To Yisrael
My close and dear friend

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# Acknowledgments

This book was originally published in Hebrew by Yad Vashem (2012) as part of my academic work as a historian of the Holocaust and Polish Jewry. My first book, on the Jews of Białystok, was published in 2008 by Brandeis University Press. Due to the contribution of this book on the Jews of Kielce to Holocaust research, I made sure that it, too, would be published in English. The translation was subsidized at the recommendation of my colleague, Dr. Marcus Silber of the Department of Jewish History at the University of Haifa, via The Wolfson Academic Chair, and was supported by the Association of Kielce Jews in New York, headed by Manny Bekier. In addition, Yaacov Kotlicki offered a great deal of support to this project: he played a large role in publishing the book as well as acquiring photographs. Both Manny Bekier and Yaacov Kotlicki are second-generation Holocaust survivors.

In regard to the English edition of the book, I also wish to thank Jacek Młynarczyk, a Polish historian of repute and a loyal friend, for his generous assistance in collecting the material from the archive in Ludwigsburg, Germany. I owe profound and special gratitude to the late Yitzhak Bauer, my dear friend, a Holocaust survivor and an excellent scholar from the town of Buczacz, Galicia, who with boundless devotion helped me to translate manuscripts in various languages, without which the study would have been deficient. Among those whom I interviewed in the course of my research, I shall always remember Rafael Blumenfeld, a prodigious educator, who before passing away devoted unlimited time to me and equipped me with important material on contemporary events. I am especially grateful to Dr. Daniel Uziel, director of the photo archives at Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, and I sincerely thank all members of the archive staff at this institution.

My friend of many years, Michael Berenbaum, who recommend that the book be published in English, deserves special gratitude.

Special thanks I owe to the American judge Thomas Buergenthal, whom I was able to interview in the summer of 2004. When the Kielce Ghetto was established, Buergenthal was seven years old and ten years old when he arrived with the last Jews of Kielce to Auschwitz. The value of the information he gave me and the details he remembered are a precious treasure that I will always take with me.

This book is dedicated to my close friend the late Yisrael Gutman, in whose company I built much of my academic career and development. The knowledge that I derived from being in proximity to him cannot be weighed in gold.

**Sara Bender**
**Tel Aviv, October 2018**

# Preface

The Jewish community of Kielce, Poland, began to develop, albeit very slowly, in the 1860s. However, it was the massive pogrom which erupted there in July 1946 that etched the city's name into everlasting infamy.

The idea of writing a study about the Jews of Kielce—one of the three most important Jewish communities in Radom District during World War II, along with those of Radom city and Częstochowa—germinated in my research on Jewish slave labor in the camps of this district. In the course of that investigation, I found that no comprehensive studies about the fate of the Jews in these cities had been written.[1] Furthermore, in contrast to Radom and Częstochowa, on which hefty post-war *yizkor* (memorial) books document the Holocaust era in copious detail, the companion volume for Kielce tells the story of this community only up to the beginning of World War II.[2] It was the absence of attention to the post-war pogrom—a constitutive event that raises, among other things, the question of why it happened there, of all places—that spurred me to produce the book that you hold.

This book, focusing on the German occupation period in Kielce and several nearby towns, drew its nourishment from numerous and diverse sources. I made extensive use of a thesis about the Jews of Kielce by the German-Polish historian Jacek Młynarczyk, who combed the archives in Germany and Poland and also produced a detailed book about the German

1 Notably, Wila Orbach wrote about the Jews of Częstochowa. Her study, however, focuses on the pre-war history of that community. See Orbach, *A History of the Jews of Częstochowa* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Society of Jews from Częstochowa and the Vicinity in Israel, 2000).

