

Wrocław, the chief town of Lower Silesia in what is today southwestern Poland, known for centuries as Breslau, was ruled by Poland from the end of the tenth century, passed to the Austrian Empire in 1526, and then to Prussia in 1742. During the Middle Ages, Poles as well as Germans lived in Breslau, but by the end of the nineteenth century, it had become an entirely German city. After World War II, it was included in the lands returned by Germany to Poland. Now called Wrocław, its German population was voluntarily repatriated or expelled and replaced by Poles, many from the region of the prewar Polish city of Lwów, which passed to the Soviet Union after the war.

The history of the town is rooted in trade between Germany and Poland; the international fairs of Breslau were famous for centuries. A tombstone attests to the presence of Jews in the town as early as 1203; the medieval Jewish community owned synagogues, a bathhouse and cemeteries; however, beginning in the fourteenth century, Jews were persecuted and expelled from the town. In 1455, the town was awarded the privilege *de non tolerandis Judaeis* (of not tolerating Jews) except for those attending the fair. Small numbers of Jews received privileges to live in Breslau over the succeeding centuries; when the Prussians took the town, an official Jewish community was recognized.

Breslau became a center of Hebrew printing and talmudic scholarship. The first modern Jewish theological seminary was founded by Zachariah Frankel in 1854 and functioned as a legendary center of Jewish learning until 1938. Breslau also became a center of conflict between followers of Reform and Orthodox Judaism; the preeminent Reform leader Abraham Geiger was rabbi in the city from 1840 to 1863. Other Jewish natives of Breslau were Henrich Graetz, the first modern Jewish historian, and Ferdinand Lassalle, a founder of the German workers' movement.

After World War I, there was a renewal of Jewish communal life; several Jewish schools were founded, as were a youth institute and a home for the aged. On the eve of Hitler's ascension to power in 1933, there were some 20,000 Jews in Breslau; six years later, half had fled. In November 1938, all Jewish institutions, including schools and synagogues (with one exception, the Storch Synagogue), were destroyed. Beginning in September 1941, Breslau Jews were deported to



camps in Silesia and from there to Auschwitz-Birkenau. The following spring, the remaining Jews were shipped directly to Auschwitz-Birkenau, Sobibór, Riga (ghetto) and Theresienstadt. The archives of the Breslau Jewish community survived and are located today in the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw.

After the war, Polish authorities encouraged Jewish survivors from all over Poland to resettle in Wrocław; a Yiddish school and a Yiddish theater were established. In 1960, there were some 1,200 Jewish families living in the city, but few remained after the anti-Zionist campaign of 1968–1970.

