Based on statements that are hard to confirm, about 10,000 people acknowledging themselves as being Jewish lived in Poland in 1985. This figure was given by the Polish-Jewish religious activist Mozes Finkelstein at a conference in Florence of delegates of European Jewish local communities. The case of Finkelstein himself says a great deal about the community, since at the time of his conversation with a journalist he was 77 years-old and spoke Yiddish and Hebrew; yet he was the only member of his extensive family to use Jewish languages. His closest relations kept their distance from Jewish affairs. This was the case in a great many, if not all families, especially if the representatives of the generations of children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors had married people not of Jewish descent.

The situation of Jews in the PRL and conditions within their community in the 80s differed considerably from those in the preceding decade. This was due to the country’s political leadership changing its policies on Jewish matters. These changes were expressed quantitatively, as well as qualitatively. Owing to factors to be described later, the number of people trying to get in touch with Jewish institutions and organizations increased quite considerably. As a result of the authorities’ new policies, these institutions and organizations were able to offer their followers and members much more. Another characteristic feature of the new situation was the number of Polish Jews who were active outside the system.

The new political circumstances were, above all, the new attitude of the PZPR and the government of the PRL towards Jewish issues. While the key positions in the party and state were still held by people who, with a few exceptions, had not protested against the ‘anti-Zionist’, in reality antisemitic, campaign of 1967-1968, most were not committed to a return to the rhetoric of those days. The First Secretary of the PZPR Central Committee at the end of the 70s, Edward Gierek, as well as the Prime Minister Piotr Jaroszewicz, definitely had no intention of doing so. More to the point nor was the Minister of

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1 Archiwum Akt Nowych w Warszawie, Wydział Administracyjny KC PZPR (henceforth AAN, LI), vol. 291. This information was gleaned from notes from the publication *Idisze Presse* (no. 2558, 2 X 1985), vol. 14. Foreign Jewish institutions collected statistical data on the size of Jewish communities in various countries. In the case of Poland for the period 1981-1989 divergent figures ranging from between 6,000 and 8,000 to 10,000 were given; cf. *American Jewish Year Book* (henceforth *AJYB*) 1981, p. 246; 1991, p. 348. The figure of about 10,000 Jews living in Poland before 1971 appears too in the professional literature; cf. H. Chałupczak, T. Browarek, *Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce 1918-1995* (Lublin 1998), 165.

2 Mieczysław Rakowski, who after 1981 was climbing the political ranks, can be considered one of these exceptions.
Defence, General Wojciech Jaruzelski, who was the key player on Poland’s political stage in 1981.

Pragmatism dominated the political decision-makers’ actions. This manifested itself in talks between representatives of the regime and members of the Jewish diaspora and in an agreement on reinstating academic contacts between scholars in Poland and Jewish academics in the West, not excluding Israel. The authorities tolerated regular meetings between TSKŻ and ZRWM representatives and foreign Jewish activists. Whereas in the 70s there were at most a dozen or so such meetings, in the following decade there were several dozen. The Estera Rachela Kamińska State Jewish Theatre (PTŻ) and the Jewish Historical Institute (ŻIH), as well as the weekly Folks-Sztyme, were seen and exploited as model institutions for politicians to show off to foreigners.

Talks with members of the TSKŻ and ZRWM leadership and members of the Secretariat of the PZPR Central Committee between 1979 and 1981 led to an agreement on the renewed distribution of funds and material aid to Poland by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (‘The Joint’).5 This was regulated by an agreement signed in Warsaw on 14 December 1981.6 It is worth recalling that the introduction of martial law did not derail it. This is proof of how much the Polish political authorities wanted to conclude it. They envisaged two kinds of benefits. The agreement produced an additional source of funding for social needs at a time of trade and hard-currency deficits which was useful, even if only a few thousands citizens benefited. Secondly, contact with an American organization was used to present the authorities’ interpretation of political developments in Poland. When Henry Taub, President of ‘The Joint’ and his deputy Ralf Goldman visited Warsaw on 22/23 February 1982 they met not only Minister Jerzy Kuberski, Head of the Religious Affairs Department, but also the Deputy Prime Minister Mieczysław Rakowski. Both, independently of one another, presented martial law as a ‘lesser evil’, which had spared the country the tragedy of civil war. For no clear reason Kuberski raised the issue of the diminishing number of people arrested for political reasons, which was unusual for such a meeting.7 Rakowski in turn stated during his introductory monologue: ‘It is incorrect that supposedly under socialism there is no

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5 During the post-war period ‘The Joint’ provided a great deal of aid to Jews in Poland between 1946 and 1949 and between 1958 and 1967. One of those to raise the need to open negotiations with the PZPR leadership on obtaining essential funds from abroad to help finance Jewish activities was the long-time TSKŻ activist Abraham Kwaterko. He was supported in this by other members of the organization: cf. Archiwum Zarządu Głównego TSKŻ przy pl. Grzybowskim w Warszawie (henceforth AZG TSKŻ), Book of Minutes of sessions of the Presidium of the TSKŻ Board, and Plenary Sessions of the TSKŻ Board in 1979 (henceforth Rok 1979), minutes of a meeting of the Presidium of the TSKŻ Board, 12 IX 1979, unsigned. At it the decision was taken to raise the issue with the PZPR CC Administrative Department which supervised the work of the TSKŻ. However, it should be added that it took several months’ waiting to get a first audience with Comrade Teodor Palimąk. It took place only in January 1980; cf. Folks-Sztyme 1980, no. 4, p. 12. However, after a few months it was mentioned that initial talks had already begun abroad on obtaining funds: cf. AZG TSKŻ, Rok 1980, minutes of a meeting of the Presidium of the TSKŻ Board, 22 V 1980, unsigned. The delegation of the TSKŻ Board had talks on this subject with the Administrative Department, inter alia on 3 XII 1980, cf. AAN, LI. vol. 292, note on meeting with representatives of the TSKŻ Board, vol. 64.
6 The declaration of martial law prevented Henry Taub, President of ‘The Joint’ from reaching Warsaw, and so his deputy Ralf Goldman signed the agreement.
7 Folks-Sztyme 1982, no. 8, 2, 9.
place for antisemitism. In reality there is no shortage of antisemites in Poland. But the present government will fight decisively against any antisemitic behaviour.8

Rakowski announced that ‘the government [of the PRL] will provide far-reaching aid to the small, but dynamic Jewish community’ and, on behalf of the Prime Minister Wojciech Jaruzelski, he thanked ‘The Joint’ and other Jewish organizations for the material assistance supplied to Polish citizens during difficult times.9 Kuberski and Rakowski announced an increase in activity aiming to increase public awareness of the Jews’ contribution to the development of Poland over the centuries. The Deputy Prime Minister promised to introduce simplified visa formalities with the aim of making it easier for Jewish tourists to visit Poland. Although these declarations were somewhat general, it should be noted that over the next few years they became reality. The PRL’s final decade was marked by an explosion of initiatives aiming to popularize information about the Jewish people’s history and culture. While not altering their view of Israeli policies in the Middle East, but also not encountering clear opposition from Moscow, the PRL authorities in practice also achieved a significant intensification of Polish-Israeli contacts long before official diplomatic relations were established between Poland and the Jewish state.10 The accidental, yet fortunate convergence of attitudes on the part of the PRL authorities and a dominant element in the elite of the political opposition in the area of positive interest in the Jews’ participation in Polish history is noteworthy. This created a positive feeling towards the Jewish community and was doubtless one of the factors stimulating the increase in its activities, beginning in 1980.

In the context of the authorities’ actions at the start of the 80s the formation and anti-Jewish activities of the ‘Grunwald’ Patriotic Association cannot be ignored. Such an organization must have benefitted from the consent of some elements in the Party leadership. It lasted until the fall of the PRL. Fortunately, from 1983 it existed, in effect, only on paper.11 During the decade of General Jaruzelski’s domination the building of positive relations formed the core of the PRL’s policies towards Jewish communities. This tactic was the result of a calm cost-benefit analysis, but it at least helped to abandon permanently the trend which had been felt in the 60s. Thus, for the first time in the history of post-war Poland in April 1983 and 1988, on the occasion of commemorations of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the PZPR, the Deputy Speaker of the Parliament, the Deputy Prime Minister (the Chairman of the Council of State), including Wojciech Jaruzelski and Mieczysław Rakowski, met with the most important foreign delegates of Jewish organizations.12 This would have impossible in the time of Bolesław Bierut, Władysław Gomułka or Edward Gierek.