2 See Pinchas Cytron, *Kielce Book: History of the Kielce [Jewish] Community from Founding to Destruction* [in Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Society of Kielce Jews in Israel, 1957); and Sara Kerbel, *'Al beyteynu she-harav, Fun der kharuver hayyim* (in Yiddish) (Tel Aviv: Society of Kielce Jews in Israel and the Diaspora, 1981).

occupation era in Radom District.[3] Another important study about the Jews of Radom District during the war, by Robert Seidel, recounts (among other things) the history of the Jews in a large number of small communities in the district.[4] The Polish historian Krzysztof Urbański, born in Kielce and residing there to this day, wrote about the Jews of Kielce and Radom District during the Holocaust. He based his studies on material that he harvested from various archives in Poland and research literature published largely in Polish, most concerning the history of the Jews in Kielce up to World War II.[5] Urbański also collaborated with Rafael Blumenfeld to produce a comprehensive lexicon that I used mainly in regard to the pre-war era—a rich trove for anyone probing the history of the Jews of Kielce until World War II.[6]

Important sources for researchers who wish to delve into the minutiae of Jewish life during the relevant time are testimonies, memorial books, letters, and diaries. Despite the difficulty in authenticating and cross-referencing the information that these artifacts yield, the many accounts that appear in them—particularly testimonies written or given in the initial post-war years—constitute a cache of information of inestimable research value. I found voluminous documentary material that helped me to produce a detailed picture of Jewish life in Kielce during the Holocaust in the main archives of several institutions including Yad Vashem in Jerusalem; the Central Office of the State Justice Administrations for the Investigation of National Socialist Crimes (Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen zur Aufklärung von NS-Verbrechen) in Ludwigsburg, Germany; the Jewish Historical Institute (Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, ŻIH) in Warsaw; the State Archive in Kielce (Archiwum Państwowe w Kielcach), and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D. C. In the last mentioned archive, I discovered two manuscripts—unpublished memoirs—that were eye-opening documents for

3 Jacek Młynarczyk, "Der Holocaust in Kielce/Distrikt Radom" (M. A. thesis, Essen University, 2000); idem, *Judenmord in Zentralpolen: Der Distrikt Radom im Generalgouvernement 1939–1945* (Veröffentlichungen der Forschungsstelle Ludwigsburg der Universität Stuttgart 9 (Darmstadt: Deutsches Historisches Institut, Warschau, und der Forschungsstelle Ludwigsburg der Universität Stuttgart: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2007).

4 Robert Seidel, *Deutsche Besatzungspolitik in Polen: Der Distrikt Radom 1939–1945* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2006).

5 Krzysztof Urbański, *Społeczność żydowska w Kielcach* (Kielce: Muzeum Narodowe, 1989); idem, *Zagłada ludności żydowskiej Kielc 1939–1945* (Kielce: Kielecki Towarzstwo Naukowe, 1994); idem, *Kieleccy Żydzi* (Kraków: Małopolska Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1992).

6 Krzysztof Urbański and Rafał Blumenfeld, *Słownik historii kieleckich Żydów* (Kielce: Kieleckie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 1995).

any Holocaust scholar. Finally, I was able to interview several survivors from Kielce, including Thomas Buergenthal, a Jewish boy in Nazi-occupied Kielce who later became a judge at the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

The book begins by telling the history of the Jews of Kielce up to the beginning of World War II, a relatively brief span of time that captures Jewish life in this city. Following are three chapters on the three years of Nazi occupation in Kielce that began in September 1939, focusing on the pre-ghettoization period, the way of life in the ghetto, and the obliteration of the surrounding Jewish communities between the summer of 1942 and the winter of 1943. The next two chapters recount the fate of the last Jews in Kielce, most of whom were taken to three slave-labor camps in that city; the question of rescue; and the attitude of the Poles. The book concludes with a chapter on the tragic pogrom that Poles perpetrated on July 4, 1946, against a group of Jewish survivors who had gathered in the city ahead of emigration to pre-independence Israel. It was in the aftermath of this event that tens of thousands of Jewish survivors in the new Poland rushed to escape from the country where they had hoped until then to rekindle their lives.

