Official Opinions on Polish-Jewish Relations in the Kielce Region
from the Entry of the Red Army until the Kielce Pogrom

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Official opinions on Polish-Jewish relations in the Kielce region in the period between the entry of the Red Army and the Kielce pogrom have not yet been the subject of historical research. This issue has been mentioned in passing in discussions of that pogrom on 4 July 1946. The event itself—undoubtedly the turning point in the post-war history of Jews in Poland—is not, however, the subject of this analysis.

In discussing this topic, I will focus attention, above all, on how relationships between the Polish and Jewish populations, as well as their respective circumstances, were described and evaluated by the local officials of the newly-forming state administration. These officials were the guarantors of law and order and of sources of livelihood, and almost everything depended on their involvement in and assessment of the situation in the period immediately following the war’s cessation. In concentrating on this group—which was at least partly responsible for the Kielce pogrom—I have examined archives that have been overlooked in previous discussions of the situation of Jews in this area. These archives contain monthly situational reports by the officials who headed the local urban or county (powiat) administrations. Their basic perceptions and comments about the events taking place on the territory under their supervision were recorded in these reports. These were then sent as confidential documents to the provincial governor (wojewoda) of Kielce, who headed the provincial administration (województwo) and subsequently became the basis for compilations of situational reports regarding the entire województwo, as submitted by the Kielce wojewoda to the central organs of the national government. As one of the primary sources of information for the governing authorities, they undoubtedly served as the basis for their political decisions.

Their authors were the heads (starostowie) of county administrations or mayors of cities which had been given a more independent status (as a starostwo grodowe) and were responsible directly to the provincial governor. Observing the day-to-day post-war reality close up and taking into account information from officials under them as well, they described in their reports the problems of the local population and significant incidents which had taken place. They also gave information on the material circumstances and problems of the Jews. Matters concerning the latter were considered separately since, in administrative terminology, Jews were a national and religious minority. The authors of these reports basically represented their own points of view and they expressed their opinions in confidence. One should also take into account that these officials represented an administrative system that was being recreated after more than half a decade of German occupation. This was a new government that saw no reason to relate its actions either to the

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1 This article was written in 1999.
2 The situational reports by heads of districts (starosta) or mayors of cities (prezydent miasta) are held in the National Archives in Kielce (Archiwum Państwowym w Kielcach; hereafter APK), in archival department II for 1944–1950 of the Kielce Provincial Offices (Urząd Wojewódzki Kielecki; hereafter UWK). Typically, the circumstances of the Jewish population are discussed in these reports under the heading ‘national minorities’, where information was also given about the few remaining Germans. Jewish religious communities, however, had existed in these lands since the Middle Ages, and in modern times Jews had lived in practically all the cities and towns of the region (see A. Penkalla, Żydowskie ślady w województwie kieleckim i radomskim, Radom, 1992).
Polish state which had existed before 1 September 1939 or to local conspiratorial administrations formed during the war and connected with the London government-in-exile.

The authors of these reports had been appointed following the establishment of local administrations by the Polish National Liberation Committee (Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego), whose headquarters were in Lublin. The Committee was recognized by and maintained close cooperation with the Soviet Union. As was the case throughout Polish territory in the post-war period, a crucial role in the creation of the Committee in the Kielce region was played by the Polish Workers’ Party (Polska Partia Robotnicza—PPR). This party was founded 5 January 1942 and associated from its establishment with Moscow and with the Comintern until the latter’s dissolution in June 1943. The leftist Peasant Party (Stronnictwo Ludowe—SL) worked in close cooperation with the PPR. In April 1945, five of the county heads in the Kielce province were from the Polish Workers’ Party, five were from the Peasant Party, one was from the Polish Socialist Party, and one was unaffiliated. Wherever a PPR representative was not the starosta himself, he held the position of vice-starosta. Furthermore, members of the PPR held, as a rule, the function of the heads of the national councils that acted as the local legislative and executive authorities. The Kielce wojewoda, as well as the mayors of the largest cities—Kielce, Radom, and Częstochowa—were members of the Polish Workers’ Party. Jan Naumiuk, a leftist historian writing about the process by which the government was formed in the Kielce region, concluded that ‘the PPR and remaining parties of the democratic camp delegated their own members to leading positions in the administration, while accepting nominated representatives of the former ruling class for positions of lesser responsibility’.

Archival material originating from Jewish sources has also been taken into consideration here. Such documents were produced by the Radom Jewish committee. However, some also provide information regarding the situation of Jews throughout the province and thus complement the situational reports mentioned above.

A further documentary source is the correspondence between the wojewoda’s office and the administrative structures under his control, as well as the Secret Police (the Office of Public Safety or Urzęd Bezpieczeństwa—UB) regarding the Jewish population. The UB, acting as a political police, was to guarantee the safety and security of the authorities as well as of society as a whole. It was an integral element of the governmental apparatus of power, since part of Polish society was in armed opposition to the new authorities and this conflict often took on the character of a civil war.

I have also examined documents penned by officials of the Polish Workers’ Party outside the Kielce region. These documents contain analyses of the reasons behind the Polish population’s attitudes towards Jews immediately after the Kielce pogrom and thus are connected with the period under discussion here. These documents are important because of the decisive political and administrative role of the PPR at this time. Finally, I have included in my analysis some documents resulting from the endeavours of Ignacy Schwarzbart, former member of the London National Council (which acted as the Polish parliament-in-

5 This correspondence, in the form of copies or rough drafts, is to be found in UWK II in the APK.
exile during World War II). After the war, Schwarzbart was interested in the situation of Polish Jews (including those from the Kielce region), and analysed the possibilities for rebuilding a Jewish headquarters in post-war Poland by contacting people traveling to London from Poland.\(^7\)

The situation of the Jews was transformed by the entry of the Red Army into the Kielce province. The German army and administration—which, during its occupation of Poland, had been implementing the mass murder of the Jews—abandoned the region. For the Jewish population saved from annihilation, the German departure constituted liberation. In contrast, most of the Polish population, belonging to various social groups and classes, perceived the advance of the Soviet army and the efforts by people connected with the leftist and pro-Soviet Lublin administration to seize control as another occupation. As a result, this population either reacted ambivalently towards the new government and its advocates or engaged in armed battle against them. At the same time, the Polish Committee of National Liberation was seen by Jews in Poland as—apart from a symbol of the granting of equal rights—the sole guarantor against Polish antisemitism. This new government condemned any signs of antisemitism in its political program, and there were some Jews within its leadership. On 8 August 1944, an Autonomous Department for Aid to the Jewish Population (Samodzielnny Referat do Spraw Pomocy Ludności Żydowskiej) was established, and on its initiative, the Central Committee of Jews in Poland (Centralny Komitet Żydów w Polsce—CKZP) was established on 4 November; both were placed under the aegis of the National Council (Krajowa Rada Narodowa). The latter drew representatives from the different ideological groups within Polish Jewry—from the communists to Bundists and Zionists. A provincial office of the Committee was based in Kielce, with branches in other towns inhabited by Jews.\(^8\)

By August 1944, the Red Army had already entered those areas on the left bank of the Vistula that had been assigned to the Kielce province. This territory included the Baranowski bridgehead, which encompassed a significant section of the Kielce region and was controlled by the 1st Ukrainian Front, and the Warecko-Magnuszewski bridgehead, which was controlled by the 1st Belorusian Front. Within the terrain of the former was Sandomierz, which had been liberated from the German occupation on 18 August 1944. Both of these bridgeheads played a crucial role during the initial offensive that took place on 14 and 15 January 1945. As a result of this action, German troops were forced out of Kielce on 15 January; the Soviet Army took over Radom on 16 January and Częstochowa on the following day.

Thus, all of the largest cities of the Kielce province (which were inhabited by a significant number of the Jews) had been liberated. The Polish National Liberation Committee, discharging the function of the highest executive power, had designated Kielce as the capital of the new province by a decree of 21 August 1944. Centres of nationwide administrative decision-making were to be found here; in addition, the headquarters of all services responsible for guaranteeing sources of livelihood and the safety of the general population—including the Jews—were to be found here. There were also centres of the Roman Catholic Church’s administration within the province, which was of great significance as the vast majority of the region’s residents was Roman Catholic. Sandomierz, Kielce, and Częstochowa were also Roman Catholic diocesan centres. The importance of

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\(^7\) A. Fiszer, *Archives of the office of Dr I. Schwarzbart, Member of the Polish National Council in Exile*. Record Group M-2, Jerusalem, 1976.

Częstochowa, where the Paulist monastery with its Black Madonna is situated, and which has long been the destination of mass pilgrimages of the faithful, was as unique then as it is today. Critical here, too, is the attitude of the Church authorities, as well the clergy, to the problems of concern to the Jewish population. This particular question, for the period under discussion, has not yet been the subject of historical research. The reason for this lack of research is probably that studies of such relations between state and church authorities have only been undertaken since the negotiated end of communism in 1989.

This importance of the Church’s attitude is connected to the fact that the Kielce region’s populace was then dominated by peasants, who traditionally had strong ties to Catholicism. According to data for 14 February 1946, of the 1,718,000 inhabitants of the province, 78.8 percent lived in the countryside and supported themselves primarily by working mostly small farms of two to five hectares. The rest of the population lived in towns, of which only seven had more than ten thousand residents. A large part of this population also worked in agriculture, finding employment in industry to a lesser extent as that sector was just beginning to recover from the wartime destruction. The largest cities within the province were Częstochowa (pop. 101,255), Radom (69,455), and Kielce (49,960). Residents of the province, immediately after the cease-fire and the German withdrawal found themselves on the brink of famine and universal poverty. They lived from day to day. Everything was regulated by the state and almost everything was in short supply. Local authorities were aware of this. They were also conscious of the fact that solutions to these problems could be found only with the help of the central administration.

By the time the Soviet Army entered the Kielce region, a Jewish population had already re-established itself. Some Jews had hidden in the woods, others among the Polish Christian population and some had been members of the numerous partisan groups active in the area. A further group had hidden in the ghettos during the German occupation, coming out of hiding only after the advance of the Red Army. In Sandomierz they began to emerge in August 1944. As a starosta recounted, ‘…during the [Baranowski] bridgehead, and after emerging from hiding places, the majority [of Jews] left for Lublin; after the front had

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9 In a situational report for August 1946, the mayor of the city of Częstochowa stated that the city was ‘slowly becoming a centre that is described by Catholic circles as the spiritual capital of Poland and all of Slavonia’. Moreover, he noted that the Jewish population feared that there would be anti-Jewish manifestations during the feast of the Assumption of the Holy Virgin Mary on 15 August. During this time scores of pilgrims from all over Poland gathered in the city (APK/UWK, vol. 1350, pages 78–9).


