

## Tarnow

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## Tarnow

**Name in Polish:** Tarnow

**Name in German:** Tarnau

**Name in Ukrainian:** Тárнів (Тарнув)

**Name in Russian:** Tarnov (Тарнув)

**Name in Hebrew:** טרנוב

**Name in Yiddish:** Tarna [טרנא]

### Administrative History:

Years	State	Province	District	
Until 1772	Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: Kingdom of Poland	Rus Voivodship ( <i>Województwo ruskie</i> )		
1772-1867	"Habsburg Empire", since 1804 - Austrian Empire	Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria ( <i>Königreich Galizien und Lodomerien</i> )		
1867-1914	Austro-Hungarian Monarchy	Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria ( <i>Königreich Galizien und Lodomerien</i> )		
1914-1915	Under Russian occupation	General-Government Galitsiia	Tarnow, Galiscia, Austro-Hungarian Monarchy	
1915-1918	Austro-Hungarian Monarchy	Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria ( <i>Königreich Galizien und Lodomerien</i> )		
1918 - May 1919	West-Ukrainian People's Republic			
May 1919 - September 1939	Republic of Poland	Stanisławów województwo	Tarnow powiat, Krakow województwo	
September 1939 - June 1941	USSR: Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic	Stanislav oblast'		
June 1941 - July 1944	Under German occupation:  General Government ( <i>Das Generalgouvernement für die besetzten polnischen Gebiete</i> )	Distrikt Galizien		
Since 1945	Republic of Poland	Malopolsky województwo		

### Population Data:

Year	Total	Jews	Percentage of Jews
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1765	?	1,080	-
1820	?	1,640	
1880	24,627	11,349	46%
1890	27,574	11,677	42.3%
1900	31,691	12,586	39.7%
1910	36,731	15,108	41.1%
1921	35,347	15,608	44.1%
2006	117,109		

**External links:** [Tarnow in THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY DIGITAL COLLECTIONS](#)  
[Tarnow in JewishGen site](#)

### Remarks:

Tarnów is located on the eastern bank of the Dunajec River, one of the tributaries of the Wisła River, about 70 km. east of Krakow. In 1330 two adjacent villages with similar names were consolidated into one city, under the name of Tarnów, and King Władysław I awarded the city Magdeburg rights. The location of the city on the thoroughfare between Lvov on the east and internal Poland on the west turned it into an important point of reference on the trade route between Eastern Europe and Hungary and the eastern lands. The strategic location of the city brought, of course, to its economic development, but also turned it into a point of contention between various influential forces in the area. Already in the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century the city fortress was captured by Hungarian nobles, and during the Tatar, Ottoman and Swedish wars of the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries, Tarnów suffered heavy damage, both economically and physically. With the Austrian conquest, the route between Lvov and Krakow returned to its former status as a central trade route, and thus Tarnów's place as an important trade center was reestablished. Following the First World War, trade with the East diminished, and the economic standing of the city followed suit.

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### The Jews of Tarnów

It is likely that Jews arrived in Tarnów during the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries, along with additional immigrants from Germany and Western Europe, who were brought to the city to bolster its economic standing. In 1581 the Jews of Tarnów were awarded a bill of privilege by the ruler of the city, Jan Tarnowski, which allowed them to purchase and build homes, to engage in trade and in other handicrafts, so long as they did not impinge on the rights of the Christian inhabitants of the city. In addition, the Jews were given legal rights that placed them under the direct authority of the ruler of the city, as opposed to the municipal court. In this year there was already an established Jewish community in the city, as evidenced by the synagogue the community maintained. In 1583 the Jews were given permission to build a cemetery, and these rights were renewed in 1667. One should also note an edict issued by the nobleman Mikołaj Ligeza, which required the Jews to establish an army unit and to participate in the ongoing defense of the city from Tatar invasions. Rights awarded the Jews led to much friction between the Christian and Jewish inhabitants of the city.