# Introduction

Kielce is a city in south-central Poland, above the Silnica River, 260 meters above sea level. Its earliest mention in writing dates to 1084, from which until the end of the eighteenth century it was the property of the bishops of Kraków. In 1171, the incumbent bishop initiated construction of a church there, making Kielce a permanent settlement. In the mid-thirteenth century, the Tatars who invaded Poland destroyed the church and the homes around it; the settlement did not recover until early in the next century. In 1364, Kielce, still the property of the Kraków bishops, received municipal privileges and autonomy by force of the Magdeburg Laws that had been introduced in 1118. The town had 950 inhabitants that year. In the fifteenth century, Kielce became an important glassmaking center; stone quarries were established there as well. In 1535, King Zygmunt I of Poland officially ordered the bishops of Kraków to enjoin Jews from settling in Kielce; the edict was renewed in 1561. It was at this time that lead, silver, and copper mining and processing industries evolved in the Kielce area.

Kielce was thoroughly sacked in 1660–1665, during Poland's first war with the Swedes, but it rebounded swiftly thanks to aid from the bishops. Not long afterward, however—during the second war with the Swedes (1706–1707)—the town fell again. Only after the war ended and a peace treaty was concluded did it recover and its revitalization ensue. Kielce then expanded steadily; with the encouragement of ecclesiastical leaders in Kraków a new town center was built, as were new houses and even additional churches. In 1789, when the Polish royal treasury nationalized all of the bishops' properties, the king authorized the holding of a weekly market day and an annual trade fair in town. The local economy developed; glassmaking shops were built and, after a training seminar for the priesthood was established, the town became one of Poland's most important ecclesiastical centers.[1]

1 *Wielka Encyklopedia Powczechna,* vol. 5 (Warsaw, 1963), 586; *Słownik Geograficzny Krolestwa Polskiego,* vol. IV (Warsaw, 1883), 21–22. See also *Pinkas Hakehillot Lublin-Kielce*

In 1795, with the third partitioning of Poland, Kielce was annexed to the Austrian Empire and became a subdistrict capital. From 1809 on, the city was considered part of the Warsaw principality; in 1815, after the Congress of Vienna, it became part of Congress Poland, under the sovereign rule of the Russian Empire. From 1816 on, Kielce served as an administrative center in its district (*gubernia*) and in 1837 it became the district capital, maintaining this status until 1844.[2] Local development had halted after the great fire of May 1800 and due to the wars and the political changes that they engendered. From the mid-nineteenth century on, however, Kielce again saw vigorous population growth. Stone buildings were constructed in lieu of wooden ones, a school was established to train quarry workers, and mining activity steadily expanded. The building boom was accompanied by numerous infrastructure projects such as cobblestone paving of streets and leveling of terrain. It was a time of accelerated development for the entire area, and in addition to the industrial and quarry workers in and around Kielce, various skilled tradesmen in coal mining and marketing, as well as laborers, settled there and helped establish foundries. The mineral deposits in the area, however, were underutilized due to deficiencies in the rail and river transport system. In the late nineteenth century; thus, local commerce was confined to basic parochial needs. Most commercial activity that did take place was handled by Jews, who had been permitted to settle in town shortly beforehand. Only in 1833 was the town linked to the Warsaw-Kraków railroad and it took until 1885 for a spur to be built to the mining area near Dąbrowa Górnicza.

## The Dawn of Jewish Settlement

As early as 1819, a few Jews had settled in Kielce as individuals even though the ban on Jewish residency, dating back to the sixteenth century, remained in force. Following the Polish rising in 1831, Russia revoked the ban, and in 1841 it had a Jewish council established in Kielce, albeit to handle religious affairs only. Formally, the Jews in town were considered part of the Jewish community of nearby Chęciny, where dozens of Jews had been living since the mid-seventeenth century. Members of that community were allowed to visit

(Encyclopaedia of Jewish communities, Poland, volume VII—Lublin-Kielce District), ed. by Abraham Vein (in Hebrew: Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1999), 490–194; and Krzysztof Urbański, *Społeczność żydowska w Kielcach*, 5.

