

Why Did our Ancestors Leave a Nice Place Like the Pale?

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From the 1790s until World War I, Jews in the Russian Empire were for the most part restricted to Poland and the Pale of Jewish Settlement. The Pale consisted of the Vice regencies of Belorussia, Bessarabia, Lithuania, New Russia, and Ukraine. Poland was a separate entity which was merged into the Pale by the early 1870s. Each vice regency was composed of one or more guberniyas (provinces) which were further subdivided into uyezds (districts).



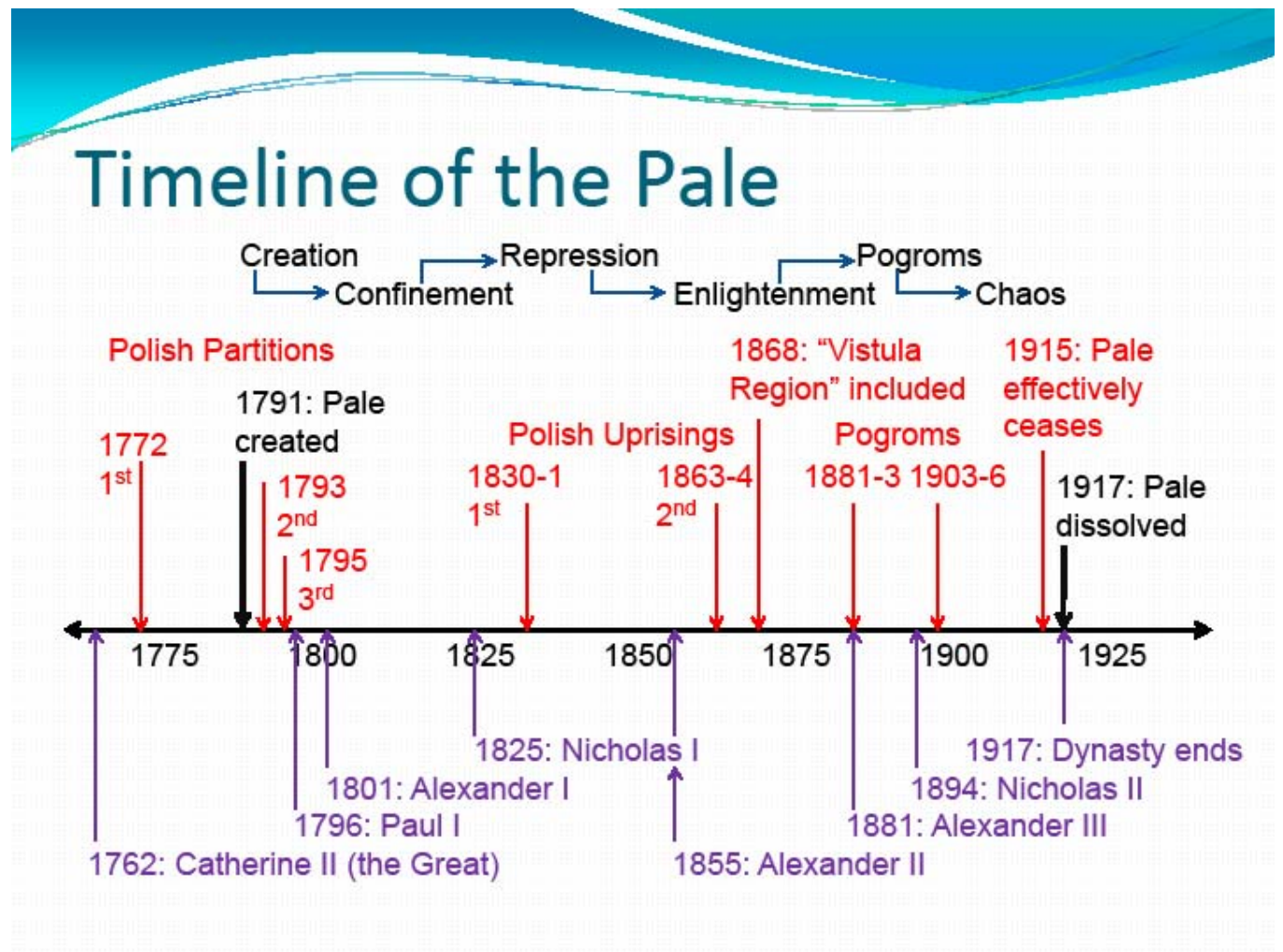
Map source: Atlas of Modern Jewish History by Evyatar Friesel

Timeline of the Pale

The history of the Pale can be thought of as going through six stages,

- Creation,
- Confinement,
- Repression,
- Enlightenment,
- Pogroms and
- Chaos.

