

# Shoah

## **Jewish - Christian relations in the wake of the Holocaust and in the shadow of the history of Christian anti-Semitism**



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## Terminology: Holocaust or Shoah

*Not just semantics....*

The word "**holocaust**" meaning conflagration is derived from the Greek **holokauston**, meaning "a **completely** (holos) **burnt** (kaustos) **sacrificial offering**," or "a fully burnt **sacrifice** offered to a god." In Hebrew: קרבן עולה (Korban Olah)

The word **שואה Shoah** meaning "catastrophe, devastation" is found a number of times in the Tanach. Originally meaning "to make a din or crash", it developed into "crash into ruins", and then "to ruin, lay waste"

Another term: **חורבן אירופה khurban eiropa** – meaning the European destruction using the same *khurban* term used to describe the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 BCE and the by the Romans in 70 CE



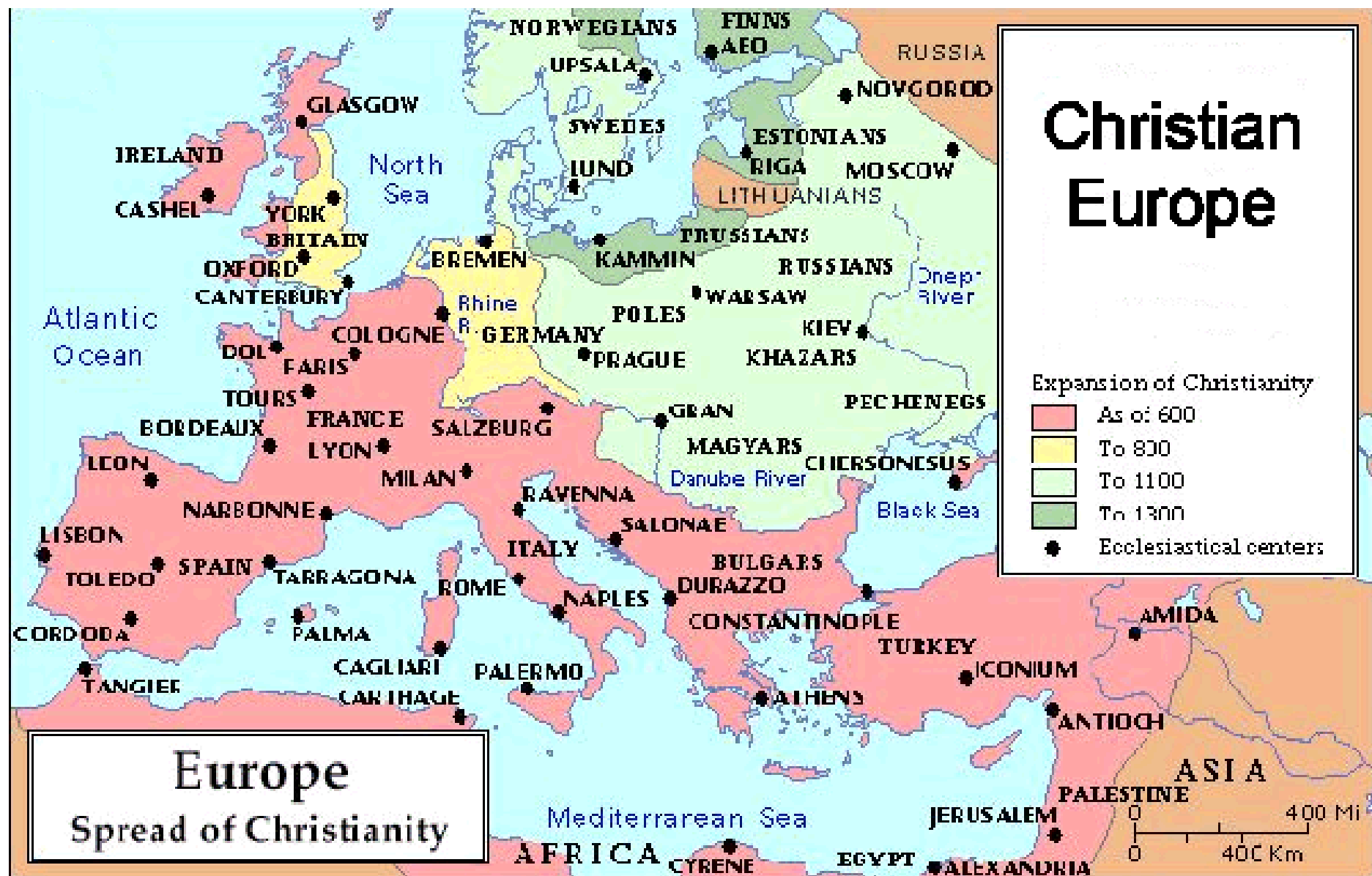
A "holocaust" offering  
*Korban Olah*

## The Roman Empire in 117 AD











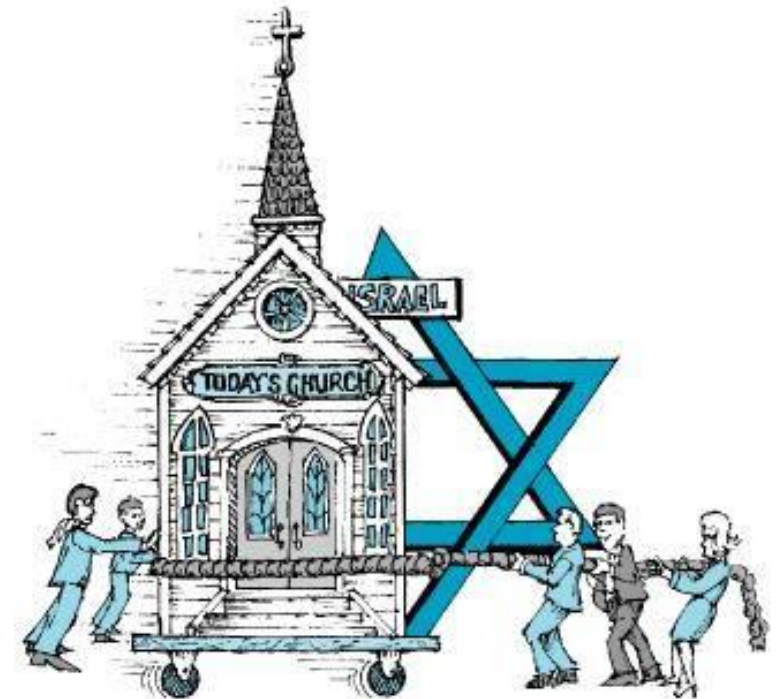
"Not by bodily death, shall the ungodly race of carnal Jews perish ... Scatter them abroad, take away their strength. And bring them down O Lord. (*Attributed to Church Father St. Augustine 354-430 CE*)



Church Father **John Chrysostom** 347-407 CE: ***The Jews sacrifice their children to Satan...*** They are worse than wild beasts. The synagogue is a brothel, a den of scoundrels, the temple of demons devoted to idolatrous cults, a criminal assembly of Jews, a place of meeting for **the assassins of Christ**, a house of ill fame, a dwelling of iniquity, a gulf and abyss of perdition...