The Jewish community of Tarnów was part of the 'Lesser Poland' region of 'the Council of the Four Lands,' and was subordinate to the community of Szydłów, and later Krakow. Individuals from the leadership of the Tarnów Jewish community, who served as part of the national leadership of the Council, however, can be found amongst the signatories of various of its edicts and resolutions, such as Rabbi Yehezkel Zvi Hirsch and his sons, Rabbi Judah and Rabbi Zev Wolf Segal Landau. In addition, several well-known personages served as rabbis in the city. At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Rabbi Abraham Abele Gombiner, author of the famous halakhic composition '*Magen Avraham*,' was employed as a rabbi in the Tarnów community, and in 1647 Rabbi Samuel Shmelke Horowitz of Nikolsburg was appointed the city rabbi, a position in which he served for approximately 40 years, followed by Rabbi Eliezer Margaliyot, author of '*Ma'ase Roke'ach*.' Following the First World War, Rabbi Meir Arik, an important halakhist of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and the author of several books, served in this position.

With the Austrian conquest, the condition of the Jews of Tarnów grew worse. They were subjected to heavy taxation and other decrees and were discriminated against by the Austrian authorities. In

addition to economic decrees, the community was ordered to send 19 families to settle agricultural farms and to finance the founding of the Jewish agricultural settlement. However, due to the difficult financial situation the community was in and the many taxes they were subjected to, this plan never got under way. In addition, the community was charged with financing the construction of a Herz Homberg school, whose purpose was the introduction of German language and culture into the Jewish community. The school operated until 1806.

In 1839 and 1844, the Jews of Tarnów were accused of the murder of a Christian women and boy in order to use their blood for the baking of *matzot* for Passover. The blood libel eventually ended with the acquittal of the defendants, but caused much suffering to the Jewish community. Among other things, the municipality of Tarnów placed various restrictions and passed edicts against the Jews and limited the spaces in which they were permitted to live or engage in trade. These restrictions were only removed after many years of legal strife. During the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Jews were the victims of riots several times (in 1870, 1897 and 1901), and order was established only after the army intervened.

Despite these incidences of antisemitism and violence against Jews, the Jewish community of Tarnów, along with the general population of the city, grew exponentially throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some of the city's Jews were partners in the development of industrial factories that were established in the city: a mechanized flour mill and factories for the processing of chicory, oil, soap, candles and underwear. Many tanning factories were built in the city as well. Despite this Jewish involvement in varied economic undertaking, most of Tarnów's Jews, like the Jews in most Galician cities, were peddlers, small-scale tradesmen and craftsmen of various sorts: tailors, furriers, cobblers, glaziers and metalsmiths. In 1842, a well-appointed Jewish hospital was built in Tarnów. The community council began the construction of a new and large synagogue in 1864, a project which took about 40 years, with the new synagogue's inauguration in 1908 attended by representatives of the Austrian government and army. Despite this, the Jewish community did not realize its elective power in the free municipal elections beginning with the elections of 1874 and up to the beginning of the First World War. Only ten of the 36 representatives in the city council were Jews, despite the fact that Jews comprised about 45% of the general population of the city.

At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, with the growth of the Polish nationalist movement, the Poles in the city announced an economic ban on Jewishly-owned businesses, in order to return control of the city's trade to Polish hands. Despite the Jews' financial difficulties, however, the ban did not seriously affect their businesses. Various financial associations aided those in need, and a credit bank for business owners was opened. The first Jewish credit associations was established already in 1829 – 'the Association for Credit' – and in the 1880s 'the Credit Front' and the 'Discount Bank' were formed. In addition to these, in 1864 a charity fund was established to supply interest-free loans for needy families. In 1876, the '*Yad ha-Haruzim*' association, which organized the Jewish artisans of the city, both in terms of representation and for the provision of mutual support through credit, was formed; in 1905 a tradesmen's union was formed, and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a loan fund supported by the 'Alliance' was established.

Already in 1891, the first Zionist association, '*Ahavat Zion*,' was established, with the object of building a settlement in Palestine, and a school for the instruction of Hebrew was founded in 1896. This organization ultimately failed, but branches of '*Hovevei Zion*,' '*ha-Shahar*,' '*Po'alei Zion*' and '*ha-Mizrachi*' were established in Tarnów at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as a '*Saffa Berurah*' school for the instruction of Hebrew.

