Introduction

In 1947, the “Cultural and Propaganda” Division of the Central Committee of Polish Jews, together with the “Kinor” film cooperative, produced a Yiddish propaganda-documentary movie entitled ‘Jewish Settlement in Lower Silesia’ (Der Yiddisher Yishev in Nidershlezye), directed by Natan Gross. The film was prepared for the second anniversary of the settlement in June 1947. These festivities were held in its first center, Dzierżoniów, which was previously known by its German name: Reichenbach im Eulengebirge. The film tells the story of the miraculous reconstruction of Jewish life in Polish Lower Silesia, praising its rich, autonomous, pluralistic national Jewish life – made possible by the reality of a “new,” “socialist,” and “democratic” Poland. It showcases Jewish workers, artisans, schoolchildren, cultural and social institutions, as well as Zionist activities, and even the rebirth of religious life. The film was presented to Jewish audiences in Poland in the summer of 1947, in the so-called “year of stabilization,” when for many it seemed that collective Jewish national life, with a degree of cultural and social autonomy, had a bright future.

Before aptly showing this miraculous rebirth as a brave Jewish answer to the tragedy of the Holocaust, the film begins with images of the Lower Silesian landscape, its farms, factories and coal mines (“the land of black gold”). Its narrator speaks of the “old Polish lands,” “Polish roads,” “Polish automobiles,” now rightfully returned to Poland, and about the Jewish contribution to this act of historical justice.1

The goal of this article is to analyze the connection between two narrative lines found in the film: the “German” narrative, connected to the very recent German past of Lower Silesia and the communist politics of its “polonization,” and the “Jewish” narrative, concerned with the possibility of national Jewish life in post-1945 Poland.2 This article examines the deep metapolitical meaning behind the language used in this document, which characterized all of public

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1 See Der Yidisher Yishev in Nidershlezye: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5q82LKi7Zi0 (02.10.2016)
2 Research for this article was made possible by participation in a research project and support of Czech Science Foundation, “Inclusion of Jewish citizens in Postwar Czechoslovak and Polish Societies” (project no: 16–01775Y) and Polish National Science Center Bethoveen
discourse in Lower Silesia, and Poland more broadly, in the first five years after the Second World War. Further, drawing a connection between these two aspects sheds new light on the trajectory of Jewish life in post-Holocaust Poland, deepening scholarly understanding of the reasons for its demise in 1949–1950. The small Jewish community of Holocaust survivors responsible for the rebirth of Jewish life in Poland was entirely dependent on the will of state authorities. It thus had no other alternative but to participate in the project of constructing the new “socialist” socio-political reality. One of its core elements was a nationalist propaganda regarding the “Polishness” of the newly acquired Western Territories, which formed the basis of the general vision of a new communist, and simultaneously mono-ethnic, state. The paradox – and great tragedy – of the Jewish community was the fact that it had to participate in a discourse that, in the long term, undermined the popular legitimization of the Jewish presence in Poland.

The Rebirth of Jewish Life in Lower Silesia and the “German Problem” in the New Poland

By the end of July 1944, when large parts of Poland were already liberated by advancing Soviet troops, Polish communists and left-wing socialists alike, closely following guidelines received from Joseph Stalin, proclaimed a new government. This government was called the Polish Committee of National Liberation (Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego, PKWN) and began its activity in Chelm, and shortly after relocated to Lublin. On 4 September 1944, a handful of Jewish survivors, as well as a few Jewish activists brought for this occasion from the Soviet Union, established the Temporary Central Committee of Jews in Poland (Tymczasowy Centralny Komitet Żydów w Polsce, TCKŻP, later CKŻP).3 On 13 November, the Jewish Press Agency, in the first issue of its bulletin, presented the official objectives of the new central Jewish body. The second point on the list declares: “Full Jewish participation in the active struggle for the complete driving out of the Germans and for the creation of an independent, free and truly democratic Poland.”4 Here, “driving out of the Germans” means the occupying forces of the Nazi state. But soon it became obvious that the meaning of this term was much broader.

Grant - UMO-2014/15/G/HS6/04836 - “Jews and Germans in Polish Collective Memory. Two case studies of the memory formation in local communities after the Second World War”.
3 In February 1945, the committee was renamed the Central Committee of the Jews in Poland (CKŻP).
The redrawing of the Polish-German border, as part of the postwar arrangement, was debated by Polish politicians from all sides of the political spectrum – including those active in the Polish government-in-exile in London. But these plans could only be put into practice by political forces that had the support of the Soviet Union, which was driving German armies out of Poland at the time and was the only decisive player in that part of Europe. Stalin had no intention of relinquishing the eastern territories of Poland he acquired through his infamous pact with Hitler in September 1939. During the allied conference in Tehran (28 November–1 December 1943), Stalin shared with F.D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill his plan of moving Poland westwards and placing its border on the Oder-Nisse line. From that time, the Allies, as well as Stalin’s Polish protégés, understood that this act would entail the expulsion of millions of Germans living in territories that would be acquired by Poland. These territories were to be resettled by Poles relocated (or exiled) from territories acquired by the Soviet Union or from Central Poland.

As the Second World War was coming to an end in the spring of 1945, it was not clear, at least for the Western allies, how far the Polish western border would go and how many Germans would be expelled from the country. In May 1945, Władysław Gomułka, Poland’s communist leader, speaking to the congress of his Polish Workers Party (Polska Partia Robotnicza, PPR), emphasized the complete expulsion of Germans from the so-called “Regained Territories” (Ziemie Odzyskane), to make room for Poles arriving from the Soviet Union. In addition, Gomułka outlined an original vision of a communist mono-ethnic state, which surprisingly meant the appropriation of old right-wing nationalist ideas. The rapid resettlement of Lower Silesia was also crucial for rebuilding the country’s

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5 The allies thought that Stalin meant the eastern Nisse, which would leave most of Lower Silesia, with its capital Breslau (Wrocław), inside the German borders. For tactical purposes, the Soviet leader did not clarify that he meant the western Nisse, which meant moving Poland’s south-western border more than 200 kilometres further to the west. For a discussion of the Polish borders during the Teheran conference and its aftermath, see Sebastian Siebel-Achenbach, Niederschlesien 1942 bis 1949: alliierte Diplomatie und Nachkriegswirklichkeit (Würzburg: Bergstadtverlag Wilhelm Gottlieb Korn, 2006), 50–54; Ray M. Douglas, Orderly and Humane: The Expulsions of the Germans after the Second World War (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012), 75–82.
6 Douglas, Orderly and Humane, 83.
7 For so-called Polish “western thought” and the acquisition of elements of Polish nationalism by the communist state, in 1945 and after, see Marcin Zaremba, Komunizm, legitymizacja, nacjonalizm. Nacjonalistyczna legitymizacja władzy w komunistycznej Polsce (Warszawa: TRIO, 2005), 135–173; Gregor Thum, Obce miasto. Wrocław 1945 i potem (Wrocław: Via Nova), 2005, 233–282 [for the original of this work, see Gregor Thum, Die Fremde Stadt. Breslau 1945 (Muenchen: Seidler, 2003)].
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Economy. These actions would play an important role in binding Poles to the widely distrusted communists. At the time, few could anticipate the important role of Polish Jews in establishing a Polish presence in the Regained Territories, mainly in Lower Silesia. This process began the very month the war came to an end, in May of 1945.