Admittedly, the regime’s leadership above all wanted good relations with foreign Jewish organizations, but Poland’s domestic Jewish community benefited no less perceptibly. Apart from serious illustrative examples, we can provide a less significant, but one no less visible to the representatives of the Jewish community. General Jaruzelski, as Minister of Defence, signed orders voiding the commissions of almost 1,800 officers of Jewish descent in the Polish Army, who had left Poland between 1945 and 1971. But when in 1987 Colonel Józef Guterman, who had served for many years in the central quartermaster’s department and who in 1967 had been forced to retire after 24

8 Ibid., 9.
9 Ibid.
12 AZG TSKŻ, Rok 1988, an assessment of the commemoration of the 45th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, 1988, unsigned.
years’ service in the Polish People’s Army died, he was accorded a full military funeral at the Powązki military ceremony. A military band and honour guard attended. This would also have been hard to imagine a dozen or so years earlier, especially given that after 1967 Guterman had worked closely with domestic Jewish institutions.

On the other hand, it is worth pointing out that an agreement to open up Poland to foreign guests representing the Jewish diaspora did not mean that the PRL’s security services abandoned careful surveillance of what Jewish visitors were doing in Poland, and how people involved with the Polish Jewish community behaved around them. Surveillance of Jewish institutions continued, although its scope was greatly reduced from sixties’ levels.

The Jewish institutions, formed in 1949 and 1950, operated in the PRL’s final decade – more or less as before – within a framework established by the country’s political leadership. The leaders of the TSKŻ and the ZRWM were loyal citizens and followed government policy for running national minority organizations. Between August 1980 and December 1981 they presented some issues a little more boldly, demanding inter alia that antisemitic activities be stopped and recalling the victims of the 1946 Kielce pogrom. After 13 December 1981 they abandoned raising such issues at meetings with representatives of the Interior Ministry, the Department of Religious Affairs and the PZPR. They focused on current cultural and charitable work. In 1985 the Board of the TSKŻ took the decision to join the Patriotic Movement of National Renewal (Patriotyczny Ruch Odrodzenia Narodowego – PRON), a federation of organizations supporting PRL government policy. In 1985, Szymon Szurma, Chairman of the TSKŻ Board (ZG) became a member of the Polish Sejm having stated earlier that ‘the Party and the Government have chosen the correct path to extricate the country from the deep crisis with the aim of stabilizing and democratizing (…) life [in Poland]’.

Preparing for the Plenary Session of the TSKŻ Board it was stated that ‘If the [annual – G.B.] report outlines the Association’s position on [the country’s socialist] renewal, then it should honestly mention that within it there lies an antisemitic campaign’, cf. AZG TSKŻ, Rok 1981, minutes of a session of the Presidium of the TSKŻ Board, 19 II 1981 r, unsigned. In fact, a great deal of time was devoted at the Plenary Session of 12 March 1981 to a discussion of the occurrence of antisemitism in Poland; cf. AZG TSKŻ, Rok 1981, minutes of a Plenary Session of the TSKŻ Board, 12 III 1981, unsigned. The TSKŻ leadership came out in 1981 against all expressions of antisemitism, turning to Party and government agencies and the press on this issue.

AZG TSKŻ, Rok 1985, minutes of the Plenary Session of the TSKŻ Board, 2 X 1985, unsigned. After the TSKŻ’s 8th Annual Congress, meeting on 26 III 1985, a decision was taken to return to using the concept of ‘branch’ as a name for the TSKŻ’s outlying elements. The name ‘circle’ was introduced in

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13 Folks-Sztyme 1987, no. 5, 11.
14 An example of this type of counter-intelligence operation is the information on a visit to Poland by Szlomo Goren, the chief rabbi to the Israeli Army, who in March 1984 came to visit his family’s region of Poland in Wyszków, and Jewish cemeteries in Eastern and Southern Poland, but who also met the ZRWM leadership. Thanks to agents within the ZRWM, counter-intelligence knew what interested the Israeli; cf. IPN Bu 1585/15108, appendix to the Interior Ministry’s (MSW) Daily Bulletin of 6 IV 1984, vol. 101. Renata Kobylarz, op. cit., p. 342 writes too of the surveillance of participants in the commemorations of the 40th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.
15 G. Berendt (ed.), Społeczność żydowska w PRL przed kampanią antysemicką lat 1967-1968 i po niej (Warsaw 2009), 166, 188.
16 After the TSKŻ’s 8th Annual Congress, meeting on 26 III 1985, a decision was taken to return to using the concept of ‘branch’ as a name for the TSKŻ’s outlying elements. The name ‘circle’ was introduced in
are all activists on behalf of the PRON Board’s National Electoral Manifesto. This approach was maintained in subsequent years. A return to raising difficult subjects, such as the threat of antisemitism, at meetings with the authorities was made only in the final year of the PRL’s existence.

The response to the loyal attitude of the ‘official’ leaders of the Jewish community was the political decision-makers’ friendly, although not over-involved, support. They found it hardest to reply positively to demands involving budget increases. The TSKŻ was financed from Interior Ministry funds, while the ZRWM’s support came from the Department of Religious Affairs.

When in the 70s Jewish secular activists sought an increase in funds for their work, they usually received the reply that it was impossible, justified by the statement that their organization was receiving a relatively larger subsidy than did other national minority associations. At the end of July and the beginning of August 1980 the Interior Ministry’s Finance Department directly urged ‘far-reaching savings’. Funds were sporadically allocated for a specific project: remodelling a facility, or organizing national commemorations for the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. As a result of cutbacks during the Girek decade a number of regional TSKŻ circles were wound up, and at the beginning of 1980 barely fifteen remained. There was also a lack of money for current operations. From the mid-seventies it was precisely the unappealing nature of the TSKŻ’s activities, and not ‘official antisemitism’, which in any event was not widely and openly expressed, that affected the reduced interest in this association among the Jewish community. The return of ‘The Joint’ changed this state of affairs. Without a doubt it was the economic factor that contributed to an increase in interest in the TSKŻ in a vital and diverse manner.

The first aspect of the material factor was the deterioration of the living conditions of Jews in Poland as a result of the trade deficit and price increases. Pensions, allowances and wages were losing their purchasing power literally every month. There was a lack of money and drive to seek supplies on the black market. Thus by 1981 more and more requests, indeed pleas, were coming in from the whole country for material assistance in the form of food parcels and medicines. The situation was deteriorating by the month. Even before 14 December 1981, the understanding that political decision-makers were amenable to ‘The Joint’ reintroducing aid for Jews in Poland led the leadership of the TSKŻ and the ZRWM to set up regional commissions to gather information on the scale of need, i.e. mainly drawing up a list of solitary, old, weak and sick people who required assistance. A ‘survey’ was carried out which revealed that several thousand people were in need of speedy intervention. First on the list for aid were to be old people: pensioners and senior citizens.

1977, arguing for the need to conform to organizational structures of the new national administrative divisions of 1975.
21 AZG TSKŻ, Rok 1985, text of an Appeal adopted at the Plenary Session of the TSKŻ Board 2 X 1985, unsigned.
22 AZG TSKŻ, Rok 1989, minutes of a conference of TSKŻ branch secretaries, 29 IV 1989, unsigned.
23 For instance, we find this kind of thinking on the TSKŻ in the following quotation: ‘The Association has the highest employment ratio – one full-time employee for 60 members. Other national minority associations have 1 employee for 300-350 members. Hence the TSKŻ has the largest payroll, which in 1979 is 1,227,000 zloty and represents ⅓ of the entire sum allocated to payroll for all the national minority associations. The TSKŻ has barely 6.3 per cent of the members of all the national minority associations, but commands about 33 per cent of the funds allocated to payroll for these associations.’ Cf. AAN, LI, vol. 288, a note on various TSKŻ issues, IV 1979, vol. 65.
24 AZG TSKŻ, Rok 1980, minutes of a session of the Presidium of the TSKŻ Board, 9 VIII 1980, unsigned.
25 AZG TSKŻ, Rok 1981, minutes of the Plenary Session of the TSKŻ Board, 29 X 1981, unsigned.
In conversation with delegates of ‘The Joint’ on 22 February 1982, a member of the Presidium of the TSKŻ Board, Szymon Szurmiej, said that the price of certain essential products had increased as much as five times, and he described the living conditions of thousands of Jews in Poland as very bad. So bad, that he suggested adding to the category of those already receiving aid, people in liberal professions, including the intelligentsia: civil servants, teachers, actors, journalists and cultural activists.26 Abraham Kwaterko added that hitherto about 4,000 people had benefitted from assistance and he foresaw that number rising to 5,000.27 He did not exclude the fact that this estimate did not represent the full extent of need.