11 A document from the Social Welfare Administration (Wydział Opieki Społecznej) states: ‘The terrain reveals a land of ruins and conflagrations. Whole villages have disappeared from the face of the earth; fields are engraved with the ruts of heavy artillery, marked by bunkers, and spiked with entanglements of barbed wire among which the bodies of soldiers still lie unburied. Access to these is thwarted by mines. Entire fields and forests are mined, which makes movement or agricultural fieldwork impossible on this terrain. Some 250,000 people have been left homeless and are living in basements or in bunkers abandoned by the army. Hungry, without underwear, dressed in tattered clothing and overwhelmed by scabies, they die en masse of typhus and typhoid fever. Seventy-five percent of the livestock has perished; the rest are dying of hunger for lack of feed. Some of the best land in Poland is unsown; there is a lack of seed or potatoes for planting. The so-called Sandomierz (Baranowski) bridgehead encompasses one quarter of the Kielce province. It has been calculated that 500 tons of flour and cereal are needed monthly to feed the starving population here, as well as an appropriate amount of fat, milk, and potatoes; To fight epidemics, 100 thousand sets of male, female, and children’s underwear are needed as well as fifty thousand sets of work clothes. There is the acute problem of an overpopulation of about sixty thousand people who, due to the destruction and the lack of land, should emigrate to other territories.’ (APK/UWK, vol. 176).
moved west, they returned in greater numbers to all the towns and settlements. Data from the local administrative authorities from May and June 1945 shows that the Jewish population inhabited—for shorter or longer periods—twenty-four of the towns of the Kielce province. It is possible, however, that other towns were inhabited by Polish Jews; at a conference of Jewish committees from the Kielce province (held 14 May 1945), Dr. Seweryn Kahane, Chairman of the Kielce branch of the Central Committee of Jews in Poland, (who was later murdered at the start of the Kielce pogrom) stated that there were 48 local committees. As a rule, such committees were to be found only in towns inhabited by a significant group of Jews.

Another problem for research on this period is connected with the reliability of the statistical data; we find significant differences between the data of the administration and that of Jewish institutions. One possible reason for the discrepancy might be that because there was considerable territorial mobility among both Jews and Poles, the Polish state administration and offices, which were just organizing in the wake of the German retreat, were unable to determine the size of the population and could only estimate its composition. Jews were moving from smaller to larger localities. They were also leaving the Kielce province and heading beyond its borders towards the western territories that were now within the post-war borders of the Polish state. Occasionally, they would live temporarily in a larger city, in some cases at the headquarters of the Jewish committees, while en route to a permanent place of residence. Some chose not to register with the committees out of fear for their lives—which was justifiable at the time.

According to Dr. Kahane at the mid-May conference, there were 2,707 persons in the area registered in local Jewish committees. However, the local committee delegates present stated that 1,902 persons were registered in 17 committees. Not all of the representatives of the organization in the Kielce province were at the conference. Absent, for instance, was the representative for Częstochowa, where more than 3,000 Jews lived at that time. Still, according to the records of the Central Committee of Polish Jews, there were only 5,085 Jews in Kielce province as of 15 June 1945. This figure, taking into consideration the numbers of the Jewish populations in specific places, appears to be close to the then-current number of Jews in the province.

The form and content of the documented sources have also hampered an accurate evaluation of the data on the number of localities inhabited by Jews as well as the total numbers of Jews living in each. Some of the Jews who survived the Shoah and were still in Poland seem to have visited their previous places of residence right after the war, remaining for longer or shorter periods of time. These were, above all, those who wanted to find out the wartime fate of their loved ones. Furthermore, as the heads of counties and the mayors of cities observed, Jews stayed only briefly, especially in smaller villages. They remained just long enough to sell or lease their property. On the basis of these reports we can assume that these Jews did not plan longer stays in their pre-war places of residence. A frequently

14 A. Penkalla, ‘Sytuacja ludności na terenie województwa kieleckiego w maju 1945 roku’, Kieleckie Studia Historyczne, 13 (1995), 241ff. This conference was attended by committee delegates from the following localities: Kielce, Radom, Jędrzejów, Sandomierz, Kozienice, Szydłowiec, Działoszyce, Zwoleń, Ołkus, Gniewoszów, Skarżysko Kamienna, Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski, Chmielnik, Chęciny, Bodzentyn, Włoszczowa, and Starochowice.
15 Meducki (ed.), Antyżydowskie wydarzenia, 36. The data cited are from the files of the Ministry of Public Administration held in the Archiwum Akt Nowych in Warsaw (vol. 786, page 65).
16 The Sandomierz starosta wrote in a situational report from June 1945 that ‘Jews… currently pass through here and there with the purpose of leasing or selling their holdings, usually half-ruined by the German occupation’ (APK/UWK, vol. 1336, page 149)
heard argument was that they did not want to live in the ‘cemetery’ where their loved ones had died. They also feared for their lives and these factors pushed them to relocate from smaller to larger towns. For these reasons the Jewish population of particular towns, according to the administration’s data, fluctuated and quite variable. Depending on the size of the town, the population might be anywhere from a few Jewish residents to a few thousand.

The statistics of the state administration show the largest—and the only—Jewish settlement of several thousand people in the Kielce province was in Częstochowa. On 25 January 1945, eight days after the entry of the Red Army into the city, 6,150 Jews lived there. Certainly this state of affairs was related to the last phase of the German occupation. Holocaust historian Adam Rutkowski states that there were 5,200 Jews there on 17 January. They were almost exclusively drawn from the roughly 11,000 Jews held by the Germans in four factory labour camps, of which over five thousand were transported from the city on 15–16 January upon the news of the Red Army’s approach. In August of that year, according to the statistics of the city’s mayor, about 3,600 Jews lived in that city. The leading role of Częstochowa as the Jewish centre of the region persisted despite the fact that 120 Jews had left the city by the end of November 1945 and, in December, after an attack on one of its most wealthy inhabitants, forty Jewish families left. Some of them left Poland for good; others returned. The city of Częstochowa was one of the largest hubs of Jewish population on Polish territory at that time.

The second largest Jewish centre in 1945 was Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski where, according to the information of the local authorities, between 400 to 564 Jews lived in June and July. Nevertheless, the delegate of the local Jewish committee at the May conference noted that, in this city, purportedly one of the largest Jewish settlements in the province, there were only 193 persons, including sixteen children. Taking into consideration the great differences in the administration’s and the Committee’s figures, it may be that this latter figure referred to persons receiving charitable aid from the delegate’s office.

About 300–400 Jews lived in Radom and in Kielce in 1945. According to information provided by Rutkowski, when the Red Army entered Radom in January 1945, there were 300 Jews in one of the camps organized by the Germans within the city. Among them, only 180 were pre-war inhabitants of Radom. Within a few months the number of Jewish residents in the city rose. According to the statistics of the Regional Jewish Committee (Okręgowy Komitet Żydowski) there were 402 Jews living in Radom on 12 May 1945, including 158 women, 194 men, and fifty children. Of these, six children were living with Polish families (and quite likely had been hidden by them during the war), eighteen were orphans, and the remainder were with their parents. The figures cited here, as in the case of the other cities, did undergo change. For instance, on 25 July 1945, the Radom

18 Ibid. See A. Rutkowski, ‘Martyrologia, walka i zagłada ludności żydowskiej w dystrykcie radomskim podczas okupacji hitlerowskiej,’ BZIH, 15–16 (1955), 140, 168.
21 Penkalla, ‘Sytuacja ludności,’ 242.
22 Penkalla, ‘Sytuacja ludności,’ 242.
regional Jewish committee noted that 152 persons were staying temporarily and were receiving dry food for their further journey.23

In a few of the towns in the Kielce province in the second half of January 1945 there were Jewish settlements of around 100 persons. The figures presented here indicate the number of Jews in a particular locality and the month in which their number reached its peak. They are derived mainly from the monthly situational reports of the county heads mentioned earlier; any information in these reports, including statistics, refers to the whole month. The numbers are also derived from other, similar accounts. Hence, these data should be treated as an approximation of the actual numbers. Thus we learn that 120 Jews lived in Skarżysko Kamienna in January.24 Immediately after the arrival of the Red Army, a significant Jewish centre was Działoszyce with 161 Jewish residents.25 Around 106 lived in Szydłowiec in February.26 Among the inhabitants of Sandomierz in June 1945 there were 103 Jews.27 Koziernice was also found in this category of towns as well; from the information given by the local Jewish committee representative and presented at the May 1945 conference, there were 106 in that city.28 The most numerous group of non-Roman Catholics in Busko were, as starosta Stopnicki reported to his provincial governor, 124 Jews in July 1945.29 About 100 lived in the area of the Włoszczów powiat.30 In keeping with the degree of urbanization in that county, the majority of Jews lived in the town of Włoszczów itself. The situation was similar in the Ilża powiat; according to its starosta, there were 136 Jews there in June 1945.31 Certainly, most resided in Starachowice, which was the largest city of the powiat and was its governmental seat.

For these months, there is data indicating a peak in the numbers for the Jewish populations. This was the point at which the highest number of localities—all of the major urban centres—within the Kielce region were inhabited by Jews. However, this situation did not last long. According to data from the Central Committee of Polish Jews, 5,085 Jews lived in the province on 15 June 1945; that number fell to only 4,081 by 1 January 1946.32 The decrease was caused by the territorial mobility of the Jewish population at the time. From the starosta reports it appears that Jews in some counties began moving from smaller to larger cities shortly after the entry of the Red Army. As a result of these migrations—in the days preceding the Kielce pogrom—the majority of Jewish residents of this region was concentrated in the cities of Częstochowa, Kielce, Sandomierz, Staszów, and Włoszczów.33

25 Ibid., page 23.
27 Ibid., vol. 1336, page 149.
29 APK/UWK, vol. 1337, page 233, situational report of the starosta for the month of July, dated 20 August 1945. At the time there were 215 ‘believers in other faiths’. The head of the county described them as non-Roman Catholics.
31 Ibid., vol. 1336, page 5.
33 Compare with data in volume 1531: ‘Detailed tallies of national minorities in each powiat of the Kielce province 1946’, page 39. There is information here regarding the numbers of Jews immediately after liberation (1945) and for the period in which the table was created (1956).
These territorial migrations are discussed by the Opatów *starosta* in his reports regarding the situation in his county for the period from the liberation until 20 May 1945. He informed the *wojewoda* that, among the inhabitants of his *powiat*, ‘…the Jews are a very negligible percentage; lately they have been drifting out of this terrain to larger cities.’\(^3\) In his report for August of that year he noted that the remaining ‘handful’ had already left Opatów itself; he further noted:

One should add a handful of Jews to the number of national minorities who have settled in the county seat. However, as a result of persecution on the part of some *Endecja* supporters entailing even—in the last few days—homicide, these Jews have been forced to leave the territory of the Opatów *powiat* in order to find shelter in a larger community and not expose themselves to harm to life and limb.\(^3\)

In October only a few still resided in Opatów.\(^3\)

A parallel situation existed in the Radom *powiat*. Jews there were leaving for similar reasons. In the situational report for the month of July, the Radom county head stated, ‘Of the national minorities in the *powiat* area there are only Jews who are concentrating in the larger towns, that is, Szydłowiec and Białobrzegi.’\(^3\) In February 1946 they would leave both towns and the *starosta* would write that, ‘As the census conducted last year shows, not one Jewish family is living within the county. In Szydłowiec, where there were 115 Jews a few months earlier, there is not one Jew left.’\(^3\)

In June 1945, apart from Sandomierz, Jews no longer inhabited any of the other towns in the county.\(^3\) The majority left Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski in March of that year after an armed attack on a Jewish family that resulted in several deaths; after the Kielce incident the remainder left Poland.\(^4\) The Ostrowiec attack was noted in the regional press and this undoubtedly influenced Jews to leave the area. In September 1945, there were twenty-five Jews in Iłża county—specifically, in Starachowice-Wierzbnik itself.\(^4\) From that time on, the *starosta* no longer recorded the presence of a Jewish population in the *powiat*. In November the county head wrote that only in Koziencie ‘a group of Jews remains which does not demonstrate any activity.’\(^4\) Soon they, too, would leave the Kielce region.