2 In 1837, Poland was divided into gubernias. Poland had five gubernias in 1844 and ten in 1866. In 1917, the division of Poland into gubernias was revoked.

Kielce on market days and for the annual fairs. Since Kielce remained a poor and struggling locality in the early nineteenth century, the Russian authorities sought to attract settlers who would help it develop. Three Jews answered the call, opening shops and buying houses near the market (*rynek*) square. The local populace objected to this fiercely. In 1833 twenty Polish merchants appealed to the district authorities, demanding that Jewish residency in town be prohibited in accordance with the Polish royalty's original directive to this effect. Since the settlement of Jews had produced positive changes in the town's economy, however, the poorer classes sided with continued Jewish residency in town. After conducting a survey of commerce in Kielce, the municipal authority reviewed the findings and recommended that Jews be encouraged to settle in the city and to buy shops and homes.

The few Jews who lived in Kielce in those days had to fight unceasingly against the Polish merchants, who enjoyed the support of the Church, for their right to reside and do business there. In 1835, this struggle gave rise to legislation prohibiting Jews from living within a radius of three kilometers from the town center. In 1838, the nine Jews who lived in Kielce were required by the municipal authority to translate every business document of theirs into Polish. By 1841, the Jewish population of Kielce had grown to thirty-two individuals in seven families, fewer than 1 percent of the total. That year, apart from suffering periodic attacks by riffraff on their shops, the Polish merchants' association urged the Russian authorities to banish all Jews from Kielce—and the authorities assented. Jewish settlement in Kielce came to a halt; those who were expelled resettled in nearby communities and launched a persistent struggle for their right to return.[3]

As soon as the Jewish merchants left Kielce and stopped investing in the town, the local building boom faltered and economic development again ground to a halt. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Jewish settlement in Kielce was again permitted. By 1852, there were 101 Jews there out of a total population of 3,639.[4] The year 1860 saw thirty-one Jewish families in Kielce, including seven that lacked formal permission to live there, although the mayor himself had leased some of his lands to them. In 1862, the Tsar granted full emancipation to the Jews of Congress Poland. From then on, there was no further impediment to Jewish settlement in Kielce: Jews were permitted

3 *Wielka Encyklopedia Powczechna* (Warsaw, 1963), vol. 5, 586; *Pinkas Hakehillot Lublin-Kielce,* 491; Urbański, *Społeczność żydowska w Kielcach,* 6.

4 Cytron, *Kielce Book,* 11.

to purchase lands and open commercial and artisan shops in town. Few Jews, however, exercised this entitlement at the time due to the aftermath of the Polish rising in January 1863 and the consequent restrictions imposed on the populace. As the rising ebbed and normal life in Poland resumed, the number of Jews who settled in Kielce gradually increased and a Jewish community began to organize. By 1882, Jews from nearby villages started to move into town. Another wave of Jewish migration to Kielce took place in 1893, when lands of Jews in nearby villages were expropriated. Some of the new settlers stayed for good; others headed elsewhere within a few months. By 1868, the municipal birth registry recorded the births of Jewish children. In 1870, Jews purchased a plot of land in the Pakosz suburb and opened their own cemetery.

