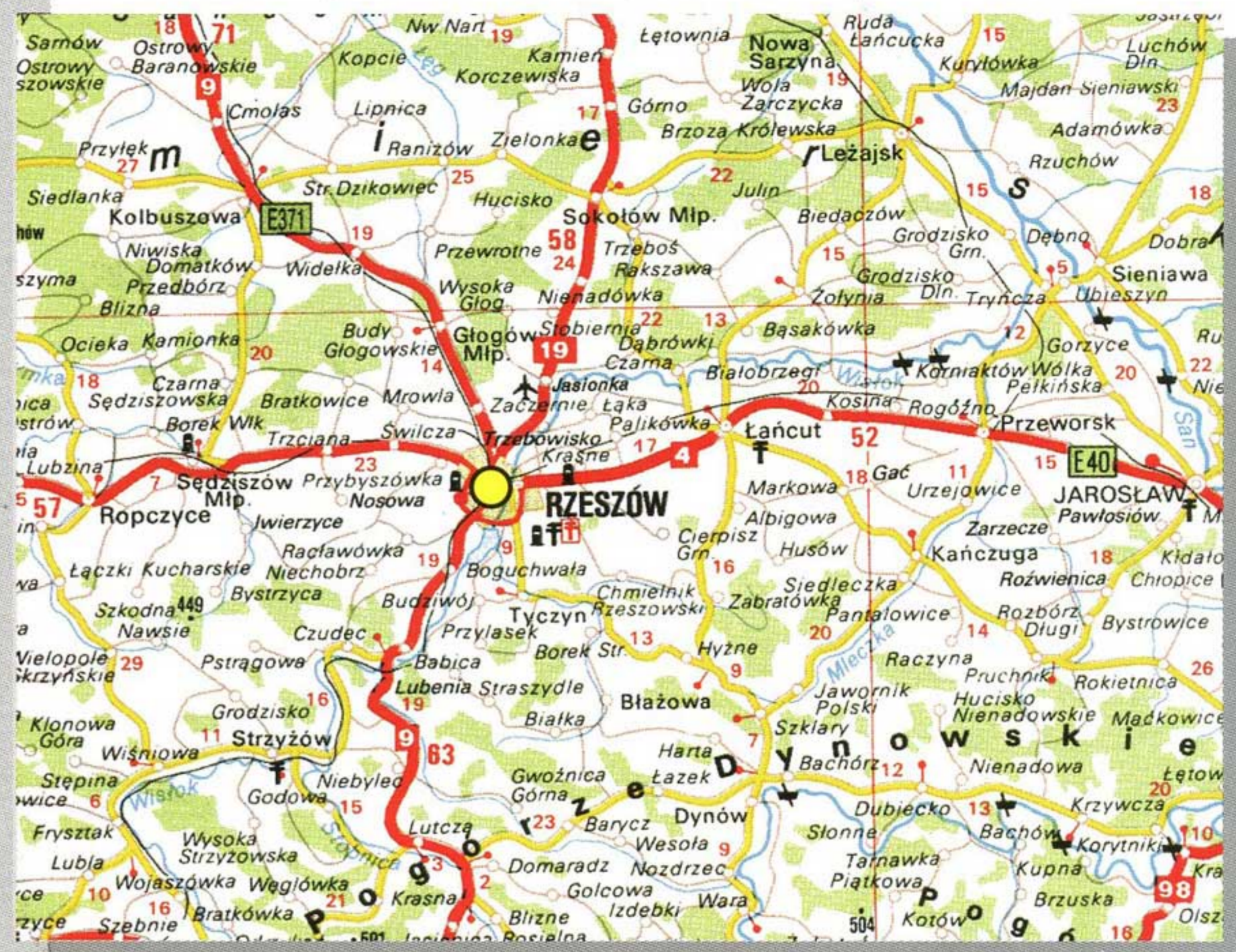
General Population, 1939

42,000 (33% Jewish)

General Population, 1994

159,372

RAYSHA, REICHSHOF, REISHA, ZHESHOV



SYNAGOGUES

ul. Bóznicza 4

Old Town Synagogue dating from seventeenth century.
Current use: State Archives.

ul. Sobieskiego 18

New Town Synagogue dating from 1686.
Current use: art gallery.

