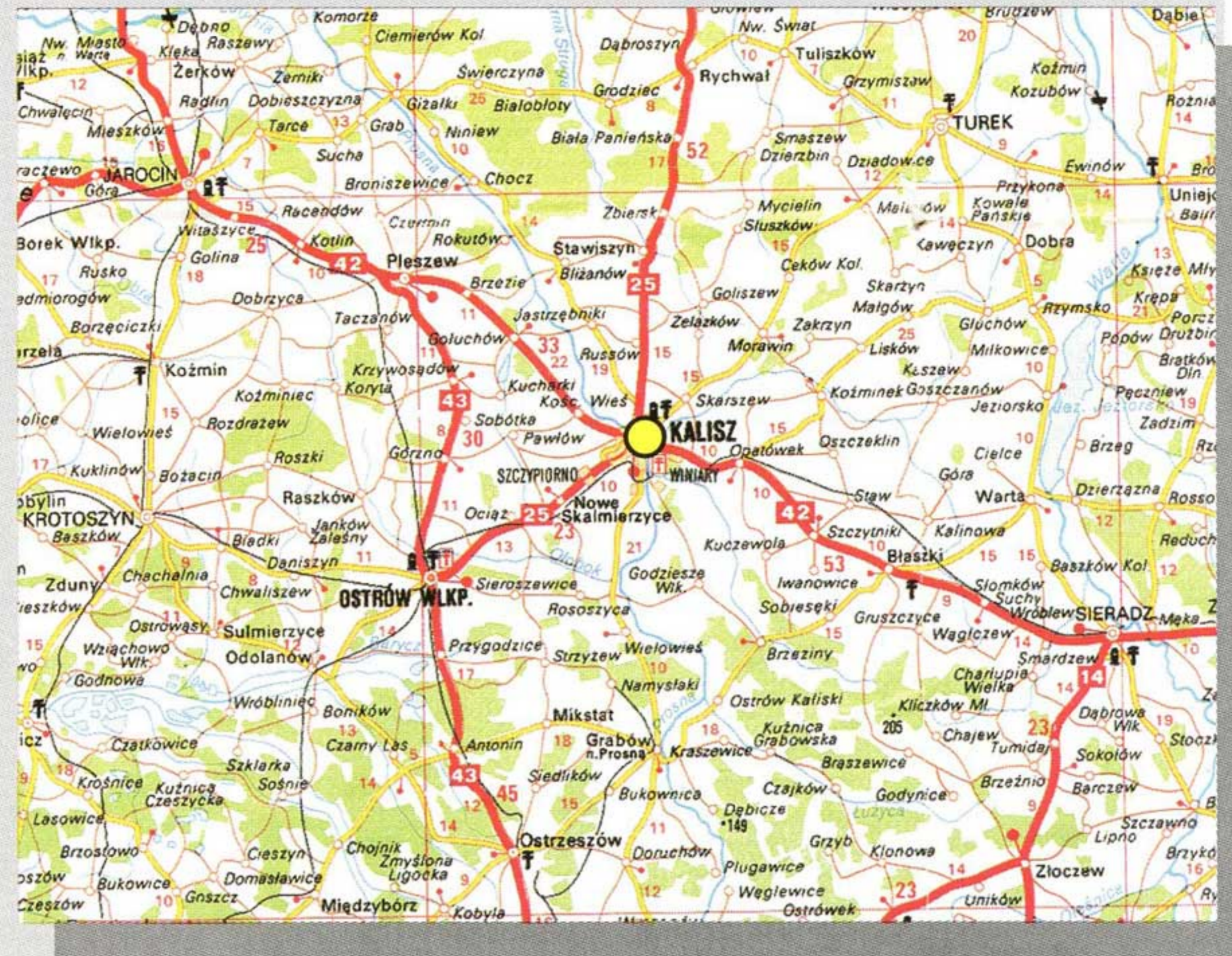


One of the oldest Polish cities, the town of Kalisz in western Poland was the home of one of the oldest Jewish communities in Poland. Minters to King Mieszko III, Jews lived in the city in the latter part of the twelfth century. A Jewish community was founded in the mid-thirteenth century. In 1264, Kalisz was granted a favorable charter of privileges, known as the Statute of Kalisz, which became a model for such documents for centuries to come. At first, the Jews engaged in moneylending, but increasingly they turned to trade with Kraków and Breslau and to crafts including goldsmithing, tailoring and butchering. In the fifteenth century, Kalisz Jews helped found new Jewish settlements throughout Poland. Subjected to occasional persecution, especially as a result of rivalry with Christian merchants and artisans, the Jewish community nevertheless flourished in the sixteenth century. The community was sorely afflicted by the wars of the mid-seventeenth century—in 1659, Russian troops razed the Jewish quarter—but Kalisz Jews quickly rebuilt their community. By the end of the century, Kalisz had become a center of Talmudic learning and the site of an important yeshiva.

Kalisz was briefly taken by Prussia, but then passed to the czars in the nineteenth century. Beginning in the 1840s, Jews became active in a variety of industrial enterprises, opening factories, producing soap, candles, liquor and lace. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Jews founded modern textile mills and knitting factories. By the interwar period, there was a sizable Jewish working class, including garment and leather workers and porters. Jewish institutions included a secondary school, three Yiddish elementary schools, three Yiddish weeklies, two synagogues and about 35 prayer houses. Polish nationalists, organized in the National Democratic Party, were increasingly strong in Kalisz in the interwar years, fomenting anti-Semitic propaganda and organizing an economic boycott of Jewish businesses. On the eve of the Holocaust, there were some 20,000 Jews in the city, making up nearly half the population.