The table that follows charts the development of the Jewish community in Kielce:

| Year | Total Population | Jewish Population |
|---|---|---|
| 1872 | Unknown | 505 |
| 1873 | Unknown | 974 |
| 1874 | Unknown | 1,046 |
| 1876 | Unknown | 1,121 |
| 1880 | Unknown | 2,640 |
| 1887 | Unknown | 2,649 |
| 1896 | Unknown | 2,946 |
| 1897 | 20,468 | 6,173 |
| 1908 | 30,810 | 11,151 |
| 1910 | 31,171 | 11,351 |
| 1915 | Unknown | 14,794 |
| 1921 | 41,346 | 15,530 |
| 1931 | 58,236 | 18,683[5] |

Poor Jews who came to Kielce settled in outlaying neighborhoods such as Targowa, Pocieszke, and Bodzentyńska; wealthier ones bought or rented apartments in the town center. The first houses built by Jews were in the

5 Urbański, *Społeczność żydowska w Kielcach*, 7; *Pinkas Hakehillot Lublin-Kielce*, 490; Cytron, *Kielce Book*, 11–19; Adam Penkalla, *Żydowskie ślady w województwie kieleckim i radomskim* (Radom: Tramp, 1992), 43. The last-mentioned source indicates that the share of Jews in the general population climbed from 30.2 percent in 1897 to 37.6 percent in 1921 and receded to 31.2 percent in 1931.

northwestern area, along the Silnica River. Here, over time, the Nowy Świat neighborhood, populated largely by affluent or middle-class Jews, took shape. The Jewish population included a small stratum of wealthy merchants who developed local industries such as lime, marble, gravel, and lumber for construction. Jehuda Ehrlich was the first to build a lime factory in Kielce. Abraham Zagajski's family owned several sawmills and shops that turned out furniture and lumber for construction.

## Consolidation of the Kielce Jewish Community: Contribution to Local Economic Development

For almost forty years, between 1863 and 1900, Jews who had settled in Kielce sought entrée to local commercial life and turned to domains in which Polish enterprises had little interest. In fields such as food and beverages, they encountered stiff competition from local non-Jewish merchants; the book trade, however, was theirs alone. Over time, Jews managed to penetrate all local fields of commerce and many of their establishments enjoyed excellent reputations. When it became apparent, for example, that Jewish bakeries produced higher quality bread than the Poles offered, the local newspaper wrote that there was nothing left to do but to invite Jews from Chęciny, Chmielnik, and other nearby towns to teach the Poles how to bake bread.[6]

In 1867, five of the twenty butchers in Kielce were Jewish, as were two of its seven bakers. The various markets, in which dozens of Jewish peddlers sold clothes, haberdashery, and so on, gave Jews an excellent opportunity to fit into local commercial life. In 1871, Yehezkel Landau of Chęciny won a contract to build a commercial center in Kielce; within two years, a structure with fifty-six shops and warehouses went up in town. In 1898, Jewish artisans won contracts to pave the city's streets and perform carpentry and construction work. This irked the non-Jews in town, who felt that the Jews were stealing their livelihood. By the end of the nineteenth century, some streets in Kielce were lined with nothing but Jewish-owned stores and workshops.

Wealthy Jews who reached Kielce in the 1880s sensed the great commercial potential of the region's natural resources. The first to take advantage of the limestone in the Kielce region was Jehuda Ehrlich of Działuszyce, who acquired a parcel of land from an estate-holder in southern Kielce and built

6 Urbański, *Społeczność żydowska w Kielcach,* 8–9. Notably, Jewish professionals were invited to Kielce for short stays at this time. An optician, a furrier, and a dentist from Warsaw made regular visits.

a lime-extraction kiln there. His facility evolved into the famous Kadzielnia quarry, from which many Jewish townspeople would earn their living. Extraction of limestone from the Wietrznia quarry began in 1874 and accelerated when Abraham Zagajski acquired the property in 1885. The quarry quickly expanded and eventually came to employ 600 workers. Additional Jewish families developed local stone, lime, brick, and tile industries. In 1897, the Hajman brothers opened the Leonów glass works, which utilized the large deposits of sand in the region.[7]