At the beginning of 1982 a food convoy from Frankfurt reached the TSKŻ headquarters on Grzybowski Square, whose official name was the House of Jewish Work and Culture. Despite the problems caused by the lack of a Jewish press in the first weeks after the introduction of martial law and restrictions on telephone and telegraph communications, news of the gift quickly became current not only in Warsaw, but the whole country. Even people from areas without TSKŻ circles or Jewish congregations, such as Gdańsk, Grudziądz, Koszalin or Suwałki, turned up at Grzybowski Square at the distribution point for parcels.28 From documentation from Gdańsk Province we know that in 1984 ‘financial assistance from “The Joint” in Geneva’ was getting through’.29 It took the form of individual financial subsidies of $40. Fifty-seven people received them, the majority of whom received them only twice over the course of the year, but nine people received four such subsidies and two others six.30 Pensioners and senior citizens dominated the list of recipients, although there were at least two people who were still working. It is worth emphasizing that no branches of any Jewish institution existed in the area. Information on those in need must have been obtained through some sort of ‘grapevine’. This was the result of the December 1981 agreement.

Material aid provided thanks to the support of foreign charities, operating with the permission of the PRL authorities, was initially the principal factor determining that hundreds of people who had earlier never set foot in TSKŻ premises or religious congregations, or who had stopped going, having been intimidated by the 1967/68 antisemitic campaign, established contact with Jewish institutions.

Describing this state of affairs, TSKŻ activists compared the situation to behaviour patterns in the non-Jewish population who, faced with a lack of goods on the market and high prices, hastened for help to Catholic or Protestant parish centres, where gifts provided by Western charitable organizations, or other institutions and associations were distributed. Jews turned to Jewish organizations. Moreover, the distribution of gifts by the TSKŻ on its premises made it easier for veterans of the communist movement, for whom it was inappropriate to turn to religious institutions, to decide to seek aid. Perhaps the non-religious outlook of thousands of Jews and people of Jewish descent led to the appearance in the 80s of a greater dynamic in the growth in numbers of people seeking contact with the TSKŻ, rather than with religious congregations.

A year before the first act in the 1967 antisemitic campaign the TSKŻ leadership stated that 7,100 to 7,500 people belonged to the organization, organized in 26 branches

27 It was reported in 1983 that 5,500 people were receiving parcels in Poland, cf. AJJB 1983, 252.
28 Folks-Sztyme 1982, no. 3, p. 1; no. 4, 12.
30 Ibid. Lists of recipients receiving financial assistance from the co-ordinating committee for ZRWM and TSKŻ social assistance in Gdańsk Province 23 and 24 XI 1984, vols. 243-246.
and 19 circles. This was followed by the March exodus, and in 1979 the Interior Ministry was informed that only 1,325 people were associated with the TSKŻ. In 1982 a figure of 2,560 people belonging to it and centred around 15 circles was provided. Eight years later supposedly around 2,000 people belonged to the organization, of whom over 120 were designated as young people. For sake of comparison in the 60s the number of members of Jewish religious congregations was about 5,500; in the 70s it was about 2,000. For 1982 an approximate figure of 1,892 people was given, while in 1985, 1988 and 1990 the figures were 1,805, 1,560 and 1,558 respectively. So far no reasons have been given for such a marked drop in the case of congregations. Undoubtedly a natural factor, i.e. deaths, contributed to it. Possibly another reason was moving to the TSKŻ. It is hard though to connect these issues, since in the 80s belonging simultaneously to both organizations was not out of the question. It is easy to notice that the sole period when the ZRWM’s membership was greater than the TSKŻ community was when the religious association had a monopoly on legally obtaining hard currency from the West, i.e. between 1968 and 1980. This assistance was significant, since the ZRWM received monthly between $4,000 and $7,000, which with a privileged exchange rate increased its budget by several hundred thousand zloty.

Taking into account these facts I believe that the larger numbers in the pre-1980 congregations were a function of the fact that at this time the ZRWM benefitted from uninterrupted financial assistance from the West, funnelled through the charitable organisation’s office in Switzerland. Thus it could fund social assistance for co-religionists, for instance in the form of kosher meals served in kitchens operating alongside the Jewish congregations. When the TSKŻ was still at the stage of negotiating for material help from the West one of the secular activists summed things up: ‘We’re talking of [food G.B.] parcels here, but the religious congregations have long been receiving them.’ Information has survived on financial aid grants of $20, which before 1980 reached individuals associated with certain congregations. This sum was equivalent to an average wage, if the money was exchanged on the black market.

It was only after 14 December 1981 that the TSKŻ’s attractiveness in socioeconomic terms increased considerably. Social aid turned it into an organization that was useful to many people. Otherwise the financial motivation for maintaining contact with Jewish institutions had already appeared earlier in the community, specifically between 1944 and 1947, and between 1957 and 1960. In a report discussing the distribution of gifts at the start of the 80s it was stated baldly: ‘This led to a considerable increase in the TSKŻ’s membership.’

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33 Folks-Sztyme 1991, nos. 1-2, 3.
38 Assistance after the destruction of the war speaks for itself, however after 1957 the bulk of the aid went to people who had been repatriated from the Soviet Union.
This phenomenon is illustrated by fragmentary statistical data. In Łódź after the charitable commission had been operating for two years the TSKŻ circle consisted of 218 people, including 41 newcomers, however about 300 families were receiving charitable assistance.⁴⁰ In Szczecin at the beginning of the decade 52 people belonged to the circle, but in 1981, 1983 and 1984 the respective figures were already 75, 133 and 134. So there had been a very significant increase, and a scholar of these events is also of the opinion that economic factors had an influence on these changes.⁴¹

In the 80s a greater number of young people than before appeared. As the surveys organized by Joanna Wiszniewicz indicate, the causes of this phenomenon were different from those for older people.⁴² Material aid was definitely not a critical factor. More on this later. At this juncture let us review some statistical data on this trend. For instance in Katowice over 60 young people joined the circle.⁴³ The following year people between the ages of 18 and 40 represented 25 per cent of that TSKŻ branch’s 300 members.⁴⁴ They then brought four people onto the board. Describing the situation in Bielsko-Biała it was stated: ‘We began to think that there were no more Jewish young people, but it turns out that there are, and even those who are more assimilated come, and they want to learn the Yiddish language, they want to learn about Jewish culture and tradition, they are interested in Jewish theatre.’⁴⁵ A female journalist on Folks-Sztyme noted too the growing interest among young people in the paper.⁴⁶ However, a few years later an activist from Bielsko, Tyla Blajfer, noted sadly the gradual decrease in the young people’s enthusiasm. After a period of intense activity the large group had shrunk to a few people.⁴⁷ But it cannot be excluded that she was being too hard on the young people. They stopped being active in their home town, since they had left, for instance to go to college. In academic Wrocław, the youth section which in 1985 had around 60 people had fallen by 20 people by the spring of 1989. The young people who remained though stayed with the organization. It was for them that the first Jewish Youth Rally for 16 years was organised on 12 June 1986 in Śródborów.⁴⁸ In Katowice in 1989 there were sixty of them; 13 representatives of the younger generation and 10 children frequented the club in Bielsko. The youth section in Łódź had 40 members. As a chronicler established, in 1988 throughout the whole country ‘there were 225 people in the youth sections, 67 in the children’s ones and 31 in the intermediates.’⁴⁹ Interestingly enough, in where at the time 400 people belonged to the TSKŻ, the youth section had only 15 members. The explanation for this state of affairs probably lies in the fact that in the capital the relatively large group of young Jews created alternative fields of activity for themselves as is discussed below. Szymon Szurmiej supported the idea of forming separate youth sections in the TSKŻ, and thus it came to pass.⁵⁰ After some years it

⁴⁰ The difference between the number of members in a circle and the scale of social assistance provided was based on the fact that some people belonged just to a congregation, or were completely unaffiliated, but were entitled to receive material support from it; cf. AZG TSKŻ, Rok 1983, minutes of a session of the Presidium of the TSKŻ Board, 12 X 1983, unsigned.
⁴¹ J. Mieczkowski, Zarys dziejów szczecińskiego oddziału Towarzystwa Społeczno-Kulturalnego Żydów w Polsce i Żydzi szczecińscy. Tradycja i współczesność (Szczecin 2004), 73.
⁴² J. Wiszniewicz, Życie przecięte. Opowieści pokolenia marca (Warsaw 2008), 493-750.
⁴³ AZG TSKŻ, Rok 1984, minutes of a Plenary Session of the TSKŻ Board, 6 IV 1984, unsigned.
⁴⁴ Folks-Sztyme 1985, no. 24, 12.
⁴⁵ Ibid.
⁴⁷ AZG TSKŻ, Rok 1988, minutes of a conference of TSKŻ branch secretaries, 3 XII 1988, unsigned.
⁴⁸ 60-lecie TSKŻ. Towarzystwo Społeczno-Kulturalne Żydów w Polsce, Warsaw 2010, 103.
⁴⁹ Ibid.
⁵⁰ AZG TSKŻ, Rok 1989, minutes of a meeting between S. Szurmiej and representatives of TSKŻ branch youth sections, 30 IV 1989, unsigned.
turned out that from them emerged later leaders of the Jewish community, such as Jerzy Kichler and Piotr Kadlcik.

On the subject of the growth in the number of people making contact with the TSKŻ it would be an obvious mistake to ignore yet another factor, namely the personality, energy and hard work of local activists. Young and middle-aged people began by degrees to play a greater part, although they did not have a decisive voice. In any event this would have been difficult, for even there where they were quite numerous, they did not exceed 20-25 per cent of the membership in TSKŻ branches and circles.

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Charitable work continued to be a key element in TSKŻ and ZRWM activities. However, it would be a mistake to see that as the only thing. The supportive stance of the PZPR’s central organs and of the government, the arrival of additional means and people led to an increase in different kinds of activity. It should be added that trends appearing in the actions of the central political authorities affected events in the field. Correspondents of Folks-Sztyme, reporting on the work of TSKŻ circles, gave the names of representatives of local PZPR committees, national councils, and of local and provincial government who took part in commemorations and significant events. Thus TSKŻ club activities on offer were enriched on a day-to-day basis by better equipment for playing music, film projectors and funds for paying for visits by lecturers and performers. Assessing the situation in 1983, it was stated that ‘efforts were made to make the clubs more attractive and people began to attend more often.’ Club premises began to look better. They were remodelled, then new furniture and other new indoor accessories were brought in. The number of visits by outside speakers and guest appearances by performers from Warsaw noticeably increased. As an example, let us cite the TSKŻ branch in Żary, which in 1986 had as many as three visits by the actors of the Jewish State Theatre. The singer Sława Przybylska also came, giving a joint recital with actors from the Warsaw Teatr na Targówku. Izak Kersz, Michał Friedman and Maurycy Horn travelled the country giving lectures on Jewish history and culture. The director Jakub Rotbaum visited every centre giving talks on the subject of Jewish playwrights and the history of Jewish theatre. Throughout the whole country several hundred events were organized every year. Towards the end of the Jaruzelski decade children and young people benefitted from subsidized trips to Hungary, Yugoslavia or even Israel. Parents paid for the travel, while ‘The Joint’ or the Zionist Jewish Agency Sochnut covered the cost of a resort.

The fact that grandchildren of Holocaust survivors began to show up more often at TSKŻ clubs doubtless was the result, on the one hand, of their parents’ consent and encouragement, but also to a great extent of the richer offerings than in the Gierek decade. The much more liberal approach to tourist exchanges meant that, starting in 1983, a growing number of Jews from the West and Israel visited Poland. They travelled not only to the most famous places associated with the history of the Jews and their martyrology in Warsaw, Kraków, or the former concentration camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau. They visited the towns and villages where they had been born, or where their ancestors had come from. They sought and made contact there with local Jews, who did not avoid meetings and conversations. The fear of accusations of staying in touch with Jewish foreigners, seen by the SB as potential enemies of the PRL, had gone.

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51 Folks-Sztyme 1983, no. 43, 9.
52 AZG TSKŻ, Rok 1983, minutes of a meeting of TSKŻ circle secretaries, 1 XII 1983, unsigned.
53 Folks-Sztyme 1987, no. 6, 12.
54 AZG TSKŻ, Rok 1988, minutes of a session of the Presidium of the TSKŻ Board, 4 XII 1988, unsigned.
55 AZG TSKŻ, Rok 1986, minutes of a session of the Presidium of the TSKŻ Board, 11 IX 1986, unsigned.
A certain paradox emerged in the early 70s. As a result of having been forced by antisemitic action to take early retirement and pensions, there were quite a number of relatively young people, sometimes barely in their fifties, who had the strength and desire to look for an outlet for their energy. Some of them used it to support the TSKŻ or another Jewish institution. The previously-mentioned Colonel Guterman can serve as an example. After a dozen or more years other individuals who had reached the legal retirement age came to the end of their working lives. Some of them still wished to be active. Having the means to support themselves they devoted their free time to new interests. They looked for it too in the Jewish community. They recalled the traditions they had learnt as children, marking the rhythm of life and they wanted to adopt again some of their elements. Not, perhaps, on a daily basis, but at least a yearly one. One outcome of this was seeking to make contact with the TSKŻ and religious congregations. ZRWM congregations and TSKŻ circles created a platform for integrating people with similar experiences, especially the painful experience of antisemitism.

In 1979 a TSKŻ activist from Wrocław, Henryk Robak, described one of the signs of this phenomenon as follows: ‘We know very well that the intelligentsia become involved in TSKŻ circles only when they retire and there’s nothing we can do about that.’ In turn Adolf Elsner from Bielsko-Biała pointed out at the same time that one could attract the intelligentsia, but that they turned up when someone from Warsaw, someone interesting came to give a talk or to perform. Henryk Robak complained how rarely State Jewish Theatre performers visited. It is worth recalling that the Wrocław branch was one of the largest in the country. In smaller centres things were much worse. After four years, in better and newer surroundings Aleksander Sapir from Katowice noted with satisfaction the increased number of intelligentsia visiting the TSKŻ centre. Speaking of a similar trend evident in Gliwice, another activist linked it to interest in the greater number of performances there by PTŻ actors.

In the case of older people a return to the community was not linked to any radical change in their daily life. It was different for some of those who were middle-aged or very young. They often sought their identity by accepting the religion of their ancestors. They tried to apply religious precepts, which was exceptionally difficult, and in urban areas far from large Jewish communities quite impossible. It is possible to speak of a process of reverse assimilation replacing a Polish awareness formed by school, the mass media and other factors with a Jewish national and religious consciousness. This was reinforced by intensive personal study of Jewish religion, culture and languages. Not everyone had the patience and stamina. Initial motivation turned out to be too weak. That was the case, for instance, in Szczecin, where 20 participants began a course on Yiddish; by the final (35th) lesson there were barely 6 of them.

As a result of March ’68 the Warsaw TSKŻ branch ceased to exist. This was all the more surprising in that at the end of the 70s, according to estimates, the largest group of people of Jewish descent lived in the capital. Three hundred people interested in the work of the TSKŻ would meet at the TSKŻ Board’s club on Grzybowski Square. The issue of resurrecting the Warsaw circle was revisited from time to time – even in conversations with representatives of the PZPR Central Committee – but no decision was ever taken. Traces of an explanation of this puzzle can be found in a document from February 1980 when a member of the Board’s Presidium Szymon Szurmiej stated in connexion with forming a circle in the city: ‘We don’t want this to be the Krzywe Koło

56 AZG TSKŻ, Rok 1979, minutes of a Plenary Session of the TSKŻ Board, 2 III 1979, unsigned.
57 AZG TSKŻ, Rok 1983, minutes of a session of the Presidium of the TSKŻ Board, 12 X 1983, unsigned.
58 AZG TSKŻ, Rok 1984, minutes of a Plenary Session of the TSKŻ Board, 6 IV 1984, unsigned.
59 Folks-Sztyme 1988, no. 23, 12.
(Crooked Wheel) Club, and we won’t allow a jot of nationalism to enter it.\textsuperscript{60} Making this connexion with the history of the discussion club, where in the latter half of the 50s there had been no shortage of speeches contesting PRL reality, was a little too obvious. Older members doubtless remembered how in 1967 bold statements by young people associated with the Student and Young Intellectuals’ Club ‘Babel’, operating under the aegis of the TSKŻ Warsaw branch, were used to attack the whole Association. Even at the end of 1983 and the start of 1984 resurrecting the capital’s circle was still only at the discussion stage.\textsuperscript{61} Those interesting in re-forming it even set up a steering committee, but the Association’s leadership was in no hurry to implement its demands. It was resurrected only in March 1985. From the available evidence it emerges that it was the largest TSKŻ circle in the country. In March 1986 322 people belonged.\textsuperscript{62} At the same time the head count in certain other branches was as follows: Gliwice – 73, Katowice – 304, Szczecin – 134, Wałbrzych – 120, Żary – 116. In the case of Warsaw in the final days of the PRL it was said that the TSKŻ branch had 400 members.\textsuperscript{63} They had a base in the form of the centre for Jewish social life in the building on Grzybowski Square.

Attempts to resurrect ZRWM and TSKŻ operations in the ‘Tri-cities’ (Gdańsk, Gdynia and Sopot) were made in much more difficult conditions. This was the sole initiative in the field which ended in partial success.\textsuperscript{64} Thanks to the perseverance of a number of people, towards the end of 1987 a TSKŻ club was formed. However, the club’s name did not quite match conditions, since it borrowed the premises of the Gdańsk branch of the Polish Blind People’s Association. It has not yet been established whether the TSKŻ leadership had allocated the Gdańsk membership a budget. For almost the next ten years the work of Jewish institutions in the ‘Tri-cities’ relied on the involvement of four or five activists. They were the ones to give talks and represent the community in its contacts with outside entities. Several times a year there were meetings which 30-40 people and occasionally more attended. They did not have their own premises, hence meetings and events had from time to time to be organized elsewhere, taking advantage of the generosity of various institutions, not excluding Christian religious communities. Including the ‘Tri-cities’, at the end of the decade the TSKŻ had its outposts in 17 locations, thus in fewer than half of those towns where the Association had had its branches prior to 1967.

The ‘Tri-cities’ example is relevant insofar as it shows that a certain feature of the PRL authorities’ policies towards the Jewish population was the same as in the previous decade. In order to achieve a temporary propaganda effect the political decision-makers were ready to spend even considerable sums to achieve a specific effect, an example of which were the commemorations of the consecutive five year anniversaries of the outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. But there was no question of increasing any permanent obligations, which would have arisen had new TSKŻ branches been formed, as well as congregations with permanent premises and staff.

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\textsuperscript{60} AZG TSKŻ, Rok 1980, minutes of a Plenary Session of the TSKŻ Board, 23 II 1980, unsigned.
\textsuperscript{61} AZG TSKŻ, Rok 1983, minutes of a session of the Presidium of the TSKŻ Board, 12 X 1983, unsigned; \textit{Ibid.}, Rok 1984, minutes of a meeting of the Presidium of the TSKŻ Board, 5 III 1984, unsigned.
\textsuperscript{62} AZG TSKŻ, Rok 1986, minutes of a Plenary Session of the TSKŻ Board, 19 III 1986, unsigned.
\textsuperscript{63} AZG TSKŻ, Rok, 1989, minutes of meetings of TSKŻ branch secretaries, 29 IV 1989, unsigned.
\textsuperscript{64} We know of the forms that local Jewish activity took in the ‘Tri-cities’ above all from \textit{Folks-Sztyme} 1988, no. 5, 12; no. 7, 12; no. 14, 12; no. 22, 12; no. 46, 12.
In 1981 the ZRWM had 16 congregations, most of them in Lower and Upper Silesia. In Łódź, Szczecin and Warsaw too. The best-known figure in the Association was Mozes Finkelstein, Chairman of the Board. He had headed the organization since 1972. He enjoyed the confidence of the authorities, although for at least some years he had not necessarily run things by the book. The office was run by Jerzy Kornacki. In order to get things back on an even keel a Conference of Chairmen of Congregations of the Mosaic Faith was held on 4th October 1983. One of the measures adopted was a timetable of election meetings in the congregations with the aim of appointing new boards and delegates to the Congregational Congress. Since the Board had earlier worked for too long not at full strength, the Department of Religious Affairs now approved setting up an Interim Board and an Interim Audit Committee. Mozes Finkelstein retained his position as Chairman. Czesław Jakubowicz was elected Secretary of the ZRWM Board. After a gap of many years an Association Congregational Congress was announced and then held over the 4/5 December 1984. The situation in the organization was discussed. In an article on the subject we read: ‘In terms of religious life, it has been focused – as always during the post-war years – on synagogues and houses of prayer. Both sabbath and holy day observances took place with rituals fully observed. Unfortunately, even in Warsaw it has been hard to assemble a required minyan. The reason for this state of affairs lies in our community’s aging (the average age of participants at prayers is 65) and the fact that they are scattered all over the country. Often followers of other faiths, as well as guests visiting the land of their forefathers, took part in services. After the services a Kiddush was held in facilities attached to the synagogue, or in halls, and to which all the participants in the service were invited, irrespective of faith or sex. (…).

In order to help the faithful closely observe the rituals, followers throughout the country have been supplied with the paraphernalia of their religion (prayer books, prayer shawls and other accessories) as well as with a religious pocket diary (…). The Association has received religious materials as gifts from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. Kosher and matzo food products come from the same source. Symbolic payment is made for the matzo, while senior citizens and pensioners receive it for free (2 kg. of matzo and 1 kg. of matzo flour).’

The report had raised the issue of restoring Jewish cemeteries using funds provided by the Department of Religious Affairs and foreign organizations. A work schedule was established during discussions at the International Committee on Jewish Cemeteries in Poland set up in 1983. The Social Committee for Care of Cemeteries and Jewish Cultural Sites tried to maintain day-to-day care of provincial cemeteries. It was stated: ‘Financial contributions to the Association come mainly from funds allocated by “The Joint”’. The Congress appointed a new Board, and at the first plenary session its members appointed a Presidium which included: Chairman – M. Finkelstein, Secretary – Czesław Jakubowicz, as well as Szymon Datner and Adam Flecker.

65 There were active congregations then in Bielsko-Biała, Bytom, Częstochowa, Dzierżoniów, Gliwice, Katowice, Kraków, Łódź, Lublin, Wałbrzych, Wrocław, Zgorzelec and Żary.

66 *Folks-Sztyme* 1983, no. 41, 12.

67 The Interim Board consisted of: Abram Blado (Łódź), Franciszek Edelman (Bielsko-Biała), Mozes Finkelstein (Wrocław), Adam Flecker (Szczecin), Czesław Jakubowicz (Kraków), Henryk Kinda (Łódź), Jankiel Kulakier (Warsaw). The Interim Audit Committee consisted of: Maurycy Jam (Kraków), Leon Stawik (Częstochowa), Jakub Wolf (Wałbrzych).


69 Ibid., 1984, nos. 51-52, 9.

70 Ibid., 1985, no. 1, 12.

71 In addition to those mentioned, the following joined the Board: Adam Blado, Franciszek Edelman, Michal Nadel, Paweł Wildszttein, Marian Akselrad. The following were elected to the Audit Committee:
A subsequent AGM of ZRWM delegates before the demise of the PRL was held on 17/18 February 1988. They discussed the state of the association and failures in trying to form a congregation in Warsaw. M. Finkelstein again became the head of the Board, approaching his eightieth year. He was supported by a somewhat younger Paweł Wildstein. Michał Nadel became Secretary.\textsuperscript{72}

In the atmosphere of impending change in the country the time was ripe for a decision to abandon the measures adopted in 1949. At an extraordinary meeting of congregation delegates on 14 July 1988 new by-laws were proposed, which were to lead to a return to using the traditional pre-war traditional name ‘local Jewish community’ (‘gmina żydowska’). There was a move to reduce the dependence on the Department of Religious Affairs. It was successful. In November 1988, the new by-laws were adopted.\textsuperscript{73} In February of the following year a congregation of Warsaw Jews was revived.

To a certain extent it was only during the last decade of the PRL’s existence that the ZRWM became a presence in the mass media. From 1950 the Jewish communists had held a monopoly on regular media impact on the community. They had their own newspaper, and in the 50s they had been allowed to broadcast on Polish Radio in Yiddish. The religious association was permitted only to produce once a year a little pocket diary giving basic information on the organization, on religious festivals and the hours for starting and ending the sabbath. After 7 April 1982, on the strength of an agreement reached between the Polish Ecumenical Council and the management of Polish Radio, just before the three, later the four, most important Jewish religious festivals a programme on them, prepared by representatives of the Jewish Historical Institute, the ŽIH, and the ZRWM, was broadcast.\textsuperscript{74} Starting in 1983 a large attractively designed Jewish calendar was published, containing articles not only on religion, but also on the culture and history of the Jews. Additionally, small-format pocket diaries were also published, which were far more attractive in terms of design than those of previous decades. ‘The Joint’ funded various ZRWM needs. Thanks to it a new kosher eating house was also set up in Warsaw.\textsuperscript{75} Altogether, kosher eating houses were run in 8 cities.\textsuperscript{76} In 1986 they served around 75,000 meals. There were active synagogues in Kraków, Łódź, Warsaw and Wrocław, with smaller houses of prayer (beit midrash) in 15 towns.\textsuperscript{77}

A new venture were concerts held in synagogues featuring foreign cantors such as Gerszon Sirota, Szlomo Karelbach, Mosze Kusewicki, Marcel Lorand, Jan Peerce or Josele Rosenblat.\textsuperscript{78} In February 1987, a group of 63 American rabbis visited Poland. One can venture to suggest that never in post-war Poland had so many rabbis visited

\textsuperscript{72} The remaining members of the Board were: C. Jakubowicz, S. Farber, Szmul Szuster, Symcha Wajs, M. Akselrad; cf. A. Grabski, \textit{op.cit.}, 157.


\textsuperscript{74} Programmes were broadcast in conjunction with the following religious festivals: Passover, Shavuot, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Szymon Datner (ŽIH) and Mozes Finkelstein (ZRWM) made the first such programme on the occasion of Passover. It was broadcast on 7 IV 1982 at 18.00 on Polish Radio Two; cf. \textit{Folks-Sztyme} 1982, no. 10, 12.

\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Ibid.}, 1986, no. 40, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{76} In 1983 kosher kitchens were running alongside congregations in Bielsko-Biała, Katowice, Kraków, Legnica, Łódź, Szczecin, Warsaw and Wrocław.

\textsuperscript{77} \textit{Folks-Sztyme} 1987, no. 6, 7.

\textsuperscript{78} \textit{Ibid.}, 1987, no. 5, 12; no. 9, 11.
Poland simultaneously.\textsuperscript{79} However, the first rabbi to settle permanently in Poland did so only after a long gap in May 1989, as the result of an agreement reached by the governments of the PRL and Israel.\textsuperscript{80} He was Pinchas Menachem Joskowicz.\textsuperscript{81} Admittedly they was sporadic, but traditional rituals such as Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah were appearing.\textsuperscript{82} Young men decided to undergo the ritual of circumcision.

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From the mid-seventies proposals began to emerge to unite the TSKŻ and ZRWM structures into a single organization. A number of TSKŻ activists were behind this. It has still not been established what was the attitude of the ZRWM’s leadership towards this. However, the proposal went nowhere, since it was not supported by the Interior Ministry and was opposed by another section of TSKŻ activists. They simply could not imagine working in a single organization, which would inevitably have to play a religious role. The concept’s opponents won out, although even in 1988 it was stated publicly that ‘there ought to be a Jewish local community in Poland like the one in Kiev, which would supervise the Association and the Congregation.’\textsuperscript{83} During this period the historian Marian Fuks was a proponent of such a solution. He drew up an organizational statute of this proposed institution. He was given an opportunity to present his concept in the Jewish press.\textsuperscript{84} Clearly, however, unwillingness based on the need for new tasks, as well as special interests continued to be stronger than a specialist’s arguments.

The proposal to set up a unified Jewish Local Community in Poland was brought up every few years, and reactions to it demonstrated the two approaches. Representatives of the first one wished to retain the secular and religious institutions’ current independence, while representatives of the second were for narrowing the gap between the TSKŻ and the ZRWM. There were supporters of independence both among TSKŻ activists and the congregations. From time to time in the first tendency’s supporters’ statements there appeared a tone suggesting a sort of rivalry in trying to win over public support. For instance, they compared which association had the greater number of members or guests visiting its premises.\textsuperscript{85} In 1983, a cultural and social activist from Katowice announced that within the local congregation there were negative feelings towards the TSKŻ, while religious people stayed aloof from this secular organization.\textsuperscript{86} Statements were recalled of various religious people responding to the TSKŻ offer with the remark that ‘I’m not going to have anything to do with communists.’\textsuperscript{87}

Judging, however, by other facts, in the 80s a conciliatory tendency, rather than local animosities, became a typical feature of mutual relations. Noteworthy is the attitude of a TSKŻ elder, an individual who before the war had spent time in communist organizations, a one-time Stalinist, who on the issue of attitudes towards the congregations stated that ‘we should live in harmony, not engage in underhand tactics

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 1987, no. 10, 8-9.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 1989, no. 23, 5.
\textsuperscript{81} The agreement was made by the Department for Religious Affairs and the Israeli Ministry of Religion; cf. P. M. Joskowicz, Opowieść o radości i cierpieniu (Warsaw 1996), 98.
\textsuperscript{82} The first bar mitzvah for 35 years was held in the Kraków Tempel synagogue in 1985. Eric Strom from the United States, whose ancestors came from Kraków, was the first to have his bar mitzvah. However, that same year Matusz Kameraz had his bar mitzvah in Warsaw.
\textsuperscript{83} AZG TSKŻ, Rok 1988, minutes of a conference of TSKŻ branch secretaries, 3 XII 1988, unsigned.
\textsuperscript{84} FolkS-Sztyme 1988, no. 45, 10.
\textsuperscript{85} For instance, after visiting the TSKŻ Legnica circle M. Kajler stated: ‘the Jewish community in this city is dominated by the congregation.’ cf. AZG TSKŻ, Rok 1981, minutes of a session of the Presidium of the TSKŻ Board, 2 XII 1981, unsigned.
\textsuperscript{86} AZG TSKŻ, Rok 1983, minutes of a session of the Presidium of the TSKŻ Board, 12 X 1983, unsigned.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., Rok 1984, minutes of a session of the Presidium of the TSKŻ Board, 10 I 1984, unsigned.
and not inflame matters.’

Things even went so far that some TSKŻ circle secretaries joined the boards of religious congregations. Although for a time such signs of integration were seen as too extreme. While there was no formal prohibition, the TSKŻ Board Chairman Szymon Szurmiej adopted an ideologically principled stance: ‘TSKŻ circle secretaries cannot simultaneously join the boards of congregations, for we have to maintain our secular approach.’

So, in 1984, the line, which was not to be crossed, was drawn. The issue was revisited four years later, with the voiding of the resolution of the Presidium of the TSKŻ Board forbidding the duties of a TSKŻ circle secretary being linked to responsibilities in a congregation. Independently of this, the decision to go for dialogue had already been taken earlier on a number of issues. The custom of celebrating the joyful feasts of Hanukah and Purim was becoming widespread in TSKŻ clubs.

Thanks to this, when in 1987 a belated meeting ‘to celebrate the tradition of Hanukah’ was held in the Wałbrych club the festive candles were lit by the chairman of the local religious congregation, who had been invited. Two years later, Szymon Szurmiej and Paweł Wildstein, as heads of their organizations, in the company of representatives of the Interior Ministry, the PZPR Central Committee and the Jewish Historical Institute, established that they needed to co-operate with the aim of representing the interests of Polish Jews as well as possible.

Although this did not mean the end of separate structures, Szurmiej’s idea of a Polish-Jewish Association never came to fruition.

However, during the first half of 1981 a Co-ordinating Committee consisting of representatives of the TSKŻ, the ZRWM and the ŻIH, was successfully formed. It lasted until 1989. At its inception the leaders of the TSKŻ were meant to define its tone and steer its activities, but I have been unable to establish whether this ever happened.

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After 1,200 guests attended the fortieth anniversary of the outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the number of Jewish tourists grew year by year. Some of them, on finding the lamentable state of the Jewish cemeteries where their ancestors lay, or the lack of memorials to the victims of mass executions, began to pay for clean-up work and to fund all manner of monuments and tablets. A great deal of publicity surrounded the installation of a memorial tablet in the wall of the former yeshiva in Lublin.

Projects undertaken under the auspices of a foundation set up by Sonia and Zygmunt Nisenbaum had the greatest impact. Not just the Jewish press, but also the local media covered them. The Frenkel family foundation began to operate in Poland around 1988. That same year preparations began for the work of a foundation set up by American

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88 From comments by Abraham Kwaterko, a member of the Presidium of the TSKŻ Board and editor-in-chief of Folks-Sztyme; cf. AZG TSKŻ, Rok 1983, minutes of a session of the Presidium of the TSKŻ Board, 12 X 1983, unsigned.
89 The Wroclaw activist Henryk Robak somewhat indignantly noted this; cf. AZG TSKŻ, Rok 1984, minutes of a session of the TSKŻ Board, 10 I 1984, unsigned.
90 Ibid.
91 Ibid., Rok 1988, minutes of a session of the Presidium of the TSKŻ Board, 2 II 1988, unsigned.
92 Ibid., Rok 1979, Report on the operations of the TSKŻ for 1978, unsigned.
93 Folks-Sztyme 1987, no. 4, 12.
94 AZG TSKŻ, Rok 1989, minutes of a session of the Presidium of the TSKŻ Board, 21 II 1989, unsigned.
95 Ibid., Rok 1981, minutes of a session of the Presidium of the TSKŻ Board, 5 III 1981, unsigned.
96 Folks-Sztyme 1985, no. 29, 11 and 12.
businessman Ronald S. Lauder, one of the most significant sponsors of educational efforts on behalf of Jewish culture in our country after 1989.\textsuperscript{98}

During the last two years of People’s Poland Jewish life was financed to a great extent by foreign sources. The Interior Ministry did not have the resources to satisfy many of the TSKŻ’s needs, especially when expensive remodelling was called for. Wherever the communist state ceded ground, foreign sponsors entered. So great was the financial collapse, that without any great difficulties the Ministry of Finance’s permission was obtained to sell in Poland cash equivalents transferred by ‘The Joint’ for remodelling the centre of Jewish life on Grzybowski Square, and the TSKŻ rest home in Śródborów near Otwock.\textsuperscript{99} The Warsaw Ghetto celebrations, which for over two decades had been appropriated by the Association of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy (ZBoWiD), were returned to the control of Jewish organizations, especially the TSKŻ.\textsuperscript{100}

Symptomatic of the collapse of the old regime were, inter alia, the discussions during a meeting of the inner TSKŻ leadership in December 1988. Discussing the possibility of sending young people abroad for the summer holidays, it was suggested that they be sent to Scandinavian countries, where they would make contact with the community of March exiles: those same people who in the 70s had been consistently denied permission to visit their homeland, while citizens having any kind of contact with them had been treated with the greatest suspicion. In turn Aleksander Sapir of Katowice suggested inviting to Poland ‘young people from capitalist countries, who had left Poland in 1968,’ to take care of them, and as a result of these contacts to plan further foreign tourist trips for young Poles.\textsuperscript{101} The following year young people from Poland enjoyed the hospitality of Jewish institutions in Israel, Yugoslavia and West Germany.

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This article deals primarily with expressions of institutional activity by the Jewish community in the final phases of the PRL. However, we cannot limit our account of the state of Jewish life at the time to a description of conditions in the TSKŻ and the ZRWM. An alternative was developing right alongside. In the second half of the 70s a group of people in their thirties, who were seeking a path to Jewishness through religion, got together in Warsaw. There were about sixty of them. Since they came from assimilated and atheist families this meant going back to basics. Their parents were unable or unwilling to support them, since they themselves had often abandoned the Jewish tradition even before the war. They remained confirmed atheists.

People like Stanisław Krajewski or Konstanty Gebert studied Judaism using English translations of \textit{Tora, Tanakh and Talmud}. They learned about the culture of the Polish Jews from English translations of the classics of Yiddish literature.\textsuperscript{102} Owing to an aversion to ZRWM representatives, obedient to the PRL authorities, they decided not to work with them full-time. They linked a fascination with Judaism to a dislike of the ruling party, which permitted antisemitism to be used as a tool of political warfare. In 1968 the teenagers of the day, as well as newly-minted students, had their first experience of this, while toleration of the Patriotic Association ‘Grunwald’ a dozen or so years later was proof that the attitude of the PRL’s political decision-makers was still ambiguous in this matter.

Hundreds of people seeking Jewishness linked it with anti-governmental activities. They organized alternative commemorations of the outbreak of the Warsaw

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\textsuperscript{98} The foundation’s representative in Poland was initially rabbi Besser; cf. AZG TSKŻ, Rok 1988, minutes of a session of the Presidium of the TSKŻ Board, 29 IX 1988.
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid., Rok 1988, minutes of a session of the Presidium of the TSKŻ Board, 5 XII 1988, unsigned.
\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., Rok 1989, minutes of a session of the Presidium of the TSKŻ Board, 28 IV 1989, unsigned.
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., Rok 1988, minutes of a session of the Presidium of the TSKŻ Board, 4 XII 1988, unsigned.
\end{flushleft}
Ghetto Uprising to those of the authorities and the Jewish institutions. They were supported by political allies, as well as anti-regime dissidents including Jan Józef Lipski, Jacek Kuroń, Janusz Onyszkiewicz, Lech Wałęsa and Leszek Moczulski. Jewish issues were often raised among intellectuals linked to the anti-communist opposition, but in a spirit diametrically opposite to that of the ‘Grunwald’ Patriotic Association. Krajewski’s and Gebert’s group did not seek a place for itself in the TSKŻ or the ZRWM, and cognizant of their views, no-one there was expecting them.

When around 200 people gathered on the former Umschlagplatz on 17 April 1983 in order to honour the martyrs and heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto independently of the authorities, among them was a religious young man in a yarmulke. The authorities did not allow Marek Edelman to speak at the monument to the Ghetto Heroes, however a well-known member of the opposition Janusz Onyszkiewicz presented a message from him. It is worth pointing out that when well-known members of the Committee of Social Self-Defence ‘KOR’ then wanted to pay homage to the soldiers of the Jewish Fighting Organization at the Jewish cemetery, they found its gates locked, despite assurances. Theoretically, the Warsaw Congregation of the Mosaic Faith had taken the decision. We do not know if this was a decision taken by the Board alone. It is, however, true that Marek Edelman’s joint organization of alternative commemorations of the anniversary of the Ghetto Uprising in 1988 met with a tense and sharp response from the Presidium of the TSKŻ Board, drawn up during a session by Abraham Kwaterko. He refused Edelman permission to speak on behalf of the Jewish people as well as the fighters and martyrs of the Ghetto, stating that this undermined the legitimacy of using the term ‘uprising’, and that during his counter-demonstration he had walked arm-in-arm with the right-winger Leszek Moczulski. The view formulated by the Secretary of the TSKŻ Board was supported by the TSKŻ Board Chairman, Szymon Szurmiej. This approach was announced to the public in an article summing up the commemorations of the anniversary. In the polarized circumstances of the day if one side accused Marek Edelman of being allied to fascism, there was no point in engaging in dialogue. Edelman was a typical leftist anti-communist, as well as a firm critic of the nationalist right. Suggesting that he supported fascism was way out of line.

As Krajewski explained: ‘The discovery of Judaism became part of a larger project – the project of the search for freedom. Everything began (…) spontaneously at Kostek’s [Gebert’s], Ryszarda’s [Zachariasz’s] and others’ flats. When Staszek and his wife held the first Passover Seder at their home, the atmosphere was euphoric: they were doing it for the first time, perhaps they made some mistakes, but it didn’t matter; what mattered is that they were doing it themselves. During the Seder, when they recited the prayers with the words “today we are slaves, tomorrow we shall be free”, they added a

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103 In 1983 and 1984 these commemorations involved gatherings on the site of the former Umschlagplatz, from which in 1942 and 1943 the German occupiers had transported inmates of the Warsaw Ghetto to death camps, and some of them to labour camps.
105 However, things are not always clear in life. For instance, the difference in opinion on Jews’ attitude towards the regime did not mean that the community of converts to Judaism did not come up against the veterans of religious congregations. It was in fact from the circles of old members of the Warsaw congregation that the proposal emerged to allow the sons of Nina Kameraz, who was involved with the Solidarity opposition, to take their bar mitzvahs; cf. M. Kurlansky, op.cit., 230-231.
106 Ibid., 370.
107 Ibid., 372.
108 Kwaterko ignored a great many other members of the opposition who had taken part in the alternative commemorations, responding to the appeal of the Citizen’s Committee for commemorating the 45th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising; cf. Ibid., 423-426.
109 Folk-Sztyme 1988, no. 24, 3.
plea for a free Poland. (...) Staszek told us (...) about Jewish tradition, which he had mastered by willpower, with enormous effort and self-study, for there had been no-one to pass it down to him. This happened when he was grown-up, during the time of “Solidarity”, during the time of the Jewish Flying University. Staszek began to perceive a deep affinity between Judaism and Marxism: the role of the tzadik, the tradition of textual commentary, the messianic hope. Stalin had become a messiah at a time when it had appeared that one had to choose between Stalin and Hitler. For Staszek the tragedy was not that the Jews had chosen Stalin, but that they had confused Stalin with the Messiah. Only in 1968 did they realize that communism and fascism were similar to one another.'

At the same time, when this community was active in the capital, slowly approaching 40 members, another group appeared composed of younger people seeking their identity. The American scholar Marci Shore engaged with both groups. The representatives of the younger one entered the path of a return to Jewishness only towards the end of the PRL. Some of them, perhaps even the majority, came from families whose grandfathers and fathers had built the basics of the communist system on the Vistula. Their position was even more difficult than that of Krajewski’s and Gebert’s generation, since they had been raised in the cult of communism, inevitably far from Christianity, so for religious Jews they were still Jews, while from the point of view of Jewish law some of the younger ones were not recognized as Jews. Shore outlines the reality of the situation:

‘Bogna spoke of her Catholic baptism as a rape, as unforgivable violence, to which she had been subjected. Lea too had been baptised. All of them had. It was 1982, martial law, their parents became involved in “Solidarity” to atone for the sins of their godless parents. But “Solidarity” committed itself to the Catholic Church. At the time this was a symbol of moral freedom. “I was a Catholic woman, I was a religious woman, I believed!” shouted Bogna, consumed by a sense of guilt and hatred. She never forgave her mother for this.'

The father of the Lea mentioned in this quotation was a pre-war communist who had later begun to oppose the policies of the PZPR leadership. He had not wanted his daughter to grow up surrounded by Jewish affairs, although he came from a religious Jewish family. He died in 1979 when she was seven. He was buried in a Jewish cemetery. She converted to Judaism in her teens.

Marci Shore described Bogna’s family and surroundings:
Her father was of Jewish origin; her mother was not. In the 70s he became involved with the opposition. In 1979 and 1980 he was a political prisoner; in 1982 he was interned during martial law and their flat was bugged.

Many of Bogna’s friends, Jews in their twenties, had parents who were involved with the opposition and who had linked their fortunes to ‘Solidarity’, as an act of rebellion, or as compensation perhaps for the mistakes that their parents had made, building communism in Poland. Pope John Paul II was ‘Solidarity’s’ most significant patron; Bogna’s parents had their children baptised; for people like them this Catholic ritual was an act of freedom.

Bogna, however, was deeply resentful towards them for this; had she been living in a free country, there would have been no baptism. She would have been a devout Jew, she would have had a bat mitzvah.

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111 Ibid., 157-158.
112 Ibid., 165.
At least that was her view. Now it was too late for the bat mitzvah, but not for learning Yiddish, which in her opinion preserved the core of her identity.\textsuperscript{113}

Among these young people there were those who were determined to rebuild Jewish life in Poland, and who were quite hostile to the idea of emigrating, even to Israel. Bogna was one of them. Shore called her a ‘diaspora nationalist’.\textsuperscript{114} In this small circle Yiddish, not modern Hebrew, was enthusiastically learned. Israel was not an alternative for this group. However, there was one girl in it who decided to study at a yeshivah in Jerusalem. The members of the group tried to uphold the traditions and wore the symbols of their religion. At the same time they lived with an awareness that because of that they could become the target of aggression by antisemitic extremists.\textsuperscript{115}

These phenomena among the capital’s inhabitants appeared too in other urban areas. One can cite the example of an educated young woman from the ‘Tri-cities’, brought up Catholic and exceptionally religious, who in the mid-eighties decided to abandon the religion in which her mother had raised her with the consent, and even support of her Jewish father. She began to become interested in Jewish issues and eventually emigrated, making not only a choice of country, but also one of religion and culture. In the same ‘Tri-cities’ another young woman, aware since childhood of her Jewishness, started a family, marrying a man from a Catholic family. They are bringing up their children in a Jewish environment. Without a doubt in both these examples the parents’ strong personality influenced this choice. In the first example the father, though not religious, after many years once again began to become involved with Jewish affairs. In the second one it was the mother, also not religious, but an exceptionally dynamic person able to serve as a role model to the child. In her emphasis on connections with Jewishness she also found support from her Polish husband.

As has already been mentioned, the conclusions reached by Joanna Wiszniewicz during interviews with people who during the PRL’s final decade were between 35 and 45, are very significant for a discussion of this issue.

An émigré returning mid-decade from the United States to Poland discovered in her former ‘Jewish/atheist community an explosion of interest in Jewishness.’ As she said: ‘This was normal Jewish craziness!’\textsuperscript{116} That was Warsaw.

Wiszniewicz encountered people following the path towards Jewishness or going in another direction in other cities too. A woman living in Wroclaw became involved together with her husband in working with the opposition. They brought up the children to be aware of her and their Jewish descent, while building a link with her husband’s family through religion, ‘for,’ as she stated, ‘children are not supposed to have to defend their parents’ views.’\textsuperscript{117} A woman from Szczecin thought the same way and decided to baptise her daughter, although no-one in her family was putting any pressure on her. She admitted that she was thus ‘giving the child the right to choose’.\textsuperscript{118} Another woman from Wroclaw became involved with ‘Solidarity’. She also was interested in Jewish affairs and wanted to be active in the TSKŻ, although as a young person she was put off by the ‘sad atmosphere there; the young people were disappearing and the old people were getting older and sicker.’\textsuperscript{119} The formation of a young people’s section in the TSKŻ

\begin{footnotes}
\item 113 Ibid., 180.
\item 114 Ibid., 155.
\item 115 Ibid., 156-157.
\item 116 J. Wiszniewicz, op. cit., 533-534, 621.
\item 117 Ibid., 624.
\item 118 Ibid., 706.
\item 119 Ibid., p. 641.
\end{footnotes}
supported by Szurmiej represented a change. Going to an organizational meeting a witness found herself suddenly in a group of several dozen like-minded people. They had been recruited by Jerzy Kichler, who had written letters to them through their parents and grandparents – former TSKŻ members. Another man living in Wrocław for a time cherished his Jewishness and displayed it, as it were, on his own initiative, not seeking contact with institutions. What tipped the balance in favour of joining organized group work was coming into contact with elderly members of a TSKŻ club, and the desire that Jewish life in Poland not end with them.

The transmission of culture, which somewhat unexpectedly began to involve the children, and perhaps to a greater extent the grandchildren, was a phenomenon. What the parents, recalling streets and small Jewish towns from their own childhoods, had not passed on to their children, they now recounted to the third generation born since the Holocaust. To a great extent these cases were very similar and appeared at about the same time in different parts of Poland such as: Dzierżoniów, Szczecin, the ‘Tri-cities’, Warsaw or Wrocław. One person, who lived first in Gdańsk and from the end of the 70s in Warsaw, recalled the case of her parents, who for several decades had been involved with communism and had lived far-removed from Jewish affairs.

My father died in eighty-one. His death coincided with mother taking retirement. At the time I was often away on business trips and didn’t have too much time for mother so, in order to fill her time, I signed her up for the TSKŻ.

Why there? Well, a girl friend’s mother attended various TSKŻ functions and I knew it was a place where ladies of their age could socialize.

However, I never thought that the TSKŻ had any connexion with Jewish culture. I wasn’t looking at it from that point of view. But from the moment that mother started going there, everything began to change in my Kasia’s life. Mother used to bring back from the TSKŻ all sorts of information: there were Jewish dance classes, there was a lecture and other interesting activities. Kasia was intrigued as to where granny went off to and began to ask my mother questions: who are the Jews, what is this Jewish tradition? And mother, who for forty years after the war had completely abandoned Judaism and had never spoken to my brother and me about her Jewish past, now suddenly began trying to explain to her granddaughter all she knew. (…) Then mother said that a youth group had been formed at the TSKŻ and Kasia started going. Until one day she came home complaining that we maintained no traditions, and if they existed, they should be cherished. From that moment she took matters into her own hands. She would go round to granny’s with a tape recorder and would record her reminiscences. She began to frequent youth events at the TSKŻ and when once a Jewish family from America put on a Seder, she took a pen and notebook and took careful notes (…).”

This same teenager because of family accounts and then contact with official Jewish institutions became an eager proponent of Jewish life, as her mother called her, ‘a terrible proselytizer.’ She encountered too the bitterness of experiencing antisemitism among her closest friends. She and her grandmother eventually emigrated to Israel. This turns out to be a somewhat typical story for dozens of very young people, entering adulthood in the 80s and 90s.

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121 Ibid., 693.
122 Ibid., 694-696.
The number of young people who, deciding to cherish their Jewishness came to the conclusion that this would be difficult in Poland and emigrated, is unknown.\textsuperscript{123} Not just spiritual dilemmas, typical for young people searching for their place in the world, were behind this. Unfortunately, another factor was also fear of aggression caused by the revival in Poland of organizations, whose members were and are fascinated with the traditions of the pre-war National Democratic Party, including its negative views on the place of the Jews in Polish history. For instance, an unexpected encounter with a well-known person’s antisemitism had a deep effect on a woman living in the ‘Tri-cities’, who some time later left Poland. Then a school friend of another woman in the ‘Tri-cities’, when visiting her flat, repeated in the presence of her parents the old antisemitic refrain that Hitler had done the world a service by murdering the Jews. In this case such a shocking statement did not lead to emigration. Fears that antisemitism would appear could be felt in various parts of the country and in every city where there were functioning Jewish communities. Conversations about these revived tendencies roaming on the fringes of Polish political life once again became part of Jewish life at the end of the 80s.\textsuperscript{124}

Neither earlier, nor during the period under discussion was the Jewish community united in its views on certain key issues, both those affecting Jewish affairs, as well as general Polish ones. That group of people, who while feeling themselves to be Jews still kept their backs turned to their forefathers’ religion, never disappeared. On the other hand, alongside those who continuously practised the Jewish faith, appeared new people who learned it as adults. There were those who felt guilty that either they or their forbears had established communism; others did not.\textsuperscript{125} Some revealed their identity before 1989, others chose to do so only after the political changes,\textsuperscript{126} sometimes publicly, sometimes only to their closest friends. Others still keep it a secret to this day.

The eighties’ renewal was strengthened at a time when, after 1989, new organizations could be freely formed. As earlier, this was aided by the attitude of the political decision-makers and the support of foreign Jewish institutions. At the same time a negative demographic phenomenon was felt – the outcome of a unique, constant drain of human resources represented by the emigration of around 250,000 Jews and family members after 1945. Now the few who had remained and who for many years had given time and energy to their community’s needs began to depart. The influx of young people is too weak to balance these human losses.

\textsuperscript{123} One of the women from Wroclaw recalls that from a group of about 80 young people whom Kichler had recruited, after a few years 27 remained in Poland, the others having emigrated; cf. \textit{Ibid.}, 643.

\textsuperscript{124} AZG TSKŻ, minutes of a session of the Presidium of the TSKŻ Board, 5 IX 1989, unsigned; \textit{Folks-Sztyme} 1989, no. 42, p. 12; no 43, 12.

\textsuperscript{125} M. Shore, \textit{op.cit.}, 170, 187, 229. The daughter of a Gdańsk TSKŻ activist from the 60s, the pre-war communist Andrzej Jaroszewicz, recalled in a conversation with me that her father saw the rise of the independent trade union ‘Solidarity’ as evidence of counter-revolutionary activity.

\textsuperscript{126} For instance, the literary scholar Michal Głowiński took this route; cf. M. Shore, \textit{op.cit.}, 209.