Replacement Theology





## Major sites of massacres of Jewish communities during the First Crusade



**FORCED CONVERSIONS - CONVERT OR DIE** - During the Crusades, traditional Catholic hostility toward Jews became radicalized, with the Jews coming to represent an alien enemy residing in the heart of Christendom. A despised minority scattered and unarmed, barely protected by the era's most powerful authorities, the Jews easily fell prey to Christian Crusaders. The Jewish communities hardest hit by Crusader attacks—Worms, Mainz, and Cologne—were the greatest western European Jewish centers. Some Crusaders put it bluntly, “either the Jews must convert to our belief, or they will be totally exterminated—they and their children down to the last baby at the breast.” **Massacres of Jewish communities took place throughout Europe and in Jerusalem**

**KIDDUSH HASHEM** – To die for the sanctification of God's name. To be willing to die physically rather than giving up Judaism



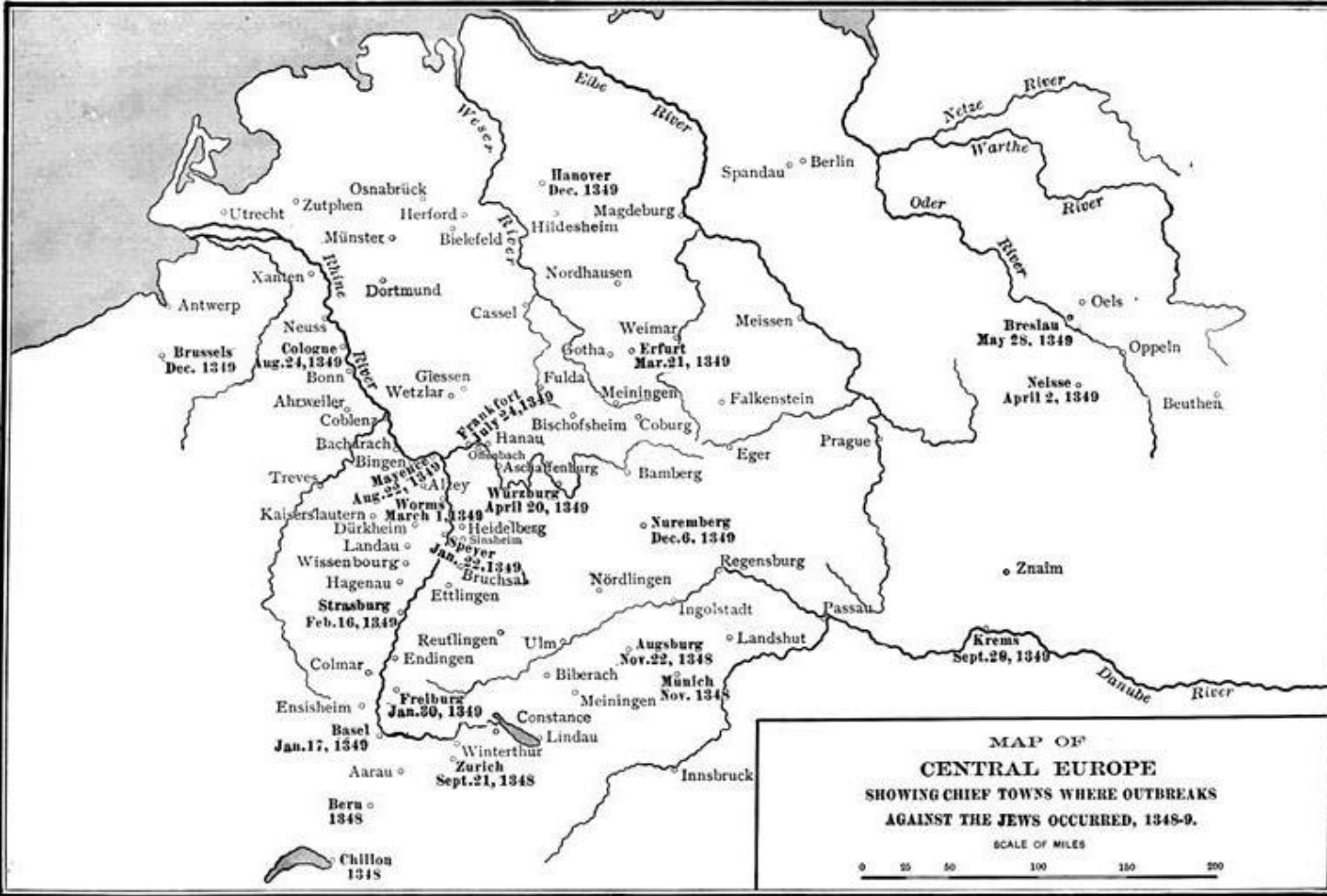


**Blood libels** falsely accuses Jews of murdering Christian children (or other gentiles) in order to use their blood in religious rituals like baking matzah or “reenacting the crucifixion of Jesus”. These claims—alongside those of well poisoning and host desecration- were major themes in the persecution of the Jews in Europe over the centuries. Tens of thousands of Jews were murdered – often by mobs of their Christian neighbors - over these false charges.





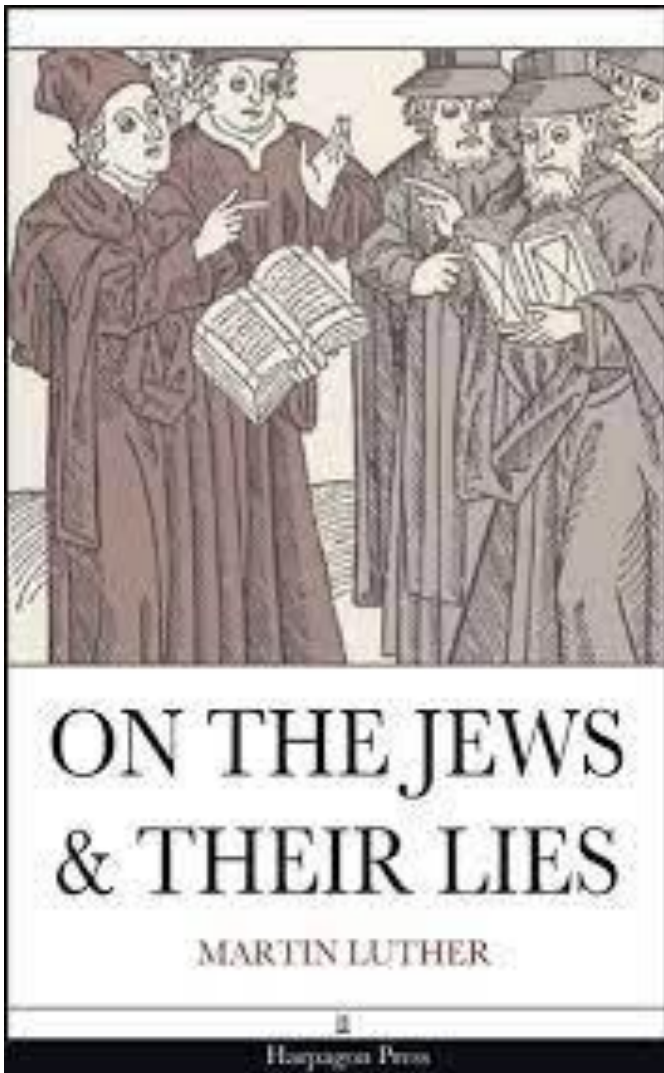
In the 1300s the Jews of Europe are accused by their Christian neighbors of poisoning the wells and causing the “Black Plague”. Tens of thousands of Jews are massacred.