As a result of the migrations, Jews remained in only a few towns of the region. They stayed in Częstochowa, which—thanks, among other things, to the settlement of Jews returning from the Soviet Union in 1946—remained the largest of their settlements in the area. Beyond that, in 1948, Jews still lived in Radom and in Włoszczów county—in the

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37 Ibid., vol. 1337, page 95, report written in Radom, 9 August 1945.
38 Ibid., vol. 1344, page 95, report for the month of February, written in Radom, 5 March 1946.
39 Ibid., vol. 1336, page 149.
42 Ibid., vol. 1341, page 166, report for the month of November, written in Koziencie, 3 December 1945.
towns of Włoszczów and Szczekocin, as well as in Opatów where there were yet a few. 43 A year later, in 1949, they could only be found in Częstochowa, Radom, and Włoszczów. 44

According to the figures of the Central Committee of Jews in Poland, between 15 June 1945 and 1 January 1946 there was an increase in the number of Jews in Poland. Only in the Kielce province and the Białystok, Lublin, Przemysł, and Bydgoszcz regions did the number of Jewish inhabitants fall. It is notable that a consistent armed resistance against the new regime, as well as against the Jews, was characteristic of those regions where the fall in the Jewish population was greatest. Among them was the Kielce region.

The main cause of the Jewish exodus from this region was armed attacks on Jews. Fear was constant among the Jewish population in the Kielce region. It became the crucial and ultimate element in the decision to leave the area and Poland itself. Furthermore, the local administration was not always able effectively to guarantee the safety of the population. This situation was also affected by the mutual relations between ethnic Poles and Jews.

A crucial question influencing decisions to stay was the local authorities’ guarantee that they could provide for the basic needs of the general population. This was at a time when, after the end of years of warfare on this ravaged expanse of land, there was a shortage of nearly everything indispensable to normal life—and the distribution of the majority of basic products was regulated by the new administration. Thus arose the key and often sharply debated issue of how to distribute fairly the inadequate supply of food and clothing. This discussion was the more heated because the Jewish population, in addition to generally available allotments of products, obtained aid from foreign Jewish organizations. The administration and the Polish population sometimes perceived this as a sign of partiality and special treatment for the Jews.

Another important matter in a region just recently traversed by a military front that left many homes destroyed was the shortage of housing. The need for housing was of great concern to the Jewish survivors of the Holocaust, many of whom returned to their homes to find them occupied by Poles. A further concern was the protection of the general population from assaults by the Red Army, especially by soldiers returning from the German front. This problem was seen as an important influence on the opinions of the population regarding the Soviet Union and was continually mentioned in reports filed by the authorities. 45

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43 Ibid., vol. 1371, ‘Monthly situational report of the starostas and town councils for the month of March 1948’, page 69. About 200 people took part in eight meetings and conferences in Częstochowa organized for the Jewish community in March 1948; page 54: 50 lived in the Włoszcza starostow powiat; page 76: in Radom there were then 134; vol. 1372, page 27: in Opatów there were eight (see report for the month of August 1948). After that period the Opatów starosta no longer notes their presence.

44 Ibid., vol. 1382, situational report for the month of January 1949, pages 3, 34, 48. There were 20 Jews then in Włoszczowa, 129 in Radom.

45 As an example, I quote fragments from the situational reports from a few districts. The starosta of the Radom powiat in a report for the month of July 1945 wrote: ‘The attitude of society towards the Red Army is still hostile in some areas and caused by incidents of offenses committed by soldiers returning from the front, which are more frequent than in past months’ (APK/UWK, vol. 1137, page 93). In his account from that same month, the starosta of the Częstochowa powiat reported to the provincial governor that ‘officers and soldiers of the Red Army committed five homicides in the process of thefts and thirteen incidents of assault and robbery’ (Ibid., page 335). In the report of the Stopnik starosta (again for the same month), we read: ‘A plague of mice and the trampling through of the Red Army have contributed to further impoverishment of the population in these devastated areas. Hence further aid for these victims of war will still be necessary to an even greater extent’ (Ibid., par 371). An excerpt from the situational report of the mayor of the city of Radom for August 1945 regarding the position of officers and soldiers reads: ‘The Red Army did not fight and shed blood for the liberation of Poland from Hitler’s occupation just so as to be met with denial or passive resistance wherever it demands personal services or goods from the population’ (Ibid., vol. 1338, page 15). Numerous accounts of criminal offenses, especially by Soviet marauders, as well as occasional armed
During the period immediately following the cease-fire, the practical solution to matters concerning basic living conditions depended, above all, on the capabilities and resourcefulness of the local authorities. Judging by their statements, their attitude toward the Jews was unfavourable something that was understood both by the Jewish organizations and the central authorities. As a consequence of local intervention on the part of Jews, the central offices of the state administration began to put pressure on the local authorities very shortly after the German troops evacuated the territory.

Thus, as early as February 1945, a Mr Rubinstein, an official for the affairs of the Jewish population in the Political Bureau of the Nationalities Section (Departament Polityczny Wydziału Narodowościowego) in the Lublin Ministry of Public Administration, notified the Kielce Provincial Offices (Urząd Wojewódzki) of the fact that the authorities in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski did not want to work with local representatives of the Jewish population and that the head of the Town Council had refused Jews their rations of bread, foodstuffs, and coal. He further noted the cases of two Jewish homeowners who were denied housing. In his summary of this matter, Rubinstein concluded that ‘citizens of Jewish nationality living within the region of your województwo in Ostrowiec Kielecki [today, ‘Świętokrzyski’] are the object of maltreatment by the authorities.’ Shortly after receiving this report, the city authorities responded that no one could receive foodstuffs without ration cards, but that ‘the Town Council, perceiving the critical situation of the Jewish population and in spite of great difficulties, has allocated the Jewish Committee (see letter of 1 March 1945) 75kg of sugar, 75kg of candles, and 150kg of salt.’

At the request of the provincial governor, this matter was then referred to the starosta in Opatów county, who concluded that the fate of the Jewish population in the town, in which the occupying force had destroyed all food reserves, was better than that of the Polish population. The report went on to argue that the Jews were unjustifiably claiming welfare:

It appears from the demands of the Jewish Committee that the Jewish population expect that the local National Council (Rada Narodowa) in Ostrowiec would continue to be supported by the Social Welfare (Opieka Społeczna) administration, despite the fact that the Committee holds appropriate resources and the Jews are have a rather high standard of living—e.g., consuming white bread, cold cuts, and working in trade.

Further, the starosta reported that the Jews would be granted better living quarters upon the departure of a group of Poles from the pre-war western territories who had been resettled by the Germans in Ostrowiec. The town government was facing a serious problem of food supply. The main source of livelihood for the majority of the inhabitants of the town was employment at the local ironworks foundry, which had not yet begun to function fully. Hence, from the day that the Red Army entered Ostrowiec (16 January) until the end of May 1945, about 16,000 people from the town and its surroundings were provided with essential

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48 Ibid., pages 5-5v. Ibid., pages 5-5v.
foodstuffs on the basis of ration cards; about 10,000 persons did not receive ration cards.  

The numbers for later months were similar.

The Jews’ attempts to recover their property was a controversial issue, especially in cities that were centres of local administration. A significant portion of all buildings had been destroyed during the war. In Kielce, for instance, 117 buildings (25 percent of the city’s edifices) had been devastated. The salvaged living quarters were inhabited not only by permanent residents of the area but also by wartime settlers from Poznań, Łódź, and Warsaw; other buildings were now occupied by the newly arrived officials of the administration, including functionaries of the militia (Milicja Obywatelska) and the UB.  

The situation was similar—although there was less damage—in Radom, with forty homes destroyed, in Częstochowa with 100, in Skarżysko Kamienna with forty-two, and in Ostrowiec with thirty homes left uninhabitable. These figures pertain only to brick buildings. Destruction was also significant in smaller towns. The entire city centre (70 percent) of Pińczów was devastated as a result of the war. A significant portion of the ravaged buildings in these towns were located within the wartime Jewish ghettos created by the Germans.

Existing sources do not permit a full examination of the mutual relations between the Ostrowiec Jews and the town authorities at that time. In response to letters from the Ostrowiec branch of the Jewish Committee, on 29 May the town council stressed local hardships in providing food, while simultaneously noting that the situation of the Jews was also difficult. Taking the town’s financial capabilities into consideration, the council claimed that the its position was ‘not in the least an expression of national animosity’.  

It seems, nevertheless, that the Jewish side was justifiably suspicious; the council’s report can be seen as a response to the criticisms made by Ostrowiec Jews during the 14 May 1945 conference of local Jewish committees in the Kielce województwo. A representative of this group, illustrating his account with examples, drew attention to the failure of the the town authorities to provide any security or welfare whatsoever, as well as to the general conditions of hardship. Among other things he claimed:

The state of security is known: thefts and homicides. Not too long ago the town officials expressed the opinion that German laws [dating from the occupation] are still valid with regard to Jews. Jewish survivors from camps are arriving barefoot and naked; with no living quarters they have located themselves amongst the ruins. There have also been cases of simple hooliganism, in which Jews have been beaten while the militia has remarked: ‘You can hit him while I’m not looking.’ Jews are arrested for illegal marketeering; murderers who have killed four persons have been arrested but are to be set free. Just prior to the arrival of the Red Army a certain Polish family murdered a Jewish family. They were arrested, but freed shortly thereafter. In the Ostrowiec area pamphlets are scattered proclaiming ‘Death to the rest of the Jews.’ The authorities do not react.

The case of Ostrowiec was not exceptional in the Kielce province and relations between the local administrations and the representatives of the Jewish population often remained tense. On 10 March 1945, also as a result of the ministry’s letter of 7 February, the Kielce wojewoda intervened. In a special circular directed to the heads of counties and town councils, he called attention to their illegal treatment of the petitioners. He ordered that supplicants be ‘treated properly and taken care of objectively and with due speed.

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49 Ibid., vol. 118, monthly report of the mayor for the month of May 1945.  
52 Penkalla, ‘Sytuacja ludności’, 242.
acting against these orders should be held responsible and disciplined.\textsuperscript{53} From another document we learn that the provincial governor issued another circular on 23 March, this time specifically regarding the Jewish population. In it he noted the ‘improper stance taken towards citizens of Jewish nationality who have not been treated properly or suitably taken care of by the county heads’. In the last section of the document the governor informs his addressees that continuation of this behaviour is ‘unbefitting and politically damaging’.\textsuperscript{54}

In Radom, too, relations between officials of the agencies within the urban administration responsible for guaranteeing living conditions and the local branch of the Jewish committee fell short of the expectations of the Jewish population. As early as 12 May 1945 the Radom Jewish Committee reported to the Central Committee of Jews in Lublin that ‘the attitude of the local authorities regarding housing matters is unfavourable towards the Jewish Committee and the Jewish population; as a consequence, a large portion of the Jewish population remains without a roof over its head and has to make use of the local shelter.’\textsuperscript{55} This shelter had been organized by the Radom committee for Jews who could not reclaim their pre-war homes because they had been occupied by the Polish population or ruined during the war and for those who were passing through the city. There was a cafeteria in the shelter as well.