With the outbreak of the First World War, on 10.11.1914, Tarnów was captured by the Russian army, which abused the city's inhabitants, and particularly the Jews. The city remained under Russian control until 05.05.1915. When the Russian forces retreated from the city, they took 31 members of the Jewish community with them into the depths of Russia as hostages. A lot of Jewish possessions were also taken, both by the Russians and by the Polish citizens of the city. With the end of the war rioting broke out in the city, and many instances of robbery and assault were perpetrated by both Polish soldiers and mobs of simple citizens, incited by the church and by the nationalistic organization 'the Black Hand,' which operated in Galicia. This behavior led the Jews to form a defense militia composed of former Austrian soldiers and commanders, and this militia was also put in charge of providing healthcare for the Jewish population. With the aid of the American Joint

Distribution Committee, soup kitchens and support in obtaining very basic products were established in the city. Additional institutions for the support of Russian refugees were established in the 1920s, and in the 1930s similar organizations targeting refugees from Germany and Austria. In addition, several orphanages were built in the city.

As mentioned above, as part of the general financial situation in Poland between the two World Wars, Tarnów's status as a trade center declined, and the financial situation of the Jews was adversely affected. There were constant attempts by unions of Polish artisans to impinge on the Jews' livelihood, and to these were added harassment by the authorities. The internal communal aid organizations continued to operate at full force, and additional organizations were formed to support the needy. Alongside this the community continued to support several educational, cultural and social aid institutions. Different professional courses were organized, and the community sustained a variety of cultural activities. A general public library was built, as well as a sport union, 'Samson,' and new religious institutions – *batei midrash* and synagogues, and the widespread political Zionist activity continued at full force.

## The Second World War

With the outbreak of the Second World War, many Jewish refugees from the vicinity of Silesia and Krakow began arriving in Tarnów, together with units of the receding Polish army. German army units entered the city on 08.09.1939, about a week after the outbreak of the war, and began robbing, abusing and capturing Jews for forced labor. In addition, all Jewishly-owned stores were marked with a Star of David, Jewish bank accounts were frozen, and later on Jews were forced to wear white ribbons with blue Stars of David on their arms. On 09.11.1939 all the synagogues in the city and the community council building were burned. In the summer of 1940 the Jews of the surrounding area were all rounded up and brought to Tarnów, bringing the total Jewish population of the city up to around 40,000 people. Throughout this period, the gestapo kidnapped and murdered Jews on multiple occasions, and occasionally also held public executions. Despite this difficult situation, the community founded soup kitchens and organizations to aid orphans and the needy.

The first roundup of the Jews of Tarnów took place on 11.06.1942, and was accompanied by much brutality: babies were murdered in front of their parents, dozens of children were rounded up in the school building and murdered there, and infants' heads were smashed against the cobblestones in the marketplace. On the first day of the roundup around 3,500 people were sent to the Bełżec extermination camp, and the Germans began sending groups of Jews to the cemetery, where they were shot to death into large communal graves. The roundup continued on 15.06.1942, but at this stage some members of the Judenrat refused to supply the Germans with lists of Jews and were shot in their place. Throughout this period, trains full of Jews were sent to Bełżec, and groups of Jews were taken out of the city and shot in surrounding areas. By the end of the roundup, on the 18th of June, between 15 and 20 thousand Jews, about half the Jewish population of the city, had been killed. With the end of the roundup, a closed ghetto was constructed, and its walls guarded by cooperating Polish army officials. On 10.09.1942 the second roundup began, and 8,000 Jews were sent to Bełżec. Following this roundup only 15,000 Jews remained in Tarnów, some of whom were new arrivals from surrounding settlements. Throughout this entire period, sporadic murders took place. On 12.19.1943 the third roundup began, and the remaining Jews of Tarnów, around 11,000 people, were sent to Auschwitz (around 7,000 people) or to the infamous labor camp Płaszów, near Krakow.

(Roe Goldshmidt)

## Sources:

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The official website of the Tarnów municipality, which includes an historical overview by Maria Sasiadowicz: <http://www.tarnow.pl/Miasto/Ciekawostki/Historia-miasta/Kalendarium>

**Historical-cultural region:** Western Galicia

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