Church and civil authorities force Jews to live separately from Christians in **Ghettos** and to wear badges and hats of shame so that they could easily be recognized and shunned.







## The Protestant Reformation

1500s - A Missed Chance for Christian – Jewish reconciliation

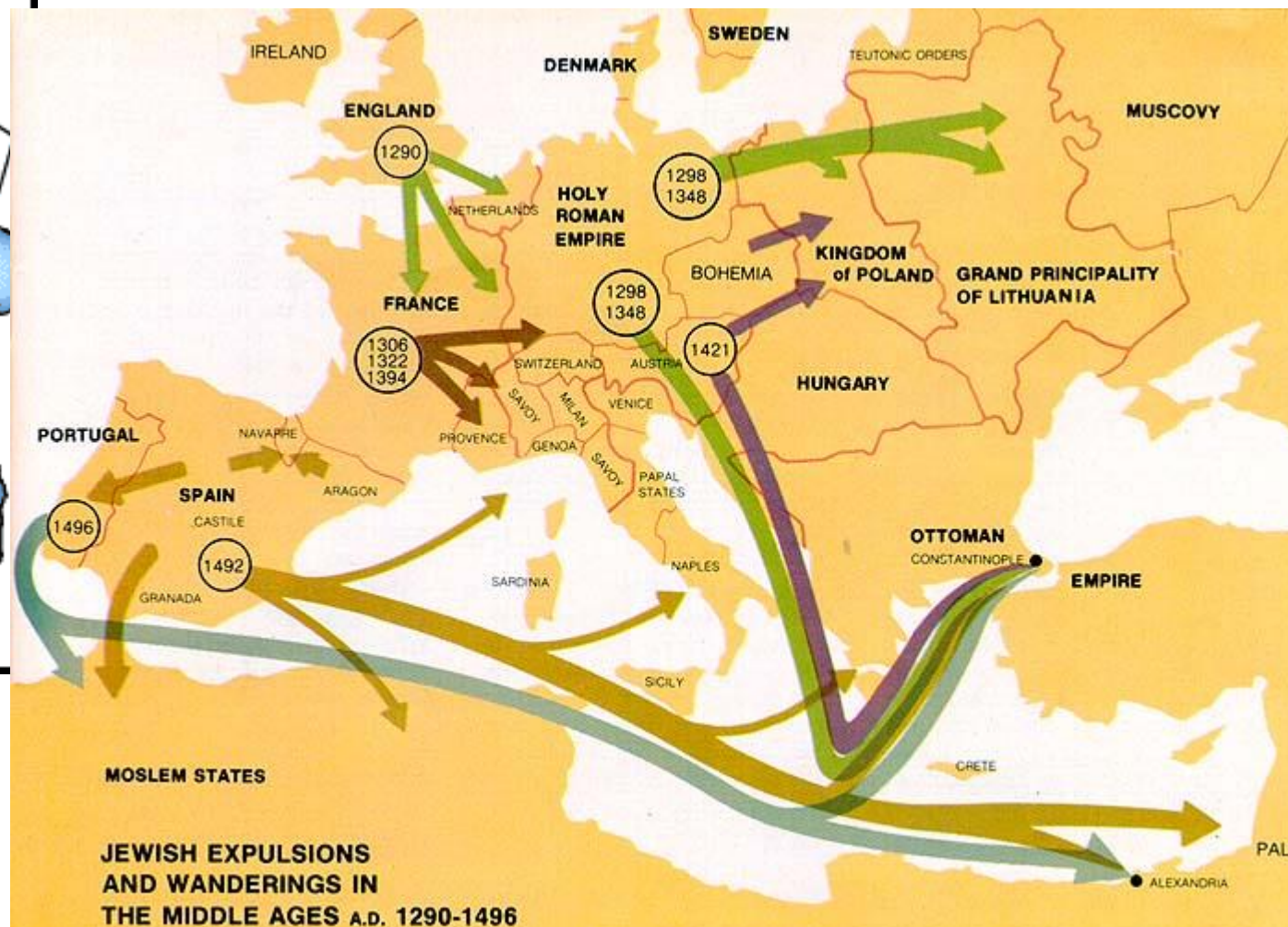
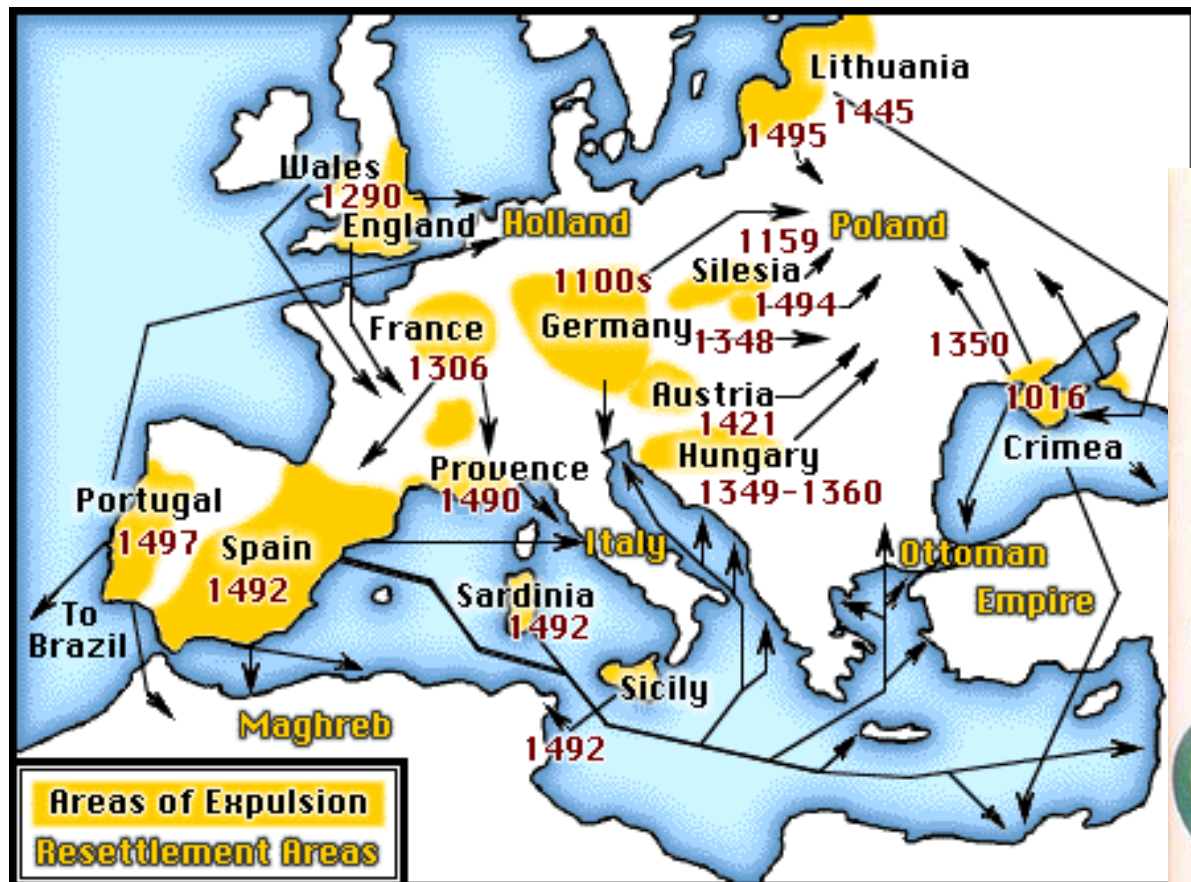
*Stricter monotheism and a new approach regarding Jews?*

The German Christian Reformation leader **Martin Luther** initially advocated humane treatment of the Jews in the belief that Christian hate and persecution was preventing Jews from “seeing the light” and becoming Christians. When that did not transpire, he began to viciously attack the Jews and in 1543 he wrote his seminal anti-Judaic and anti-Semitic work **On the Jews and Their Lies** in which he advocated : Jewish synagogues and schools should be burnt, Jewish books should be their destroyed, Rabbis should be forbidden to preach, Jewish homes should be burned, and property and money confiscated. Jews should be shown no mercy or kindness, afforded no legal protection and "these poisonous envenomed worms" should be drafted into forced labor or expelled for all time He also seems to advocate their murder, writing "**We are at fault in not slaying them**".