Aside from the problem of basic living conditions, the guarantee of safety for the Jews living in the town and in Radom county was a key issue—especially as there had been attacks and homicides. The failure of either the mayor of the town or the head of the county to intervene in this matter prompted the Radom Jewish committee to file an official complaint on 21 January 1946. The representative of the committee described the community’s fears and added that the starosta, for unknown reasons, refused to meet with him on this very pressing matter. As a result,

…a delegation from the Regional Jewish Committee in Radom approached the starosta with an official request, noting that this was regarding a matter of security; the delegation, after several hours of waiting, was told that office hours had ended and to return the following day. The delegates made an appointment for 10:00 with the assurance that they would certainly be seen. Despite their appearance and request for a meeting the next day, they were told in the secretary’s office that the starosta had left town and there could be no talk of a meeting.\textsuperscript{56}

It is no surprise that, in such a situation, the relationship between the state administration and the Jewish population aroused misgivings on the part of the latter—the more so as the Jews believed they were subject to real discrimination. The central political administration was showered with individual pleas for intervention from the Jewish population; the example of the Radom administration ignoring the Jews was not unusual on a national scale at the time. On 5 June 1945 the Ministry of Public Administration directed a circular to all the provincial governors entitled ‘On the matter of attitudes towards citizens of Jewish nationality’. It asserted that:

It has come to the attention of the Ministry of Public Administration that there are cases in which the provincial and county leaders and offices of the general administration, as well as of the local government, do not apply appropriate objectivity in settling the cases of petitioners of Jewish nationality. In the unjustified negative stance towards these cases by the above-listed authorities and offices—

\textsuperscript{53} APK/UWK, vol. 1524, page 3.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.; information about this appears in a circular dated 26 July 1945.
\textsuperscript{55} Penkalla, ‘Stosunki polsko-żydowskie’, 62.
\textsuperscript{56} APK/UWK, vol. 1524, page 65.
especially in hindering Jewish repatriates from taking up their rightful residences—a rather clearly and highly undemocratic antisemitic tendency is revealed. The Ministry of Public Administration calls attention to this undesirable phenomenon and stresses that all loyal citizens of the Republic of Poland, without regard to their nationality and faith, are to be treated equally, i.e., in facilitating their lives within the framework of the legislation in force. In connection with this, the Ministry of Public Administration recommends that citizens observe that the authorities and the offices subject to them comply with the bidding of this document.57

Members of the Jewish population in Kielce province were among those intervening during this period, as we see from the contents of a special Ministry of Public Administration document sent to the Kielce wojewoda on 25 June 1945 in connection with information from the official for the affairs of the Jewish population. The document contains an assertion that the attitudes of the authorities toward Jews in Jędrzejów, Chmielnik and Chęciny were inappropriate and politically damaging. According to the Ministry, the county and town officials gave negative decisions in cases involving Jews. In Ostrowiec, the National Council in town summoned representatives of the local Jewish Committee and demanded that they dispatch all Jews to work in the mines.58 It appears that this suggestion to direct Jews into the mining labour force was not unique in the operations of the local authorities, since the delegate from Białobrzegi at the 14 May conference of representatives from the Kielce Jewish committees reported that seven Jews had been assigned to work in a mine.59

The wojewoda’s reaction to the circular was almost immediate; on 26 July, he sent a supplementary directive in which he wrote:

I request that the county heads abandon their hostile attitude towards persons of Jewish nationality and act uniformly, amicably and justly towards all citizens, in accordance with the principles of a democratic state. Conducting themselves in this manner they will act not only in the interests of individual citizens but also, and above all, in the interest of public service as, without mutual respect and trust, there can be no talk of a real and effective administration.60

There can be no doubt that the Jews’ negative opinion regarding the inappropriate behaviour of urban authorities towards them was justified. Jewish delegates at the 14 May conference reported hostile or ambivalent attitudes towards them by town and county officials in Jędrzejów, Skarżysko, Koźminiec, Radom, Chmielnik, Ostrowiec, Włoszczyzna, and in Białobrzegi. This atmosphere prevailed in most of the towns and cities of the Kielce region then inhabited by Jews. According to the conference delegates, only the town authorities in Sandomierz and in Kielce itself demonstrated a positive stance towards Jewish issues.61

One of the duties of the county heads and the mayors of large cities was to observe the moods and opinions of residents and to deal with their attitudes and activities in accordance with the political directives of the government. Furthermore, the wojewoda was to be informed about the situation in the territory under his administration. Hence,

57 These documents are cited by Jan Gross in his Upiorna dekada. Trzy eseje o stereotypach na temat Żydów, Polaków, Niemców i komunistów 1939–1948 (Kraków, 1998), 99–100. This correspondence can be found in the documents of the Urząd Wojewódzki in Kraków. The author adds on page 100 that ‘one can find the complaints that have been discussed here and filed via Jewish committees in the archives of the Urząd Wojewódzki in Kraków.’
descriptions of the varied relations between Poles and Jews appeared constantly in the monthly situational reports. These observations of and reactions to the direction that these relations were taking at that time were extremely important as the Jewish population was then particularly endangered.

Between March and August 1945 alone, according to fragmentary information from depositions made on 19 September 1945 before the Political Department of the Ministry of Public Administration and forwarded to the Ministry of Public Safety, thirty-two persons of Jewish descent had been killed within Kielce province, fourteen had been assaulted and four were wounded. According to this information, the incidents of assault and robberies were caused by the restitution of property that had been taken from Jews during the Nazi occupation. What was especially tragic was that parents with small children were among the murdered. Some of them had survived the war with assistance from Poles. Incidents of homicide took place throughout the entire province—practically in all of the localities inhabited by Jews. During this period in Poland, eighty-one persons were killed, thirteen injured, and two abducted. There were thirty incidents of assault and robbery, including eleven thefts motivated by the return of homes and belongings that had been taken from Jews during the German occupation. According to F. Stoliński, a ministerial official, fourteen assaults were ‘the result of Nazi propaganda, which has poisoned our society during the occupation with the venom of racial hatred.’

Descriptions and appraisals of the mood among Jews appear in the correspondence of the state administration from the moment the government began to function after the cease-fire. In reports for the month of May 1945 (the earliest of the surviving documents), there is information about Polish-Jewish relations in Pińczów, Busko, Częstochowa, Kożienice, Olkusz, and Kielce. Aside from the general statement that Jews then constituted an insignificant percentage among the inhabitants, various opinions on this subject were expressed. The mayor of the city of Częstochowa asserted that ‘the Jews who have luckily succeeded in avoiding the Holocaust return to their establishments, not meeting with any sort of troubles on the part of either the Polish population or the governmental authorities.’ A similar opinion was presented by the starosta of Kożienice: ‘The attitude towards believers in the Mosaic religion—loyal. The individuals of other faiths listed are treated sympathetically by the authorities and the population.’

Nonetheless, on the basis of accounts from the other localities, one could assume that these relations were not then at their best. The Pińczów starosta reported to the wojewoda that ‘there were no antisemitic manifestations in the reporting period. However, it is possible to observe an unfriendly disposition with regards to Jews.’ Further, the head of the county of Olkusz wrote that ‘the local community treats the Jews returning from camps with some reservations, nursing some fears that commerce will return to their hands. Clearly hostile attitudes towards the Jews are displayed by certain reactionary groups and raiding parties that are hiding in the nearby woods.’

The Radom Jewish Committee took note of such hostile attitudes in a report to the Central Committee of Polish Jews in Lublin dated 12 May 1945: ‘…until now there have been no reports of incidents worthy of attention; the mood among the Jewish population is

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62 Meducki (ed.), Antyżydowskie wydarzenia, 55–61. This was a top secret document regarding robberies and homicides committed against the Jewish population.
64 Ibid., page 117, report edited 11 June 1945.
65 Ibid., page 39, report for the period until 20 May 1945, edited 30 May 1945.
despondent and uneasy. The attitude of the local Polish population towards Jews is unfavourable and arouses anxieties.  

Judging by the accounts of the local authorities, it appears that the anti-Jewish mood among the Polish population lasted throughout the period under discussion here. The Polish population’s negative attitude towards the Jews, as described in situational reports, did not cease until the Jews left. The county head of Kozienice observed in his situational report for the month of October 1945: ‘In the last ten days the attitude towards Jews has improved. The reason is that the majority of Jews living within the powiat has moved to the western territories; the antisemitic disposition has been steadily weakening as a result.’ In contrast, a report dating from three months earlier (August 1945), when Jews were still living in Kozienice and in other localities of the powiat, the provincial governor reported to the central administration that the Kozienice and Olkusz county heads had told him that ‘the attitude of the Polish population towards the Jews is not sympathetic’. As we have noted, the situation was similar in the Pińczów powiat. This negative atmosphere continued to be felt in June in that powiat despite the fact that only an insignificant number of Jews lived in Pińczów itself. Subsequently there was no mention of Jews in the reports of this starosta. Moods in the Olkusz area also underwent change. In June of 1945 the opinion of the Polish population about Jews was characteristically varied. The starosta recounted: Society is generally correct towards the returning Jews. Basically one can differentiate two camps. One camp comprises those people who, in connection with the campaign of destroying the Jews led by the occupier, benefitted somehow from it. The second camp comprises people who see Jews as other human beings, Polish citizens. These people sympathize with the Gehenna that the Jews shared with the Poles and this segment of the society greets the returning Jews without prejudice. This was the last information on this subject in the reports of the Olkusz starosta. In his June 1945 situational report for the whole of the province, the wojewoda wrote: ‘On the whole, the number of members of national minorities the Kielce województwo is negligible. Jews are primarily engaged in economic affairs and in setting up workplaces. The attitude of the [Polish] population is generally hostile and unfavourable.’ He again noted the small number of Jews in July. Two months later, in his report for August, he updated his information regarding the number of Jews. As we have shown he argued there that the attitude to the Jews was not favourable.  