Lumber was another industry that developed well in Kielce, thanks to the dense forests in the surrounding countryside. Jewish merchants bought afforested parcels from estate owners, built sawmills, and processed the lumber into boards, sills, and posts. As hundreds of workers were employed in the lumberyards and the modern sawmills, the industry developed commercially. Exporting of unprocessed lumber was a wholly Jewish activity. By the end of the nineteenth century, the town also had a brewery, a factory for soap, and candles, and tanneries—all under Jewish ownership. The footwear industry developed with particular vigor, eventually gaining a reputation throughout Poland. With the completion in 1885 of the Kielce–Dąbrowa Górnicza railroad and the construction of a train station in town, affluent investors were drawn to the city. Newly arrived Jews purchased plots in the western part of town, between the tracks and the Silnica River. In time they became the town's wealthiest families. Henryk Nowak of Łódź bought a vast plot of land and built homes, shops, and factories on it. An industrial savings-and-loan fund was set up and in 1904 Jehuda Ehrlich opened a bank. The Jewish bourgeoisie and intelligentsia began to participate actively in local non-Jewish economic and social life. Several Jews joined a committee that had been established to set district and regional tax rates and others sat on the board of the district's mortgage company.[8] Recognition of the Jews' contribution to local commercial life found expression in the late nineteenth century when Michal (Michael) Goldhar, who along with being a bookseller owned a small bank (Dom Bankowy), received a citation of honor for his part in the growth of commercial life in Kielce.

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7 Cytron, *Kielce Book,* 21–22. Urbański, *Społeczność żydowska w Kielcach,* 10. In the 1880s, the Wietrznia quarries produced thirty tons of lime per week. Between 1909 and 1911, new kilns were built at the quarry that permitted 17,000 tons of lime to be produced annually. Headcount at the quarry grew from 129 in 1926 to 190 in 1930 and 300 in 1939. The quarry had branches in Białystok, Częstochowa and Katowice. See also Urbański and Blumenfeld, *Słownik,* 133.

8 Cytron, *Kielce Book,* 23–25; Urbański, *Społeczność żydowska w Kielcach,* 10.

## Jewish Institutions, Organizations, and Political and Ideological Awakening

As the local Jewish population grew in the second half of the nineteenth century, so did its array of communal institutions. Despite the objections of the rabbi of Chęciny—where there had been a relatively large Jewish population before such a collective developed in Kielce—on September 1, 1868, a district community committee was formed in Kielce, chaired by a landowner named Mosze Pfeffer. The panel established synagogues in dwellings that were remodeled for this purpose and budgeted them with the help of Jews who lived on streets near the prayer houses and visited them regularly. The oldest synagogue in town was that on 39 Starowarszawska Street, which had space for fifty congregants. In 1878, a synagogue with space for 100 congregants began to operate in Joel Dawid Mayerson's house at 26 Starowarszawska Street. In 1890, Mosze Rakoszinski began to run a synagogue in Mosze Kasztan's home at 5 Kozia Street. The year 1903 saw the inauguration of Kielce's 400-seat Great Synagogue on Nowowarszawska Street, a 20,000-ruble prayer house financed by the businessman Mosze Pfeffer and his wife. The architect, Stanisław Szpakowski, designed it as a single-story brick structure in the Arab-Romanesque style. Its façade and windows had delicate floral ornamentation, its interior walls were covered with a rich variety of decorations, and whole the structure was reminiscent of the synagogues of Vienna and Breslau. Symbols of the Twelve Tribes were embedded in the walls of the main sanctuary against the background of blue skies. On the wall to the right of the entrance there was a large painting of the Western (Wailing) Wall in Jerusalem, the wall to the left was adorned with a painting of Rachel's Tomb. Set into the eastern wall was a Holy Ark decorated with a golden Torah crown, and at the edge of the sanctuary stood a balcony for a choir. Stairs led to an exquisitely crafted *bima* (Torah reader's rostrum) at the center of the sanctuary. The windows were of stained glass and stretched from the floor to the rafters. The women's gallery rested atop marble-covered pillars. The choir, which had sixty to one hundred singers, was led by the cantor Jisrael Weiner. During World War I, the well-known cantor Gerszon Sirota regularly performed there.[9] Outside, the synagogue yard was surrounded by a fence.

