



## Jewish emigration from communist Poland: the decline of Polish Jewry in the aftermath of the Holocaust

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### ABSTRACT

This article takes stock of the prime catalyst behind the shrinking and transformation of the Jewish populace in communist Poland – emigration. Over the course of four major waves, nearly a quarter of a million Jews left the country, most of whom headed to Israel. On the basis of recent scholarship and the author's own research on migrations from communist Poland, he gauges the magnitude of and discusses key factors behind this exodus, not least Polish Jewry's time- and place-specific considerations, the emerging shape of Warsaw's relevant policies, and the social dynamics of these outflows.

### KEYWORDS

Poland; 1945–1989; Jews; emigration; communist regime; migration policy; social networks; antisemitism; Zionism

After the Holocaust, Polish Jewry was just a small fraction of its former self. Until 1941, Poland was home to more than three million Jews and the largest Jewish community in Europe. Though estimates vary, only about ten percent apparently survived the war.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, it remained one of the biggest diaspora communities. Smaller than Soviet, British, and Romanian Jewry, Polish Jews outnumbered their counterparts in France, Hungary, Germany, and the Netherlands. Despite the strong pull of Zionism, most of the survivors initially tried to restore Jewish life within the modified borders of Poland and under the fledgling communist regime. In fact, many settled down in the newly annexed region of Silesia in the hopes that communist Poland would offer better conditions for its Jews than the pre-war government. By 1970, little remained of this dream and of the Jewish populace itself. The community was down to several thousand souls; its synagogues, organizations, and cultural institutions were closed or reduced to mere shadows of even their postwar selves. Neither assimilation nor a high mortality rate was the primary cause for this decline. The single most important social phenomenon to shape Polish Jewry in the postwar decades was emigration.

There are additional reasons why Jewish emigration from Poland warrants scholarly attention. First, communist Poland was a bureaucratic police state, which produced sheaves upon sheaves of documentation. As a result, there is considerably more source material on the migrations during Poland's communist era (with the exception of the early postwar years), than on prior waves. Second, after 1989, the relevant archives have been fully accessible, which is not the case for, say, Russia or Ukraine. Third, Jewish migrations have riveted the attention of several researchers, who have indeed enriched

our knowledge of this phenomenon.<sup>2</sup> This subject also turns up in works on other aspects of Polish Jewish history.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, knowledge about the outflow from Poland is richer than that of the other Warsaw Pact countries (where most of European Jewry resided), including the USSR and Romania.<sup>4</sup> Lastly, the history of Polish Jewish emigration sheds light on other communist policies toward the Jews, Israel, and emigration more generally.

This article will canvass the four waves of Jewish emigration from Poland between 1945 and 1970. From that point forward, the outflow was numerically insignificant, as the potential pool of departees had been exhausted and the remaining Jewish community was small and aging. My emphasis will be on the factors behind the exodus, including the likely motives of the expatriates themselves, and the government's emigration policy. That said, the history of the emigrants after their departure, such as their integration into their new homelands (mainly Israel), is largely beyond the scope of this paper.

### Postwar population

Any study on a demographic phenomenon like migration must begin with a definition of the group under review and an estimate of its size. These two variables are clearly related, for the size of any collective depends on who is included therein. With respect to postwar Polish Jewry, questions of identity and identification—the key determinants of a community's boundaries—are rather complex.

Estimates of this population's size in the aftermath of the Shoah rely heavily on data gathered by the Jewish committees that sprang up in Poland immediately following the end of the German occupation. These communities registered upwards of 240,000 people. Owing to the fact that registration was the best way to be found by surviving relatives and friends, as well as a prerequisite for receiving the vital material assistance that was distributed by the committees, most of the Jews took this step (some more than once). A significant number of the survivors, though, preferred to "remain in hiding," that is, to shed their pre-war identity and eschew registration. In 1946, provincial committees surmised that at least 10% of the eligible population had taken this course.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, it is worth noting that the Nazi definition of a Jew was applied even more rigorously in occupied Poland than in Germany proper. More specifically, the German authorities deemed all those with Jewish grandparents to be Jews, including those who had not been listed as such in pre-war Polish censuses. In all likelihood, at least some of them had not considered themselves to be Jewish. Nevertheless, during almost six years of German occupation they were labeled and treated as Jews, sharing the fate of Polish Jewry. Due to their social and cultural capital (non-Jewish relatives and friends, fluent Polish, and knowledge of Christians rituals, inter alia), their chances of survival "on the Aryan side" were probably greater. For this reason, they were likely overrepresented among the survivors and underrepresented on the rolls of the Jewish committees.<sup>6</sup>

The vast majority of Jews residing in postwar Poland had survived the war in the Soviet Union. This group consisted of various subsets: those who had been deported by the Soviet regime from the parts of eastern Poland that Moscow annexed in 1939; those who left the occupied zone in search of jobs to the east; Soviet army conscripts; and those who took flight in the wake of the Blitzkrieg in 1941. From 1944 to 1946, most of them migrated to Poland's new borders. Several

thousand came back as soldiers in the communist-led Polish army in 1944. Approximately 55,000 Jews resettled under population-exchange agreements between the new Polish government and the Soviet republics of Lithuania, Belarus, and the Ukraine. The lion's share – some 140,000 – arrived from the Soviet interior under a repatriation scheme in 1946.<sup>7</sup>

The influx from the USSR is notable not only because of its size, but also because of the migrants' peculiar link to the reinstated Polish state. The Jews were the only ethnic minority to which repatriation was expressly offered. Conversely, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Belarusians, and above all Germans were not only prohibited from returning from their wartime exile, but also deported in bulk. As early as 1943, the Polish communist newspaper *Wolna Polska* declared that "the restored Polish state will be a nation-state," that is, a state of ethnic Poles.<sup>8</sup> In light of the above, the repatriation of Polish Jews from the USSR was far from obvious.<sup>9</sup> Polish–Soviet agreements on population exchange, however, cleared the way for their return.<sup>10</sup> "People's Poland" thus became a nation-state with a recognized ethnic minority.

The second-largest group of Polish Jewish survivors – an estimated 50,000 – were liberated prisoners from German concentration camps. A few of these camps were in Lower Silesia, which was annexed to Poland in 1945. Their liberated inmates went on to become the pioneers of postwar Poland's largest Jewish settlement in this same region. However, the majority of ex-prisoners became displaced persons (DPs), mainly in the American zone of occupation. Many of these survivors did not return to Poland, but moved to Palestine, Western Europe, or further afield. The third group survived the war on Polish soil by hiding in cellars, attics, and woodlands, or by assuming an "Aryan" identity. Though there is little consensus over the size of this group, the most convincing estimates run from 30,000 to 60,000.<sup>11</sup>

The Jewish population in Poland reached its postwar apex in June 1946, when some 220,000 Jews registered with the above-mentioned committees. This number does not include another 30,000 to 80,000 Polish Jews who had already departed by June 1946 or returned at a later date, as well as those who did not register at all. A more precise estimate is, in all likelihood, an unattainable goal, as such margins of error are commonplace in migration statistics.

From 1946 until the end of the communist regime in 1989, Poland's Jewish population was in constant decline. Even the inflow from the USSR in mid-1950s could not reverse this trend. In contrast to emigration, natural growth had a relatively minor impact on the community's size and, at any rate, is difficult to gauge. While fragmentary data point to a baby boom in the first postwar decade, this reproductive upswing apparently ran its course sooner among the Jews than the rest of the population. At most, this demographic shift appears to have increased the Jewish populace by no more than several percentiles.<sup>12</sup>

## After Kielce

It is worth stressing that the majority of Jews in postwar Poland had migrated *to Poland* from the sundry places to which they had been driven earlier by the vagaries of war. Likewise, those who had survived the Holocaust on Polish soil had been uprooted by the deportations to ghettos, their own escape routes, and years of hiding. In sum, almost every Jew had been violently uprooted from his or her familiar environments – household,

community, and landscape – and these places had been almost completely destroyed. It is difficult to underestimate the consequences of such an experience on Polish Jewry's propensity for emigration.<sup>13</sup>

Upon returning to their hometowns, these Jews often encountered mass graves and ruins – mementos of the cruel death that had befallen their loved ones. In a memorandum from early 1946, the Central Committee of Jews in Poland (CKŻP) listed the inability to dwell in places that had been transformed into “cemeteries of their families, relatives and friends” as the primary factor behind Jewish emigration. Other stated factors were the desire to reunite with families abroad, Zionist leanings, and an acute sense of insecurity.<sup>14</sup> The latter reason was well founded, as postwar Poland was indeed rife with danger, especially for Jews. In the first place, banditry was widespread. There was also an ongoing civil war between the communist government – with which the Jews were strongly identified – and an armed underground. What is more, Jews were special targets of attacks motivated by antisemitic prejudice and the fear that they might reclaim their property or avenge those who had betrayed their families during the war. Even the blood libel had reared its ugly head.<sup>15</sup>

It is difficult to measure the relative importance of these factors, but violence certainly triggered the massive flight. This trend hit its peak in June 1946 following the pogrom in Kielce, which took the lives of 42 Jews, women and children included. By February 1947, no less than 70,000 Jews had left Poland – between a quarter and a third of the country's total Jewish population and the biggest exodus of the postwar era. While tens of thousands of Jews had left in the months between the Allied victory and the summer of 1946, the intensity of the outflow in the latter half of that year surpassed that of all the other postwar waves.