Lower Silesia was the location of one of the main German concentration camps, Gross-Rosen. From April through the beginning of May, when it was liberated by the Soviet troops, the camp contained 18,000 surviving prisoners, among whom were 10,000 Polish Jews. One of its subcamps, "Sportschule," was located in the southern part of the region, Reichenbach (from 1945 Rychbach and 1947 Dzierżoniów). On 13 May 1945, the Jewish prisoners of this camp formed the Committee for the Aid of Former Jewish Camp Prisoners (Komitet Pomocy Żydom z Obozów Koncentracyjnych). Besides providing for the food, shelter, defense and physical recovery of former camp inmates, a second major goal of the committee was to explore the possibility of Jewish settlement in the area. Very soon an initiative was taken by the Central Jewish Committee in Warsaw. It seems that its leaders tried to enlist themselves and the whole Jewish community in a general state policy of “creating facts on the ground,” in other words, establishing a Polish presence in the disputed territories. All of this happened before the Potsdam Conference (17th of July-2nd of August 1945), which granted Poland “temporary administration” in the region, and the July 1945 Polish-Soviet agreement over repatriation of Polish citizens from all territories of the Soviet Union. The goal of the state was to have as many Polish citizens in Lower Silesia and other Western Territories as quickly as possible, before their fate would be decided at the conference. Incidentally, the largest groups of Polish citizens there, many of whom were not interested in going back to their former homes in central and eastern Poland, were Polish Jews. The Central Jewish Committee acted swiftly in

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9 Archiwum Państwowe we Wrocławiu (APW), 145, Wojewódzki Komitet Żydowski, 5, k, 37–38.
11 The 6 July 1945 repatriation agreement was preceded by one signed in September 1944 allowing for the return to Poland of its pre-1939 Polish and Jewish citizens who inhabited the eastern territories, now annexed to the Soviet Union, at the time of the agreement. The July 1945 agreement extended the possibility of repatriation for Poles and Jews now living in the whole territory of the Soviet Union. See Józef Adelson, “Żydzi w Polsce ludowej,” in Najnowsze dzieje Żydów w Polsce w zarysie (do 1950 roku), Jerzy Tomaszewski (ed.) (Warszawa: Wydawn. Nauk. PWN, 1993), 390–391.
the first days of June 1945, sending Itzhak Zukerman, a hero of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, and communist activist Jacob Egit to Dzierżoniów. They inspected the communities established by the former camp prisoners and brought their delegation back to Warsaw for talks with the leaders of the Central Jewish Committee, as well as the Minister of Public Administration Edward Ochab. On 17 June 1945, the Jewish Lower Silesian Voivodship Committee was established, with its home in Dzierżoniów. This committee would supervise the work of Jewish town committees formed in a few local towns.\(^\text{12}\) When the Polish-Soviet agreement was signed regarding the repatriation of hundreds of thousands of Polish citizens (Poles and Jews) from the Soviet Union, both Jewish and Polish state leaders indicated Lower Silesia as the site of major Jewish settlement.\(^\text{13}\) On 26 June 1945, the Central Jewish Committee, in its Yiddish language program, broadcast by Polish State Radio, announced the following message: “In Lower Silesia today we have around 7,000 Jews [...] former prisoners of the camps in Reichenbach and Waldenburg [...] They have manifested their great joy from the fact that after 700 years of German rule Polish lands are finally going back to Poland and they decided to take part in the reconstruction of these lands. They will work here, establish cooperatives, factories.”\(^\text{14}\) In addition, a memorandum entitled “On settlement of the Jews in Lower Silesia,” the first document issued by the Rychbach/Dzierżoniów Voivodship Jewish Committee, stressed that many Jewish concentration camp survivors had tried to return to their former places of residency, but were “unable to find peace there,”\(^\text{15}\) and thus decided to return to a place where they could live among other Jews – to Lower Silesia. One of the main tasks of Jewish communities in this territory was to organize the fast and efficient take over by Jews of German work

\(^{12}\) APW, 145, Wojewódzki Komitet Żydowski, 1, k, 1; Yaakov Egit, Tzu a naye Leben (Wroclaw: Nidershlezye, 1947), 19–31; Jacob Egit, Grand Illusion (Toronto: Lugus, 1991), 44–54.

\(^{13}\) Hana Shlomi, “Rashit ha hitargenut shel yehudei Polin be shlihei milchemet ha olam ha shniya,” in Osefet mechkarim le toldot shearit ha plita ha yehudim be Polin 1944–1950, Hana Shlomi (ed.) (Tel-Aviv: Universitat Tel-Aviv, Ha merkaz le cheker toldot ha yehudim be polin ve moreshetam, ha machon le cheker tefutzot, 2001), 78–79.

\(^{14}\) YIVO Archives, RG 116, Poland 3, Folder 6, Yiddish broadcast transcript from 26.06.1945 (no pagination). These auditions, which started to be aired in autumn 1944, were the first Yiddish auditions in the history of Polish radio.

\(^{15}\) This passage of the memorandum vaguely refers to ongoing anti-Jewish violence that did not stop with the German occupation and the Holocaust, but continued to menace Jewish life in Poland in the first years after the Second World War. For anti-Jewish violence in this period, see David Engel, “Patterns of Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland, 1944–1946,” Yad Vashem Studies 26 (1998): 43–85; Jan T. Gross, Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz: An Essay in Historical Interpretation (New York: Princeton University Press, 2006).
places in local industry, service, and agriculture, as well as “placing Jews as part of a plan of restoration and development of former German factories.”