Schools evolved concurrently. From 1886 on, Kielce had a *cheder* (school for young boys' initial religious instruction), run for many years by the *melamed*

9 Urbański and Blumenfeld, *Słownik,* 34, 38, 122; see also *Pinkas Hakehillot Lublin-Kielce,* 491, and Cytron, *Kielce Book,* 17.

(traditional teacher) Mordecai Herrendorf. By 1890, the town had seven such schools; by 1898, it had fourteen, and in 1901–1902 it had thirty-one, attended by some 650 pupils.[10] Jewish schools were established between 1880 and 1890. The first was situated at the study hall on Nowowiejska Street and doubled as a *Talmud Torah* (religious school for older boys) that a group of local Jewish merchants funded in the sum of 2,000 rubles per year. The revolutionary events that swept Tsarist Russia in 1904–1906 stirred unrest among Jewish youth in town, including cheder boys. Thus, Jewish students took part in school strikes and young people joined local underground groups. The melamed Dawid Kaszański, who had eighty boys studying in his cheder, applied to the authorities in 1906 for permission to teach the Polish language. Mosze Pfeffer, the philanthropist who had funded the construction of the synagogue, became a public activist who in the early twentieth century established in Kielce the Achiezer society, which maintained a Talmud Torah for children of poor families and cared for orphans. Pfeffer headed the society until 1914 and willed 40,000 rubles to organizations that engaged in aiding the ill and the needy. In 1899, the first Jewish vocational school was established as an adjunct to the Talmud Torah. After a group of assimilated businessmen insisted that modern educational institutions be built in town, the first modern Jewish school in Kielce opened in 1904, with H. Schreiber as its principal. It closed two years later due to opposition from Orthodox circles. The teacher Jisroel Joskowicz set up the first Hebrew-language school at around the same time; it survived for just one year. The percentage of Jewish youth who attended government schools was quite low: in 1898, only thirteen Jewish students attended Kielce's gymnasium (high school) for boys, out of a total enrollment of 463. Two years later, the same institution had twenty-one Jews out of 543 students (5.5 percent). The school for girls had similar ratios.[11]

On September 1, 1900, Stefania Wolman and Władysław Żimnowoda established a Jewish private school for girls. It was named for its co-founder, Wolman, an assimilated woman who patterned her institution after Polish schools. When established, it taught grades one through four. After her husband's death, Wolman was joined by the educator Salomon Paradystal,

10 Urbański and Blumenfeld, *Słownik,* 33. In 1914, the city had twenty-four cheders. By 1928 the number dropped to eleven due to depletion of the Jewish population on account of above-average mortality, the emigration that followed World War I, and secularization, from which the Jews of Kielce were not spared.

11 Jadwiga Karolczak, "Kielce 4 lipca 1946 r.," *Słowo Ludu 155* (July 6–7, 1996); see also Cytron, *Kielce Book,* 72, and Urbański, *Społeczność żydowska w Kielcach,* 11.

after which the institution developed into a girls' high school where well-to-do Jews enrolled their daughters and pressed Wolman, eventually with success, to add Hebrew to the curriculum. In 1915, Wolman's gymnasium taught grades one to five; by 1920, it had a full gymnasium complement of eight grades. In her last days, Wolman developed concern for the wider Jewish masses and became active in the Jewish orphanage that was established in Kielce after World War I.[12]

Secularization among the Jews of Kielce, like those of other cities in Poland, began in the late nineteenth century. Jewish families, mainly from the mercantile and intelligentsia classes, preferred to enroll their children in Polish schools. Likewise, there were Jews who began joining Polish organizations and institutions and a few who even converted to Christianity. In 1904-1907 and 1916–1922, many Jews supported Polish nationalist movements. Although quite a few Jews turned to assimilation, they never exceeded 1 percent of all the Jews in town. Despite their assimilation, some maintained ties with the local Jewish community and even continued to pay community dues.