Such a mass exodus would have been impossible without the regime's consent. In contrast to communist governments' well-known anti-Israel and anti-Jewish policies during the early 1950s and late 1960s, in the early postwar years Warsaw repeatedly declared its support for Zionist aims, tolerated the movement's activities, and refrained from impeding Jewish emigration. Moreover, the authorities sanctioned the establishment of Zionist parties and allowed emigration departments of the Jewish Agency, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), the CKŻP, and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee to operate in Poland.<sup>16</sup> Agents of Brichah – the clandestine Zionist network advancing illegal emigration to Palestine – had no doubt that the Polish authorities tolerated their activity.<sup>17</sup> In the summer of 1946, Brichah struck a deal that de facto opened the border to Jewish emigrants. By dint of this understanding, large organized groups of illegal emigrants crossed the border into Czechoslovakia en route to Palestine. The scale of this enterprise was so massive that it attracted international attention. The British government, which was restricting immigration to Palestine at the time, most likely pressured Warsaw into putting an end to this flow. By early 1947, the authorities had indeed shut down this illicit route.<sup>18</sup> Altogether, between 1944 and 1947, some 130,000 Jews – or 40% to 50% of the community – left Poland, mostly via illegal or semi-legal outlets.<sup>19</sup>

Warsaw's pro-Zionist stance did not last long. Within months of Israel's founding, Moscow altered its policy towards the Jewish state, and the Polish authorities followed suit. In the autumn of 1948, they closed the Jewish Agency's Warsaw office and the Joint's emigration department. Moreover, Israeli diplomats were sternly warned to refrain from “interfering in matters of Polish citizens, including those who may wish

to immigrate to Israel.<sup>20</sup> Throughout the Soviet bloc, the term “Zionist” became synonymous with “traitor.” Bloody reprisals against alleged Zionist spies ensued, the most infamous of which was the show trial of the communist leader Rudolf Slansky in Prague in 1952.<sup>21</sup>

### The “Israeli option”

Polish communists were notably less zealous in their struggle against real or alleged Zionists than their counterparts in Moscow, Prague, or Budapest. Warsaw did not sever relations with Israel and had no equivalent of the Slansky trial. Despite the hostility towards Zionists, discussions on Jewish emigration continued. Paradoxically, the anti-Zionist tendency may have contributed to the decision to let some Jews leave.

In 1949, Szymon Zachariasz, a leading Jewish communist, recommended permitting such a transfer for the purpose of ridding the country of those Jews who, in his estimation, impeded the construction of the socialist state: “all senior and mid-level activists of Zionist parties ... private businessmen, the elderly and disabled, rabbis and religious Jews.”

Zachariasz hoped that their departure would lead to the swift yet muted “self-liquidation of the Zionist movement” in Poland.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, Marek Thee, the military attaché and key intelligence officer at the Polish legation in Tel Aviv, was also lobbying for a more flexible policy on Jewish emigration, albeit for very a different reason: to strengthen the Israeli communists. According to a report by Thee, “Israeli comrades” have repeatedly begged for more class-conscious immigrants from Poland. Emigration restrictions, he claimed, were helping “English and American imperialism, feudal Arab rulers, and Jewish bourgeoisie.”<sup>23</sup>

In the summer of 1949, Franciszek Mazur, the Foreign Affairs Secretary of the Polish Communist Party’s Central Committee (CC) and a Moscow crony, proposed that the government should “prompt the departure of Zionist and religious activists and private business elements,” while dissuading workers and productive intelligentsia from leaving. In addition to reasons of Zachariasz, he raised another argument in favor of this outflow: Poland’s US\$2.5 million debt to Israel for unsettled trade accounts.<sup>24</sup> This reason appears to have tipped the scales, as the question of emigration was soon included in a secret annex to the Polish–Israeli trade agreement. More specifically, the two sides hammered out a complicated system of commodity and currency transfers which was tied to the number of Polish Jews released to Israel. Though the accord’s precise mechanism remains unknown, Poland was basically remunerated for each Jew it sent to Israel.<sup>25</sup>

Another argument in favor of Jewish emigration is hinted at in a couple of related documents. From 1944 onwards, the communists endeavored to make “People’s Poland” as ethnically homogeneous as possible. The Jews were nevertheless the only formally recognized ethnic minority because, unlike the Ukrainians or Slovaks, they were defined as an ethno-religious group, not a nation. In other words, since the Jewish people lacked a territory of their own, there was no titular nation-state that laid claim to their allegiance as Jews. This obviously changed after the establishment of the State of Israel. The terms “Israeli option” and “national option,” which turn up in some documents pertaining to the Jewish emigration scheme of 1949–1950, evidently reflect an outlook that is rooted in the emergence of nation-states from the ruins of multiethnic empires in the aftermath of the Great War. The term “national option” had been used in Polish only in reference to the citizenship option that

the Versailles Treaty had proffered to the inhabitants of the heretofore German lands now awarded to Poland. Those who chose German rather than Polish citizenship had to resettle within Germany's new borders.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, in 1949, Polish Jews were forced to decide where their national and political allegiances lay: "Zionist, clerical and bourgeois elements" were pressed to leave (and had to renounce their Polish citizenship before departing), whereas healthy members of the working class were encouraged to stay.

Soon after the trade-emigration deal went into effect, the Polish passport authorities prepared guidelines and documents for the new exit policy. In early September 1949, a couple of newspapers printed a laconic note that applications for emigration permits to Israel might be submitted to the passport department of the Ministry of Public Administration (MAP). The news spread like wildfire throughout the Jewish community. That said, many Polish Jews did not initially trust the official pronouncements; rumor had it that applicants would be deported to Siberia.<sup>27</sup> Once the first transport of emigrants actually left for Israel a few weeks later, the requests for visas began to pour in. By the end of the year, the number of applications had snowballed to almost 20,000.

The authorities were evidently surprised by the massive response, but continued the program, despite criticism by Jewish communists, who witnessed their base quickly eroding. To limit the scale of the outflow, the Polish government allowed party-controlled Jewish newspapers to initiate a propaganda campaign aiming to discourage potential emigrants. These newspapers ran articles and letters to the editors highlighting the difficulties and dangers that awaited emigrants in Israel. Though some expatriates indeed had problems adapting to their new home and asked for permission to return, most of the letters seem to be outright fabrications. Jewish communists also spoke out against emigration at community gatherings, making veiled threats that applicants could run the risk of being refused and subsequently pay dearly for their perceived disloyalty. Moreover, communist-controlled local and regional Jewish committees, which were charged with providing applicants the requisite proof of Jewish ethnicity, were deliberately slow and uncooperative.<sup>28</sup>

These efforts were not entirely in vain, as a few hundred people withdrew their applications and three thousand or so did not pick up their approved emigration documents. Most of the applicants nevertheless saw the process through. Their decisions were motivated, in part, by factors that did not exist in 1946. First, the nascent Jewish state was a much stronger draw than British Palestine. Second, between 1947 and 1949, the communists accelerated their efforts to Sovietize Poland, declaring war on private business and property, religion and traditional values, as well as Zionism and so-called "cosmopolitanism." Simultaneously, political parties, associations, and other organizations were disbanded or merged into "transmission belts" of the all-powerful Communist Party. State terror, which until 1947 targeted genuine opponents of the regime, now posed a threat to each and every Pole, as even top party members were not spared; none could feel safe anymore. Third, emigration to Israel appeared to be the only recourse, as other countries were practically off-limits. When the government announced September 1950 as the final deadline for submitting exit visa requests, it appeared as though the Israel option was a "now-or-never" proposition.<sup>29</sup>

Having closed the scheme in September, the passport administration continued to process the remaining applications and appeals from rejected candidates. The final transport of emigrants left Poland for Israel in February 1951, bringing the total figure of *olim* to

approximately 28,000.<sup>30</sup> In the months that ensued, more than 16,000 applicants submitted appeals, petitions, or tardy requests, but for all intents and purposes the door had been shut. Over the next two years, only about 157 requests, covering up to 200 mostly old or infirm candidates, were approved.<sup>31</sup> All told, between 1949 and 1951, some 45,000 Polish Jews – 28,000 emigrants and over 16,000 unsuccessful applicants – or roughly 40% of the Jewish population – expressed their willingness to leave the country. This amounted to a greater proportion of the community than the percentage that had departed after the Kielce pogrom in 1946. To put it differently, a fair share of the Jews who a mere five years earlier had believed they could rebuild their lives in Poland had already changed their mind.