Information regarding Polish-Jewish relations in the largest cities of the province—Częstochowa, Radom, and Kielce—deserves particular attention. These were the largest concentrations of Jews in the Kielce województwo at that time. Częstochowa became the seat of the largest community of Jews in the Kielce region. In June 1945, about 3,500 Jews lived here. By that time, according to the mayor of the city, Polish-Jewish relations began to take on certain characteristics. In terms of both content and form, the mayor’s account on this

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68 APK/UWK, vol. 1340, page 67, situational report for the month of October 1945, edited 9 November 1945. In mentioning the ‘western territories’, the starosta was referring to the lands annexed to Poland after World War II.
69 Ibid., vol. 1327, page 22, situational report of the Kielce wojewoda for the month of August.
70 Ibid., vol. 1336, page 84, situational report for the month of June 1945, edited on 5 July 1945. According to the report: ‘The sole minority is the few Jews. During the reporting period antisemitic incidents did occur. Antisemitic moods can still be felt.’
72 Ibid., vol. 1327, page 3, situational monthly report of the wojewoda, 20 June 1945
73 Ibid., page 11, situational report of the wojewoda for the month of July 1945.
74 Ibid., page 22, situational report of the wojewoda for the month of August 1945.
subject is exceptional against the backdrop of others cited here. In addition to describing the state of the mutual relations, he also drew attention to the causes of this situation—which he believed were to be found on the Jewish side as well. He informed the Kielce provincial governor that representatives of the Jewish population, who are members of the local Jewish committee,

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\ldots in contacts with the authorities, indicate the presence of antisemitic tendencies and moods in Polish society. In connection with this, I would underline that one cannot deny them accuracy in this matter; it is a fact that such moods and tendencies exist, to a greater or lesser degree, in Polish society, especially in working-class neighbourhoods. They are not to be seen as the only attitude prevailing towards the Jewish population; nonetheless, they require an appropriate reaction on the part of the authorities as well as political and professional organizations—on which point I place particular stress. As an aside to the comments above, it should be stressed that Jewish society is characterized by a certain oversensitivity, rather often taking on the form of describing some circumstances and facts—which by their very nature are void of any bias—as examples of antisemitism; the reactions stemming from this oversensitivity do not assist in any way in the liquidation of antisemitism where it does in fact exist.\[75\]

The mayor’s observation about the moods among workers was echoed by the Kielce provincial governor in his situational report for the województwo for the month of July 1945.\[76\] Additionally, in his report for that month, the mayor drew the governor’s attention to the persistence of this behaviour towards the Jews. He wrote: ‘With reference to the previous monthly report, I emphasize that the issue of antisemitic moods among the Polish society is still present. While one cannot negate the fact of the existence of these moods, it should, however, be noted that the fault lies on both sides.’\[77\]

I will return to the topic of the mayor’s view on the behaviour of the Jews below; the key point here is that, according to him, an anti-Jewish mood was still prevalent in Polish society in August. At the same time, the Jews’ fear was deepened by the anti-Jewish attacks in Kraków. The mayor reported:

With reference to my previous report [July 1945], I stress that, under the influence of propaganda by anti-governmental and irresponsible parties, anti-Jewish feelings have increased in the last weeks in Polish society. Immediately after the distorted and, not rarely, intentionally and purposely prepared news of the Kraków events reached Częstochowa, there were even fears that anti-Jewish disturbances could actually occur in Częstochowa. In connection with that, I undertook the appropriate preventative measures and gave the appropriate orders to the organs of public safety. Currently, I am apt to infer that the danger of such riots has decreased.\[78\]

A description of the Częstochowa situation was included in the contents of a letter by a member of the Bund Central Committee, a Mr Brener, printed in the first issue of Glos Bundu on 1 August 1946:

The murder of Jews in various Polish cities and towns influences the psyche of the Jews among us and an exodus from Częstochowa has begun. The Jewish settlement has begun to shrink. The news of the Jewish pogrom in Kraków has been like a

\[75\] Ibid., page 29-30, report for the month of June 1945, edited 4 July 1945.
\[76\] Ibid., vol. 1327, pages 11–12, situational report of the wojewoda for the month of July 1945.
\[77\] Ibid., vol. 1337, pages 329–30, situational report by the starosta grodowy for the month of July 1945.
\[78\] Ibid., vol. 1338, page 23, situational report of the starosta for the month of August 1945, compiled at the beginning of September.
Desertion of Częstochowa has begun in larger groups. Even stronger reactions are evoked by incidents of Jewish murders in Częstochowa itself. Now a mass and chaotic exodus has begun. Institutions are shrinking, and stores and prosperous workshops are being liquidated. The number of Jews falls day by day. Near the end of 1945 there were still about 3,000 Jews. The emigration from Częstochowa ceased for a few months. But in the month of March 1946, the escape from Częstochowa began anew for the same reasons. The number of Jews fell to 1,200 persons.

The situation described in this fragment is partially confirmed by the mayor’s situational reports. According to him, the reason for the anti-Jewish mood in October 1945 was that Jews had not taken the post-war reality into account and thus interpreted the behaviour of the Polish population as a symptom of anti-Jewish attitudes. Hence the Polish and Jewish populations reacted differently to the removal of a Jewish factory owner whose actions, according to the mayor, were ‘characterized by a personal rapacity, harmful for the factory and its workers’. A further reason for anti-Jewish attitudes among the Polish population, he argued, was illegal rent increases by a Jewish landlord. The renters protested and, fearing a mortal attack, the landlord left the city. Additionally, the ‘murders in Częstochowa itself’—an attack on a Jewish factory owner, the murder of a Jewish family, and the attempted murder of a Jewish physician—had, according to the mayor, other causes.

These events, following on each other in rapid succession, led to a detailed analysis by the local authorities. The mayor informed the wojewoda of the conclusions in a separate letter dated 15 November 1945. In the case of the ousting of the factory owner, the mayor’s opinion was that ‘some representatives of Jewish society…put forward the view that certain elements within the Polish population are attempting to eliminate, via physical violence, more energetic Jewish individuals from trade and industry. I do not think that this assumption is correct.’ The mayor’s view of this matter, and his justification of the behaviour of the workers, has been presented above. The murder of the family could have involved gang motives, as the victims belonged to the criminal underworld. In the case of the doctor, the attack on his life could have been connected with the fact that he was the physician for the local holding cell and worked for the city’s UB; moreover, ‘during the occupation, his wife collaborated with the Gestapo and acted to the detriment of the Jews’. Summarizing the conclusions of the investigation, the mayor determined that ‘these attacks lack political motivation in the sense of physical acts against Jews. It could be that episodes of illegal trade and the associated squaring of accounts and claims played a role in both attacks, but I do not rule out the possibility that these instances would have had other outcomes if only Poles had been involved.’

According to the mayor, one of the causes of the anti-Jewish attitudes among the Polish inhabitants of Częstochowa was the behaviour of the Jewish population resulting from their lack of understanding; the Jews seemed not to acknowledge the changes that had taken place within society after World War II as a result of the German occupation. This aspect is mentioned repeatedly on the pages of the mayor’s situational reports as one symptom of Polish and Jewish behaviour in the city and is also analysed and discussed in other accounts from this period.

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79 As cited in Gross, 107.
81 Ibid., vol. 1283, pages 114–17.
The mayor raised this matter again in his report for the month of July 1945. He argues there that:

Polish society cannot understand the Jewish minority as the latter endeavours to increase its material wealth—and, at this level, most often does not take into account facts that have existed since 1939—and as this minority stresses that only it fell victim during the war years. Quite the contrary, and not rarely, the Jewish minority has no sense of the psychological transformations that the occupation years brought about in Polish society, or for the demands of the moment, which must be understood by the Jewish population in the following way: in free, democratic Poland no one has and cannot have the privilege of taking advantage of material resources without the responsibility of performing far-reaching services on behalf of the society and the State. After all, objectivity demands that we stress that both groups behave towards one another with restraint, that their mutual relationship is not appropriately positive, that the interests of the State require a fundamental analysis by the Jewish minority of their previous attitude towards Polish society on the level of material matters, and, finally, that influential elements in Polish society, along with the authorities, must counteract the antisemitic moods.82

This opinion was accepted by the provincial governor, who repeated it (citing the mayor of Częstochowa) in his report on the state of the województwo for the month of July 1945.83

The Kielce wojewoda, Eugeniusz Wiślicz-Iwańczyk, referred to the issue of the attitudes of the Jewish population in his memoirs (published a few years after the events described here), which dealt primarily with the genesis and course of the anti-Jewish Kielce events:

Blunders in the reckless behaviour of the Kielce Jewish Community, such as the glaring difference in their higher standard of living attained without productive labour while workers were literally starving, as well as the fact of a significant concentration of persons of Jewish descent in leading positions of the secret police and the party, were taken advantage of by the organizers of the reactionary underground.84

Instructors of the Central Committee of the Polish Workers’ Party also wrote about Jewish behaviour in a report of 18 July 1946 analyzing the Kielce events. They perceived that among the causes of the incident, apart from the significant participation of Jews in the government, was the fact that the majority of the Jews was not working, but was able to enjoy a high standard of living:

…it in Ostrowiec, too, a few hundred Jews are not working. It is primarily wealthy Jews and Polish reactionaries who bask at the majority of state-owned resorts… The dissatisfied masses feel mistreated, and would like to find a guilty party on whom to unload their outrage. All that has to happen is for reactionaries [here, the political opposition] to point out to the crowds certain inconsistencies—such as the life some Jews lead without working, or such as the misappropriations to be seen among PPR politicians or the national authorities—in order to turn the masses against the PPR and against the Government.85

83 Ibid., page 12.
84 E. Wiślicz-Iwańczyk, Wspomnienia, in Meducki (ed.) Antyżydowskie wydarzenia, 83.
This interpretation of Polish Jewish actions was also presented in the next report by the mayor of Częstochowa, for the month of August 1945. Referring to the attitudes of the Jews and the lack of interest on their part in participating in the creation of a new post-war reality, the mayor noted that no more than 40 percent of the roughly 3,600 Jews then living in Częstochowa were registered in accordance with the laws in force; of the existing factories, retail shops, and crafts workshops, only about 30 percent were registered; and of the 225 citizens who were evading taxes or voluntary contributions to the state or local authorities, 160 were Jews. The mayor concluded that: ‘These facts prove that a certain part of the Jewish minority has not positioned itself appropriately towards existing legal-economic relations.’

Similarly, in Radom and the Radom powiat, relations between the Polish and Jewish populations were problematic. During the conference of the Jewish committees on 14 May 1945, the Radom representative claimed that ‘the attitude of the Polish population towards the Jews is unfriendly and arouses fears’. These attitudes continued to be observed in the region in the following months. (Apart from Radom, Jews lived in the two largest towns in the powiat, Białobrzegi and Szydłowiec.)

In the report for the month of July 1945, the Radom starosta informed the provincial governor that ‘the Jews display a certain fear of the Polish population, hence they try to settle in groups. A large percentage is, however, leaving this area and traveling west; they direct themselves mostly toward towns lying near the Czechoslovak border’. The provincial governor passed this information on to the central administration in his situational report for the state of affairs in the województwo. The description of the situation by the starosta and the wojewoda was justified. In Radom, there were several attacks on the Jewish shelter at 52 Traugutt Street, as well as on particular individuals. During an attack on the Praca Jewish cooperative on 10 August, four people were killed. Several army companies were sent to the city as a result of these and other assaults. On 25 August, the Jewish Committee sent a letter to the militia’s commanding officer in which, in light of recent window-breaking and attacks on shelter inhabitants, it requested that the neighbourhood be patrolled, adding: ‘With regard to the security of our wards, we ask that you not refuse our request as it is a matter of life and death.’

In September, there was yet another armed assault at the shelter, as well as scattered attacks against individuals. Sensing that their lives were in danger, the residents of the shelter turned to the Jewish Committee on 15 February 1946, requesting issuance of ‘one machine gun and ten hand grenades’. A few days later, on 25 February, they turned to the committee of the local Milicja Obywatelska [citizen’s militia] with a similar request.