JEWISH CEMETERIES

ul. Rejtana

300 tombstones dating from the nineteenth century.

ul. Zwycięstwa (now Plac Ofiar Getta [Ghetto Victim's Square])
Cemetery was founded in the seventeenth century.

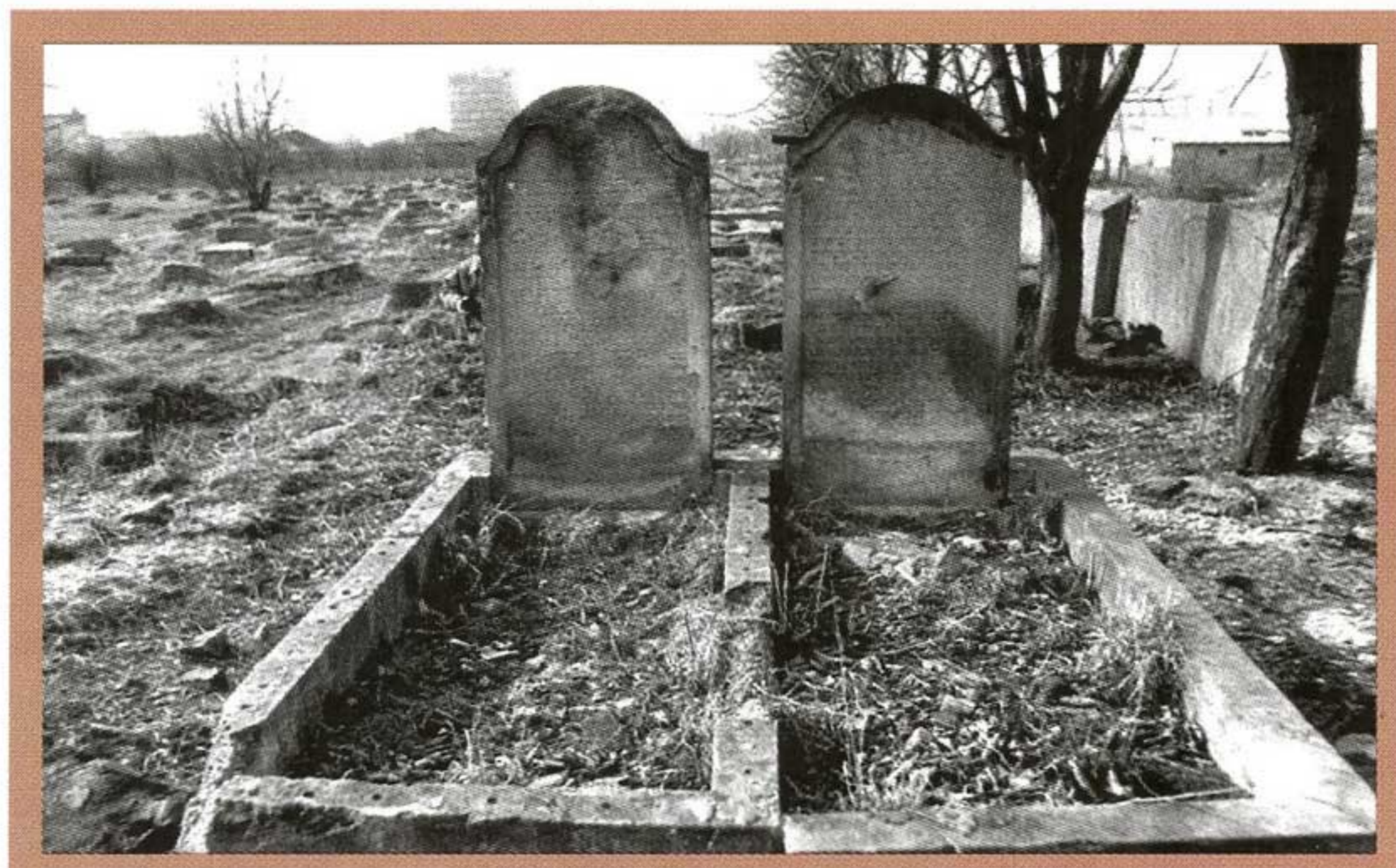
Current use: town square and park.

Several tombstones were moved to ul. Rejtana cemetery.



■ Synagogue (now the State Archives), ul. Bóznicza 4, 1967

1



Jewish cemetery, ul. Rejtana, 1993

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HOLOCAUST MEMORIALS

Monument in Jewish cemetery, ul. Rejtana.

ul. Sobieskiego 18

Memorial plaque on former New Town Synagogue.