From 1952 to 1953, the anti-Israel and anti-Jewish tendencies in the Soviet bloc reached a high point. While Polish communists did not hang alleged Zionists, they made it clear that any attempt to promote *aliyah* (Jewish emigration to Israel) was deemed to be the “criminal work of the Zionist agents.” Furthermore, they summarily refused to even discuss Jewish emigration with Israeli diplomats and expelled those whom they accused of shoring up *aliyah*. Israeli offers of “special allocations of foreign currencies” and “intensified sale of diamonds in exchange for emigration” now fell on deaf ears. The communist Security agents arrested or intimidated people for merely visiting the Israeli legation. They also inspected the content of letters to and from Israel and infiltrated Jewish organizations. These actions were part and parcel of the general prohibition on emigration and the regime’s paranoid suspicion of contacts with anyone on the other side of the Iron Curtain. As Stanisław Skrzyszewski, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, explained to the Israeli envoy: “Non-Jewish Poles who wish to go to America or another country are not allowed to leave the country. Why should we let the Jews depart? Just because Israel is ready to take them? We cannot discriminate against anyone.”<sup>32</sup> By depriving all citizens of their basic rights, the communist regime oddly fulfilled its promise: to treat the Jews the same as everyone else.

## The Gomułka Aliyah

A few months after Stalin’s death in March 1953, Moscow began to signal a curtailment in terror and improvement in relations with the West. In 1954, the Soviets allowed a few dozen Jews to leave the country; similar numbers reportedly arrived in Israel from Hungary and Bulgaria. The “no exit” policy of high Stalinism was apparently revised, and the Polish authorities cautiously followed Moscow’s lead. Their new position on Jewish emigration took shape gradually and was accompanied by a rapprochement with Israel.<sup>33</sup> These developments were mirrored by changes with respect to the emigration of ethnic Germans living in Poland and policy towards the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG).

In attaining these concessions from the Polish leadership, both Israel and the FRG combined economic incentives with the invocation of humanitarian principles. The latter course legitimized the intermittent removal of emigration restrictions on the grounds of reunifying families that had been separated by the events of World War II and by subsequent forced migrations.<sup>34</sup> In the spring and fall of 1955, Polish United Workers’ Party (PZPR) officials recommended a “gradual increase in granting Polish citizens of Jewish ethnicity permits for [emigration] to Israel ... first to the elderly, single people, [those]

unable to work...[and] other persons...if they have no immediate family in Poland and their next of kin (father, mother, brothers, sisters) live in Israel."<sup>35</sup>

The gates were fully opened in the summer of 1956. Besides a general directive instructing passport officers to approve requests on grounds of family reunification, the party instructed the Passport Bureau to grant visas to candidates without relatives in Israel.<sup>36</sup> This modification laid the groundwork for a wave of emigration to the Jewish state which Israelis dubbed "the Gomułka Aliyah." Nonetheless, "Gomułka Aliyah" is a misnomer, for Władysław Gomułka only became the first secretary of the Polish Communist Party a few months later; he can only be credited only with maintaining this liberal policy, not with its introduction.

Much ambiguity surrounds the reasons behind Warsaw's change of heart. We do know, however, that the decision was made following high-level talks with Israeli envoys who repeated Jerusalem's offers of profitable trade contracts with Poland (including proposals to help the Polish government circumvent the American embargo on new technologies) in return for Jewish immigrants. As in 1949, it thus stands to reason that the Gomułka Aliyah was the end result of a deal between the two governments linking emigration to economic benefits. However, we have yet to find any written evidence for this hypothesis.

The news of this liberalization spread post-haste, initiating the familiar inner dynamics of migration processes. The number of applications skyrocketed from some 400 a month in the spring of 1956 to 1000 in July and 9000 in December. This "emigration fever," as some observers put it, was indeed contagious, circulating through personal networks. The pace was especially rapid in Lower Silesia, where most of Poland's Jews lived in relatively close confines. As one emigrant, Leopold Sobel, recalled, "In the summer of 1956, Jews in Wrocław began to run around like a scalded cat, for they discovered that they could put in papers to emigrate."<sup>37</sup> Unlike 1949, Jewish Communist Party activists made no effort to stem the tide. Shocked by the recent disclosure of Stalin's crimes and disoriented by the rapid political changes, they were passive or joined the feverish exodus themselves. "The situation could be called a panic," noted a concerned member of the Sociocultural Association of the Jews (TSKŻ). "People who previously vacillated, have now put in [the paperwork] to leave."<sup>38</sup>

By the end of the year, over nine thousand candidates had received their exit documents and thousands more awaited approval.<sup>39</sup> The emigration fever continued in 1957: over 30,000 people received exit permits, relatively few applications being denied. The majority of the rejections were issued to former military and Security Service personnel, armament industry employees, and others with access to state secrets. Most of these candidates were eventually allowed to exit the country after two years of information quarantine. The number of requests dropped to 4,200 in 1958 and even less in 1959, as the reservoir of potential departees had apparently been exhausted.<sup>40</sup>

Included in the ranks of Polish emigrants to Israel were also recent Jewish repatriates from the USSR. As part of the Soviet thaw and changing relations between Moscow and its satellites, 250,000 pre-war Polish citizens who had not left the USSR during the postwar repatriation programs moved to Poland between 1956 and 1959. No less than 18,000 Jews were repatriated in this wave, three-quarters of whom would subsequently relocate to Israel. At first, the Jewish returnees continued to Israel almost as soon as they arrived in Poland. In early 1957, however, the passport administration ceased to issue the necessary documents.<sup>41</sup> This sudden change of policy was undoubtedly

prompted by coercion from the Kremlin. Upon learning that Jews (including some non-Polish citizens) were exploiting the repatriation scheme by using Poland as a transit country, the Soviets exerted pressure on Warsaw to block this revolving door. As the Polish Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs explained to his Israeli colleagues, "My sympathies are with you, but we can't go overboard, for going overboard could capsize the whole process of repatriation."<sup>42</sup> Once the influx from the Soviet Union had run its course, Poland had nevertheless enabled the vast majority of Jewish repatriates to leave.<sup>43</sup>

Between 1955 and 1960, a grand total of around 51,000 people obtained emigration permits to Israel. According to Israeli statistics, the number of *olim* from Poland during that period was 43,000. This discrepancy may reflect the fact that some of the departees used the liberal emigration policy to move to countries other than Israel, or Israelis may have downplayed the numbers for the purpose of obscuring the magnitude of the influx. Both the Israeli and Polish governments made efforts to hide the actual numbers from the Arab world, which pressed Warsaw and Moscow to stop the flow.<sup>44</sup>

The departure of over 50,000 people, including some 14,000 repatriates, amounted to roughly half of the Jews who had been living in Poland before 1955. As such, this exodus surpassed both the "Israeli option" five years earlier and the mass flight in the aftermath of the Kielce pogrom. The emigration rate was extraordinary, even if the population estimates according to which the Jewish population of Poland was close to 80,000 in the mid-1950s are imprecise.<sup>45</sup> The scale of such an outflow caused a dramatic decline in Jewish societal and cultural life. For some small towns in Lower Silesia, it indeed marked the end of their Jewish communities. Moreover, the exodus symbolized Poland's failure to make good on its promise to integrate the Jews into communist society. In fact, many erstwhile proponents of this integration – activists of the TSKŻ and the Communist Party, government officials and officers – were among the long line of departees.