The Germans occupied Kalisz on September 6, 1939; the city was incorporated into the Reich. Jews were seized for slave labor and made to wear the yellow badge. Thousands managed to escape to other parts of Poland; thousands more were forcibly evicted to make room for ethnic German settlers. Nearly 7,000 Kalisz Jews made their way to Warsaw. By January 1, 1940, only 612 Jews remained in the city. Of these, the chronically ill were murdered in October 1940; 200 Jews were sent to the Chełmno death camp at the end of 1941 and the remainder to the Łódź ghetto shortly thereafter.

KALISCH, KOLISH



Location

103 km W of Łódź
51° 46' / 18° 06'
Voivodship: Kalisz

Population, 1939

45,000 (45% Jewish)

Population, 1994

106,763



■ Synagogue (in background), ul. Złota, 1914

SYNAGOGUE

ul. Złota

Synagogue dating to 1264; destroyed during the Holocaust.



■ Cemetery, ul. Nowy Swiat, pre-1939

2

JEWISH CEMETERIES

ul. Nowy Świat (old cemetery)

Cemetery founded in c. 1287

Some tombstones were retrieved from the river and moved to the new cemetery when this cemetery was destroyed during the Holocaust.

ul. Podmiejska 21 (new cemetery)

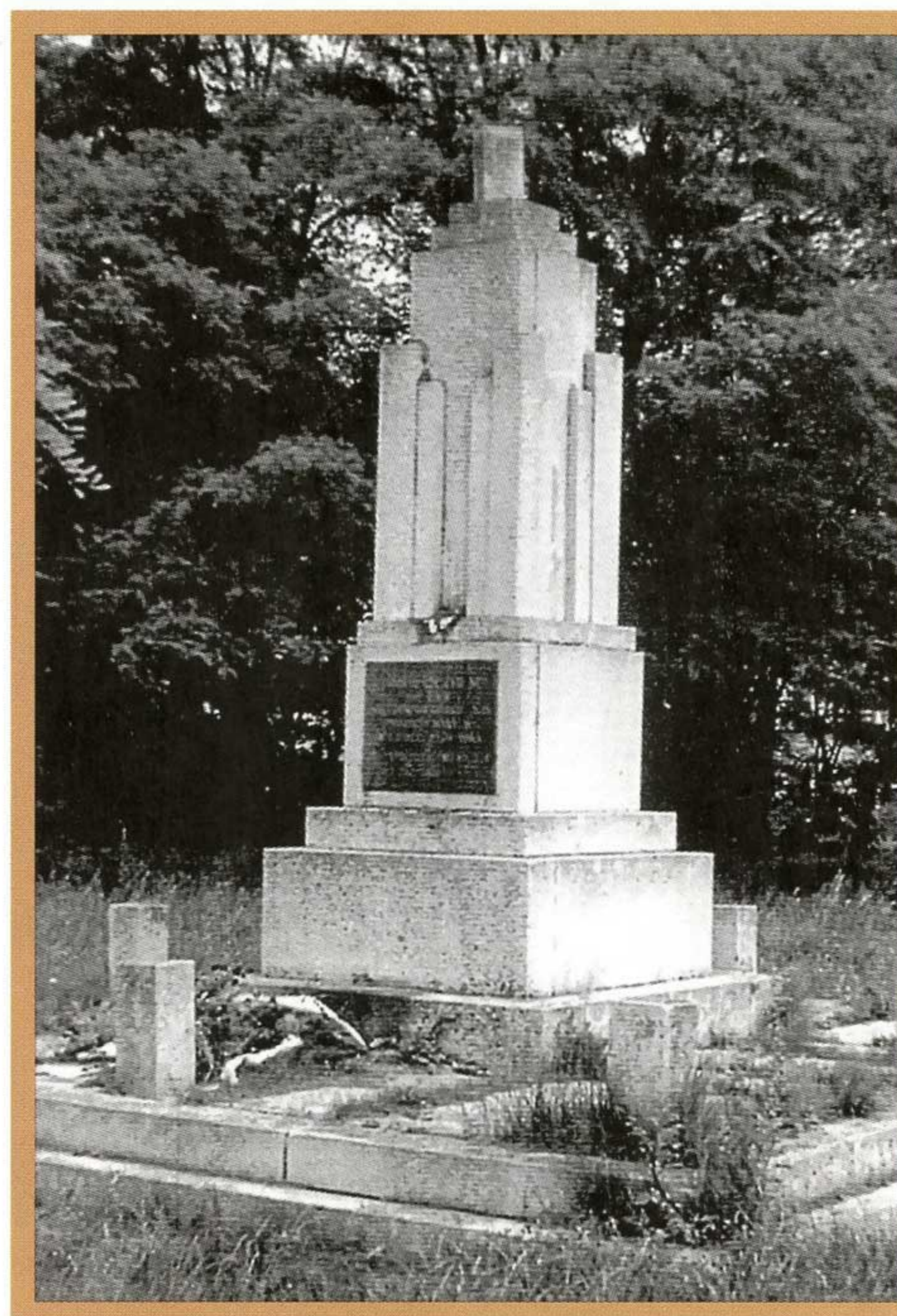
Cemetery founded in 1867.

Tombstones remaining: 500+.



■ Cemetery, ul. Nowy Swiat, pre-1939

3



■ Holocaust memorial, ul. Podmiejska 21, 1964

4

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL

ul. Podmiejska 21 (new cemetery).

DEPORTATIONS

Chełmno, Łódź ghetto.



■ Cemetery, ul. Podmiejska, 1994

5



Market square, c. 1918

6



Local view, today

7

SELECTED READING



■ Town hall, today

8



■ Jewish cemetery, ul. Podmiejska, ruins of pre-burial building, 1990

9

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