

33 Jews and Armenians in Central Europe, ca. 1900

Jews and Armenians in Central Europe have several characteristics in common: (1) both have been in certain areas as long or even longer than some of the region's "indigenous" peoples; (2) neither has ever had its "own" territory in the region; (3) for the most part their members have resided in towns and cities where they have been associated with urban professions; and (4) both have played a significant role in the economic, cultural, and, to a degree, political life of the countries where they have resided.

The Jewish presence in certain parts of Central Europe dates from classical times, when Jews appeared in Greek cities along the Adriatic, Aegean, and Black Sea coasts. However, by the nineteenth century, the vast majority of Jews in Central Europe were not descendants of residents from those earlier times but the descendants of immigrants who came to the region in the Middle Ages and who comprised two distinct groups—the Ashkenazim and Sephardim. It is also interesting to note the sheer size of these groups, in particular the Ashkenazim. In 1900, of the estimated 10,600,000 Jews throughout the world, over 70 percent were Ashkenazim living in Central Europe. (For the statistical distribution of Jews according to country, see the chart accompanying Map 30.)

The Ashkenazim are Jews from Germanic Central Europe who are distinguished from Sephardim by certain matters of ritual, dress, and speech—an older form of German (influenced by Slavic and Hebrew borrowings) that is called Yiddish. When discrimination and persecution of Jews was on the rise in the Holy Roman Empire during the twelfth century, they began to move eastward, in particular to the Kingdom of Poland, which encouraged and welcomed them. The migration into Poland continued during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Then, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when Poland expanded eastward and was transformed into the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Jews were encouraged to settle in the eastern parts of the country (Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine). This trend was halted during the Zaporozhian Cossack revolt of 1648, in which thousands of Jews were killed or fled from Ukraine. Within the next half century, however, the community there was restored and it even expanded in numbers, at least in Ukrainian territories west of the Dnieper River under Polish rule.

At the end of the eighteenth century, when Poland was partitioned by its neighbors and eventually ceased to exist (1772, 1793, 1795, see Map 22a), most of the heaviest areas of Jewish settlement in the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth came under Russian rule. Almost immediately, the imperial authorities placed restrictions on the movement of Jews to other parts of tsarist Russia. Thus they were, with few exceptions, forced to remain in the western part of the Russian Empire—those lands that had once been part of historic Poland. With reference to Jews, these lands came to be known as the Pale of Settlement, or simply the Pale.

The Pale encompassed all the Russian imperial provinces shown on the accompanying map, minus Courland, Pskov, and Smolensk in the north, but including all of Chernigov, Poltava, and Kherson, as well as Ekaterinoslav and Taurida (with the Crimea) east and south of the Dnieper River. The only other heavily Jewish-inhabited area that had once been part of historic Poland was Galicia, which in 1772 was incorporated into the Austrian Empire.

It was the Pale together with Galicia and Moldavia that became the heartland of Ashkenazic Jewry. And it is from this part of the Ashkenazic world that some of the most important developments in modern Jewish history arose—Hassidism, Zionism, and, of course, Yiddish literature and scholarship.

It was also in the Pale and Galicia where by far the greatest number of Jews in Central Europe lived. Of the estimated 7,468,000 Jews living in Central Europe in 1900, as high as 70 percent lived in the Pale and Galicia. Moreover, of the fifty-eight largest "Jewish" cities in the region, twenty-six were in either the Pale or Galicia (see the accompanying list). The only other areas of significant Jewish population were: (1) Romania's Moldavia together with the neighboring Russian province of Bessarabia, and Austria's Bukovina (both of which were part of Moldavia before 1774); (2) northeastern Hungary (eastern Slovakia and Carpathian Rus'); and (3) Budapest and Vienna, the second and third largest "Jewish" cities. All three areas experienced an influx of Jews from either the Pale or Galicia, with Vienna and Budapest receiving Jews directly from Galicia or via northeastern Hungary.

Jewish migrations to these three areas from the Pale and Galicia were motivated by economic and sometimes political reasons. Migration began in the century between 1750 and 1850 as newcomers arrived in Moldavia, Bukovina, and northeastern Hungary (Carpathian Rus' and northern Transylvania). From the latter regions some began to move on to Budapest as well. Later, with the outbreak of pogroms in the Russian Empire, especially in the 1880s and early 1900s, Jews from the Pale sought refuge in neighboring Austrian Galicia and Bukovina, and in Romanian Moldavia. In turn, poverty-stricken Galician Jews sought to improve their economic status by migrating to northeastern Hungary (and from there to Budapest) or directly to the imperial capital of Vienna. It should also be mentioned that these same decades (1880–1914) witnessed a massive emigration of Central Europe's Jews to western Europe (350,000) and most especially to the urban northeast of the United States (2,400,000). For instance, as high as 52 percent of all immigrants from the Russian Empire residing in the United States in 1910 were Jews.