In determining the underlying causes of this exodus, it must be remembered that the potential for migration had been building since the late 1940s. Thousands of Jews who had been denied exit permits between 1949 and 1955 were the first to reapply and set the emigration chain in motion. Next in line were candidates who had probably wanted to depart before 1956, but had held off upon realizing that the chances of securing an exit permit were practically nil. Moreover, applicants were liable to face a backlash.

The Gomułka Aliyah also swept up many people who had not seriously thought of leaving but now had a change of heart owing to political developments in the mid-1950s. To begin with, Khrushchev's "secret speech" at the Soviet Communist Party's 20th Congress in early 1956, which exposed (some of) Stalin's crimes, was widely disseminated throughout Poland. The same could be said of information regarding other government abuses in the USSR and Poland, targeting, among others, Jewish artists and writers. This news came as a shock to those Polish Jews who had believed in the communist promise to eradicate antisemitism and injustice. As Karol Becker, one of the emigrants, recalled, "My dad decided to leave Poland because his belief in communism had been shattered ... After the 20th congress, he had a crisis of faith. It was as though the ground had shifted beneath his feet."<sup>46</sup> Likewise, a party memorandum noted that "some Jewish comrades ... following their families' and friends' departure for Israel, feel lonely, hurt, and helpless and are no longer fit for political work in this environment ... [They say] that anti-Semitism in Poland comes 'from the top,' with the Soviet Union imputed as its source."<sup>47</sup> In 1957, a TSKŻ report stated that "the feeling of redundancy

and uncertainty” among its activists “is deepened by anonymous letters, insistent visits regarding the occupancy of one’s flat, constant questions as to when one is leaving [from non-Jewish neighbors interested in moving in].”<sup>48</sup>

The resurgence of antisemitism in 1956 also made itself felt on a local level. There was a rise in the number of anti-Jewish incidents, from name-calling and bullying of Jewish children to beatings and antisemitic flyers. Amid the general upheaval and condemnation of earlier government policies, some people started blaming Jews for many, if not most, of the crimes and absurdities of the Stalin era. These accusations found fertile ground in the popular myth of *Żydokomuna* (Judeo-Bolshevism), based on the idea that Jews had a strong inclination towards communism and played an outsized role in the party. Not surprisingly, these claims were spread by some of non-Jewish Stalinists looking to shift blame onto the Jews. In the heat of intra-party power struggles, members of the hardline Natolin faction exploited and stoked anti-Jewish sentiments for the purpose of ousting a rival group that included prominent communists of Jewish origin.<sup>49</sup> Several Jewish party members duly complained that “Comrade Nowak [the head of the Natoliners] said that the party apparatus is Jew-infested. You want to wipe out antisemitism in [the small town of] Świdnica, while it is [rife] in the Central Committee?”<sup>50</sup>

The de-Stalinization process also renewed certain religious divisions. In 1957, religion was reinstated in the public school curriculum with the eager support of the Catholic majority. An unintended consequence of this reform was that Jewish children were set apart from their classmates: Jewish pupils did not attend religion classes, either because they were secular or because they were non-Christians.<sup>51</sup> In fact, “incidents of children being persecuted and fears of further persecution as a result of not attending religion class” were sometimes cited in passport applications as a factor in the Jewish family’s decision to leave.<sup>52</sup>

The mathematician Hugo Steinhaus noted in his diary that antisemitism “makes the vast majority of Polish Jews lean towards emigration.” This predisposition is compounded by the “facility of leaving, catastrophic economic conditions, fears of Soviet military intervention ... the prosperity of Palestine [sic!], [and] the possibility of getting to the United States, Canada, Australia.”<sup>53</sup> As alluded to in Steinhaus’s entry, Poland was indeed mired in an economic crisis during the mid-1950s as a decline in living standards was felt by all strata of Polish society. The government pushed through extensive budget cuts and staff reductions in the military, the party apparatus, the Security Service, and the large administration of the command economy. Jewish communists alerted the Politburo that Jews were bearing the brunt of these austerity measures: “From various cities ... we have received news that due to changes in personnel, Jews are being removed from their posts solely on account of their ethnicity. Those dismissed from work find no assistance getting re-employed, neither in the National Councils [local governments] nor the party committees [sic].”<sup>54</sup>

The desire to emigrate was bolstered by the cumulative effects of the previous waves and a rekindling of the inner dynamics of the outflow. By 1956, there was hardly a Jew in Poland without relatives or friends abroad. As part of de-Stalinization, the barriers between East and West were lowered. This naturally facilitated the renewal of ties with relatives abroad, who urged their kin in Poland to join them. In turn, Jews who were set on emigrating not only influenced their acquaintances by way of example, but in some cases by actively encouraging others to join the procession.<sup>55</sup> As a Jewish resident of a town in

Lower Silesia noted, “Those who have already decided to leave, want everybody to leave.” This dynamic engendered the “loneliness syndrome”—the widespread belief that as many as ninety percent of Polish Jews intended to emigrate. The actual percentage was not that high, but the wheels were already in motion. News that friends or prominent Jews were packing their bags reinforced such misperceptions.

What is more, after years of government-imposed silence, the topic of emigration was back in public discourse and was the main topic of private discussions among Jews. In recollections of this period, emigration is broached time and again: “In 1956, even my mother began saying that since so many Jewish families are leaving, there must be something wrong.” Another observer remembered how “All of our parents’ friends had started to leave, Mother insisted we leave, too. She was afraid we’d be the only ones left.” The diminution of Jewish communities and the fear of being “the last Jew in town” indeed pushed ever more Jews to take the plunge.<sup>56</sup>

### The anti-Zionist campaign of 1968

In the 1960s, Poland was home to some 25,000 to 30,000 Jews, the majority of whom were acculturated and secular.<sup>57</sup> Even though there were relatively few barriers to *aliyah*, only 4,600 people moved to Israel between 1961 and 1967. This changed suddenly when a rowdy anti-Jewish campaign in March 1968 triggered a sudden exodus.<sup>58</sup> The hate-filled enterprise, which lasted three months, featured several dimensions: a mix of aggressive propaganda – barely covered with the fig leaf of “anti-Zionism;” mass mobilization against “the enemies of socialist Poland,” foremost among them the “Zionists;”<sup>59</sup> the expulsion of Jews from the party, government jobs, and the like; the draconian restrictions upon Jewish organizations; and the discrimination and harassment of various individuals for merely being Jewish. The outflow that ensued cut the Jewish community in half and pushed organized Jewish life to the brink of extinction.

The “anti-Zionist campaign” was a delayed consequence of an anti-Israel offensive of the Soviet bloc that followed the Six Day War in June 1967. In the spring of 1968, the Polish authorities were in the midst of quelling a youth rebellion. Against this backdrop, the anti-Israel campaign acquired a new, domestic dimension and was especially trenchant. On March 8, street riots broke out when police and Communist Party activists violently attacked a student rally at Warsaw University. This confrontation ignited a rash of protests and student strikes in over 100 cities and towns across the country. Within three weeks, the police had arrested a few thousand young people. Many more were beaten, removed from universities, drafted into the army, and blacklisted by the secret police. In parallel, the authorities cracked down on dissident intellectuals, scholars, and artists – a policy that evolved into a wider campaign of intimidation against the entire intelligentsia. The least visible but crucial component of the March 1968 events was a power struggle that was waged behind the scenes.

Three days after the riots in Warsaw began, the party-controlled media claimed to have discovered an alleged *Zionist* conspiracy behind the riots and singled out so-called *Zionists* as public enemy number one. A few weeks later First Secretary Gomułka publicly announced that the government was “ready to give emigration passports to those who consider Israel their fatherland.” This policy was robustly affirmed by Prime Minister Cyrankiewicz,<sup>60</sup> whereupon lower-ranking officials and police officers followed suit. Jews were urged in a

roundabout way to pack up and leave. For instance, lower-level officials appealed to the Jews' common sense: "Citizen, you've got such a beautiful country, what's the point of hanging around in Poland." Other representatives of the state conveyed the message in a less subtle fashion. A Security Service officer warned a student, "If you don't fucking leave by September you won't have a life here; you'll prefer to hang yourself."<sup>61</sup>

Following the party's lead, the Passport Bureau removed all obstacles in the way of potential emigrants, so long as they were Jewish.<sup>62</sup> Pursuant to a 1950s procedure, applicants had to submit a request for a change in citizenship, namely to renounce their Polish citizenship prior to departure. In the end, they did not even leave the country on a Polish passport, but with an identity document – essentially a one-way ticket – that was issued to stateless people.