The presentation discusses these stages and their impact on the Jewish population of the Pale.



The Pale of Jewish Settlement consisted of the Vice regencies of Belorussia, Bessarabia, Lithuania, New Russia, and Ukraine (Poland was a separate legal entity). Each vice regency was composed of one or more guberniyas (provinces). Each guberniya was made up of a number of uyezds (districts). Normally, the name of a uyezd was the same as its chief town. When the town had a different name, it is shown as "Uyezd/Town." The chart below shows these political breakdowns. The population figures are from the 1897 Russian census as shown in the Atlas of Modern Jewish History by Evyatar Friesel. The list of uyezds by guberniya is from the Great Soviet Encyclopedia. The contemporary names (in parenthesis) are from Where Once We Walked by Gary Mokotoff and Sallyann Sack.

Vice regency #, % Jews, 1897	Guberniya (year formed) # Jews, 1897	Uyezd (contemporary name) * = Guberniya capital
Belorussia 724,000; 13.6%	Minsk (1793-95, 1796) 345,000	Bobruysk, Borisov, Igumen (Cherven), *Minsk, Mozyr, Novogrudok, Pinsk, Rechitsa, Slutsk
	Mogilev (1773-78, 1802) 203,900	Bykhov, Chausy, Cherkov, Gomel, Gorki, Klimovichi, *Mogilev, Mstislavl, Orsha, Rogachev, Senno
	Vitebsk (1802) 175,600	Drissa (Verkhnedvinsk), Dvinsk (Daugavpils), Gorodok, Lepel, Liutsin (Ludza), Nevel, Polotsk, Rezhitsa (Rezekne), Sebezh (Sebeza), Velizh, *Vitebsk
Bessarabia 228,500; 11.8%	Bessarabia (1873)	Akkerman (Belgorod Dbestrovskiy), Beltsy, Bendery, Izmail, Khotin, Kishinev, Orgeyev, Soroki
Lithuania 697,900; 14.7%	Grodno (1801) 280,000	Bialystok, Bielsk, Brest Litovsk (Brest), *Grodno, Kobrin, Pruzhany, Slonim, Sokolka, Volkovysk
	Kovno (1842) 212,700	*Kovno, Novoaleksandrovsk (Zarasai), Panevezys, Raseiniai, Siauliai, Telsiai, Vilkomir (Ukmerge)
	Vilna (1795-97, 1802) 204,700	Disna, Lida, Oshmyany, Svencionys, Trakai, Vileika (Naujoji Vilnia), *Vilna (Vilnius)
New Russia 501,800; 8.0%	Ekaterinoslav (1802) 101,100	Aleksandrovka, Bakhmut (Artemosvk), *Ekaterinoslav (Dnepropetrovsk), Mariupol (Zhdanov), Novomoskovsk, Pavlograd, Slaviansoserbsk/Lugansk (Voroshilovgrad), Verkhnedneprovsk
	Kherson (1803) 339,000	Aleksandriya, Ananyev, Elizavetgrad (Kirovograd), *Kherson, Odessa, Tirashpol
	Tavrida (1802) 60,800	Berdiansk, Dnepr/Aleshki (Tsyurupinsk), Feodosiya, Melitopol, Perekop, *Simferopol, Yalta, Yevpatoriya
Ukraine 1,425,500; 9.7%	Chernigov (1796) 114,500	Borzna, *Chernigov, Glukhov, Gorodnya, Konotop, Kozelets, Krolevets, Mglin, Nezhin, Novgorod Severskiy, Novozybkov, Oster, Sosnitsa, Starodub, Surazh
	Kiev (1708-81, 1796) 433,700	Berdichev, Cherkassy, Chigirin, Kanev, *Kiev (Kiyev), Lipovets, Radomyshl, Skvira, Tarashcha, Uman, Vasilkov, Zvenigorodka
	Podolia (1796) 370,600	Balta, Bratslav, Gaysin, *Kamenets Podolskiy, Letichev, Litin, Mogilev Podolskiy, Novaya Ushitsa, Olgopol, Proskurov (Khmelnitskiy), Vinnitsa, Yampol
	Poltava (1802) 110,900	Gadyach, Khorol, Konstantinograd (Krasnograd), Kovelyaki, Kremenchug, Lokhvitsa, Lubny, Mirgorod, Pereyaslav (Pereyaslav Khmelnitskiy), Piryatin, *Poltava, Priluki, Romny, Zenkov, Zolotonosha
	Volhynia (1796) 395,800	Dubno, Izyaslav, Kovel, Kremenets, Lutsk, Novograd Volynskiy, Ostrog, Ovruch, Rovno, Starokonstantinov, Vladimir Volynskiy, *Zhitomir