In contrast to the Ashkenazic Jews of Russia, Austria-Hungary, Romania, and Germany were the Jews in the Balkans. For the most part, these were descendants of the Spanish or Sephardic Jews, who were expelled from Spain in 1492, after which as many as 250,000 emigrated to North



Africa, Italy, and in particular to the Ottoman Empire, where they were welcomed. The Sephardic Jews had their own language called Ladino, a form of archaic Spanish heavily influenced by Hebrew and Aramaic. Like the Yiddish of the Ashkenazim, the Sephardim developed Ladino into a standard language (first in Hebrew and later Latin letters) with its own literature.

The Sephardic Jews were numerically much smaller than the Ashkenazim. For the most part they comprised those Jewish communities in the Balkans that for the longest time were under direct Ottoman rule—Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, and lands still under Ottoman rule in the late nineteenth century. This means that in 1900, when there were an estimated 193,000 Sephardic Jews in Central Europe, the vast majority (140,000) lived in the European portion of the Ottoman Empire.

Like the Ashkenazim, the Sephardim also experienced migration within the region. This was particularly the case with the Sephardic Jews of Greece. After Greece gained its independence and progressively expanded its boundaries northward, Greek authorities persecuted Jews who were suspected—often with justification—of having supported

the Ottoman state. The Greek Jews sought refuge in the remaining Ottoman territory, in particular Salonika, the major Sephardic center, as well as in Sarajevo, Edirne, and the imperial capital of Istanbul. It should also be remembered that after the Sephardim came from Spain to the Balkans, some went farther north (Budapest, Vienna, Cracow, Zamość), where their small communities continued to function in the nineteenth century.

Whereas there were marked similarities between the Jews and Armenians in Central Europe, there was a substantial difference in their relative population sizes. By 1900 there were only 249,000 Armenians throughout all of Central Europe, the vast majority of whom (178,000) lived in the European part of the Ottoman Empire, in particular Istanbul. Moreover, in the rest of Central Europe (again in contrast to the Jews, whose numbers increased in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries), the number of Armenians continued to decline. This was, in part, due to the relatively easier possibility for assimilation, at least with fellow Christians.

The Armenian presence in Central Europe dates from the Byzantine era, specifically during the late sixth-century rule of Emperor Maurice (r. 582–602), himself of Armenian

Largest "Jewish" cities in Central Europe, ca. 1900 (Yiddish or Ladino names follow the slash)