For Jewish leaders committed to the plan of building a Jewish future in Poland, binding this plan to Polish nationalism was unavoidable. In respect to the Western Territories, which contained the most favorable conditions for Jewish settlement and collective life, it meant participating in a grand narrative of “native Polish” or “Slavic” lands that, after centuries of existing in an unnatural state under German dominion, returned to their rightful owners, the Poles. Harnessing the Jewish case to Polish ethnic nationalism, which had a long exclusionary tradition in relation to all other ethnicities, especially the Jews, meant active support for the deportation of the German population from Lower Silesia in the first year of socialist Poland. It also meant stepping into a historical trajectory which, over time, allowed for less and less space in the country for Jews themselves.

At the time, in late spring and summer of 1945, Lower Silesian Committees consisting almost entirely of Holocaust survivors achieved impressive results, given the harsh conditions under which they operated, in building the foundations of collective Jewish settlement in the area, and in some cases very much serving as outposts of the Polish state in the new territories. In Dzierżoniów and the vicinity, former Jewish camp prisoners quickly formed a militia that was armed by the local garrison of the Red Army. Before the Polish state militia was formed, it was the Jewish militia that guarded the local factories, shops, workshops and farms from many different restless spirits in the “Polish Wild West,” as these territories came to be called. Officially, the goal of these militias was to defend the local population from the Nazi underground (so-called “Wehrwolf” groups). In fact, the biggest threat of the time came from deserters, demoralized regular soldiers of the Red Army, and criminal elements arriving from Central Poland who engaged in looting (szaber) of property in the Western Territories. Restless spirits of this kind could be found among any group. According to the first government reports arriving in Warsaw from Dzierżoniów, some freshly demobilized Jewish soldiers of the Polish army had joined Soviet marauders in robbing arriving Polish settlers. This was a time of chaos, of masses of people travelling through Europe to their homes from

16 Egit, Tzu a naye Leben, 26.
19 Archiwum Akt Nowych (AAN), 196, Ministerstwo Administracji Publicznej, 2453, k. 3.
In these hard and chaotic times, the development of Jewish settlements in Lower Silesia was closely linked with subsequent waves of deportations of the Germans. After their spontaneous flight before the arrival of Soviet and Polish troops, the Germans were expelled by Polish troops from Lower Silesia and other newly acquired Polish western territories beginning in June of 1945. After British protests against these “wild” deportations, they were stopped in autumn 1945, only to recommence again in the late winter and early spring of 1946. The deportations were part of a well-organized political plan, but more importantly, they were accepted by the decisive majority of Polish society. The connection between German deportations and the development of the Polish Jewish community in Lower Silesia was not only a matter of “objective” historical circumstances. In the wake of the Holocaust, there was a certain affinity between the dual notions of Jewish resettlement and anti-German revenge, for both Polish Jews and for important representatives of American Jewry visiting Lower Silesia at the time. Enthusiastic support for the harsh measures taken against the German population, and the great optimism for the prospects of Jewish life in Lower Silesia, from people such as the American Jewish communist Pesach Novick, who visited Poland in 1946, is illustrative. These combined notions were accepted also by important non-communist Jewish figures as well. Yaacov Pat, for example, was a former interwar Polish Bund leader and general secretary of the New York Jewish Labour Committee. In his book, Osh un Foyer (1946), and its English translation

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20 For an example, see Diaspora Research Center Archives, P-70, The Abraham A. Berman Bequest, 141, Report of the Jewish Voivodship Committee send to Central Jewish Committee in Warsaw (2nd of July 1945) (no pagination); APW, 145, Wojewódzki Komitet Żydowski, 5, k. 1–3,12.


22 Hugo Service, Germans to Poles, 93.

23 For excerpts of Novick’s 1946 report from his visit to Lower Silesia, see http://dolnoslaskosc.pl/nowy-zydowski-dom-dolny-slask,313.html (12.10.2016).
*Ashes and Fire* (1947), he describes his trip to post-Holocaust Poland, made in late winter and early spring of 1946. He was a staunch anti-Stalinist and anti-Communist, and very critical of prospects for the rebirth of Jewish life in Poland. In the first 150 pages of the book, Pat describes the horrors of the Holocaust, and also of Jewish life in Poland after it, with antisemitic attacks, murder and dreadful Soviet domination. His recollections suddenly change in tone within a chapter called “Raichenbach” (sic). Pat writes here:

It was just before the Sabbath, on a Friday night when I drove into Richenbach [sic], capital[sic] of Lower Silesia [...] difference between Richenbach and any other East European city – was staggering. Richenbach is a beautiful town, as whole and rounded as a nut. The market square is clean, pleasant, intact. Everywhere you turn you see Jews going about their business or standing in small clusters on street corners. If an occasional German passes by, you know him by a white armband – just as the yellow badge with the Star of David had once marked the Jew. I can see lighted store windows, open doors. Everything is peaceful and snug. Is this [a] dream or reality?

Joseph Tenenbaum, president of the World Federation of Polish Jews, visiting Poland in spring and summer of 1946, shared a very similar impression:

I came to Rychbach on April 28, 1946. I was struck by the sound of Yiddish everywhere, Yiddish posters, large streamers in Yiddish calling for May Day celebrations, Yiddish theater bills, and in the Silesian Hotel Polonia where I was lodged a dance was given that night to Yiddish music and songs [...] in spite of the psychical suffering there was a feeling of security, a feeling of “belonging”. Here, the Jews could rebuild a permanent home for Polish Jews. [...] On the following day, I visited the outlying districts, made the rounds of the cooperatives, orphanages and Chalutzim shelters. Some of the Zionist youth buildings were located right in front of the Soviet district, where Soviet garrison was billeted. One could hear from the spot Hebrew songs competing with the Soviet melodies all through the day and most of the night. I also encountered new phenomena, prosperous Jewish farms and farmers, farm schools with Jewish workers and farmhands plowing the fields. Jewish maidens were milking fat German cows, and Jewish farm boys chasing German pigs.