### Location

176 km WNW of Częstochowa  
 51°07' / 17°02'  
 Voivodship: Wrocław

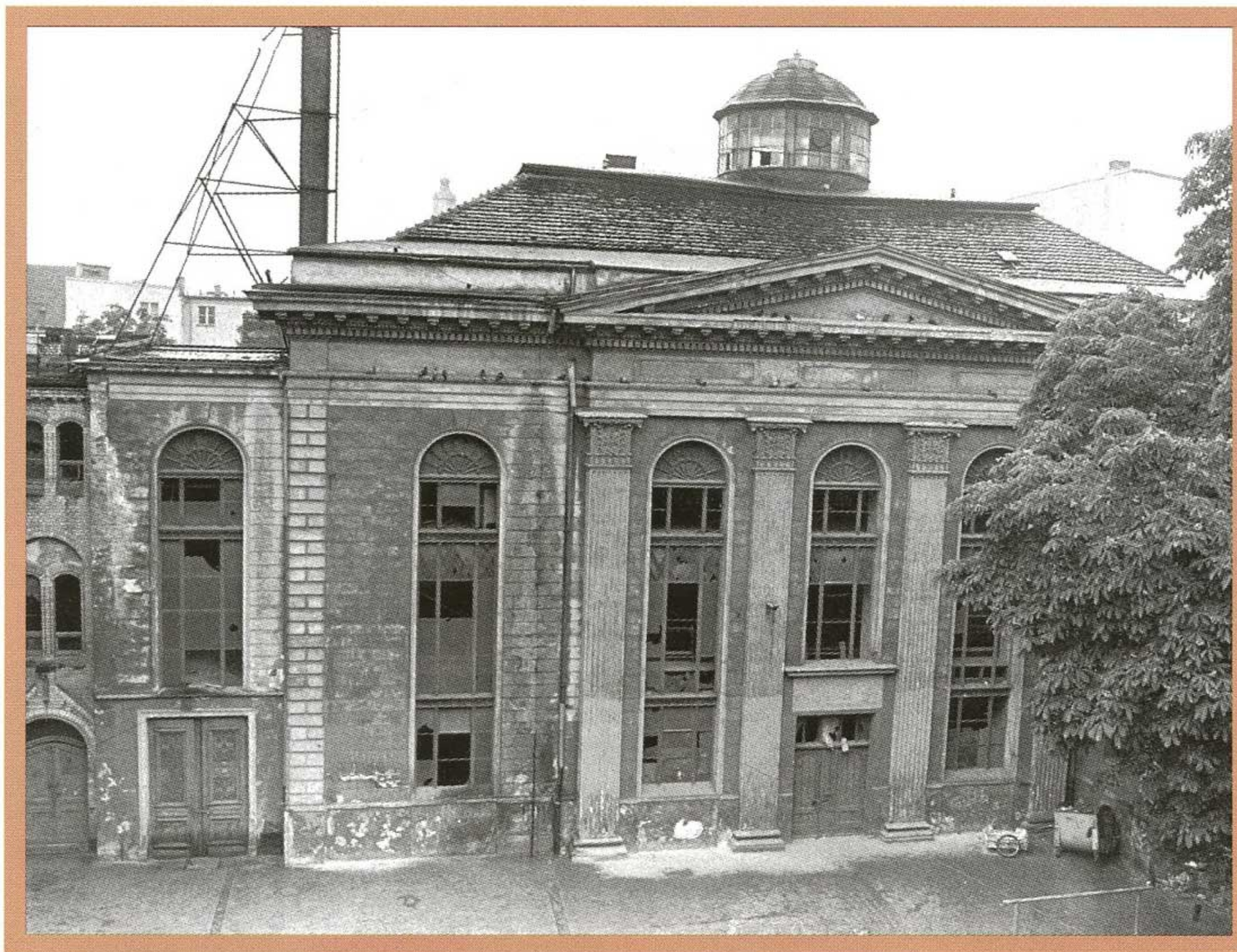
### General Population, 1939

630,000 (1.5% Jewish)

### General Population, 1994

643,106





■ Storch Synagogue, ul. Włodkowska 7, 1976

1

## SYNAGOGUES

ul. Łąkowa

Great Synagogue dating from 1872,  
destroyed in 1938.

ul. Włodkowska 7

Storch Synagogue dating from 1829.  
Now under renovation.

ul. Złote Koło 2

Sklowar Synagogue dating from  
1790; partially destroyed by  
Germans in 1938 and later used by  
them as a wine cellar and  
warehouse.



■ Storch Synagogue interior, ul. Włodkowska 7, 1976

2





■ Jewish cemetery, ul. Ślężna

3

### JEWISH CEMETERIES

ul. Gwarna

Oldest Jewish cemetery, dating from 1761, destroyed.

ul. Ślężna (part of City's Architectural Museum)

Remaining tombstones: 6,000, dating from 1856.

ul. Lotnicza 51

Remaining tombstones: 8,000, dating from 1900.

### OTHER SITES

ul. Wiśniowa

Former Jewish Hospital dating from 1726.

Current use: railroad hospital.