As I have mentioned, the threat was also palpable in other towns in Radom county. In a pamphlet dated 29 July 1945, an anti-government underground organization in Jedlińsk ordered the Jews to leave Radom and the powiat territory by 15 August 1945. It stressed that

88 Ibid., vol. 1337, page 95, report for the month of July 1945.
89 Ibid., page 11, situational report for the month of July 1945.
94 Ibid., 66. The Committee requested one carabine and one machine gun for the shelter, as well as ten grenades for the Committee offices at 45 Traugutt Street. Two days before this document was sent (22 February 1946), the Committee had, due to the attacks, turned to the militia ‘to assign a guard in front of the shelter in order to protect the residents of the shelter from attack’ (page 13).
‘overstepping this deadline or pleading for assistance from the current authorities [would] be punished absolutely’.\(^95\) The Provincial Jewish Committee informed the wojewoda of the existence of the pamphlet in a separate document.\(^96\) The murder of the Jews from Kozienice and the disappearance of the head of the Jewish Committee along with three others in the town of Zwolen intensified fears in the northern part of the province.\(^97\)

It is curious that during the May conference of Jewish Committees held in Kielce, there was no information about the circumstances of the Jewish population in that city. There is also no information about the situation of the Jews in that city in the situational reports here. Krzysztof Urbański, author of a monograph on the history of the Jews in Kielce has claimed that ‘an anti-Jewish attitude was not observed among the population’ at that time.\(^98\)

Perhaps the basis for this statement was that in Kielce, the provincial capital in which the army was stationed and the provincial headquarters of the UB and militia were located (as well as a militia school), anti-Jewish manifestations were not as apparent as in other localities until 4 July 1946. It is quite possible that the reason for the lack of such evident anti-Jewish behaviour here was the fact that some of the prominent offices were headed by Jews who did not disguise their background. They included key figures in the administration: the first secretary of the provincial committee for the Polish Workers’ Party, the director of the UB, the mayor of the city and the head of the Organizational Division (Wydział Organizacyjny) of the PPR. There were also Jews among the colleagues of the Kielce wojewoda, Eugeniusz Wiślicz-Iwańczyk.\(^99\)

This does not mean that the situation here was exceptional; from the accounts of Jewish inhabitants of Kielce we find that an atmosphere which produced anti-Jewish acts reigned here as well. Jechiel Alpert in a testimony given to Yad Vashem reported this in response to questions posed to him in 1967. His report is an interesting example of the views and attitudes of the Jewish population, as well as those of the local Bishop Kaczmarek and his views on shaping the attitudes of the Polish Catholic population. Alpert states that during Hanukkah in December 1945, a few grenades—which fortunately did not explode—were tossed into the buildings where the Jewish shelter and the Jewish Committee were situated. He lived in the building at 7 Planty Street, and later witnessed the pogrom that took place there on 4 July 1946. Before December 1945, he did not register any particular anti-Jewish mood. Until then he had met with such attitudes only outside of the town. After the grenade incident it was suggested to him that he approach the Kielce bishop, Czesław Kaczmarek. He went to the priest accompanied by the head of the Jewish religious congregation. He describes their conversation as follows:

\begin{quote}
We sat there for an hour. I told him that I had come to ask that he influence Polish society to understand that this small handful which has survived should not be persecuted further. He laughed and said, ‘It’s strange that you have come to me. You must read the press and know that we have no influence. How can I influence my souls when I have nothing to say in the matter.’… He said this with great irony. Then
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\(^95\) APK/UWK, vol. 1306, page 6. A reason for the distribution of the pamphlet was that ‘it has been concluded that Jews, on the whole, work in intelligence on behalf of the currently and brutally imposed government; therefore they act to the detriment of Polish Society.’

\(^96\) APK/UWK, vol. 1524, page 36. In this document, sent 31 July 1945 and requesting intervention, it was stressed ‘that similar posters have been put up all over the whole district’.

\(^97\) Ibid., page 35, 2 August 1945 letter of the Kielce wojewoda to the Provincial UB; page 37, protocol of the provincial Jewish committee to the Kielce provincial governor.

\(^98\) Urbański, 193.

\(^99\) Ibid., 191.
he said, ‘I will tell you, sir. I want to explain. I am from Kielce; I know who you are. You know, sir, that Jews are talented merchants, talented physicians, and talented attorneys. Poland is ruined and needs strength—Why don’t Jews take up what they are good at? Why do they take up politics? Can you imagine how it looks when some priest come to some ministry and there sits a Jewess, who is not even a Polish Jewess, but is a Jewess from God knows where—and she treats our clergy rudely? What sort of an impression does that make?’ The conversation lasted a long time; we spoke about all sorts of subjects.

*Question: Did the Bishop promise you help?*

Diplomatically. ‘I’ll try.’… But you could see that nothing would come of it and when I left I understood that this conversation would not bring any results, that he had very nicely gotten rid of me. I only wondered why he had seen me at all.’

The anti-Jewish mood and manifestations in the first half of 1945, which were often of a criminal nature and were noted by the heads of towns and counties as well as by the militia (and which the latter could not generally control), led the Kielce governor to send copies of ten protocols reporting particularly drastic anti-Jewish incidents within the province directly to the commanding officer of the provincial UB on 6 August 1945. These documents were subsequent to a document that had been sent on 3 August. In the document of 6 August, he assessed the actions of the administration in the area of protecting the Jewish population negatively:

…[T]error, thefts, and murders performed against the Jewish population are taking on frightening dimensions while the majority of the security forces are behaving ambivalently. I feel that this sort of attitude cannot be tolerated in a state in which the rule of law prevails. I ask for special attention to this matter and that it be reported to me whether and what orders have been issued to make arrests and prevent the above-mentioned crimes in the future, and to secure the life and property of citizens of Jewish nationality.101

Apparently he did not receive any reply to this document, because in a letter of 19 September 1945, he renewed his request that reports be sent informing him of the relations between the Polish and Jewish populations. He also asked to be informed above all of cases of terror against Jews, and of any special policies undertaken by the UB to prevent such occurrences.102

The reply to the wojewoda’s letter—regarding what was then one of the most important social issues and analysing the causes of anti-Jewish attitudes among Poles—was undoubtedly carefully considered by the UB. It was not until 9 October 1945 that Lieutenant Srokowski, head of the First Division of the provincial UB in Kielce, presented his point of view in this matter in a lengthy document:

In general, the attitude of society towards the Jewish population is characterized by a hostility that has its sources, in a sense, in Nazi propaganda as well as in actions during the occupation. The unfriendliness and negative attitude are seen in the complaints and in their stressing of the fact that Jews hold high positions in the administration and in the state. Rumours are widely spread among the Polish population about the Jews are availing themselves of purportedly huge subsidies from the national government. In addition, the fact that Jews are reclaiming their pre-

100 Yad Vashem Archives, Jerusalem, 03/2985.
101 APK/UWK, vol. 1524, page 39, copy of the documents to be sent.
102 Ibid., page 40.
war property arouses a certain hostility among the population. These facts are taken advantage of by reactionary elements who distribute propaganda among the Polish population aimed at creating a purely negative stance towards the Jewish population. These elements, and in particular those factions of illegal organizations that have not emerged from underground, do not limit themselves solely to propagating hatred and creating a state of enmity; they also perpetrate terrorist acts and murders on the Jewish population, hoping to force their ideas through in this way and aiming towards the formation of a national Poland. The provincial UB in Kielce, as well as the UB offices subject to it, in connection with the activities of insurgent elements that are striking at the security and lives of citizens of the Jewish nationality, have taken certain steps for the purpose of discovering the perpetrators of these crimes to this point and preventing this sort of incident in the future. As a result, a decrease to the minimum intensity has been observable lately in the campaign against the Jews; in the event, however, that this sort of offense does occur, the elements that have provoked it will meet with a previously organized counter-action.¹⁰³

Certainly the wojewoda was aware of the contents of this document and considered it crucial in the presentation of the situation in the Kielce region: a note appended to it stated that it should be included in the monthly situational report of the provincial governor and sent to the central authorities governing the nation.

It is clear that Jews living in western Europe as well as in the Middle East were aware of the situation in Poland and the attitude of the Polish population towards the Jews. News on this subject influenced their thinking about whether to return to Poland. Among other sources, the official Polish press—in the Kielce province as well—reported on the situation.¹⁰⁴ The subject was present for instance on the pages of Gazeta Polska: Dziennik informacyjny Polaków na Bliskim Wschodzie, which was ideologically linked with the London government-in-exile and which, in recording anti-Jewish incidents in Poland, sharply condemned them. Incidents in Kielce were among those mentioned.

On 5 November 1945, Gazeta Polska published an account of a protest meeting convened by Polish refugees and directed against anti-Jewish disturbances and attitudes in Poland. The report condemns those who organized and took part in ‘the pogroms against the remnants of Polish Jewry in Kraków, Tarnów, and Radom’; the author claimed that: ‘In Poland today there rules a tyranny imposed by Moscow which is responsible for the murder of Jews and Poles.’¹⁰⁵

The post-war fate of Polish Jews, including those from the Kielce region, was also of interest to Ignacy Schwarzbart, who was associated during the war with the emigré London government as a Jewish member of the National Council (Rada Narodowa), representing the Zionists. He held this function until 21 March 1945, when President Władysław Raczkiewicz dissolved the Council. Schwarzbart’s wartime ties with the emigre government, his Zionist convictions, his observations of the fate of Jews in Poland and actions directed against him personally, determined his opinion of the post-war political situation in Poland. On the basis of this appraisal, he decided not to return to his beloved Kraków.¹⁰⁶

Remaining in London

¹⁰³ Ibid., page 41.
¹⁰⁴ For example, Dziennik Kielecki (nr 41, 1945) wrote about anti-Jewish manifestations. The Polish press pointed, as a rule, to the National Armed Forces (Narodowe Siły Zbrojne) and ‘fascist elements’ in the Home Army (Armia Krajowa) as the perpetrators.
¹⁰⁵ Gazeta Polska. Dziennik informacyjny Polaków na Bliskim Wschodzie, nr 209 (1255), 3, 1945
¹⁰⁶ During the conference ‘Żydzi i judaizm we współczesnych badaniach’ (Jews and Judaism in Current Research), held in Kraków 24–6 November 1998 and organized by the Polish Association of Jewish Studies, I presented a paper
until mid-April 1946, he played a key role as a source of information about what was happening in Poland with Jews who had survived the Holocaust. His opinions undoubtedly influenced the thinking of Jews who were considering returning to Poland. Though it is true that Schwarzbart’s views and perceptions are not directly connected to the Kielce region, they do touch on numerous aspects of the issue of Polish-Jewish relations. They resulted from his conversations with people arriving in London from Poland and affiliated with various contemporary political trends, including representatives of Polish Jewish groups. The city of Radom appears prominently in his ample correspondence from this period.

This correspondence originated from a bureau organized by Schwarzbart which, aside from giving material aid to Jewish survivors remaining in the West, aimed at uniting families separated during the war and the occupation. One client was a pre-war resident of Radom. On 30 September 1945, in reply to her inquiry about the situation in her hometown, Schwarzbart wrote: ‘…it is not good in Radom. The majority of the handful of remaining Jews, as I have heard, has been forced to leave Radom.’ This is typical of his views; as a result of the Holocaust and post-war Polish antisemitism, some Jews did not then see a possibility for rebuilding their centre in Poland.