No different were the attitudes of Polish Jews themselves. They saw their Lower Silesian success, and the rebirth of Jewish life in Poland, as an important form of symbolic revenge for the Holocaust. This stance was aptly expressed by Polish-Jewish emigrant writer Henryk Grynberg, who, in his semi-autobiographical novel *Życie osobiste* [Personal life], remembered his visit to Lower Silesian Bielawa with Jewish scouts at the end of the 1940s:

Every day, after theory class, we came out with our outspread banners and marched in array occupying the whole width of the street, through which only a few years ago the brave boys of

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the Hitlerjugend had marched. We couldn’t stop thinking about that looking at XVII century facades of buildings, with their gothic signs. And so we hit the German pavements even more strongly with our boots, and under the guise of a march of cheers and songs we screamed: You didn’t succeed, sons of .... We had survived you! You don’t live here anymore, but we do!²⁶

These kinds of arguments were a central part of official Jewish discourse at the time.²⁷ Hersh Smolar, one of the leaders of the so-called “Jewish Faction” of the Polish communist party, wrote in 1947 that the Jewish presence in Lower Silesia was an act of historical justice that was possible only through Jewish participation in the Polish struggle to regain their lands after hundreds of years of German domination.²⁸

It is important to note that Jewish victimhood from the hands of the Nazis was also used by the authorities to legitimize the Polish presence and permanent acquisition of Lower Silesia. In connection with the Paris Peace Conference, in July 1946, the Ministries of the Regained Territories and of Foreign Affairs jointly organized a study trip for Polish correspondents of the British and American press to Lower Silesia. Western journalists visited southern parts of Wrocław voivodship, which contained the highest density of Jewish settlements. The author of the government report noted with satisfaction that, thanks to this visit,

²⁶ Henryk Grynberg, Życie osobiste (Warszawa: PIW, 1992), 20. The same mood is also expressed in the memoirs of the American volunteer working in the Jewish orphanage in Peterswaldau/Piotrolesie, see YIVO Archives, RG 116, Poland 3, Folder 1, 16; or recollections of Bela Fleis, who arrived with her mother from the Soviet Union to Lower Silesia in spring 1946. For quote, see Helga Hirsch, Gehen oder Bleiben. Juden in Schlesien und Pommern 1945–1957 (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2011), 78; these emotions were perfectly congruent with the popular mood of Lower Silesian Poles at the time. For example, see Teresa Gos, Moja wędrówka z Kielc na Ziemie Odzyskane (Wrocław: [printed by the family of the author], 2010), 21; and in all of Poland, see Marcin Zaremba, Wielka trwoga. Polska 1944–1947. Ludowa reakcja na kryzys (Kraków: Znak, 2012), 561–573.

²⁷ That of course does not mean that Jews did not have social contacts, or even good relations with German individuals, usually their new neighbors. Jews as did Poles in many cases were able to take over and run anew factories, workshops, farms or places such as dental clinics with the help of their previous German owners. Also, Jewish committees had taken care, supported financially and defended in front of the authorities individual Germans who were known to help Jewish camp prisoners during the war, or for example Konrad Springer, who took care over the Jewish cemetery in Dzierżoniów and prevented its destruction during the war. See “Fotoreportaż z życia Żydów na Dolnym Śląsku, Rychbach 1945–1946” (Rychbach: ZIH, 1946); interviews with Bela Fleis (Dzierżoniów, 28.09.2008); Szymon and Dora Tennebaum (Bielawa, 19.11.2008); Frieda Pertman (Baltimore, 16–17.02.2009); Samuel Ponczak (Colombia, 13.02.2009); Joseph Tenenbaum, In Search, 254. But all of this did not change the fact that in public discourse the German nation, as a whole, was presented as a collective enemy.

²⁸ Egit, Tsu a naye leben, 3–5. Find Hersh Smolar’s remarks in the Introduction; for recollections of Jewish public discourse justifying harsh anti-German measures, see Turkow, Noch dem Bafrayung, 235–236.
the correspondents could understand the “Jewish question in Poland” and the “attitude of Polish Jews towards Polish reality.”29 In the first years of communist Poland, the reconstruction of its Jewish community, despite the presence of antisemitism and waves of popular anti-Jewish violence, had an important place in foreign propaganda and the legitimization of the policies of the new authorities. Jews were to serve as an important public relations asset, proof of a new democratic non-xenophobic Poland. The rebirth of Jewish life in Lower Silesia was frequently reported in Poland of Today, an English language bulletin published by the Polish embassy in the United States.30

In January 1946, the Polish Jewish Committees had 93,000 registered Jews (with thousands of others unregistered). From February until July 1946, a large wave of 136,000 Jewish repatriates arrived in Poland from the Soviet Union.31 Most of them were directed to Lower Silesia, as it had the best conditions for their resettlement. Precisely at the time when Jewish repatriation from Soviet Union was coming to an end and the number of Jews in Poland after the Holocaust reached its peak, the terrible pogrom of 4 July 1946 took place in Kielce, taking the lives of 42 Jews.32 This caused a major emigration panic and flight from Poland by the majority of Polish Jews. Its effects were also enormous in Lower Silesia, but still weaker than in other parts of the country. In November 1946, the Jewish population of Lower Silesia, having stabilized after the panicked mass emigration, was still impressive, numbering some 72,000 – densely concentrated in a few towns – and representing 70% of all of Polish Jewry.33 The following year, 1947, was a time of so-called “stabilization.” Jewish schools, cooperatives, and collective farms reached the peak of their development. Paradoxically, this was also the year of the highest Zionist activity in Poland, now concentrated not on flight (Bricha), but on establishing party cells, youth movements, kibbutzim, schools – besides Łódz, with Lower Silesia as their center. With the exception of Zionist Revisionists, all of the important Jewish political parties, among them the

29 AAN, 196: Ministerstwo Ziem Odzyskanych, 52, k. 57.
30 For examples, see Poland of Today, no. 4, April 1946; Poland of Today, no. 4, April 1947; YIVO Archives, RG 116, Poland 3, Folder 1, k. 3, 20.
31 Grzegorz Berendt, August Grabski, and Albert Stanowski, Studia z historii Żydów w Polsce (Warszawa: ŻIH, 2000), 108.
32 For the Kielce pogrom, see Bożena Szaynok, Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach 4 lipca 1946 (Warszawa: Bellona, 1992); Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, Okrzyki pogromowe. Szkice z antropologii historycznej Polski lat 1939–1946 (Wołówiec: Czarne, 2012), 143–176.
33 YIVO Archives, RG 116, Poland 3, Folder 1, k. 4; Bożena Szaynok, Ludność żydowska na Dolnym Śląsku (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2000), 103. Szaynok disputes the figure of 72 thousand registered Jews, arguing that the real number was probably around 50 thousand at the time of the “stabilization.”
orthodox Agudat Israel, ran their activities legally in Poland. As it is written in the Bundist *Folkstsaytung* correspondence from Lower Silesia, in June of 1947:

We arrive here from “alienated” Warsaw, which is alienated externally, because there’s fewer Jews here, and internally (in the offices of the Central Jewish Committee one can hardly hear any Yiddish). And here, in Lower Silesia, one finds a kind of consolation [...] Against all odds, Jewish culture still lives and is being built [...] And so, this last remnant of Jewish survivors, who gave so much blood of their closest relatives in the fight with the Hitlerite occupiers, and this Jewish survivor, who carried the flame of the fight against the fascist oppressors, had won his place and right to live in a free anti-fascist Poland.