From under six dozen applicants in March 1968, the number of requests doubled in each of the next few months, hitting 577 in June. Following several months of stable outflow, the authorities announced that the streamlined procedures for emigration to Israel would end in September, thereby igniting another sharp uptick in the final weeks of this scheme. In sum, between 1968 and 1970 nearly 13,000 people emigrated upon declaring Israel as their destination. Ironically enough, only about a quarter of this group, which were forced out as *Zionists*, actually moved to Israel.<sup>63</sup> The remainder spread out across Western Europe and North America, settling down wherever they had family or friends. A few thousand chose Scandinavian countries, which welcomed Jewish refugees in 1969.<sup>64</sup> A smaller group, probably no more than a few hundred applicants, were given exit permits to other countries.

Facing harassment and threats, many Polish Jews were simply coerced into leaving. Notwithstanding the conditions of the March 1968 events, most had some hesitation, deliberating and weighing their options with relatives. That said, the campaign's overtly antisemitic nature and the intensity of its symbolic aggression, which had not been seen in Poland since the Stalin years, came as a shock to the entire community and poisoned the air. As one emigrant recalled, "Everyone was leaving. And it wasn't due to first-hand harassment...but because of the whole witch-hunt, the general atmosphere. No force was used; people weren't loaded onto trains. Rather an atmosphere was produced that could not be borne by people with shattered nerves and who had been severely tried."<sup>65</sup> The campaign awoke Jewish fears—the ghosts of a not-so-distant past. "My mother was terrified," said a former resident of Łódź. "It was a return to the nightmares of the war years. A macabre dream. The fear that something bad might happen and the conviction that it could." According to one student, "I was born four years after the war," but "fear was handed down to me by my parents...I was physically afraid. Of what, I don't know. I can't name it." Another Polish Jew recalled his father's unambiguous advice: "[If] You don't want to go to Israel, then go somewhere else; just don't stay in Poland. Leave this country!"<sup>66</sup> The campaign was also highly reminiscent of the Stalinist hate campaigns, thereby eliciting another layer of fears instilled before 1956. The Warsaw Pact armies' invasion of Czechoslovakia in the summer of 1968 added to the gloomy atmosphere, choking off any last hope of "socialism with a human face."

In the spring of 1968, emigration once again became the main topic of conversation among Polish Jews and excerpts from interviews of deportees reveal the general atmosphere that prevailed: "During this period, if you came upon a Jewish acquaintance, there really was nothing else you could possibly talk about." "All around, people no longer spoke

of anything but leaving.” “People left and pulled others in their wake. Because they talked, made decisions together, many of them knew one another since before the war, they were a family of sorts [sic]. It was obvious they would mutually persuade one another.” Those who had already moved would call up their family and friends and beseech them to come. A bitter joke from the period captures the basic drift of these conversations: “How does a smart Jew talk to a stupid one? By phone from Vienna.” One departure led to another, leading to a recurrence of the loneliness syndrome. “People kept leaving; from day to day it got emptier...In the end, nearly all my friends had left. Only a handful of single Jews remained in [the Silesian town of] Dzierżoniów. And out of the full family units, only mine and another one.”<sup>67</sup>

The final straw for many of the emigrants was the release of the Politburo’s decision of June 1969 to “terminate the operation of departures to Israel on September 1.”<sup>68</sup> Between this announcement and the deadline, more requests were filed than in all of 1968. Fearing that the gates to Israel or, for that matter, any Western country would be irreversibly closed, thousands of people who had hitherto wavered finally decided to take the plunge.<sup>69</sup>

While some Jews saw emigration as a punishment, there were many people in Poland who dreamed about it. In 1968, the authorities refused permits to 65,000 applicants for exit visas to Germany and another 14,000 to the United States. As one expatriate recalled, “Some of my non-Jewish peers could not understand why we were so concerned, for all they’d ever dreamed of was to take off for Sweden, Germany, Italy – anywhere in the West.” Another testified that “My Polish colleagues envied me: ‘You’ll be in the West, you’ll buy a fancy car.’”<sup>70</sup> Some people even viewed emigration as a privilege that was granted to Jews. According to a party report from April 1968, natives of Upper Silesia had raised the issue of Jewish emigration to Israel in articulating their own demand to leave for Germany.<sup>71</sup>

The post-March 1968 expatriates stood out in particular for their education level, as a high proportion were college graduates, mainly with degrees in engineering, medicine, economics, or the humanities. By September 1969, the Passport Bureau registered nearly 500 lecturers and scholars, 200 journalists and editors (including fifteen editors-in-chief or deputy editors-in-chief), nearly 130 musicians, actors (including the Director of the Jewish Theater in Warsaw), filmmakers, and other artists, and over 60 radio and television professionals. The departees’ prominence attests to the character of the Jewish community in Poland as well as the anti-intelligentsia bent of this campaign. While relatively small, the post-March 1968 exodus was a major blow to the Polish intelligentsia and the nation’s cultural and scholarly life. This wave also included numerous former members of the communist establishment. For instance, 520 emigrants had been officials in the central state administration: 176 had worked for the Ministry of Public Security or the Ministry of the Interior and 28 had filled senior posts at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Of the 998 retirees, as many as 204 had merited special pensions for outstanding contributions to the PRL.

## Conclusion

Let us conclude by pointing out some distinguishing features of Jewish emigration from communist Poland. To begin with, virtually every candidate declared himself or herself to

be Jewish on applications for exit permits or upon joining groups organized by Brichach in the 1940s. Moreover, the Security Service took pains to find and reject candidates without proper Jewish backgrounds, lest this route become an easy way out of the otherwise closed state.<sup>72</sup> On occasion, these declarations of ethnic origin were misleading. Some applicants of Jewish descent issued these statements not because they identified as Jews, but in order to meet one of the preconditions for securing an exit permit. As a post-March 1968 expatriate quipped, "I departed from Poland because it was the only country where I could not be Polish."<sup>73</sup>

Be that as it may, the very experience of participating in a wave of Jewish emigration often buttressed the Jewish component of the departees' complex identities. While this sentiment is to be expected for those who settled down in Israel, it also appears to characterize those who moved elsewhere. In a study on emigration to Sweden, Julian Ilicki finds that people who had considered themselves Poles or Poles of Jewish origin before 1968 warmed up to the category of "Polish Jews" or simply "Jews."<sup>74</sup> Put differently, being labeled as a Jew and sharing an experience with this collective, especially a traumatic one, helped prompt a change in mindset.

Second, most of the emigrants chose to relocate to the Jewish state (or, before 1948, the Jewish state *in spe*).<sup>75</sup> To reiterate, the applicants' declaration whereby Israel was their country of destination was not necessarily sincere, for it was a prerequisite for obtaining the coveted permit. However, a comparison of the Polish data on stated destinations with Israeli figures regarding immigration from Poland indicates that before 1968 the vast majority of applicants indeed moved to Israel. In all likelihood, this decision stemmed from Zionist convictions or, more broadly, a desire to live as a Jew among Jews. These were not the only reasons for taking this path. The State of Israel recognized Polish Jewish immigrants as its citizens, offering them a package of rights and entitlements (as well as duties), which were by and large unavailable elsewhere. During the Cold War, the citizens of communist states could not, as a rule, even enter a Western country without a visa in hand, nor could they expect access to legal employment, social benefits, education, and permanent residency.

Third, the decision to emigrate to a specific country was often tied to the presence of family and friends. For the most part, Polish Jews had exceedingly more kith and kin abroad than other Poles. These transnational bonds as well as the pull of the social capital inherent in these personal networks certainly contributed to their decision. A substantial portion of these friends and relatives lived in Israel, so the choice of the Jewish state often rested on personal reasons as well. Most of the other ties that Polish Jews had were in major Jewish communities in North America and Western Europe. The precedent set by acquaintances and the information, advice, assistance, and encouragement they provided were crucial to many of the pertinent decisions. The role of personal networks inside Poland was equally important, as they fueled the inner dynamics of migration. It was through these channels that the "emigration fever" spread. Moreover, the departure of friends and relatives meant that a considerable portion of a given person's network, along with the accompanying social capital, had relocated abroad.<sup>76</sup>

Jewish emigration from communist Poland was undoubtedly a post-Holocaust phenomenon. The impact of the Shoah on the motivation for leaving was obviously greatest in the early postwar wave, but informed all the other rounds as well. The indirect influence of the Holocaust not only came to expression in the existential fears that were reignited in 1968. To the best of our knowledge, the experience of being uprooted by

the forced migrations and the loss of social environments contributed to the survivors' alienation in Poland upon their return and their propensity for emigration. The postwar spate of anti-Jewish sentiments and violence, which were factors behind the migration waves in 1956 and 1968, was yet another outgrowth of the Shoah. Moreover, this tragedy shaped the survivors' highly transnational personal networks. Since most of their relatives and friends in Poland had perished, their ties abroad became all the more important.