On November 1, 1906, a scientific library opened in the home of Jósef Nowak Its brief, according to its statutes, included organizing lectures and cultural events. Its board was chaired by the physician Dr. Jan Daszewski, and two assimilated Jews, Zygmunt Zandowski and Salomon Padarystal, were among those who donated their private collections. In 1909, the entire collection was moved to the municipal public library.[13]

From October 1906 to December 1907, a Polish-language weekly called *Echa Kielcekie* ("Kielce echoes")—a liberal-democratic magazine that dealt with political, economic, and literary matters—was published in Kielce. Its chief editor was Leon Rygier, husband of the famous Polish woman of letters Zofia Nałkowska. The magazine devoted much space to Jewish issues, addressed the phenomenon of assimilation, and represented the town's progressive forces. It published articles on these themes by the Jewish engineer and high-school teacher Adolf Wolman, an assimilationist and a candidate for the Second Duma, the lower chamber of the Imperial Russian parliament.[14]

Back in 1869, a group of affluent Jews established a voluntary organization to raise funds for the establishment of Jewish public institutions. The organization was granted permission to establish a Jewish hospital in town and

12 Urbański and Blumenfeld, *Słownik,* 53; Cytron, *Kielce Book,* 74–76.
13 Urbański and Blumenfeld, *Słownik,* 35.
14 Ibid., 41.

commissioned Szpakowski, the architect who had drafted the plans for the Great Synagogue, to design it. The Jewish hospital was built next to the municipal hospital and its construction was completed in 1897, at a cost of 22,000 rubles. In 1889, Rabbi Mosze Twersky, Jehuda Ehrlich, and Michael Goldhar established Bikur Holim, an institution whose purpose was to supply the municipal Jewish hospital kosher food, medicines, and bedding. In 1902, at the initiative of Bikur Holim, construction of an additional wing to the Jewish hospital commenced; it was officially inaugurated in 1908 and was run by Dr. Yosef Lewinson. The hospital staff mainly treated the town's poor population; people of means preferred to seek private healthcare. Bikur Holim aided many casualties of the great epidemics that Kielce experienced in 1905–1907. After World War I, it steadily lost power and influence.[15] Local Jewish institutions availed themselves of individual Jewish philanthropists, foremost Zwi Herszel Zagajski, one of the most generous benefactors in town, who funded the construction of an old-age home, an orphanage, and synagogues, and also donated to help pave the road to the Jewish cemetery.[16]

The Jewish population occasionally dabbled in broader local cultural life. In 1897, Jews in Kielce took part in a countrywide fundraiser for the construction of a monument in Warsaw to the Polish national poet Adam Mickiewicz. Jews attended the theater, opera, and concerts, eagerly took part in raffles, participated mass picnics on Sundays in the municipal park, and went on organized tours.

In the early twentieth century, political and ideological breezes began to stir in the Kielce Jewish street. Mass mobilization for the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) sapped the local economy. On May 1, 1904, red flags were put up and anti-Tsar graffiti festooned the walls. In October of that year, after conscription notices for the Russian army were promulgated, masses of Kielce residents—Poles and Jews together—stopped a convoy and enabled dozens of conscripts to escape. Such cooperation did not keep a gang of Polish marauders from destroying, on December 28, 1904, Jews' stalls in the municipal market. In July 1905, a three-day strike was organized in Kielce in sympathy with the Łódź proletariat; soldiers opened fire on the protesters and two Poles and two Jews were injured. In October 1905, Poles and Jews removed posters with Tsarist symbols from building walls in an operation engineered by the Polish Socialist Party (Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, PPS), 30 percent of whose members in

15 Ibid., 21, 26, 35, 123.
16 Ibid., 46.