In 1947, the documentary *Jewish Life in Lower Silesia* was produced. For many – not only for Jewish communists and Jews living in the country, but also those in the West – it seemed that collective Jewish national life in Poland, with a limited degree of social and cultural autonomy, was not only possible, but was an established fact. The problem was that through their unavoidable participation in this new socialist state-building, or a curious version of communist-directed Polish nationalism, Jews found themselves on a path that endangered their remarkable communal achievements.

**Nationalism, Communism and the Trajectory of the Demise of Jewish National Life in Post-Holocaust Poland**

What were the conditions that Jews had to meet in order to receive this “right to live in a free anti-fascist Poland” mentioned above in the *Folkstsaytung*? Most important of all was the unshakable support for the new ruling regime. As we have seen, this support also meant participation in the public discourse that drew intensively from the arsenal of Polish nationalism. Its code was well known to Polish Jews, who were subjected to it in interwar Polish schools and acquired it through Polish acculturation. For the first time in modern history, Jews were not only victims of Polish nationalism exclusionary praxis, but also its participants, while simultaneously not being denied their right to individual and collective Jewish identity. However, Jews had to pay a certain price for their inclusion, which grew steadily with the increasing authoritarianism of the communist regime. Anti-German discourse was just as inseparable from other elements

34 Adelson, “Żydzi w Polsce ludowej,” 446–447.
of the general state discourse that Jews were forced to reproduce. This steadily undermined the possibility of forming their own discourse, their own authentic communal voice, and, thus, their collective and national subjectivity.

Since the second half of 1944, when the PKWN and the Central Jewish Committee were formed, the latter’s political line was fully subjugated to that of the former. Among other things, this loyalty assumed participation in attacking the Polish émigré government in London and the anti-communist opposition in the country.\textsuperscript{36} This political line had to be consistently sustained, and gradually strengthened, because of the deepening division between World War II Allies and the development of the Cold War. Thus, for example, during the meeting of the CKŻP in January 1946 – where participants included not only the Warsaw Jewish leaders, but the leaders of the voivodship and county committees from all over Poland – a resolution was made against the “campaign of the foreign press […] spreading fantastic and deceitful news […] about the rising tide of antisemitism, which is allegedly the reason for Jewish flight from Poland.” All of this was recast as lies issued by a “band of reactionaries,” that is, the Polish London émigré government.\textsuperscript{37}

This process of subjugating Jewish political discourse, disabling the ability to speak freely about the complicated position and hardships of Jewish life in Poland, reached its peak during the campaign for the communist referendum that was to take place on 30 June, 1946. Jewish committees were already forced to act in accordance with a communist-supported policy of a “united front,” according to which Jewish parties active in Jewish committees had to speak with one voice in all matters related to Polish politics and the international policy of the state. In practice, regardless of the quantitative domination of various Zionists in the Jewish committees, they were acting under the hegemony of the communists. The former acted under strict guidelines issued by the Central Committee of the Polish Workers Party. It is also important to note that this Jewish “united front” was a copy of the Polish “national unity government” acting under uncontested domination of the communists. As it was framed by Hersh Smolar, the Jewish national front was an “extension of the new state organism.”\textsuperscript{38} Thus, on the level of official politics, independently of internal Jewish matters, there was no Jewish autonomy in post-war Poland, even in its first years.\textsuperscript{39} Jewish committees were fully subjugated to the policies of the state.

\textsuperscript{36} YIVO Archives, RG 116, Poland 3, Folder 6 (unpaginated). See Yiddish Polish Radio broadcasts from 31.03 and 12.05.1945.

\textsuperscript{37} YIVO Archives, RG 116, Poland 3, Folder 14 (unpaginated).

\textsuperscript{38} Smolar, \textit{Oyf di letzter pozicye}, 43–44.

\textsuperscript{39} For differences of opinion regarding whether Jews in Poland in the years 1944–1949 had a relatively large degree of political and national autonomy, see Grabski, \textit{Centralny Komitet Żydów w Polsce}, 21.
This kind of subjugation was clearly manifested during June 1946 referendum, which was little more than a propaganda trick by the communists to postpone elections in Poland. Polish society was asked three questions, to which it was hard to answer “No,” even for people opposing communism. Answering three times “Yes” meant supporting the communist government. Voters were asked if they were in favor of the abolition of the Senate (second chamber of the Polish parliament), agrarian reform, the nationalization of big industry (combined with keeping private economic enterprises), and support for the new Polish western border.40 A proclamation of Poalei Zion Left, issued two months before the referendum as part of its campaign, not only praised the Soviet Union for defeating fascism, but also condemned western “capitalist and imperialist vultures again showing their claws.” In the same proclamation, people who attacked Jews in Poland at the time were regarded as solely connected to the “forces of reaction” operating in capitalist countries. These forces were seen as acting against the Soviet Union and supporting the Germans after the war. Hence, unwavering support for the Polish government was the only answer that Jews could give.41 Just before the referendum, this logic was offered by one of the leading Zionist journalists in Poland, Henryk Szner, who wrote the following in an article titled, “The Jewish masses will answer three times yes!” (“Masy żydowskie odpowiedzą trzykrotnym tak!”):

The Oder and Nisse borders were not only an act of satisfaction for centuries of long harm inflicted upon Slavs and the Polish nation. By answering “yes” to the third question, we will corroborate and strengthen the rightful Polish territorial claims. The Oder and Nisa border is one of the main guarantees against the rebirth of German imperialism, they are the basis of a mighty and independent Poland.42

As the words of Szner aptly demonstrate, even Zionists were forced to use the language of communist propaganda, taken straight from the arsenal of right-wing Polish ethnic nationalism. In Lower Silesia, all Jewish political parties, even those as remote from communism as orthodox Agudat Israel and religious-Zionist Mizrachi, were harnessed to the referendum propaganda campaign.43

This level of political subjugation had deep consequences central to the problems of Jewish life in Poland. Just a few days after the Referendum, the Kielce pogrom of 4 July 1946 took place. On the level of official public language, Polish Jews could not take any other stance or interpretation of the reasons behind