Last but not least, the emigrants under review were uprooting themselves from a communist state. The oppressive nature of the regime – not least its belligerent policies towards Zionism, religion, and private business – certainly factored into their decision. Evolving communist policies shaped many facets of Jewish emigration from Poland, including its jagged distribution over time. Each wave swept up an appreciable share of the Jewish population. All told, almost 90% of the Jews who were present in the country during the early postwar years took this route. The sheer magnitude of this outflow testifies to the failure of communist Poland to fulfill its promise of integrating the Jews into society.

Under any circumstances, such a feat would have been very difficult to pull off after the wartime catastrophe, which had, among other things, severely alienated the Jews. On the other hand, though, there was a hope that socialist Poland could bestow peace, stability, and a sense of normalcy upon its shattered Jewish community. The numbers indicate that at the outset most Polish Jews believed that this objective was not a pipe dream, as they remained and toiled to rebuild both their families and the Polish Jewish community. Within a few years, though, most of these same people decided to get out. The communist regime did not manage to offset the combination of domestic push factors or the lure of the recently established State of Israel.

This experiment in integration was repeated once more in the 1960s, under the helm of the reformed, post-Stalin regime. Poland's "really existing socialism" was more open than in the rest of the Soviet bloc, and Warsaw's policies towards Jews and Israel were relatively amiable, even if its veteran Jewish communists were losing sway. The low Jewish emigration rates between 1960 and 1967 demonstrate that some progress was being made. During this period, the 30,000 Polish Jews more or less viewed the country to be their home. The very fact that the community was stunned by the March 1968 events paradoxically bolsters this argument: the anti-Zionist campaign was a shock precisely because Polish Jews did not expect it.

To be sure, the progress that informed the seven years that preceded the March 1968 events did not entirely stem from Poland's new reforms. After three mass waves of emigration, the Jewish population of the 1960s varied widely from its early postwar analogue in terms of acculturation, religious practice, and the like. With the passage of time, more of the community's young people had grown up in communist Poland. It is thus a historic irony that this second, relatively successful attempt at socialist integration was brutally reversed by the Communist Party itself. Turning a blind eye to the loyalty of Polish Jewry, the regime forced many of its members to seek home elsewhere.<sup>77</sup>

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## Notes

1. Józef Adelson, "W Polsce zwanej ludową," in *Najnowsze dzieje Żydów w Polsce w zarysie*, ed. Jerzy Tomaszewski (Warsaw: Wyd. naukowe PWN, 1993), 388–400; Grzegorz Berendt, "Straty osobowe polskich Żydów w okresie II wojny światowej," in *Polska 1939–1945: straty osobowe i ofiary represji pod dwiema okupacjami*, eds. Wojciech Materski and Tomasz Szarota (Warsaw: IPN, 2009); Albert Stankowski and Piotr Weiser, "Demograficzne skutki Holokaustu," in *Następstwa zagłady Żydów: Polska 1944–2010*, eds. Feliks Tych and Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska (Lublin: ŻIH, 2011); A. Stankowski, "How Many Polish Jews Survived the Holocaust?" in *Jewish Presence in Absence: The Aftermath of the Holocaust in Poland 1944–2010*, eds. Feliks Tych and Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2014).
2. For a recent survey of the scholarship on this topic, see Bożena Szaynok, "Raport o stanie badań na temat emigracji z Polski Żydów obywateli polskich po II wojnie światowej (1944–1989)," in *Polska emigracja polityczna 1939–1989*, ed. Sławomir Łukasiewicz (Warsaw: IPN, 2016). General publications: Dariusz Stola, *Kraj bez wyjścia? Migracje z Polski 1949–1989* (Warsaw: IPN, ISP PAN, 2010); Albert Stankowski, "Nowe spojrzenia na statystyki dotyczące emigracji Żydów z Polski po 1944 r.," in *Studia z historii Żydów w Polsce po 1945 r.*, eds. Grzegorz Berendt, August Grabski, and Albert Stankowski (Warsaw: ŻIH, 2000); Grzegorz Berendt, "Emigracja ludności żydowskiej z Polski w latach 1945–1967," *Polska 1944/45–1989* 7 (2006): 25–60; Piotr Wróbel, "Migracje Żydów polskich. Próba syntezy," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 1–2 (1998): 28–50. Specific periods or regions are canvassed in Ewa Węgrzyn, *Wyjeżdżamy! Wyjeżdżamy?! Alija gomułkowska 1956–1960* (Kraków: Austeria, 2016); Natalia Aleksium-Mędrzak, "Nielegalna emigracja Żydów z Polski w latach 1945–1947," *Biuletyn ŻIH* 46, no. 3 (1996): 175–8; Bożena Szaynok, "Nielegalna emigracja Żydów z Polski 1945–1947," *Przegląd Polonijny* 2 (1995): 31–46; Maciej Pisarski, "Emigracja Żydów z Polski w latach 1945–1951" and Albert Stankowski, "Emigracja Żydów z Pomorza Zachodniego w latach 1945–1960," in *Studia z dziejów i kultury Żydów w Polsce po 1945 roku*, ed. Jerzy Tomaszewski (Warsaw: Trio, 1997); E. Gawron, "Powojenna emigracja Żydów z Polski. Przykład Krakowa," in *Następstwa zagłady Żydów: Polska 1944–2010*, eds. Feliks Tych and Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska (Lublin: ŻIH, 2011); Marcos Silber, "Immigrants from Poland Want to Go Back: The Politics of Return Migration and National Building in 1950s Israel," *Journal of Israeli History* 2, no. 2 (2008): 201–19.
3. Natalia Aleksium, *Dokąd dalej? Ruch syjonistyczny w Polsce (1944–1950)* (Warsaw: Trio, 1998); Grzegorz Berendt, *Życie żydowskie w Polsce w latach 1950–1956. Z dziejów Towarzystwa Społeczno-Kulturalnego Żydów w Polsce* (Gdańsk: Wyd. UGd, 2008); David Engel, *Ben shih'rur li-verihah: nitsole ha-Sho'ah be-Polin v'eha-ma'avak 'al hanhagatam, 1944–1946* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1996); Yosef Litvak, *Plitim yehudiim mi-Polin be-Brit ha-moatzot* (Tel Aviv: Kibbutz Meuhad, 1988); Hana Shlomi, *Asupat meh'karim le-toldot she'erit ha-peletah ha-Yehudit be-Polin, 1944–1950* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2001); Bożena Szaynok, *Ludność żydowska na Dolnym Śląsku 1945–1950* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo UWr, 2000).
4. The outflows from the USSR and Romania were greater in absolute terms than from Poland. Radu Ioanid, *The Ransom of the Jews: The Story of the Extraordinary Secret Bargain Between Romania and Israel* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2005); Yaacov Ro'i, *The Struggle for Soviet Jewish Emigration, 1948–1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Albert Kaganovitch, "Stalin's Great Power Politics, the Return of Jewish Refugees to Poland, and Continued Migration to Palestine, 1944–1946," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 26, no. 1 (2012): 59–94.
5. Adelson, *W Polsce*, 399.
6. On the identities and identification of the survivors, see Ewa Koźmińska-Frejłak, "Polska jako ojczyzna Żydów – żydowskie strategie zadomowienia się w powojennej Polsce (1944–1949). Zarys problematyki," *Kultura i Społeczeństwo* 1 (1999): 119–141; Ewa Koźmińska-Frejłak, "Asymilacja do polskości jako strategia adaptacyjna ocalałych z zagłady polskich Żydów," *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* 2 (2013): 236–247; Małgorzata Melchior, *Zagłada a tożsamość. Polscy Żydzi ocaleni "na aryjskich papierach": analiza doświadczenia biograficznego* (Warsaw: Wyd. IFiS PAN, 2004). Karen Auerbach analyzes another aspect of this complex question: the paths to