From the opinion of Częstochowa’s mayor cited above, it is apparent that the anti-Jewish events in Kraków caused a panic among the Jewish inhabitants of his city. Undoubtedly these incidents were known throughout the Kielce region, as well as in the rest of the nation, where they met with similar reactions. It is not surprising that they were the subject of Schwarzbart’s conversation with the ambassador of the Warsaw government in London, Henryk Strassburger. In the course of that exchange, which Schwarzbart described in his journal, he informed the ambassador that the Kraków events had echoed widely across the world, and, in addition, that they ‘had made, as a matter of course, very strong and unsavoury impressions on Jewish opinion and certainly, too, on general opinion.’ This was all very shocking because, he went on:

The current government…enjoys significant trust on the part of Jews. Among Jews at the border there is a conviction that this government is truly countering antisemitism—which, I must admit, is an absolutely inexplicable phenomenon. It was not that way for me and for us Jews before the war, but now it is a hundred times more horrible. I wish to stress, however, Mr. Ambassador, that despite this credit, or actually due to this credit, an uneasy thought is being stirred: how can these disturbances occur, why—as I have heard—does the police or militia come too late again? We know how to appraise the reaction of society, but these things must cease

entitled, ‘Powojenne stosunki polsko-żydowskie w opinii dra Izaaka Ignacego Schwarzbarta’ (Post-war Polish-Jewish Relations in the Opinion of Dr. Isaac Ignacy Schwarzbart). This research was based on the archives of Schwarzbart that are held in the Yad Vashem Archives in Jerusalem (see Fiszer, Archives of the office of Dr I. Schwarzbart).

107 Yad Vashem Archives, I. I. Schwarzbart Archives, nr M2/410, par 117–18. This was a reply to Eugenia Danziger’s letter.

108 In his diary, under 12 October 1945, he notes: ‘Jews are escaping from Poland’; on 18 September he writes: ‘Jews do not have any reason to return to Poland unless perhaps they feel themselves to be such Poles that they want to become antisemites’ (Ibid., Dz S, nr. M2/758, pages 73, 77).

109 Schwarzbart Archives, nr M2/758, page 50. A few days before his conversation with the ambassador, the first secretary of the embassy assured him that the embassy was aware ‘of the fact that the Kraków pogrom has made horrid impressions among Jewish public opinion and that energetic steps should be undertaken. An embassy report has already gone to the government in the country’ (Ibid., 47).
or at least be punished if the sympathy with the government has acquired in the eyes of the Jews is not to be squandered.\textsuperscript{110}

The issue of Polish-Jewish relations was also the constant theme of his meetings and conversations with prominent members of the government in Poland who happened to be in London. It was also the key aspect of his meetings with participants of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising: the Zionist Zivia Lubetkin, with whom he spoke on 4 November 1945, and Gustaf Alef (‘Bolek’), an officer in the Polish Army connected with the Jewish section of the Polish Workers’ Party, with whom he met on 14 December 1945. Schwarzbart noted that Alef was among ‘the quite influential persons in the system.’

Lubetkin informed him that the authorities in Poland were doing everything possible to fight antisemitism, adding that antisemitic manifestations were also of an anti-governmental nature. In that case, Schwarzbart asked, why did the government not use drastic means to combat it? Lubetkin’s reply was typical:

…the Jew, as a result of the contempt sown deeply on fertile soil, has become a lesser being in the eyes of this society. If the government were to try to hang a Pole for anti-Jewish pogroms, it would not remain in power for one hour. The crowds would say, ‘How can a Pole die for a Jew?’ It is impossible for the masses to even consider this after five years of Nazism, during which hundreds of thousands of Jews were killed with impunity. But the Government has undertaken other means, has developed numerous agencies, and even armed us.

Earlier, Schwarzbart had asked her whether there was a chance of building a life for Jews in Poland. ‘In her opinion,’ he writes, ‘there is no future for Jews in Poland. In response to my question as to whether the current forces and those which will come could spark the embryo of new life, she sadly replies that it probably could not. But it is not true that Jews are “as if” getting baptized. Very many, however, are keeping their Aryan surnames.’\textsuperscript{111}

In their conversation, Alef presented post-war antisemitism of a part of Polish society on the basis of the view of the Warsaw authorities. In Poland at the time, in his opinion, there was no question that antisemitism was present and that its intensity was now greater than it had been before the war. This was the result, he claimed, of Hitler’s ‘sowing’. It was above all caused by the economic situation: ‘Poles have divided Jewish property amongst themselves. The Jew is a pang of conscience for them.’ According to these conversations, the political emigration in London—by way of secret radio stations, emigrants returning from the West, and pamphlets—was supporting these attitudes. The initiator of this campaign was General Władysław Anders. Schwarzbart reports that he ‘asked Alef if he knew that Anders had, in an interview, had accused the NKVD of provoking anti-Jewish riots. Alef, as he states, had not heard of this interview.’ In response to a question regarding the future of the Jews in Poland, ‘Alef replied: Jews will remain in Poland, will continue to develop their culture.’ But, Schwarzbart notes, ‘I see that it is difficult for him to give a clear answer.’\textsuperscript{112}

In submitting their opinions on the genesis of anti-Jewish attitudes among a part of Polish society, Schwarzbart’s interlocutors pointed to the significance of Nazi propaganda during the German occupation. On 3 September 1945, Schwarzbart met with Antoni Serafinski, the former director of the Department of the Nation in the London government’s Ministry of Internal Affairs; the latter communicated to him the opinion of an official in Poland who was connected with Stanisław Mikołajczyk, the former prime minister of the

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 47.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 109.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 119–20.
government-in-exile. In Schwarzbart’s opinion, this official always masked his antisemitism with great difficulty. Serafiński prefaced his conclusions about the situation of the Jews in post-war Poland with the remark that antisemitism was rooted among Poles. Its causes, he believed, were the following:

1. The seeds of Nazism are sown very deep;
2. The cooperation of Jews with the government is 100 percent and without reservation while the overwhelming majority of the society looks down upon this;
3. Jews are returning to trade. Those who are touched by this competition are sowing antisemitism;
4. Jews are pushing their way into offices at the highest and provincial level. Poles look upon this unfavourably;
5. Jews are very numerous in the secret service, and that service is despised;
6. Jews are keeping Aryan surnames which hinders their recognition.

Summarizing his views, Serafiński claimed that ‘Jews are to blame for the fact that there is antisemitism in today’s Poland.’ Schwarzbart felt that any polemics in this case would be futile. From his notes one gathers that this belief also emerged from his conversations with others associated with the London government-in-exile who had returned to Poland.\(^{113}\)

In the archival documents presented here, one can easily find reasons given for the hostile attitude towards the Jewish population among various groups and classes of Polish society. Furthermore, one can perceive similar attitudes among representatives of the governmental bureaus responsible for safety and security and the fulfillment of material needs. The social spectrum of persons holding these views appears to be rather broad. It was not limited solely to the armed, anti-regime opposition functioning on Polish land, whose anti-Jewish stance was tied to Jewish cooperation with the state agencies of power. This opposition also acted against Poles who actively took part in those agencies. It is, nevertheless, surprising that anti-Jewish moods, despite the effects of the war, were so common among the Polish populace in this region. Such attitudes were to be found in most of the occupational groups living in this area. This is clear from the analysis of officials at various levels in the Polish Workers’ Party of society’s attitude towards the anti-Jewish events in Kielce on 4 July 1946. Antisemitism was so common among the different social and occupational classes that one could assume that the authorities responsible for guaranteeing peace and safety were not capable of fulfilling their primary task.

In their analysis of the Kielce incident, Hilary Chełchowski and Władysław Buczyński officials of the Central Committee of the Polish Workers’ Party concluded on 6 July 1946 that, generally, ‘the Kielce area is strongly antisemitic.’\(^{114}\) In assigning blame for this situation—aside from organizational shortcomings in the functioning of the UB—they spoke of potent antisemitism among the functionaries of the civil militia and of an anti-governmental element among them. Moreover, in the Polish army, ‘antisemitism, which is also not lacking among the soldiers, has appeared among officers.’\(^{115}\) It was thus present among all of the uniformed armed services responsible for maintaining law and order.

\(^{113}\) Ibid., 106. For instance, several of the above views were noted by Schwarzbart during conversations on 18 September 1945 with a person described only as ‘Mr. XY’. He was a left-leaning, high official (in Sikorski’s, Mikończyc’s, and Arciszewski’s governments) who had gone to Poland and returned (See Ibid., pages 60–1).

\(^{114}\) Meducki (ed.), \textit{Antyżydowskie wydarzenia}, ii, 98–100. This source is held in the Archiwum Akt Nowych among documents on the Polish Workers’ Party.

\(^{115}\) Ibid.
Similar opinions can be found in the report 18 July 1946 of the instructors of the Central Committee who had been in the Kielce province from 4–15 July. This report evaluated the behaviour of the militia and army similarly. Describing the social depth of the anti-Jewish bias, the instructors stated that ‘the mood among the masses is rather negative. Antisemitism of a greater intensity manifests itself in the rather numerous group of the petty bourgeoisie: shopkeepers, craftsmen, landlords, and small traders.’ They added that among those contributing to this atmosphere were railway workers, who played a significant role in the creation of public opinion at a time when sources of mass information outside the control of the authorities were limited. According to the report:

Railway workers see transports of Jews from the East [i.e., from the Soviet Union]. The dissatisfaction with their material circumstances, the long wait for the return of their loved ones by many families in Poland—all this causes bitterness. And instead of their loved ones—Jews are returning. These Jews, isolating themselves from the Polish society, are often a reactionary factor. The unaware Polish population does not fully appreciate the contributions made to social life by a whole mass of worthy Jews. The railway workers, hence, have spread antisemitic slogans across the whole province.

In the opinion of these instructors, the Roman Catholic clergy were also propagators of anti-Jewish attitudes. They perceived such behaviour in the conduct of the local youth as well.

It is unexceptional that the Central Committee instructors also found anti-Jewish attitudes among the members of the working class, who comprised the fundamental support for the ruling regime. They gathered that ‘hostile propaganda is easy to foment among workers; it is easy to arouse hatred toward the Jews, and, at the same time, toward the parties co-ruling the state.’ It was a bit of a surprise for the PPR’s Central Committee instructors then staying in the Kielce województwo that antisemitic attitudes were also present among the rank-and-file members of their party: ‘Antisemitism has penetrated to the party members, to the lower structures, and even the middle ones. These active members of the party have also met with various irregularities among the security services and the party ranks.’ Earlier in the text of the report they note that this was a common phenomenon. One of the causes for this attitude was the opinion that abuses by Jews were tolerated by the authorities:

This aroused even greater intensification of antisemitism in the Party ranks. Considering the intensification of antisemitic moods, Jewish infractions catch the eye of our unhardened party members more easily than others. Furthermore, there are ambitions of making a party career. Jews in the Party comprise a form of competition for the party membership. This is the basis of antisemitism in the party ranks.

Most shocking for the authors of this report were anti-Jewish demonstrations at rallies of party activists who had already completed provincial and central party schooling:

The following examples serve as proof of antisemitism in the party ranks. At a rally in Ostrowiec, comrade Józef Kasior (PPR) delivered a speech against Jews: ‘What is this? Here we work like slaves and the Jews in Ostrowiec are living snug as a bug, buying butter and chickens! Where were they while we were fighting as partisans?’ The speaker was a comrade who had gone through the provincial and central party schools.