41 YIVO Archives, RG 116, Poland 3, Folder 34, (unpaginated). Proclamation of the Poalei Zion Left, 1st of May 1946.
43 For example, see Archiwum Państwowe we Wrocławiu, 145, Wojewódzki Komitet Żydowski, 5, k. 83–86.
the pogrom other than those presented in the official propaganda explanations of the state. There was no place for a discussion about the antisemitism of the Polish masses, of some communist party members, and of state functionaries. There was no place to talk about glaring mistakes, or even the conscious decision, of the local Kielce authorities and security forces to not defend Jews, or about the participation of members of the military and militia in the pogrom. In the public comment on the Kielce pogrom issued by the Central Jewish Committee of 9 August 1946, anti-Jewish violence was condemned by a “decisive majority of democratic Polish society,” and was cast as almost solely planned and perpetrated by the right-wing anti-government opposition, directed from London. Antisemitism functioned only among the “epigones of Hitlerism,” never among the ranks of people supporting “democratic progress.” The state was said to have taken all measures needed to fight antisemitism in Poland.\textsuperscript{44} A similar tone is found in a speech by the Bundist leader Michał Szuldenfrei, wherein he regarded antisemitism in general, and the Kielce pogrom in particular, as:

strictly connected to the offensive of the camp of Polish reaction, supported by Anders [general of the Polish Army evacuated from the Soviet Union in 1942 and later fighting on the side of Western Allies- K.K.] circles, in its fight for political power and against the democratic camp. Methods of racism and antisemitism were always and also today are used by forces of the reaction in their class fight against democracy and social progress.\textsuperscript{45}

There were also individual voices in the Jewish West supporting this narrative. Perhaps the most important was the above-mentioned Joseph Tenenbaum.\textsuperscript{46} However, other voices were more dominant. This included columns within a New York Yiddish newspaper, the socialist-oriented Forverts, written by none other than Yaacov Pat – whose many other activities included organizing ongoing help for the Jewish community in post-Holocaust Poland. As seen in relation to Lower

\textsuperscript{44} YIVO Archives, RG 116, Poland 3, Folder 15 (unpaginated). Public Appeal of CKŻP from 09.08.1946. It should be added that the authorities also liked to use anti-German language regarding its own problems in dealing with the antisemitism of the Polish population. It was often attributed to hidden Volksdeutsche, continually being uncovered by the new regime. In the words of a government official: “In pre-war Poland, ruled by Rydz-Smigly and the Colonels, the poison of antisemitism had penetrated deep into the souls of the Polish people. Six years of German occupation, six years of unpunished Jewish massacres and incessant anti-Jewish propaganda, have left their profound imprint upon the population.” Placing all blame on the Germans, Nazi propaganda directed at the Polish population during the war and the pre-war Sanacja regime was much easier for an unpopular and authoritarian state than to confront the truly extant and widespread antisemitism in contemporary Poland; for another example, see YIVO Archives, RG 116, Poland 3, Folder 1, k. 13, 20.


Silesia, he had cautiously believed in the possibility of sustaining the community in spring 1946. Pat was a well-informed person, who visited Poland and was well-connected to various people in the Jewish community. He was also speaking with the representatives of the state like Prime Minister Edward Osóbka-Morawski or with Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, leader of the Polish Peasant Party, which was the head of the official opposition until it was crushed in 1947. Pat was also a committed and lifelong socialist. In a series of articles in Forverts, he was able to describe the complicated situation of Polish Jews and the multifaceted character of antisemitism in the country. He had the ability to speak with a voice that Polish Jews were themselves forbidden to use. In his pieces on the Kielce pogrom, he condemned the attitude of the Polish Church, which refused to condemn antisemitism and attacks on Jews, instead fueling a narrative of “Judeocommunism” and the myth that Jews ruled the country. Pat was also not shy in writing that anti-Jewish attacks had taken place all over Poland, and that many Jews saw flight from the country as the only possible solution. He had also clearly demonstrated the participation of the military and militia in the Kielce pogrom. Like the Central Jewish Committee and Polish authorities, he identified the role in the pogrom of the anti-Jewish stereotypes and myths which had been promoted so intensely by the government opposition. However, Pat also wrote that there was no proof, or even any sign, of their participation or will to organize a pogrom. Contrary to “official” Polish statements, he could freely write that the perpetrators of the pogrom were not an isolated group, but rather represented broad and very different strata of Polish society, as well as social circles that were, generally, positively predisposed to the ruling regime. By highlighting that the authorities had only officially condemned antisemitism, Pat accused them of negligence before and during the pogrom – thus, the “state from which a part of its citizens needs to flee with panic is responsible for the pogroms and the Jewish blood that is spilled.” In recognizing the deep pre-war and Holocaust-rooted antisemitism as the main reason behind anti-Jewish violence, Pat also observed the devastating effects that the undemocratic communist minority dictatorship was wreaking on Polish society. Moreover, Pat revealed that it was within the American and British German occupational zones, and not the Soviet areas, that Polish Jews could truly find shelter. As he concluded in an article published on 3 September 1946 – after Kielce, tens of thousands of Jews fled to DP camps in western allied zones of occupied Germany, yet none fled to the Soviet Union. This was because, he argued: “Polish Jews had already known well what Soviet Russia is.”

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47 YIVO Archives, RG 541, Yaakov Pat bequest, 137. Unpaginated clippings from Pat’s articles in Forverts from August and September of 1946.
The difference between Pat’s remarks on the Jewish situation in Poland, and what could be officially expressed by Polish Jews residing in the country, indicates crucial problems of Jewish national subjectivity under the early years of communism. The decades following the end of the nineteenth century saw the emigration of Jews from Eastern Europe to America, Palestine, and other non-European locations until the early post-Holocaust years. This was a time of constant development for modern Jewish internationalism, communication, mutual support, and consciousness of the deep links between various Jewish communities across the world. After the Holocaust, a concert of developments served as ultimate proof for the growth of Jewish transnationalism. These include: Jewish emigration from Poland, interconnected activities carried out in Palestine and elsewhere by Zionist institutions, as well as the crucial role of organizations such as American Joint Distribution Committee or Jewish Labor Committee (directed by Pat) in the reconstruction of Jewish life in Europe and their support for the Jewish *yishuv* in the Land of Israel. After the war and the genocide, the Polish Jewish community, once at the demographic center of the Jewish world, became its margin. Its prospects as a national community, sustaining independent social and cultural life, were dependent upon a modern transnational connection with the new centers of the Jewish world – the United States and Palestine. In 1946, the emergence of the Cold War and the hardening of the “Iron Curtain” began to endanger the international connections of Polish Jews. As seen in the declarations of the Central Committee of Polish Jews, and Jewish political parties, mentioned above, they were forced to condemn western countries in general as capitalist regimes and as opposed to communist policies in Poland in particular. With time, this growing logic of Cold War conflict also endangered links with the western world’s Jewish communities. These were perhaps the most important assets of the Polish Jewish community after the Holocaust, which enabled its rebuilding. The subjugation of Polish Jews to the logic of the Cold War, among many other things, impeded their ability to diagnose, speak openly about, and act against the main challenges to their life in the country. Also, the public manner in which Polish Jewish institutions could speak of antisemitism was subordinated to the propaganda language of the state, in which all social ills were located outside of it and outside of the core of Polish society, connected only to the western “forces of reaction.” The state propaganda, and consequently the language of Polish Jewish institutions of the time, was thus characterized by “rhetorical collectivism,” public speaking in strict and clearly defined categories of large social and national groups, with extensive use of stereotypes and aggressive images. This kind of language was used against the German population in the Regained Territories, and justified not only their Polish resettlement, but for a time, also the reconstruction of Polish Jewish national life in a new place, in Lower Silesia. In time, this political language also harmed the Jews themselves.
This is the crucial paradox. At the beginning, Jews were exceptional as the only ethnic group provided with a degree of self-government, and the opportunity to rebuild their connections with Jewish centers outside of Poland. But this was done with many caveats, and one, paradoxically, was participation in the nationalist policies of ethnic homogenization performed by the Polish State in Lower Silesia. The consequence of this paradox was that by fulfilling this condition by supporting the state propaganda and rhetoric of polonizing the “Western Territories,” the Jews were losing their own political subjectivity. They were also losing the capacity to speak their own language and, with that, the ability to express and manifest their Jewish presence in Lower Silesia. Jews who came to the conclusion that they had no other alternative in Poland were thus forced to support the state. That state was authoritarian and did not accept any competition in the form of public discourse. Therefore, discourse could only be carried out in ideologically loaded and nationalist terms. And, paradoxically, participation in this policy subverted Jewish autonomy of Lower Silesia and was decisive in spelling the end of Jewish social, cultural, and political pluralism.