- Polishness among left-wing intelligentsia of Jewish origin. Karen Auerbach, *The House at Ujazdowskie 16: Jewish Families in Warsaw after the Holocaust* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).
7. See publications listed in footnote 1 and Kaganovitch, "Stalin's Great Power Politics," 66–9, for Soviet data.
  8. Alfred Lampe, "Miejsce Polski w Europie," *Wolna Polska*, April 16, 1943, quoted by Marcin Zaremba, *Komunizm, legitymizacja, nacjonalizm: Nacjonalistyczna legitymizacja władzy komunistycznej w Polsce* (Warsaw: Trio, 2001), 131. It is worth noting that Lampe was a Zionist in his youth.
  9. Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikov, *Obywatel Jidyszlandu: rzecz o żydowskich komunistach w Polsce* (Warsaw: Neriton, 2009), 156–60. In comparison, the Jews of Transcarpathian Ruthenia, which was annexed to the USSR from Czechoslovakia, were formally not allowed to resettle within the reconstituted borders of Czechoslovakia: Katerina Čapková, "Dilemmas of Minority Politics: Jewish Migrants in Postwar Czechoslovakia and Poland," in *Postwar Jewish Displacement and Rebirth*, eds. Françoise S. Ouzan and Manfred Gerstenfeld (Leiden: Brill, 2014).
  10. Pursuant to compacts signed in 1944 and 1945, repatriation was only available to ethnic Poles and Jews. Kaganovitch discusses the possible reasons for Soviet approval of Jewish migration to Poland: Kaganovitch, "Stalin's Great Power Politics." For the evolution of this policy among Polish communists, see Hana Shlomi, "The 'Jewish Organising Committee' in Moscow and the 'Jewish Central Committee' in Warsaw, June 1945–February 1946: Tackling Repatriation," in *Jews in Eastern Poland and the USSR, 1939–46*, eds. Norman Davies and Antony Polonsky (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991). From the Polish communists' standpoint, the need to populate the newly annexed Western Territories in 1945 was a strong argument in favor of Jewish repatriation.
  11. See footnote 1.
  12. G. Berendt, *Życie żydowskie*, 92, 99; Szyja Bronsztejn, *Z dziejów ludności żydowskiej na Dolnym Śląsku po II wojnie światowej* (Wrocław: Wyd. UWr., 1993), 24–7. The population had a notably high male to female ratio.
  13. On the fluidity of postwar Jewish communities, see Berendt, *Emigracja*, 91. An interesting case study is provided by Łukasz Krzyżanowski, *Dom, którego nie było. Powroty ocalałych do powojennego miasta* (Wołowiec: Czarne, 2015).
  14. "Memorandum CKŻP dla Komisji Anglo-Amerykańskiej," in *Stosunki polsko-izraelskie (1945–1967). Wybór dokumentów*, eds. Szymon Rudnicki and Marcos Silber (Warsaw: NDAP, 2009) (hereinafter: SPI), doc. 20; Berendt, *Emigracja*, 42.
  15. Engel, "Patterns of Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland, 1944–1946," *Yad Vashem Studies* 26 (1998): 43–85; Łukasz Kamiński and Jan Żaryn, eds., *Reflections on the Kielce Pogrom* (Warsaw: Institute of National Remembrance, 2006); Jan Tomasz Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz: An Essay in Historical Interpretation* (New York: Random House, 2006). According to Michael C. Steinlauf, the "psychic numbing" that stemmed from the wartime horrors was a factor behind the postwar hatred: Michael C. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997).
  16. Aleksy, *Dokąd dalej*; Kaganovitch, "Stalin's Great Power Politics." The similar approach of the Romanian authorities to Jewish migration hints at the fact that Moscow had given both of these satellites the green light. See Robert Levy, *Ana Pauker: The Rise and Fall of a Jewish Communist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 163–77; Ioanid, *The Ransom*, 30.
  17. Y. Bauer, *Flight and Rescue: Brichah* (New York: Random House, 1970); Szaynok, *Nielegalna*; Szaynok, *Z historii*; Pisarski, *Emigracja*; "Raport w sprawie emigracji Żydów," August 23, 1946, in: SPI, doc. 29.
  18. Michał Rudawski, *Mój obcy kraj?* (Warsaw: Agencja Wydawnicza Tu, 1996); I.A. Cukierman, *Nadmiar pamięci (siedem owych lat). Wspomnienia 1939–1946* (Warsaw: PWN 2000).
  19. Pisarski, *Emigracja*, 107; Bauer, *Flight*, 119, 287.
  20. "Notatka o działalności Wydziału Emigracyjnego AJDC," February 5, 1949, Central Archives of the Ministry of Interior (CAMSW), MAP 289. From 1947 to 1948, Jewish emigration continued on a smaller scale – no more than 15,000 – via legal channels. For the purpose of deceiving the

British, passports were often issued for false destinations, namely to countries “where the chances of getting to Israel were greater.” “Notatka dotycząca wydanych paszportów, dowodów tożsamości na [wyjazd do] Izraela,” March 16, 1953, Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (AMSZ), 11.371–20.

21. Szaynok, *Z historii*, 159.
22. Zachariasz to the party Central Committee, January 3, 1950, in: SPI, doc. 132.
23. Szaynok, *Z historii*, 182, 185.
24. F. Mazur, “Notatka w sprawie organizacji żydowskich” [1949], in *Dzieje Żydów w Polsce 1944–1968. Teksty źródłowe*, eds. Alina Cała and Helena Datner-Śpiewak (Warsaw: ŻIH, 1997), 200–4.
25. We do not have the text of this addendum, but other sources leave no doubt as to its existence as well as the linkage that it instituted between trade and emigration: SPI, doc. 99, 103, 104, 105, 129, 134, 152.
26. The national option is outlined in article 91 of the Versailles Treaty and article 3 of the Minorities Treaty with Poland: Stola, *Kraj*, 63. Similar options were placed before citizens of Austria. In the mid-1940s, this term was also applicable to Polish Jews in the Soviet interior. More specifically, they were compelled to choose between repatriating to Poland and staying in the USSR as Soviet citizens. See Shlomi, “The ‘Jewish Organising Committee’ in Moscow,” 241.
27. Szaynok, *Z historii*, 186, 202.
28. Szaynok, *Ludność*, 179–81; SPI, doc. 152. On integration problems of this sort, see Silber, “‘Immigrants from Poland Want to Go Back.’”
29. In the meantime, the Passport Bureau was placed under the jurisdiction of the fearsome Ministry of Public Security.
30. “Notatka dotycząca opcji do Izraela,” October 20, 1950, Archiwum Akt Nowych, KC PZPR (AAN, KC) 237/V-98, 153–6. This estimate of 28,000 emigrants is based on the assumption that, as noted in a government report, there was one minor for every three adults. Moreover, it is commensurate with Israeli immigration data for that period.
31. “Notatka dotycząca akcji ‘Izrael,’” November 12, 1951; “Notatka w sprawie wyjazdu do Izraela,” May 17, 1952, AAN, KC 237/XIV-3; “Notatki dyrektora BPZ z przebiegu wydawania paszportów,” June 27, 1953, AMSZ, 11.371–20, 3–4.
32. Report on the meeting with Minister S. Skrzyszewski, September 19, 1951, in: SPI, doc. 161.
33. “Informacja dotycząca emigracji do Izraela,” February 19, 1957, Śluczański cable of January 29, 1955 and Wolniak cable of February 2, 1955 in: SPI, doc. 214, 216, 243.
34. Szaynok, *Z historii*, 272, 274; SPI, doc. 204–6, 212.
35. Śluczański cable of April 8, 1955; “Informacja dotycząca emigracji do Izraela,” February 29, 1957 in: SPI, doc. 217, 243; CC Secretariat (SKC) protocol, October 19, 1955, AAN, KC 1662, 261–262.
36. Protocol of the MSW Collegium, August 28, 1956, and “Wytyczne dla BPZ w sprawach udzielenia zezwoleń na wyjazdy za granicę,” CAMSW, MSW I 10, 78–94.
37. Śluczański memo on emigration to Israel, February 26, 1957, in: SPI doc. 246; L. Sobel letter to the author, July 7, 2008.
38. Quoted by Berendt, *Emigracja*, 313.
39. “Sprawozdanie z wyjazdów służbowych i prywatnych w 1956 r.,” CAMSW, MSW 26/1, 44; Śluczański memo on emigration to Israel, February 26, 1957, in: SPI doc. no. 246.
40. “Informacja szczegółowa z wyjazdów za granicę w 1958 r.,” CAMSW, MSW 26/2, 134.
41. “Informacja o wyjazdach prywatnych za granicę, emigracji i repatriacji” [March 1957], CAMSW, MSW 49/1, 22; Małgorzata Ruchniewicz, *Repatriacja ludności polskiej z ZSRR 1955–1959* (Warsaw: Volumen, 2000), 104; Politburo protocol, June 14, 1957, in: *Centrum*, 268; Ruchniewicz, *Repatriacja*, 234.
42. “Dziennik warszawski,” February, 21, 1958, in: SPI, doc. 270. Ruchniewicz, *Repatriacja*, 183, 201, 232, 234; Gennady Estraiikh, “Escape through Poland: the Soviet Jewish Emigration in the 1950s,” draft paper 2017.
43. Passport Bureau report for 1959, CAMSW, MSW 26/4, 25; Passport Bureau report for 1961, CAMSW, MSW 26/9, 18, 20.