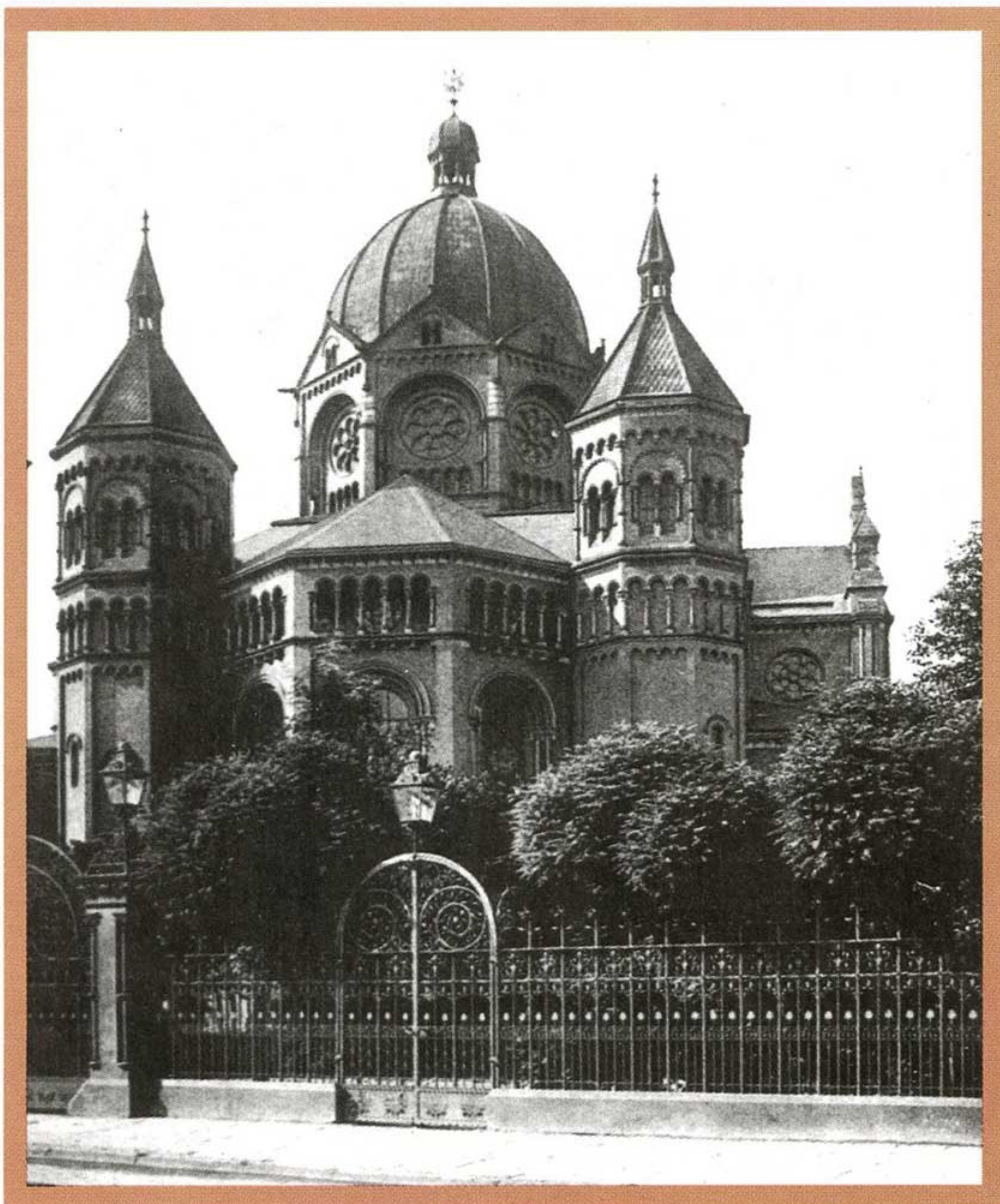
ul. Włodkowica 9

Jewish Community Office and prayer house.



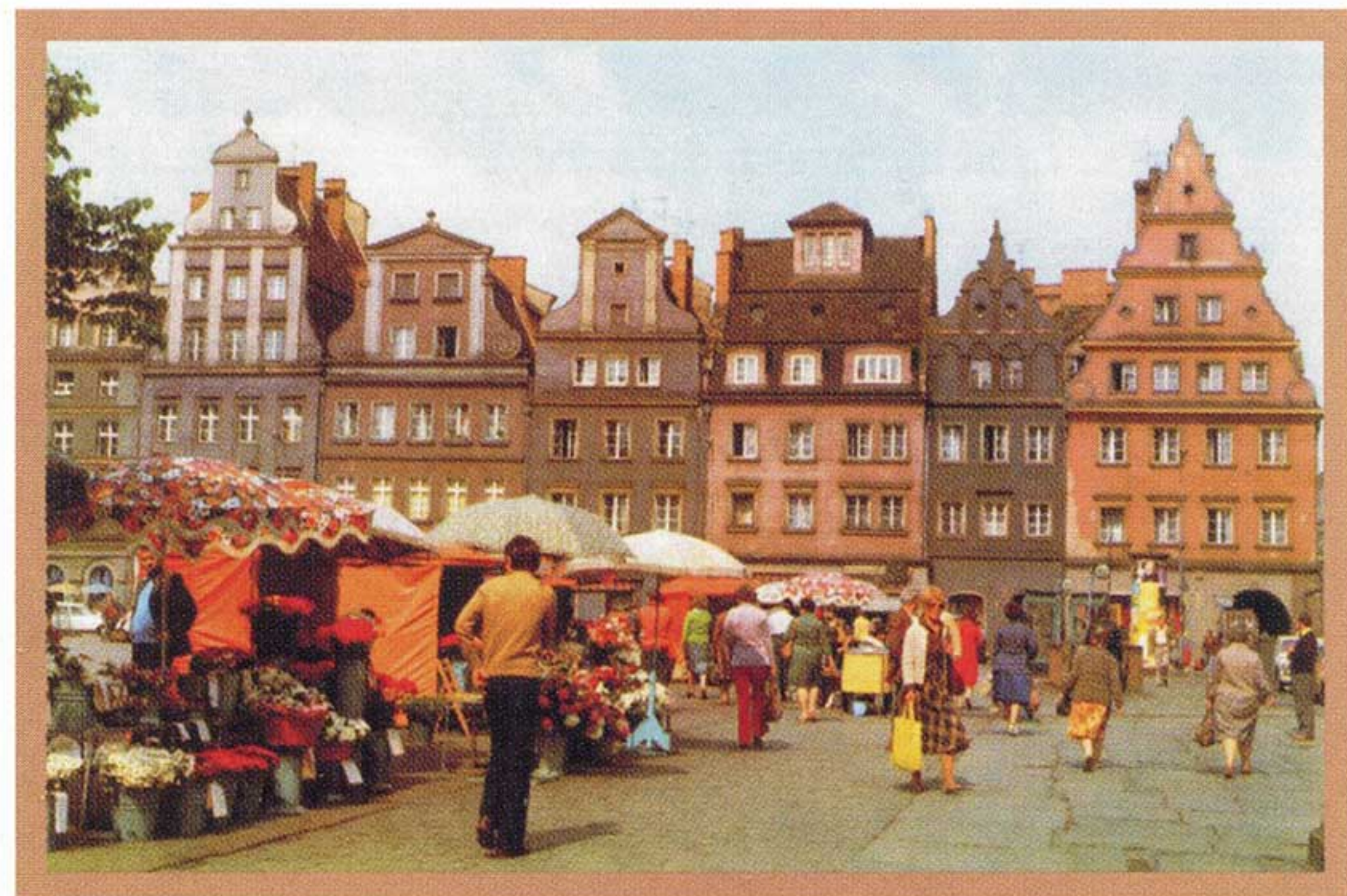
■ Wrocław (Breslau), c. 1916

5



■ Great Synagogue, burned by Nazis in 1938

4



■ Market square, today

6

### HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL

Plac Bohaterów Ghetta

Memorial to ghetto heroes.

### DEPORTATIONS

Auschwitz-Birkenau, Theresienstadt, Riga ghetto, Sobibór.



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■ Town view, pre-1939