The logic of an increasingly authoritarian state, combined with the simultaneous demise of Jewish national subjectivity, was revealed in the subsequent chain of events. After the June 1946 referendum, the next big political campaign of the communists was in the election of 19 January, 1947. The Yiddish language electoral appeal of the Central Jewish Committee had called on Jewish voters to vote for the communist-led Democratic Bloc. It was touted as the only answer to the “fascism” that had attacked Polish Jews in 1946, a clear association with the Kielce pogrom.48 Four days before the elections, the Polish-language Central Zionist newspaper Opinion called on Jewish voters to support the Bloc:

The electoral win of the Bloc of Polish Democracy will enable further reconstruction of the country, social reforms, keeping the Oder and Nisse borders and a continuation of the country’s peaceful foreign policy by an alliance with the Soviet Union. For us, Jews, the victory of the Democratic Bloc is a guarantee of the intensified fight with the forces of reaction, the murder of our innocent brothers, a guarantee of real equality and finally of the support of the Polish state for our fight for an independent life in Palestine.49

In a report covering the months between the January 1947 elections and the May Day demonstration of the same year, the Lower Silesian branch of the Jewish Faction of the communist party underscored an “overwhelming victory of the Democratic Bloc [...] demonstrating a total bankruptcy of the Polish Peasant Party

48 YIVO Archives, RG 116, Poland 3, Folder 42 (unpaginated).
The year 1947 was a year of stabilization for Jewish life in Poland, after the panic and emigration wave caused by the Kielce pogrom had ended, and Polish Jews, especially the Lower Silesian community, reached the peak of their economic and organizational development.\(^5\) But this was also the year when the true “Stalinization” of Polish life began. In the summer of 1947, the “war for commerce” introduced the Stalinization of economic life. In September 1947, the Cominform was created at the well-known Lower Silesian mountain resort Szklarska Poręba. The American Marshall Plan for Europe was declined by Soviet-dominated states. Not only communists, but also other Jewish parties, were forced to support the Polish rejection of the Marshall Plan, and with that, they were also forced to curb their relations with the Jews in the West. Thus, exactly at the moment when Natan Gross’s film reached cinema screens – praising the Jewish pluralism of Lower Silesia, and its socialist, but also Zionist and orthodox life – that life was already beginning to end. The space for Jewish national subjectivity, inextricably linked to its Jewish transnationalism, was drastically limited, and ultimately liquidated.

In the beginning of 1948, when Polish authorities, following the lead of the Soviet Union, still supported the Zionist struggle in Palestine and accepted close ties between the Polish Jewish community and the Palestinian Yishuv, the Ministry of Public Security observed these and all other international Jewish ties with great suspicion. Any Jewish independence or autonomy in relation to the state was perceived as potentially criminal.\(^5\) The fate of the “Jewish pavilion” is perhaps the most telling example of how the indigenous nationalism of Lower Silesia (“the lands of the Piasts”), anti-German propaganda, the authoritarianism of the communist state, and Jewish participation therein, meant the demise of Jewish pluralism and national life. This “pavilion” was supposed to be erected as part of the “Exhibition of Regained Lands,” which took place in Wrocław between July and October 1948. Local Jewish authorities, headed by the chairman of the Jewish Voivodship Committee of Lower Silesia, and communist activist, Jacob Egit, treated their part of exhibition as a priority. It was to serve as an ultimate proof and manifestation of their success, showcasing Jewish achievements and contributions to the Polish resettlement of “historical Polish lands.” The “pavilion” was also to be a sign of Jewish integration in the new socialist Poland. Jewish activists from the

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50 APW, 331/VI: Urząd Wojewódzki we Wrocławiu Wydział Społeczno-Polityczny, Akta Komisarza. Wojewódzkiego dla spraw produktywizacji ludności żydowskiej na województwo wrocławskie, 697, k. 77–85.
51 Especially see Szaynok, Ludność żydowska, 101–168.
region, together with local artists, began to work on the Jewish part of the exhibition in spring of 1948. In their March meeting, Jacob Egit expressed pride that “Jews were the first pioneers of Polishness in the Regained Territories.” This kind of opinion was not necessarily shared by the authorities, and such public expressions could be blocked by the government. This was seen during events surrounding the “Great Week of the Western Lands” in Wałbrzych (former Waldenburg), one of the most important Lower Silesian towns, in April of 1948. Wałbrzych contained one of the largest Jewish populations, where Jews were indeed the pioneers of Polish rule in 1945. As reported in Yiddish radio broadcast, “those celebrations were a great manifestation of the Polishness of ancient Piast lands.” A crowd of 20,000 people was addressed by Vice-Prime Minister Władysław Gomułka and the president of Wałbrzych. They spoke about “cleansing the land of any signs of Germanness,” and about German atrocities committed in death camps and the genocide of the Polish nation. Jews were not mentioned at all, neither as victims of war and the Holocaust, nor as the pioneers of Polish Lower Silesia.