44. Stola, *Kraj*, 132. For an in-depth look at “the Gomulka *aliyah*,” see Węgrzyn, *Wyjeżdżamy*.
45. Berendt, *Emigracja*, 99. The estimates exclude the Holocaust survivors who had refrained from identifying themselves as Jews before 1956.
46. Quoted by Węgrzyn, *Wyjeżdżamy*, 141–2.
47. Informacja o przebiegu narady aktywu żydowskiego w Komitecie Łódzkim, May 9, 1957, AAN, KC 237/XIV-149, 34–35; Nalewajko-Kulikov, *Obywatel Jidyszlandu*, 222–6.
48. TSKŻ report of July 1957, quoted by Szaynok, *Z historii*, 288.
49. Węgrzyn, *Wyjeżdżamy*, 155, 155; Berendt, *Emigracja*, 48–50, 294 n.; *Dzieje Żydów*, 143–9.
50. Machcewicz, *Polski*, 224; Berendt, *Żydzi jako*, 286; Berendt, *Emigracja*, 298–9, 316–17.
51. Joanna Wiszniewicz, *Życie przecięte. Opowieści pokolenia Marca* (Wołowiec: Czarne, 2008), 62, 76, 157, 255.
52. “Sprawozdanie z wyjazdów służbowych i prywatnych w 1956 r.,” CAMSW, MSW 26/1, 28; Berendt, *Emigracja*, 49.
53. Quoted by Szaynok, *Z historii*, 288; Berendt, *Życie żydowskie w Polsce w latach 1950–1956. Z dziejów Towarzystwa Społeczno-Kulturalnego Żydów w Polsce* (Gdańsk: Wyd. Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2008), 294, 305; Berendt, “Żydzi jako przedmiot i podmiot wydarzeń polskiego Października 1956 roku,” in *Polacy i sąsiedzi – dystanse i przenikanie kultur*, ed. Roman Wapiński (Gdańsk: Wydawn. Stepan design, 2001); Marcin Szydzisz, “Przejawy antysemityzmu i emigracja ludności żydowskiej z Dolnego Śląska w latach 1956–1957,” in *Państwo Izrael: analiza politologiczno-prawna*, ed. Ewa Rudnik (Warsaw: Trio, 2006).
54. “List Zespołu PZPR przy Zarządzie TSKŻ,” November 20, 1956, in Machcewicz, *Polski*, 225.
55. Berendt, *Emigracja*, 47–49. The Yiddish writers’ circle in Legnica was no less susceptible to this itch: Nalewajko-Kulikov, *Obywatel Jidyszlandu*, 260.
56. Wiszniewicz, *Życie*, 129, 87, 198, 272; Berendt, *Emigracja*, 128.
57. “Informacja o sytuacji politycznej, organizacyjnej i finansowej w Towarzystwie Społeczno-Kulturalnym Żydów w Polsce,” July 1967, CAMSW, MSW II 51, 234; A. Kwilecki, “Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce Ludowej,” *Kultura i Społeczeństwo* 4 (1963): 85–103. A. Kichelewski’s estimate is higher, but she uses a much broader definition of Jewishness: A. Kichelewski, “A Community under Pressure: Jews in Poland, 1957–1967,” *Polin. Studies in Polish Jewry* 21 (2009): 159–186.
58. Dariusz Stola, *Kampania antyżydowska w Polsce 1967–1968* (Warsaw: ISP PAN, 2000); Dariusz Stola, “Anti-Zionism as Multipurpose Policy Instrument: The Anti-Zionist Campaign in Poland, 1967–1968,” *Journal of Israeli History* 25, no. 1 (2006): 175–201.
59. The term Zionists is italicized to stress its Orwellian usage in the communist propaganda.
60. Gomulka’s speech of March 19, 1968. The speech is analyzed in Stola, *Kampania*.
61. B. Zeichner, “Uff, co to był za rok,” *Biuletyn Reunion* ‘68 3 (1998): 3; G. Lawitt letter to the author, July 1998; Włodzimierz Suleja, *Dolnośląski Marzec ‘68. Anatomia protestu* (Warsaw: IPN, 2006), 270.
62. For the sake of obtaining an emigration permit, some Poles were reportedly willing to pay Jews to marry them: H. Dasko, *Dworzec Gdański. Historia niedokończona* (Kraków: Wyd. Literackie, 2008), 140.
63. Notatka w sprawie wyjazdów emigracyjnych,” April 29, 1969, AAN, KC 1742, 475–88; M. Glanz, “Niektóre problemy emigracji z Polski w ostatnim ćwierćwieczu,” June 1971, AAN, KC 3048; Israel Statistical Office, *Immigration to Israel 1948–1972* (Jerusalem, 1973). Some publications give higher figures, like 20,000, but offer no archival evidence for their findings.
64. See Lukasz Gornio’s article in this volume.
65. A. Wróblewski, *Być Żydem* (Warsaw: Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1992), 222; Chylińska, *Emigracja*, 27; Wiszniewicz, *Życie*, 455.
66. See Torańska, *Jesteśmy*, 161, 103, 226, 233, 348; K. Chylińska, “Emigracja polska po 1967 r.,” *Kultura* 10 (1970), 27; Wiszniewicz, *Życie*, 320, 335, 344, 407, 435–7, 450.
67. These excerpts are from interviews that Joanna Wiszniewicz conducted with departees. See Joanna Wiszniewicz, *Życie*, 344, 388; Joanna Wiszniewicz, *Z Polski do Izraela. Rozmowy z pokoleniem ‘68* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Karta, 1992), 51.

68. Politburo protocol, June 2, 1969, AAN, KC 1742, 272; "Trybuna Ludu" and "Życie Warszawy," June 11, 1969.
69. "Dane statystyczne o wyjazdach za granicę," 1969, 1970, CAMSW, 1233/18, 30, 62.
70. A. Kluz, P. Siara, and K. Wierba, "Tu więcej zostawili po sobie niż mieli," a study submitted to Ośrodek Karta, 1998.
71. "Informacja 'A' Wydziału Organizacyjnego KC, April 29, 1968, AAN, KC 237/VII-5341, 156; Passport Bureau memo of May 25, 1968, CAMSW, MSW II 4502, 100-1; "Notatka w sprawie wyjazdów emigracyjnych," April 29, 1969, AAN, KC 1742, 475-88.
72. As a part of the agreement reached in the summer of 1946, Brichach undertook to prevent non-Jews from emigrating under its aegis.
73. Krystyna Piotrowska, video installation "Dokumenty podróży" [Travel documents], shown in the Zachęta Gallery in Warsaw, 2008.
74. J. Ilicki, "Den foranderliga identiteten" [The changeable identity. On changing identity among the younger generation of Polish Jews immigrating to Sweden in 1968-1972], (Phd diss., Uppsala, 1988). Some of the Jews who remained in Poland had largely been uninvolved in community life. From 1968 onwards, they too drew closer to it. See Auerbach, *The House at Ujazdowskie 16*.
75. Though the extant sources preclude estimation, it would appear that very few Jews left Poland for other countries without applying for exit permits to Israel between 1948 and 1968.
76. It bears noting that these personal networks in Poland seem to have been predominantly Jewish: adult Polish Jews (including the "non-Jewish" ones) tended to socialize with fellow Jews.
77. Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970).

## Notes on contributor

**Dariusz Stola** is a professor of history at the Institute of Political Studies in Warsaw. He has published ten books and over 100 articles on the history of Polish-Jewish relations, the communist regime in Poland, and international migrations during the twentieth century, including: *Nadzieja i zagłada* (1995); *Kampania antysemicka w Polsce 1967-1968* (2000); *Patterns of Migration in Central Europe* (2001), with C. Wallace; *Kraj bez wyjścia? Migracje z Polski 1948-1989* (2010); and *PZPR jako machina władzy* (2012), with K. Persak. At present, he is serving as the Director of the Polin Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw.