THE YAD VASHEM
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OF THE GHETTOS
DURING THE HOLOCAUST

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V O L U M E I
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with the help of partisans. When the Germans discovered these activities, they rounded up the ghetto's residents and murdered about 100 people, including the community's rabbi, Rabbi David Tsipkevich.

About ninety workers remained in the ghetto, among them some fifty workers and their families from nearby Kobylnik*. In early October 1942, Yaakov Sigalchik, a Jewish partisan from Dolhinow*, stole into the ghetto and managed to convince its inhabitants to flee. All of the Jews in the ghetto at that time fled to the forest, with the exception of a single old woman. A number of Germans were killed in exchanges of fire with partisans during the escape. A group of Jewish partisans smuggled the Jews of the Miadziol ghetto out through the front line to the Soviet Union, thus saving their lives.

MICHALISZKI

(Yiddish: **Mikhalishok**)

TOWNLET IN VILNA COUNTY, VILNA DISTRICT, POLAND

(After World War II in the USSR/Belarus; Belarussian, Russian: **Mikhalishki**)

During the war: Reichskommissariat Ostland

Coordinates: 54°49' | 26°10'

About 140 Jewish families lived in Michaliszki on the eve of World War II, representing more than half of the townlet's population. Most earned their livelihood from small commerce and artisanship. Jewish parties and youth movements were active in Michaliszki, including those of the Zionists. The townlet also boasted a Yiddish school, a Tarbut Hebrew school, a library, and study circles.

After the Soviets occupied Michaliszki in the second half of September 1939, the townlet's privately owned shops were nationalized or closed and cooperatives were formed.

On June 24, 1941, the Germans occupied Michaliszki. The Jews were ordered to wear a yellow badge, their freedom of movement was restricted, and several were seized for forced labor. From September 1941 onward, Michaliszki was included in Wilejka County, an area under Lithuanian rule. When the Jews of Michaliszki discovered in October 1941 that seventeen young Jews had been executed in nearby Worniany*, most left their homes and hid in the nearby villages and in the forest. With the help of local farmers, however, the Germans managed to convince the Jews to return to the townlet.

In late October 1941, a closed ghetto was established in Michaliszki. Some 1,500 Jews from the townlet and the surrounding localities were concentrated in approximately twenty-five buildings, under severe conditions of overcrowding. A Judenrat was established, headed by Yitzhak Svirski. Although the Jews were ordered to submit large ransom payments to the authorities, the Judenrat occasionally managed to mitigate the decree. The difficulty in making contact with the surrounding population to purchase or smuggle food caused hunger to spread in the ghetto. There was a rise in incidence of epidemic typhus and the mortality rate. A group of young Jews was sent by the German work organization Todt to perform forced labor in the Kuny labor camp near Ostrowiec*, where they were murdered three months later, and replaced by a new group of Jewish youths. In August 1942, the last remaining Jews from the Worniany, Kiemieliszki*, Swir*, and Bystrzyca* ghettos were transferred to the Michaliszki ghetto.

In the winter of 1942/43, the governor of the county, Horst Wulff, issued an order to remove the Jews from a fifty-kilometer strip on the Lithuanian-Belarussian border, which meant that the Michaliszki ghetto was slated for liquidation. On March 26, 1943, about 200 of Michaliszki's Jews were transferred to Vilna*. An additional group of Jews was sent in early April 1943 to labor camps in Ziezmariai and Vievis, near Kaunas*. The remaining Jews bribed the Germans in order to be transferred to the Kaunas ghetto, but were instead deported on April 5, 1943, to the Ponary murder site, together with hundreds

of other Jews. A struggle with the Germans broke out during the execution, and several dozens of the deportees managed to escape, although hundreds of others were killed.

During the deportations, hundreds of the ghetto's inhabitants escaped to the forests, with a number of them joining the partisans.

MICHAŁOWO

TOWNLET IN BIAŁYSTOK COUNTY, BIAŁYSTOK DISTRICT, POLAND

During the war: Bezirk Białystok

Coordinates:
53°02' | 23°36'

About 730 Jews were living in Michalowo on the eve of World War II, representing approximately 10 percent of the townlet's population. Most earned their livelihood from commerce. Jewish parties and youth movements were active in Michalowo, including those of the Zionists and the Bund, while several of the townlet's Jews were members of the Communist party. Michalowo also boasted a Yiddish school and a Jewish library.

When the Soviets occupied Michalowo in the second half of September 1939, they introduced a Soviet economic, social, and educational regime into the townlet; privately owned shops were nationalized and cooperatives were formed.

On June 27, 1941, the Germans occupied Michalowo. Immediately afterwards, the Jews were ordered to wear a yellow badge, their freedom of movement was restricted, and many were seized for forced labor. In the early days of the occupation, the Jews were ordered to appoint a Judenrat charged with collecting ransom payments. The members of the Judenrat, who initially experienced difficulty in collecting the required money and property, were aided in their work by Rabbi Yisrael Margaliot.

Within several days, the Jews of Michalowo were concentrated in a closed ghetto on the outskirts of the townlet, but this arrangement was canceled three days later by the new civil governor Paul Meltzer, who allowed the Jews to return to their homes if the residences remained unoccupied.

In August 1942, the Jews were once again evicted from their homes and moved into a number of abandoned factories, which were turned into a ghetto. They were sent to perform forced labor, at which time several of the young Jews managed to escape. On November 2, 1942, the Jews were rounded up in a former barracks of the Polish army near Bialystok* and deported on November 22, 1942, on to the Treblinka death camp. About fifty young Jews managed to hide in the woods or with local farmers, but most were eventually caught and murdered by either the Germans or Polish antisemites.

MICHÓW

TOWNLET IN LUBARTÓW COUNTY, LUBLIN DISTRICT, POLAND

During the war: General Gouvernement, Lublin District

Coordinates:
51°32' | 22°18'

After World War I, the 1,750 Jews in Michow accounted for more than half of the townlet's population. Most were petty merchants and artisans. The community had traditional relief and charitable institutions such as a burial society, a group that provided housing for the indigent, a fund for brides, and a free-loan fund. Most older Jews in Michow were Orthodox; the young were active in Zionist youth movements. There was also a small group of Bundists. Many Jewish children attended modern Jewish schools and a government primary school.

The Germans occupied Michow on September 23, 1939, and began abducting Jews for forced labor, imposing public humiliation, and burning Torah scrolls.

Some time later, a ghetto was established in the townlet to which some 700 deportees from Lysobyki were taken. Congestion and hunger led to epidemic typhus. In early 1942, a clinic and a soup kitchen were established with assistance from the JSS in Cracow*.