**.... eject them forever from this country. For, as we have heard, God’s anger with them is so intense that gentle mercy will only tend to make them worse and worse, while sharp mercy will reform them but little. Therefore, in any case, away with them!**

The Nazis saw Luther's teachings as an inspiration, precedent and guide for their own policies towards the Jews and often quoted and cited his words as proof of the danger that the Jews represented to European Christian society.

From 1100s – 1500s Jews were expelled and massacred throughout Christian Western and Central Europe. Poland begins to become the a safe haven and a major center for Jews.





**The Statute of Kalisz** (1264) granted Jews in the Polish Lands unprecedented legal rights in Europe, including granting exclusive jurisdiction over Jewish matters to Jewish courts, and established a separate tribunal for other criminal matters involving Christians and Jews.



### ***Boleslaw the Pious and the Statue of Kalisz***

**Below are abridged excerpts from some of the 36 clauses of the Statute of Kalisz**

1. Should a Jew be taken to court, not just only a Christian must testify against him, but also a Jew, in order for the case to be considered valid.
2. If any Christian shall sue a Jew, asserting that he has pawned securities with him, and the Jew denies it, then if the Christian refuses to accept the simple word of the Jew, the Jew by taking oath must be free of the Christian.
10. As punishment for killing a Jew, a suitable punishment and confiscation of property is necessary.
11. For striking a Jew, the usual punishment in the country shall apply.
14. Christian destroying cemetery will lose assets.
17. Any Jew may freely and securely walk or ride without any let or hindrance in our realm. They shall pay customary tolls just as Christians do, and nothing else.
22. If any of the Christians rashly and presumptuously jeers at their synagogues, such a Christian shall be required to pay and must pay to our palatine their guardian two talents of pepper as punishment.
30. No Christian may summon any Jew into the ecclesiastical court in any way whatsoever, or for whatever property or summons he be summoned, nor shall the Jew make answer before the judge in the ecclesiastical court, but the Jew shall appear before his palatine appointed for that term, and furthermore the aforesaid palatine, along with our governor for that term, shall be required to defend and protect that Jew, and prohibit his responding to the summons of the ecclesiastical court. No Christian is to accuse a Jew of blood libel.
36. Jews are allowed to purchase any items, as well as to touch bread and other food.

1334 - Kazimierz the Great reaffirms and expands Jewish rights in the Polish Lands as per the Statute of Kalisz.  
(The statute was ratified by subsequent Polish Kings Casimir IV in 1453 and Sigismund I in 1539)

King Cazimierz re-affirming Jewish rights



Painting by Wojciech Gerson 1831-1901

King Cazimierz III (*the Great*) 1310 – 1370



Esterika





## Poland begins to become a major Jewish center

1340s – The Black Plague. Waves of Jewish refugees fleeing Western Europe.

***Jews massacred and expelled from Britain 1290, France 1306, Vienna 1420 Spain 1492, Portugal 1497, Prague 1501***

1380s – Beginning of union between Poland & Lithuania. Jewish rights extended to include Lithuania

1400s – Growth of Jewish population and persecution. Jews expelled to the suburbs of Krakow and Warsaw

1500s – Poland begins to emerge as a major Torah center. Major personalities Rav Yaakov Polak in Krakow, Rav Shalom Shachna in Lublin, Rav Moshe Isserles (Ramah) in Krakow



**Rabbi Moshe Isserles 1525-1572**

***The Light of the West***



**Ramah Synagogue Krakow (1553) Entrance Gate**



**Ramah Synagogue Backyard Cemetery**



## Polish – Lithuanian Commonwealth (1569) Formal union between Poland & Lithuania: The Republic of the Two Nations

Beginning of “Golden Age” for Poland and for Polish Jewry. Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth becomes center of Ashkenazi Jewry



### Jewish Autonomy

Vaa'd Arba Aratzot – The Council of the Four Lands 1570s – 1764. (Lithuanian Vaa'd withdraws in 1623)



## The Shtetl

1700s - Emergence of the predominately Jewish market villages (*Shtetl*) as the economic bridge between the rural farmers and the urban markets



1618 – 1648: The Thirty Years War. More Jewish refugees from Western Europe find refuge in Poland

1648 – 1654 Ukrainian Cossacks (Eastern Orthodox) led by Bohdan Chmielniki revolt against Poland. ***They massacre tens of thousands of Jews and Catholics.*** גזרות ת"ח ות"ט

**1650s: End of Polish “Golden Age”.** Over the next few decades:

- Commonwealth weakened by tensions between Polish Kings and nobility
- Rising power of Russia. Conquers eastern and northern parts of the Commonwealth (Ukraine & Lithuania)
- Sweden invades western areas of Commonwealth
- Instability, poverty, discontent. Growth of Anti-Semitism
- Expulsions and massacres of Jews



From 1795 – 1918 the Jews of Poland no longer live in a single political cultural, religious and linguistic entity. The Jews of Western Poland are under German(Prussian) rule, the Jews of southern Poland (Galicia) are under Austrian rule and the Jews of Central Poland, and formerly Polish Lithuania, Latvia, Belarus and Ukraine are under Russian Czarist rule



# The Pale of Jewish Settlement

The partition of Poland brought millions of Jews who were living in the formerly Polish territories under Russian rule. Since the Russians did not want large numbers of Jews from the Polish lands moving to Russia proper, (*Russia had already banned Jews in the 1500s*), Jews were required to continue living in the formerly Polish lands (more or less) which became the core of the **“Pale of Jewish Settlement”** where Jews were permitted to live.





By 1880, over 5 Million Jews lived in the Pale and 80% of world Jewry lived in the partitioned formerly Polish lands.

### 1881-1914

Facing extreme Russian persecution, economic restrictions and **mass expulsions**, over 2,500,000 Jews flee from the Pale and other sections of partitioned Poland - mostly to the USA



## 1800s – Winds of Change....

In the 1800s with the emergence of the modern national state, minorities – including Jews – begin to be emancipated and given some basic civil rights as citizens. This is also the period where Jews will be required to take on hereditary family names for purposes of taxation and military drafts.

