
Jews in Poland: A Documentary History by Iwo Cyprian Pogonowski (1998), 435 pages



This book is a soft-cover reprint of the 1993 edition, now issued by Hippocrene Books. A few supplementary articles have been added. It chronicles the life of Jewish people in Poland over the period of some 700 years, written by a non-Jew. During this period Christians and Jews- as a rule lived amicably side by side. We are told that by the middle of the 18th century some 70 percent of the world's Jews resided in the Commonwealth. As Prof. Richard Pipes states in the Foreword, "contrary to prevailing, opinion, the story of Polish Jewry was not always one of poverty and persecution." Rising nationalism in the 19th century brought on lamentable antisemitism in various parts of Europe including Poland, reaching its apex in Hitler's Holocaust.

The book is essentially a compendium of historical materials presented in various forms. The chronological narrative takes up only the first 130 pages. It is followed by numerous appendices citing quotations from prominent politicians, writers, sociologists and even psychiatrists. A rich art section depicts Jewish life, person ages, and even newspaper reprints. Over one hundred maps with extensive annotations starting with 966 A.D. help the reader to locate events and occurrences in various parts of Europe but primarily in Poland. However, the author's superimposed diagrams tend to obscure rather than clarify some maps.

The entire work is a testimonial to Pogonowski's diligent research, attention to detail, and his most honest and impartial presentation of facts. The book includes an unusually lengthy index of 4,000 entries, a welcome aid to the reader.

George E. Suboczewski