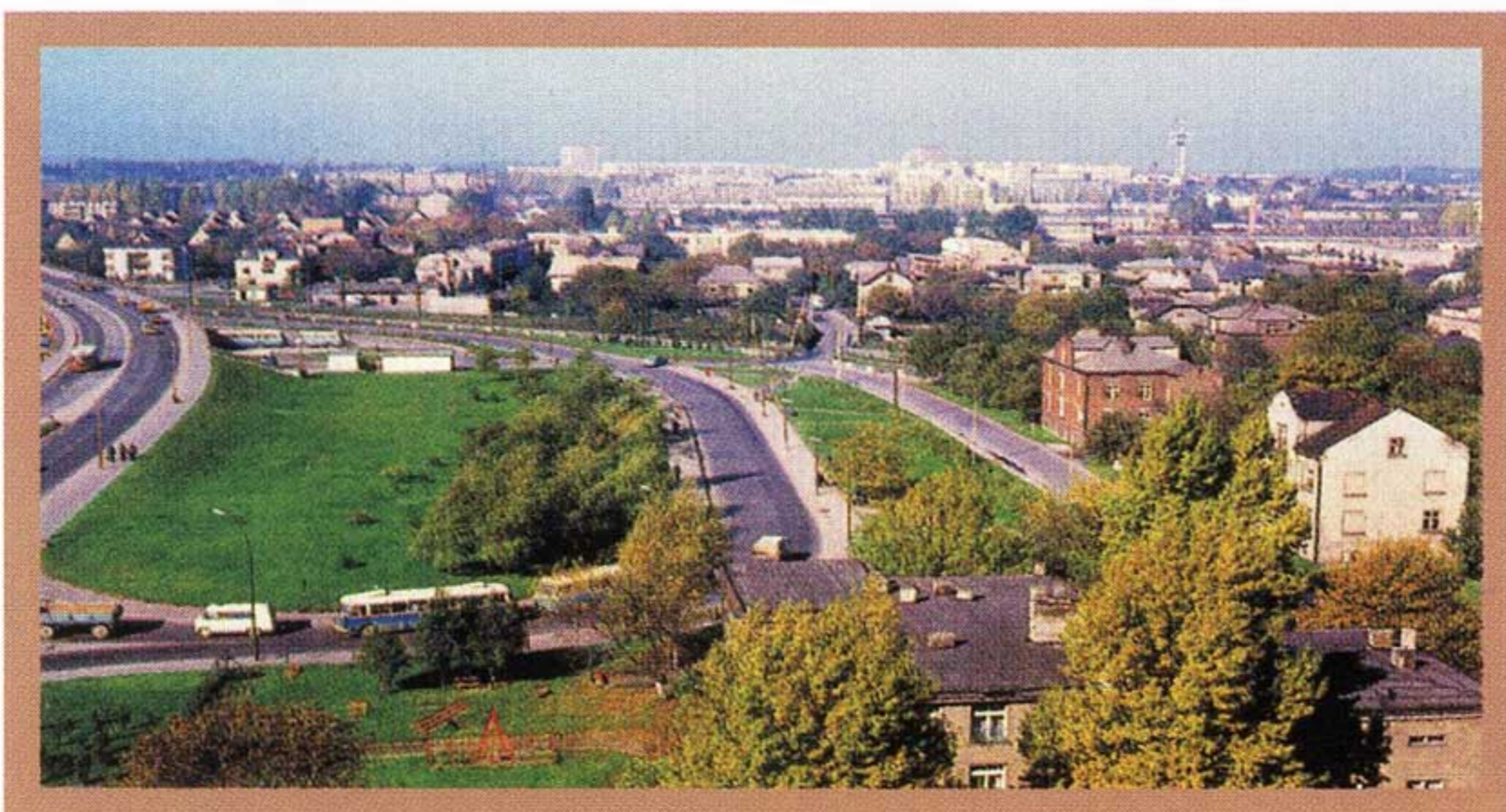


Town square, 1912

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DEPORTATIONS

Bełżec, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Pełkinie, Szegnia.