### *Civil Rights for Jews??!!!*

Jews begin to be granted some basic civil rights in the partitioned Polish territories as follows:

Prussian Poland - 1812

Austrian Poland – 1867 (Emperor Franz Josef)

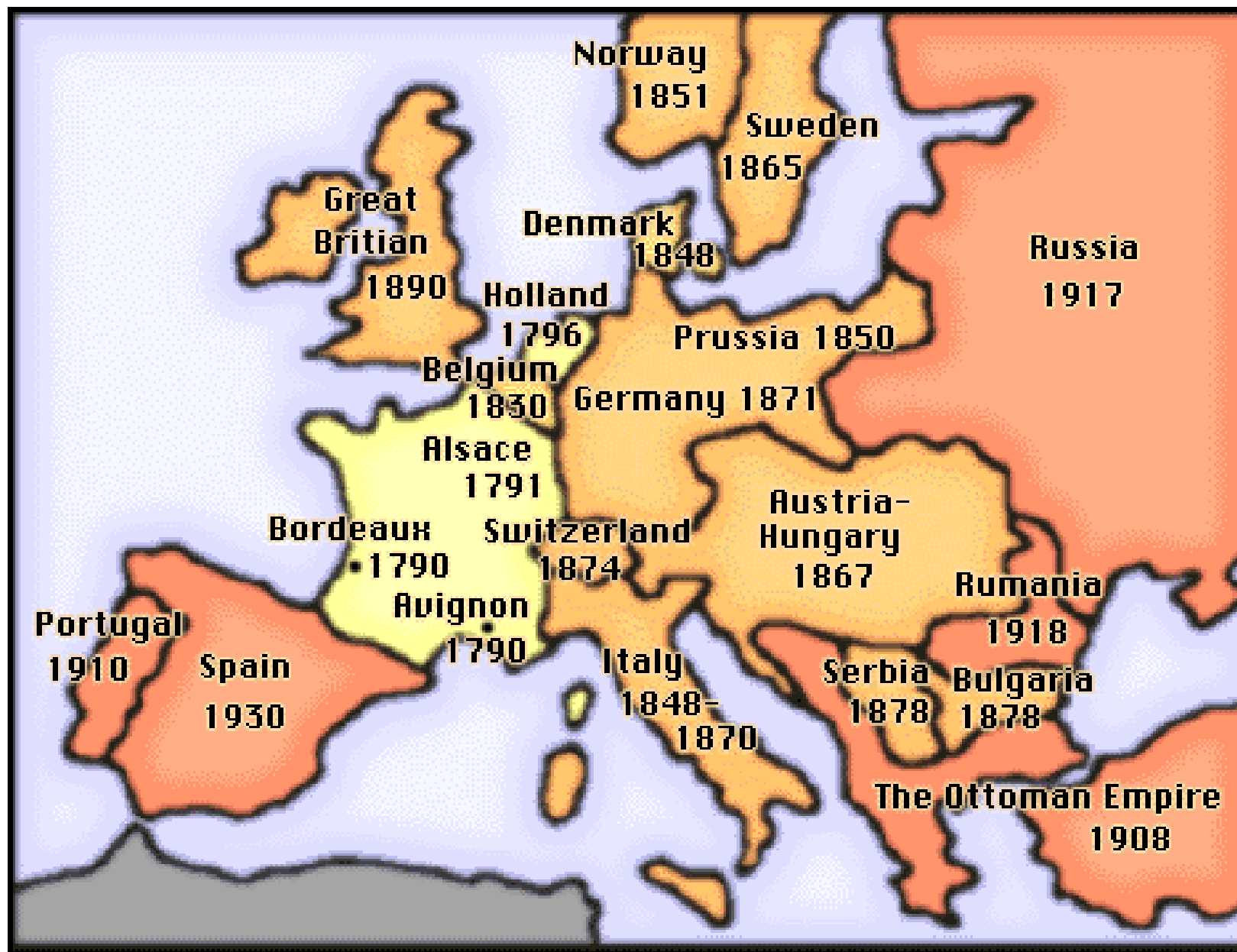
Russian Poland - Never



### **End of the Shtetl**

Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century as the industrial revolution takes hold in Eastern Europe, the economic role of the “shtetl” as the middleman between farmers and merchants fades. **Jews flock to the urban centers**





**EMANCIPATION OF EUROPEAN JEWRY 1789-1930**



## 1918 – 1939 Interwar Poland - Poland Independent for the first time since 1795

Versailles treaty guarantees minority rights in newly independent countries like Poland  
In newly independent Poland there are interethnic struggles, economic and political chaos, anti-Semitism, pogroms.

**1919 - Marshal Jozef Pilsudski** becomes “Chief of State” and fights off Soviet invasion



1926 – Pilsudski seizes power in a military coup to end political, economic and social chaos in Poland. **Strong promoter of “multi cultural Poland”** – partnership of the various ethnic and religious groups to solidify Polish identity and fight off the USSR. **Seen as a friend and defender of the Jewish community.**

Under Pilsudski Jewish life flourishes – Yiddish theater and literature, YIVO, Zionist movements, Macabiah sports,

Hebrew and Polish education, Jewish members of Parliament, Reform and Modern Orthodoxy, Yeshivat Chachmei Lublin.

**Jews begin to participate in civil life and begin to feel and identify as “Polish”**

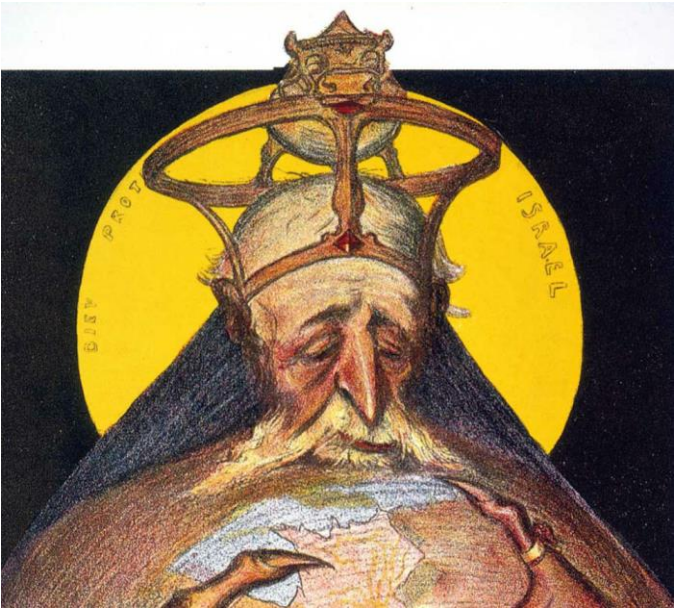
**1935 - Pilsudski dies. Situation of Jews changes rapidly and drastically.**

1935 – 1939 Catholic and nationalist political leadership institute anti Jewish measures including economic boycotts of Jewish businesses, limits on number of Jewish students allowed in universities, restrictions on shechitah and usher in an environment of tolerance of political and physical attacks on Jews.