In 1815, the Kingdom of Poland was reconstituted at the Congress of Vienna, with the Russian Tsar as King. The resultant entity was referred to as Congress Poland (“Kongresowka”) and was divided into palatinates or voivoidships (“Wajewodztwa” in Polish). These included Cracow, Sandomier, Lublin, Podlachia, Kalisz, Plock, Warsaw, and Augustowo. The first four covered Polish lands that had been occupied by the Austrian Empire as Western Galicia. The latter four covered Polish lands that had been occupied by Prussia.

After two unsuccessful Polish uprisings, the army and legislature of Congress Poland were disbanded and it was consolidated into the Russian empire as “Vistulaland”, though it often continued to be referred to as Congress Poland or the Kingdom of Poland. Concurrently, the provinces were redrawn into ten guberniya, and administered in the Russian fashion. Kielce was created out of Cracow Voivoidship. Radom was fashioned out of Sandomier. Podlachia was renamed Siedlce. Augustowo was divided into two guberniya, Suwalki in the north and Lomza in the south. Piotrkow was formed from portions of four voivoidships, Cracow, Sandomier, Kalisz, and Warsaw. The other voivoidships retained their names as they were converted to guberniya.

In the census of 1897, Congress Poland contained 1,321,100 Jews, who constituted 14.1% of the population. The chart below lists the ten Congress Poland guberniyas and some significant communities in each at the turn of the century. The communities shown are those on the map of Russia in the 1900 edition of The Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia.

Guberniya # Jews, 1897	Major communities, 1900 (identified by their contemporary names)
Kalisz 71,700	Dzialoszyn, Kalisz, Kleczew, Kolo, Konin, Leczyca, Ozorkow, Sieradz, Slupca, Turek, Warta, Wielun, Wieruszow, Zdunska Wola
Warsaw 351,900	Aleksandrow Kujawski, Blonie, Gabin, Gora Kalwaria, Gostynin, Grochow, Grojec, Kowal, Kutno, Lowicz, Lubien Kujawski, Minsk Mazowiecki, Mszczonow, Nasielsk, Nowy Dwor Mazowiecki, Plonsk, Praga, Pultusk, Radziejow, Radzymin, Skierniewice, Warszawa, Wloclawek, Wolomin
Plock 51,500	Biezun, Chorzele, Ciechanow, Lipno, Mlawa, Osada Lubicz, Plock, Przasnysz, Rypin, Sierpc, Wyszogrod
Lomza 91,400	Grajewo, Kolno, Lomza, Makow Mazowiecki, Wysokie Mazowieckie, Myszyniec, Nur, Ostroleka, Ostrow Mazowiecka, Szczuczyn, Tykocin
Suwalki 59,200	Augustow, Kalvarija, Kudirkos Naumiestis, Marijampole, Prienai, Seirijai, Sejny, Suwalki, Szakiai, Vilkaviskis, Virbalis
Piotrkow 222,600	Bedzin, Brzeziny, Czestochowa, Koluszki, Lask, Lodz, Myszkw, Pabianice, Piotrkow Trybunalski, Radomsko, Rawa Mazowiecka, Tomaszow Mazowiecki, Warta, Wolborz, Zarki, Zgierz
Radom 112,300	Ilza, Konskie, Kozienice, Radom, Rakow, Opatow, Opoczno, Ostrowiec Swietokrzyski, Przedborz, Sandomierz, Solec, Staszow, Szydlowiec, Zwolen
Siedlce 121,100	Biala Podlaska, Garwolin, Janow Podlaski, Laskarzew, Losice, Maciejowice, Ostrow Lubelski, Parczew, Siedlce, Sokolow Podlaski, Stoczek, Wegrow, Zelechow
Kielce 83,200	Busko Zdroj, Checiny, Chmielnik, Dzialoszyce, Jedrzejow, Kielce, Nowy Korczyn, Lukow, Miechow, Olkusz, Pilica, Pinczow, Stopnica, Wloszczowa
Lublin 156,200	Bilgoraj, Biskupice Lubelskie, Bychawa, Chelm, Hrubieszow, Janow Lubelski, Kazimierz Dolny, Krasnik, Krasnystaw, Lubartow, Lublin, Pulawy, Szczepieszyn, Tarnograd, Tomaszow Lubelski, Uchanie, Zamosc