Rzeszów today

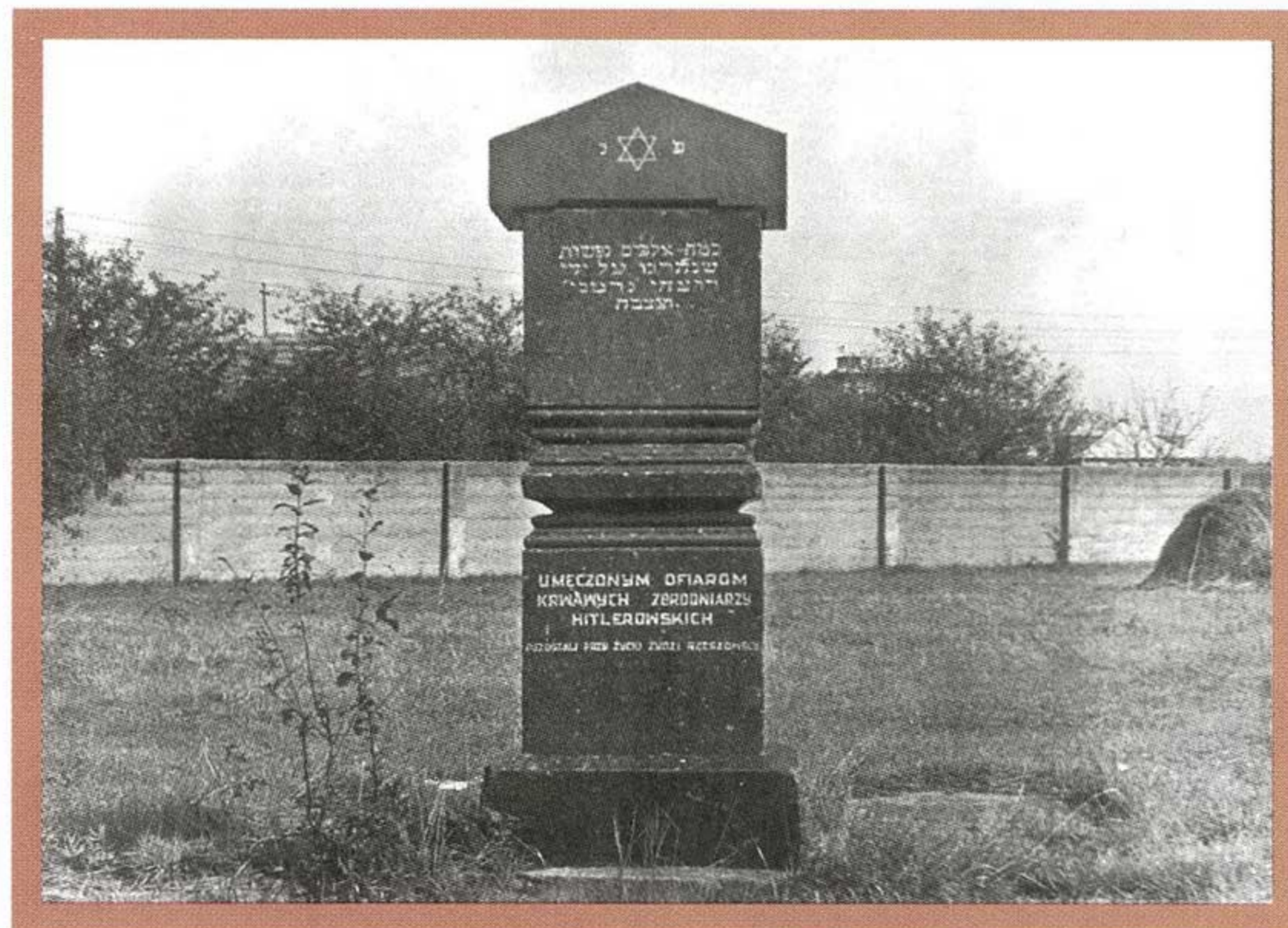
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SELECTED READING

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Holocaust memorial, Jewish cemetery, 1993

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

The Jewish History Research Center in Rzeszów was established in 1989 by order of the director of the Polish State Archives. The Research Center is housed in the Archives (ul. Bóznicza 4) and has produced exhibitions from materials in the Archives, including architectural plans of the synagogues, photographs of tombstones, documents, passports from 1920 to 1930 and old Jewish books.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC SOURCES

CTD; EDRD; EJ; EOH; GA; GUM3; GUM4; GUM5; GUM6; HSL; JGFF; JHT; LDL; LVY; PHP3; PJH; RJHS; SF