Nazi Anti-Semitic Imagery

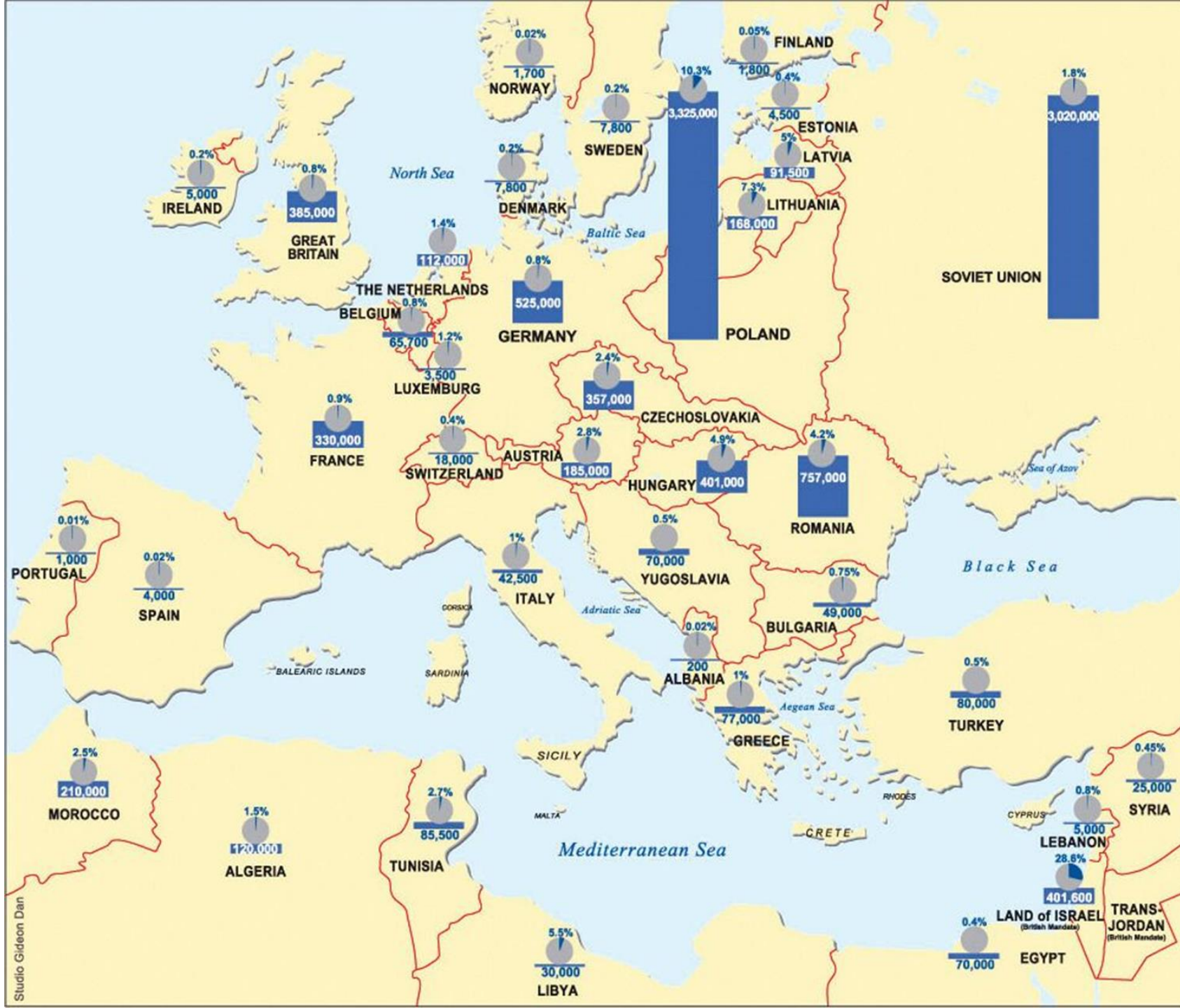


„Der Welt des Judentum ist das Geld. Das am Welt zu verstehen, beginnt er die anderen. Versteht er nicht nicht dass, bis er auf einem goldenen Reichthum sitzen kann, bis er sein König des Reiches geworden ist.“

Figure 96: A Nazi caricature of a Jewish stockbroker







### In 1939...

Over 6 Million Jews in Poland and the USSR

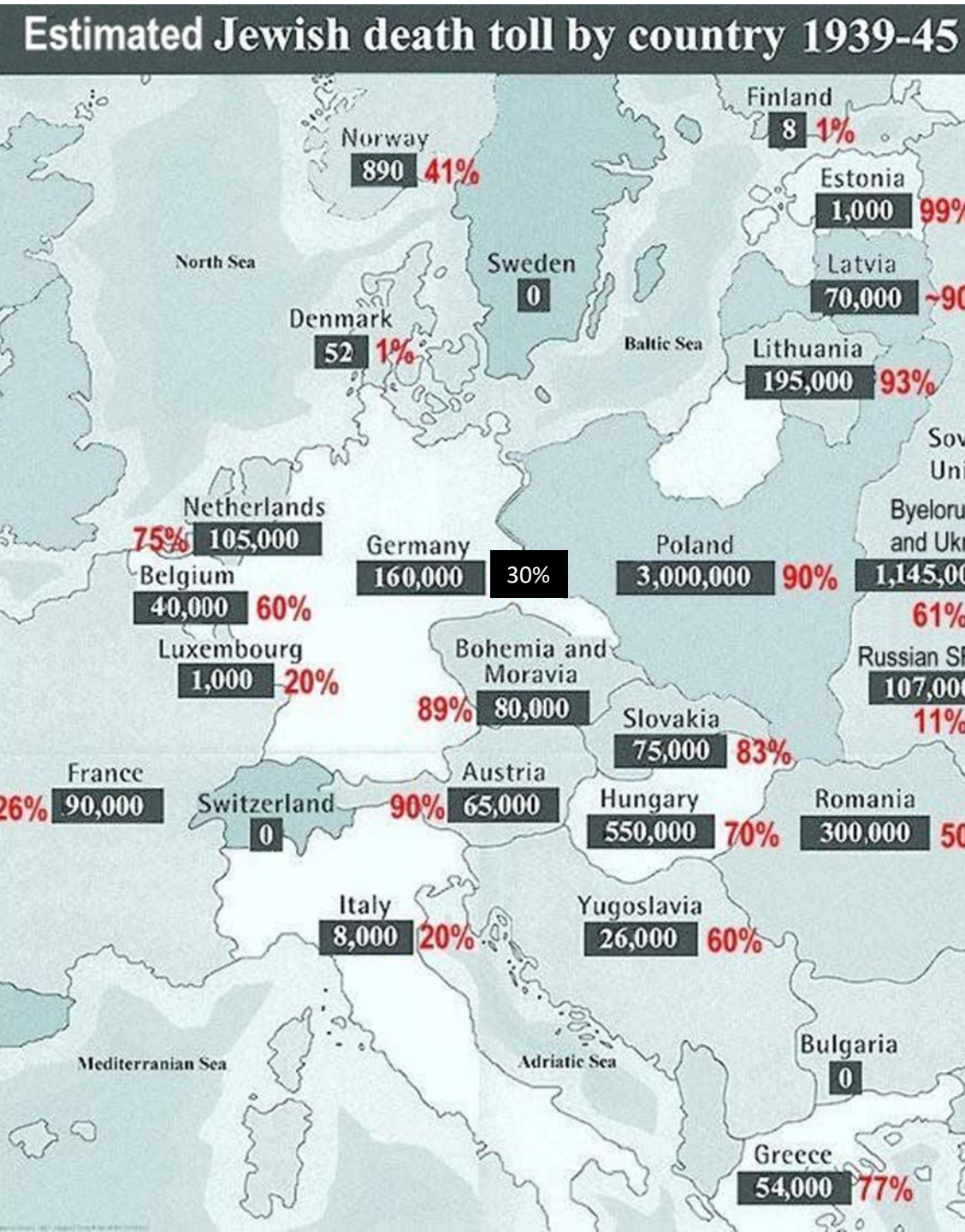
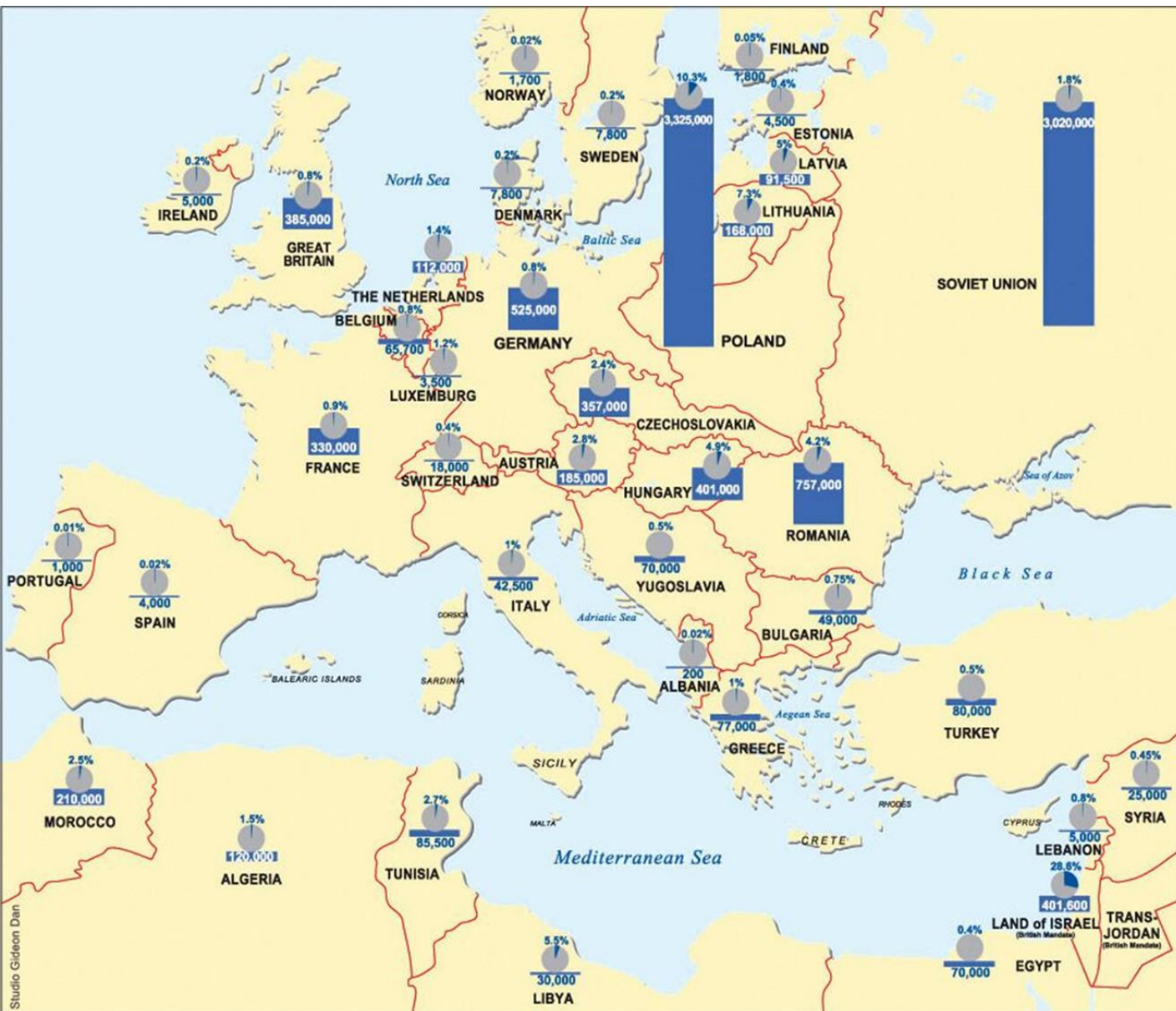
Over 3 Million Jews in other European countries