The reasons for these attitudes were explained by the Kielce wojewoda, Eugeniusz Wiślicki-Iwańczyk, as follows:

116 Ibid., 137–43.
117 Ibid., 139–40.
...our party organizations only began to crawl right after liberation. They were few and ideologically very weak, easily falling prey to the moods of their surroundings. These moods were aggravated by the outrightly hostile attitude of a part of the society towards the people’s regime. It should be remembered that this was a period of particularly escalating activity by gangs and of the entire bloc acting against the people’s republic as well.\textsuperscript{118}

To the authorities’ surprise, differentiated attitudes were found among specific social and professional groups during the so-called ‘rally campaign’ that was conducted by urban and county Departments of Information and Propaganda in July 1946. The purpose of these mass meetings was to explain and popularize the official point of view on Kielce, as well as to persuade everyone present to support a resolution condemning the perpetrators and participants in the events. The directors and instructors of the branches of this government institution noted the reactions of the Polish public in various locations across the province. Rallies were held primarily in closed workplaces and in offices; where there were no factories, they resembled public performances. For the most part, it is the reactions of the officials rather than the workers, that are described in these reports.\textsuperscript{119}

Particular attention should be paid to the conduct of the populace during rallies and meetings in Radom and Skarżysko Kamienna. Both were important cities and large industrial centres in the Kielce region. In these towns, representatives of all major groups in Polish society were in attendance at the rallies.

In Radom, over twenty mass gatherings, including one public rally, were organized in workplaces by the city’s Department of Information and Propaganda in July 1946 with the help of the Workers’ Party. Despite the great organizational and propaganda efforts expended, these were considered unsuccessful. The opposition was supported in this city by university students who were studying in Warsaw. The armed underground was also more active here. The report on the rallies stated that ‘very strong anti-Jewish moods have appeared this month, especially among the intelligentsia’. It was also noted that numerous social groups approved of the Kielce pogrom. The acceptance of the Kielce accusation of ritual murder ‘prevailed not only among the non-party affiliated; even some of the members of the labour parties succumbed to the mass psychosis. Nevertheless, there was no threat of any riots on this basis.’\textsuperscript{120}

On 18 July 1946, during their stay in Radom, the PPR’s Central Committee instructors wrote about attitudes among people there. They noted that a resolution condemning the ‘Kielce crime’ was opposed during meetings by the workers of the Radom brewery, members and employees of one of the cooperatives, and employees of the State Forestry Administration (Dyrekcja Lasów Państwowych) and by the railway workers.

From 8 to 22 July 1946, rallies and assemblies took place in the city of Skarżysko-Kamienna and in neighbouring towns. Here they were held in industrial factories, where workers dominated among those in attendance, and in government offices, with public servants making up most of the audience. The prevailing subjects of the meetings were ‘the Jewish Pogrom in Kielce— a reactionary provocation’, ‘Antisemitism—a provocation of Polish reaction’, and ‘Current problems: The Jewish Issue in Poland, the Eastern Borders, the Pogrom in Kielce’. Traditionally, a meeting ended with a proposed resolution that was consistent with its theme. It was typical—as noted in reports—for the mood at these

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 82–3.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 144–54.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 151–2.
meetings to be stormy. The anticipated resolution was defeated during the rally held in the largest industrial workplace in town, the Kamienna factory, as well as in the mechanical department of the Polish State Railways (Polskie Koleje Państwowe). On the other hand, the mood of the rallies was positive and the resolution passed (as the authorities had expected) in two private factories, at the offices of the Polish Socialist Party (Polska Partia Socjalistyczna), at a meeting of employees of the town hall, the Social Welfare department, and the Court, as well as at two rallies held for the general public. Meetings at the local ammunition factory—a workplace under close watch—went as the government had planned but no acceptance or defeat of the concluding resolution is noted in reports. A good mood prevailed in towns neighbouring Skarżysko, but the subject of the rallies was different there.  

The question of the genesis of the anti-Jewish attitudes among the numerous social and professional groups of Polish society at that time is unavoidable. Workers, the intelligentsia, public servants, members of labour parties, the militia and the armed forces have all been discussed here. Among the many reasons mentioned thus far, the most significant is the effect of the calculated wartime anti-Jewish propaganda of the Germans. In their appraisals of social behaviour administrative clerks and party officials refer to this aspect as a stimulus to attitudes; Ignacy Schwarzbart refers to it as well. These attitudes were also evoked by the repercussions of the wartime extermination of the Jewish population and its elimination from economic and social life. In the post-war situation, the Polish petty bourgeoisie took over the economic functions of the Jews, often taking Jewish property and real estate as well. When the first Jewish property owners reappeared, planning to recover their possessions, this segment of the population felt threatened by them.

One rumour that was believed without a doubt—under circumstances in which the state monopolized all information—played an exceptional role in intensifying anti-Jewish attitudes. During their stay in Kielce from 4 to 15 July 1945, the instructors of the Central Committee of the PPR concluded that ‘an antagonistically whispered propaganda points to a “favouritism” towards Jews’.  

In Kielce and in the Kielce powiat, a rumour was spread in July 1946 according to which Poles in the western lands were being displaced from towns, homes, workplaces, and farms in order to make room for Jews arriving from the Soviet Union. The head of the powiat Department of Information and Propaganda further stated that:

“Today there is a rumour circulating in town that a few thousand Jews from the USSR are soon coming to Jędrzejów. Bitterness, turmoil, agitation, and flammability. Counteraction necessary via the press, radio, etc. The radio, instead of playing mazurkas, would do better to correct this opinion. Five hundred radios in the city are of some significance as long as the radio would instruct and straighten out society’s opinion.”

Employees of the county propaganda departments in Sandomierz and Pińczów also spoke of the significant role of anti-Jewish whispering campaigns.

Among other reasons for anti-Jewish attitudes, attention was also directed to the behaviour of some groups of Jews that was negatively perceived by certain groups within the Polish population; these groups then generalized this opinion to the whole Jewish population. It was widely argued the reason for such behaviour on the part of some Jews, as was asserted

121 Ibid., 152–4.
122 Ibid., 138.
123 Ibid., 146.
124 Ibid., 144, 147–8.
by the mayor of Częstochowa and the Kielce wojewoda (see above), was that they did not take account of the post-war reality and the changes taking place. The reason for the anti-Jewish attitudes among workers, including members of the Polish Workers' Party, was the belief that Jews found themselves in better material circumstances than the general Polish population, despite the consequences of the war, and despite the fact that they did not work.

It was this that led to the great importance attached in Jewish organizations to guaranteeing Jews their own sources of livelihood. During the 14 May 1945 conference of Jewish committees, the Secretary of the Central Committee of Polish Jews, Paweł Zelicki, stated that ‘healthy people should get to work without exception. The productivization fund permits craftsmen to reorganize their workshops and professionals to undertake work.’

According to Alef, both the Central Committee of Polish Jews and the PPR had plans for the post-war rebuilding of Jewish centres.

The Polish population’s beliefs about the better material circumstances of the Jewish population should be examined in the light of certain sources indicating that the Jews were in fact impoverished. On 24 August 1945, the Jewish committee in Radom sent the following telegram: ‘Regional Jewish Committee of Kielce. We are without any money. We will have to close the kitchen and cease aid to children.’ On 12 March 1945, twelve Jews who arrived at their pre-war homes in Jedlińsk informed the Central Committee of Polish Jews that:

…[W]e are in a very critical situation; we are all nearly naked and barefoot and do not have any possibility of equipping ourselves with anything. The conditions of our subsistence are all the worse as we have no funds from the local Community [here, the official administration] since frontline areas have been utterly destroyed and so it cannot come to our aid.

The minutes of the first organizational meeting of the Jewish committee in Szydłowiec on 24 February 1945, contain the observation that:

Jews have come to Szydłowiec from labour camps, some from the woods; they are in very pitiful condition. There is a lack of clothing—shoes especially. They also suffer from a lack of underclothing and linens. Most important is a lack of machinery and tools for productive work and, until they receive such, all of them remain a burden on the committee.

At the time, 106 Jews were residing in that town. Over a year after the war had ended, the Radom committee was providing additional support for Radom Jews who were then living in Łódź. On 20 November 1946, these Jews wrote to the committee: ‘…so little has been sent to share when there is such a large number of those needing faster and greater assistance. The majority of us in Łódź are factory workers who are in difficult circumstances and cannot even dream of buying clothing and shoes.’

The relations between the Polish and Jewish populations are presented here in light of the opinions of representatives of the local administrative authorities at that time. That administration was dominated by delegates of left-wing political parties, which were then seeking the support of Polish society (a good part of which was treating that administration negatively—occasionally extremely so). The establishment and bolstering of that new administration took place at a time when society as a whole was impoverished and among people who were starving and nearly destitute, inhabiting a terrain devastated by half a decade of German occupation and warfare. The opinions compiled here—gleaned from one main source of information—should be supplemented by sources reflecting the views of

126 Penkalla, ‘Stosunki polsko-żydowskie’, 58.
other authorities operating within the Kielce region. These would include the Roman Catholic church, the underground administration connected with the London government-in-exile, and the UB. Research on their role and their activities would facilitate a deeper understanding of the place of the Jews in the reality of post-war Poland.

In the official nomenclature, the Jewish inhabitants of the Kielce region were not Poles. Widely perceived as persons of the Mosaic faith, they were described in the situational reports as a small (as a consequence of the war and the Holocaust) national minority living among the Poles of Roman Catholic faith who dominated in this area. The repercussions of pre-war anti-Jewish propaganda and, above all, of Nazi propaganda, led a significant part of Polish society to treat Jews generally as a national minority that was foreign and undesirable and whose arrival, after several years of absence, was—for some persons and for various reasons—the cause of anxiety in post-war life. Only a small fragment of that society discerned the Jewish wartime tragedy. This situation gave rise to practices and activities supporting behaviour hostile to Jews. This behaviour was observed in broad circles of the population and in various agencies of the authorities—including those responsible for maintaining safety and peace in society.

As a consequence of the war and the Holocaust, Jews had become homeless to a significant degree and their families had been destroyed. These turned out to be factors that fostered their social and political integration. Some Jews actively engaged in the realization of the social and political changes of the new authorities, whose program opposed antisemitism, proclaimed democracy and the equality of citizens, and provided Jews with a chance for a normal life; in addition, the new authorities held out the possibility of participation in the government.

Yet, this very possibility came up against the deep-rooted hostility to the presence of Jews in the administration on the part of a significant portion of Polish society. In fact, the most radical, anti-regime groups of the Polish population perceived Jewish participation in the new government as treason. The authorities in the Kielce region were aware of this, and yet the possibilities they provided, as well as the attitudes they displayed, did not provide the Jews with any special guarantees of safety. This lack of security is one of the reasons why a large number of Jews left this area in such a short amount of time, even before the Kielce pogrom. According to some sources, another cause of the anti-Jewish attitudes among a part of Polish society was that some Jews took on an attitude of entitlement. These Jews did not allegedly engage in the existing reality; neither did they accept the social changes taking place. These views should probably be seen as the result of the persistence of the persistence of antisemitic stereotypes even among those who made up a significant part of the bureaucracy of the new regime and as a further obstacle to Jewish integration.

Undoubtedly, these aspects of Polish-Jewish relations must be seen as part of the causes of the Kielce pogrom on 4 July 1946. After that tragic event, Jews constituted only a numerically negligible national and religious minority—not only in the Kielce region, but in all of Poland. In 1946 only those would remain who had been pre-war advocates of left-wing movements and those who had undergone complete assimilation and considered themselves, above all, Poles.

Translated from Polish by Annamaria Orla-Bukowska