Nevertheless, Jewish community work on the construction of the Jewish pavilion for the summer exhibition went as planned. In April 1948, its design was accepted by the Ministry of the Regained Territories. But suddenly, in June, two weeks prior to the opening of the exhibition, when the pavilion was ready, it was visited by the Wrocław chief of security police and his Soviet advisor. One of them said to Egit, “Comrade Egit, you must think that you’re in Israel. This would be a very appropriate pavilion for Tel-Aviv, but this is Poland.” Hersh Smolar remembered that when the pavilion was ready, the authorities had sent to Wrocław Antoni Bida (the future Polish ambassador in Israel), who, meeting with local Jewish leaders, praised the pavilion, but also asked them meaningful questions: “Why is it [the Jewish pavilion] needed? Why did the Jews have to be shown? Is this in the interest of Poland and of the Jewish community?” Jacob Egit tried to intervene with the local head of the communist party, Kazimierz Witaszewski (in later years, a well-known antisemite in the high ranks of the party). He not only refused to help but accused Egit and his colleagues of “Jewish nationalism, alienation from the Polish reality, enclosing in a Jewish Ghetto, close cooperation with foreign Jewish elements, especially with the American Joint Distribution Committee.”

53 Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego (AŻIH), 303/XIII, Wydział Kultury i Propagandy CKŻP, 8, k. 68.
54 Ibid., 11, k. 45–46.
55 Ibid., 11, k. 73.
56 Egit, Grand Illusion, 98.
57 Smolar, Oyf di letzter pozicye, 152.
In the end, the Jewish pavilion was dismantled and its elements, taken out of their context, were integrated into the general exhibition. Perhaps the most tragic aspect of the event was the fact that Jews were forced to act as if nothing had happened. The above-mentioned words of Egit and Smolar were written years after the events, after the former left Poland for Canada and the latter for Israel. At the time in Poland, neither they, or any other Jewish public figure or institution, could express their protest publicly or even inform others about what happened. On 1 July 1948, two weeks after officials had communicated to the Jewish leaders the decision to liquidate their pavilion, Jewish listeners of Polish state radio broadcasting in Yiddish were told that in the exhibition they would see a “Jewish pavilion that will show three years of work of the Jewish settlement in Lower and Upper Silesia and the Szczecin voivodship.”58 Another broadcast about the exhibition from later in July simply did not mention the Jewish pavilion at all, neither informing nor explaining to listeners the reasons why it was liquidated just before the opening of the event. This was only implied in an apologetic tip of the hat about the presence of Jews in different parts of the general exhibition. Its encompassing narrative line was constrained by the logic of Polish ethnic nationalism.59

Following these events, the deconstruction of Jewish national life and institutions carried on according to the same logic. In January 1948, the Central Jewish Committee in Poland, after many months of negotiations, finally joined the World Jewish Congress (WJC). Half a year later, between the 27th of June and the 6th of July 1948, the Congress held its second session in the Swiss town of Montreux. Members of the Polish Jewish delegation, which in Montreux had strictly followed the guidelines received in Warsaw, were attacked upon returning to Poland for the “political mistakes” they made at the Congress. According to communist party officials, the Polish Jewish delegation did not do enough to confront the imperialist views of Jewish delegates from Western countries.60

The autumn of 1948 saw the dismantling and annexation of the Polish Socialist Party into the ranks of the communists, now called the Polish United Workers’ Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, PZPR). The same happened with the Jewish Bund, which was forced to join PZPR in January of 1949. Before that happened, the Polish Bund had to break its ties with the World Bund Coordinating Committee in New York.61 After the support of the Soviet and satellite countries for

58 AZIH, 303/XIII: Wydział Kultury i Propagandy CKŻP, 15, k. 1.
59 Ibid., 15, k. 15, 26; 16, k. 9–11, 44–46; 19, k. 3–5.
60 Grabski, Centralny Komitet Żydów, 192–193.
the establishment of the State of Israel did not lead to expected results, an attack on Zionism began. In September 1949, the Central Jewish Committee attacked the WJC that it had so recently joined. The main reason was the alleged alliance of the capitalist and imperialist West with German “revanchism” and the Western Jewish community’s alleged complicity therein. In a document of the Central Jewish Committee announcing this breakup, Yaacov Pat and his Forverts, together with the leaders of the WJC, were accused of a “full, undisguised hatred towards Jewish communities of the people’s democracies in general and the Polish Jewish community in particular.”62 On 16 May 1949, the Central Jewish Committee had officially broken its ties with the WJC. Finally, in October 1950, the Committee was dismantled and replaced by a fully state-controlled Jewish Socio-Cultural Association. Jewish pluralism in Poland and in Lower Silesia was now over. Its dismantling, and the severe limitations imposed on connections with families and organizations in the western world, caused many Polish Jews to emigrate. Between the autumns of 1949 and 1950, 28,000 of them had left Poland.63

Summary

From the end of nineteenth century, internationalism was an important part of Jewish modernity. It was crucial to the reconstruction of Jewish life after the Holocaust. Another feature of the modern Jewish experience in Poland, as well as all other European countries, was participation in a local meta-language of the public discourse. In Poland, this encompassed the obligation of constantly declaring Polish patriotism, attachment to the Polish nation, its history, and acting consistently in accordance with its interests. In post-war Polish Lower Silesia, this obligation meant full support for the “Piast” or “indigenously Polish” character of the Regained Territories. Only by such means were Jews allowed to feel at home in the region. The paradox of the time was that precisely in the years when interwar discrimination was abolished, when for the first time the Polish state openly declared its fight with antisemitism, it demanded an even stronger “symbolic submission” from the Jews than before. Jews who wanted to stay in Poland had no choice but to obey this call. Integration and acceptance of Jews into Polish society, longed for by the former for so long, in post-1945 Poland assumed their participation in the construction of a nationalist language that in the long run made them victims of symbolic exclusion. Jews who, in the first

62 YIVO Archives, RG 116, Poland 3, Folder 14 (unpaginated).
63 Berendt, et. al, Studia z historii Żydów, 117. Only 70,000 still stayed in the country.
years after the Holocaust, stayed in Poland, had allied themselves with the government. They did so not only due to a lack of other options, but also because it promised them equality, individual freedom, and possibilities for a collective Jewish national life. However, alliance with an authoritarian state also meant a growing dependence upon it, losing in the process autonomy and the ability to speak in public about the many important problems confronting Jewish life in Poland. At the same time, the constant use of ethnic nationalism by communist authorities diminished the very space for a Jewish national life within Poland. In effect, Poland became a mono-ethnic state in which Jewishness could not function openly in the public sphere, and any contact with Jews of the western world was treated with the utmost suspicion.