**September 1, 1939 – German Invasion of Poland.** Poland partitioned between Germany and Soviet Union

## Fourth Partition of Poland October 1939









## Timeline

1932-1933 Nazi Party wins elections in Germany. Form government

1935 – Nuremberg Laws stripping Jews of citizenship rights

1936 – Berlin Olympics

### 1938

**March:** Anschluss – Austria annexed to the Reich

**July:** Evian Conference   **September:** Neville Chamberlain “Peace for Our Time”   **October:** Allies betray Czechoslovakia – Sudetenland annexed to the Reich   **November:** Kristallnacht

March 1939 – Germany annexes remainder of Czechoslovakia

September 1, 1939 – Germany invades Poland. Poland partitioned between Germany & USSR. Formal start of WWII

1939 – 1941: Jews forced from their homes in Eastern Europe - Period of Ghettoization

### Mass Murder of the Jews

June 1941 – Germany breaks non aggression treaty and invades Soviet Union

**June 1941 – December 1942 Over 1,800,000 Jews murdered by mobile death squads “Einsatzgruppen” (Babi Yar, Ponar etc) following behind the German armies**

January 1942: Secret Conference at Wannsee, Germany : Decision to operationalize the mass murder of the Jews of Europe. “Final Solution” to the “Jewish Problem”

**1942 – 1945: Approximately 3,000,000 Jews murdered in the “Death Camps”**

Chelmno: 350,000   Sobibor: 250,000   Belzic: 500,000   Treblinka: 870,000   Auschwitz-Birkenau: 1,000,000



**Additionally, over 1,000,000 Jews murdered in concentration camps, slave labor camps, ghettos and elsewhere.**



While Nazi anti-Semitism built on the history and social reality of Christian anti-Semitism, it had a different ideological focus: racial rather than religious. Historically, Jews often had the option of escaping Christian anti-Semitism by converting to Christianity - although the vast majority of Jews, when confronted with the choice of death or conversion, chose death “**Al Kiddush Hashem**”. Under Nazism, this “traditional” escape hatch did not exist.

### **Kiddush HaHayim – Staying Alive in the Warsaw Ghetto as a Religious Imperative**

#### **Rabbi Yitzhak Nissenboim**

1868 – 1942

Religious Zionist Leader in Poland



*“This is the hour of **Kiddush HaHayim** (Sanctification of Life) and not of **Kiddush Hashem** (Sanctifying God) by death. Formerly, our enemies demanded our soul and the Jew sacrificed his body in sanctifying Gods name. Now the enemy demands the body of the Jew. This makes it imperative for the Jew to defend and protect it”*

## Poland During the Shoa

Approximately 3,300,000 Jews lived in Poland before the war

**Over 3,000,000 Polish Jews murdered 1939 – 1945.** Of this number an estimated 200-300,000 Jews were murdered by fellow Poles (mostly in the countryside) while over 2,700,000 Jews were murdered by the Germans and their allies (*for more, see books by Barbara Engelking and Jan Gross*)

During WWII, Poland ceases to exist as a country. The Polish government in exile is in London. It is generally supportive of efforts to save Jews and tries to mobilize the Allies to help Poland and the Jews. **Jan Karski** acts as a courier on their behalf to try to bring news of what is happening in Poland – including the mass murder of Polish Jews to the attention of world leaders. They show little interest in his reports about the Jews.