| | Jews | Percentage of total population | | Jews | Percentage of total population |
|----------------------------------|---------|-----------------------------------|---|--------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Warsaw/Varshe | 219,000 | 32.5 | 35. Prague/Prag, Prog | 19,000 | 9.4 |
| 2. Budapest | 166,000 | 23.6 | 36. Bila Tserkva/Sadeh Lavan | 19,000 | 52.9 |
| 3. Vienna/Vin | 147,000 | 8.7 | 37. Uman' | 18,000 | 59.0 |
| 4. Odessa/Odes | 139,000 | 34.4 | 38. Kolomyia/Kolomea, Kolomey | 17,000 | 49.3 |
| 5. Łódź/Lodzh | 99,000 | 31.8 | 39. Kamianets'-Podil's'kyi/ Kumenets-Podolsk | 16,000 | 40.0 |
| 6. Berlin | 92,000 | 4.6 | 40. Edirne/Adrianopol | 15,000 | 18.5 |
| 7. Vilnius/Vilne | 64,000 | 41.0 | 41. Łomża/Lomzhe | 14,000 | 53.8 |
| 8. Salonika/Saloniki | 60,000 | 57.1 | 42. Rivne/Rovne | 14,000 | 56.0 |
| 9. Chişinău/Keshenev | 50,000 | 46.0 | 43. Ivano-Frankivs'k/ Stanislav, Stanisle | 14,000 | 46.1 |
| 10. Istanbul/Kushta | 48,000 | 4.4 | 44. Balta/Balte | 13,000 | 57.0 |
| 11. Minsk | 48,000 | 52.3 | 45. Przemyśl/Premishle | 13,000 | 28.1 |
| 12. Iaşi/Yas | 45,000 | 57.7 | 46. Ternopil'/Tarnopol | 13,000 | 44.2 |
| 13. Lviv/Lvuv, Lemberik | 44,000 | 27.7 | 47. Tarnów/Tarnuv, Torne | 12,000 | 41.2 |
| 14. Białystok | 42,000 | 63.4 | 48. Brody/Brod | 12,000 | 72.1 |
| 15. Berdychiv/Barditshev | 42,000 | 78.0 | 49. Polatsk/Polotsk | 12,000 | 61.0 |
| 16. Bucharest | 40,000 | 14.1 | 50. Mohyliv-Podil's'kyi/ Molev-Podolsk | 12,000 | 55.3 |
| 17. Vitebsk/Vitebsk | 34,000 | 52.4 | 51. Oradea/Groysvardayn, Nagy Varad | 12,000 | 25.8 |
| 18. Daugavpils/Dvinsk | 32,000 | 46.0 | 52. Częstochowa/Tshenstokhov | 12,000 | 26.7 |
| 19. Kiev | 32,000 | 12.8 | 53. Galaţi/Galats | 12,000 | 19.2 |
| 20. Brest/Brisk | 31,000 | 65.8 | 54. Vinnytsia/Vinitse | 12,000 | 38.3 |
| 21. Zhytomyr/Zhitomir | 31,000 | 46.6 | 55. Słonim | 11,000 | 78.0 |
| 22. Poznań/Pozna, Pozen, Poyzn | 30,000 | 22.2 | 56. Khmelnyts'kyi/Proskurov | 11,000 | 49.9 |
| 23. Kaunas/Kovne | 28,000 | 37.1 | 57. Radom/Rodem, Rudem | 11,000 | 37.7 |
| 24. Cracow/Kroke, Kruke | 26,000 | 28.1 | 58. Siedlce/Shedlets | 11,000 | 31.8 |
| 25. İzmir/Smirna | 25,000 | 12.4 | | | |
| 26. Lublin | 24,000 | 47.0 | | | |
| 27. Hrodna/Grodne, Horodna | 23,000 | 49.0 | | | |
| 28. Pinsk | 22,000 | 77.3 | | | |
| 29. Chernivtsi/Tshernovits | 22,000 | 31.9 | | | |
| 30. Mahilioŭ/Molev | 22,000 | 50.0 | | | |
| 31. Babruisk/Bobroysk, Bobruysk | 21,000 | 60.0 | | | |
| 32. Homel/Homel, Homlye | 20,000 | 56.4 | | | |
| 33. Mykolaiv/Nikolayev-Nayshtetl | 20,000 | 21.9 | | | |
| 34. Wrocław/Bresloy, Bresle | 20,000 | 5.0 | | | |

SOURCES: Alfred Nossig, ed., *Jüdische Statistik* (Berlin, 1903); *Jüdisches Lexikon*, vol. 4/2 (Berlin, 1930), pp. 630–701; *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 16 vols. (Jerusalem, 1972); Adam Wandruszka and Peter Urbanitsch, eds., *Die Habsburgermonarchie, 1848–1918*, vol. 3: *Die Völker des Reiches*, pt. 2 (Vienna, 1980).

origin. Many Armenians left their homeland in what was then Byzantine-controlled eastern Anatolia and settled in northern Thrace, in particular the Plovdiv region. This became the foundation for Bulgaria's Armenian communities that lasted throughout the two Bulgarian empires and the Ottoman period. In the early nineteenth century, there were 140,000 Armenians in Bulgaria living in twenty towns, the most important of which were Plovdiv, Ruse, Sofia, Shumen, Varna, and Burgas. By 1900, however, the Armenian community in Bulgaria numbered only about 15,000.

Much larger was the Armenian community in Romania, which in 1900 was estimated at 50,000. The oldest Armenian communities there were in Moldavia and dated from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It was from this same period that neighboring Podolia also had an important Armenian colony at Kamianets'-Podil's'kyi and two smaller communities in Galicia at Lviv and Iazlovets'. The Galician and Podolian Armenian settlements were to flourish during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and even though new ones were founded

in Podolia in the eighteenth century, by 1900 assimilation with Poles or Ukrainians had reduced the number of Armenians in both Austrian Galicia and Russian Podolia to a few thousand. Aside from Galicia, Austria-Hungary had a few Armenian communities in Transylvania, in particular at Gherla/Armenierstadt, but assimilation also reduced their numbers. Thus, if in 1857 Austria-Hungary had an estimated 13,000 Armenians, by 1910 they numbered under 3,000. In the southwestern provinces of the Russian Empire, there were in 1897 about 4,000 Armenians, three-quarters of whom resided in small towns and cities in Kherson province, in particular in Odessa.

The largest percentage of Armenians remained in lands under Ottoman rule, where their number in the European part of the empire reached 178,000 (1897). Small communities were found in towns in Macedonia and Thrace, with a sizable group in Edirne. But by far the vast majority (158,000) resided in the largest "Armenian" city anywhere—the imperial capital of Istanbul.