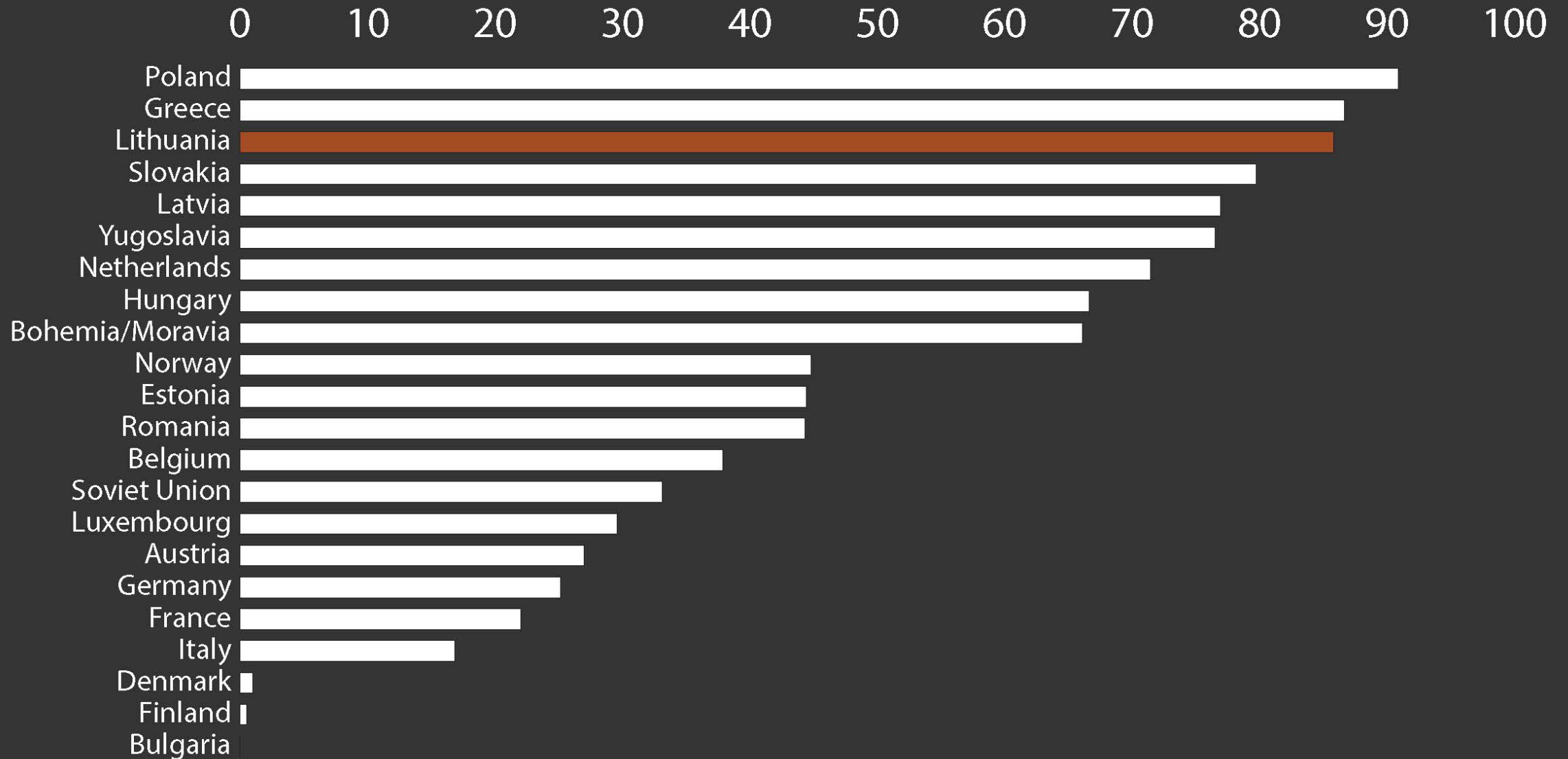
*Jan Karski*



Excerpts from a discussion between Polish Jewish prisoners in 1944 at the Radom Nazi Slave Labor Camp about Polish complicity in the murder of Jews as recorded by survivor Alexander Donat in the *“The Holocaust Kingdom*  
- **“For years the Poles have been dreaming of getting rid of the Jews and now...Hitler does it for them...At bottom, they’re delighted, however horrified by the inhuman cruelty...In Poland there has not been a single guerilla attack on a concentration camp for Jews, not a single attempt to stop a train carrying Jews to the gas chambers. Why? Because...to them the Jews have never been part of the Polish nation; patriotic solidarity does not apply to them and they don’t fall under the commandment to “love thy neighbor”**  
- **But “a Pole who shelters or helps a Jew is subject to the death penalty. They themselves are terrorized and there aren’t many heroes. If the shoe had been on the other foot...would we have risked our lives to save theirs?”**  
- **“I admitted that the Poles were terrorized but I insisted that they were a courageous people, and were threatened with death not only for sheltering Jews but for many other things- smuggling, slaughtering cattle...trading in foreign currency...political activities, reading underground literature listening to foreign broadcasts and so on – and they kept right on doing them. Why was it that only helping Jews scared them? I don’t blame the individual Pole...but their leaders – government, political parties, intellectuals, the Catholic Church - who failed to create the proper climate. A Pole didn’t hesitate to slaughter a pig because it was praised as a patriotic virtue, but saving a Jew was a sin and a disgrace”.**



# Approximate Percentage of Jews Killed during the Holocaust (by country)



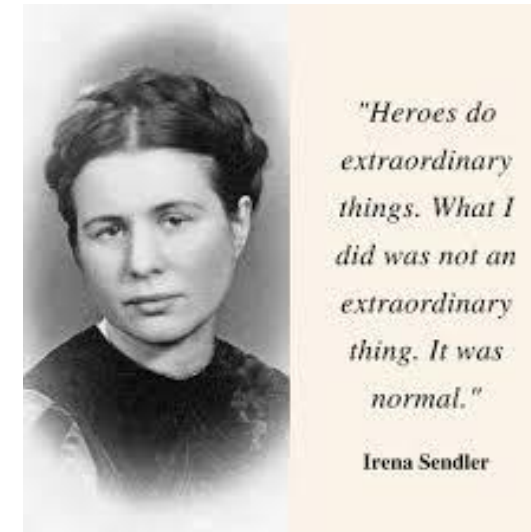
## חסידים אומות העולם – The Righteous Amongst the Nations

Yad Vashem has recognized almost 28,000 “Righteous Among the Nations” for saving Jews during the Shoa.  
The largest group are Poles – over 7,100.

The Ulma Family



Irena Sendler

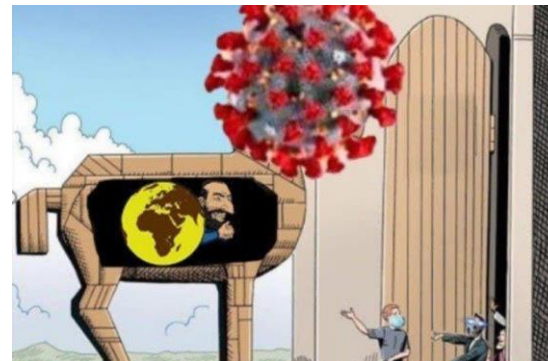


### Ulma Family Memorial in Markowa, Poland

The inscription on the monument reads: *Saving the lives of others they laid down their own lives. Hiding eight elder brothers in faith, they were killed with them. May their sacrifice be a call for respect and love to every human being! They were the sons and daughters of this land; they will remain in our hearts.*



## Contemporary anti-Semitic imagery



*I'm not anti-Semitic: I'm just anti-Zionist*