The Recovered Territories (Ziemie Odzyskane) were the provinces along the new western, southern, and northern borders of postwar Poland: southern East Prussia, Pomerania with Danzig/Gdańsk, parts of East Brandenburg, Lower Silesia with Breslau/Wrocław, and parts of Upper Silesia. The name “Recovered Territories” was coined by the Communist government in a remarkably successful propaganda campaign in the first years after the war. The campaign claimed that these territories were part of the original Polish motherland (maćierz), which had been forcefully Germanized and was now finally returned to the rightful Polish owners. Historically, most of these lands belonged briefly to the medieval Polish Crown, but for centuries they were under the shifting jurisdictions of the Holy Roman Empire, the Prussian Kingdom, the German Empire, and the Third Reich. At the Tehran Conference at the end of 1943, Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin agreed upon the allocation of the territories to Poland that was later confirmed in Potsdam in August 1945.

This redrawing of borders, or “westward shift,” had wide-ranging political, economic, social, demographic, and cultural consequences. What follows is a brief exploration of one facet of this dramatic rupture: its effect on Jewish survivors in the Recovered Territories in the first years after the war. This chapter explores how the
Polish state treated German Jews (prewar German citizens) versus Polish Jews (prewar Polish citizens) in the region. It demonstrates that while the Polish central government bestowed (conditionally) equal rights and special protections on Jewish survivors as special victims of Nazism, only Polish Jews reaped the benefits of this rule, becoming active participants in the government’s politics in the region. Local German Jews, who held prewar German citizenship, faced considerable difficulty in obtaining these protections and suffered discrimination from the local administration and the population at large. Thus the chapter shows that anti-Germanism, more than antisemitism, played a decisive role in affecting Jewish lives in the region in the aftermath of World War II. Although eventually the majority of both German and Polish Jews left the Territories and the country, the German Jewish “exodus” happened earlier and for reasons different than those affecting Polish Jews, who were able to briefly reconstitute a thriving Jewish communal life.

The Jewish history of the Recovered Territories builds on and contributes to the larger historiography on Jewish survivors in postwar Poland. In the last thirty years, the field has bourgeoned, covering a broad spectrum of topics from anti-Jewish violence; to the social, political, and cultural lives of survivors; to their emigration to the displaced person (DP) camps, Palestine, and the United States. Anti-Jewish violence, in particular, attracted the best pens in the field, including Jan T. Gross’s influential Fear: Antisemitism in Poland after Auschwitz, which introduced the Kielce pogrom of July 1946 to the broader English-language public. More recent work in historical anthropology by Joanna Tokarska-Bakir broke new ground in our understanding of the pogrom and contributed to the general (re)turn to violence in Jewish studies more broadly (including in this volume).

Yet current historiography had to go beyond violence to nuance our knowledge of survivors’ lives in postwar Poland. Karen Auerbach, Audrey Kichelewski, Łukasz Krzyżanowski, Monika Rice, and myself, among others, did precisely that. As I have written elsewhere, a sole focus on violence and emigration reduces the diversity and multiplicity of Jewish experiences in postwar Poland to one aspect, antisemitism. It thus simplifies and homogenizes postwar history, reducing it to a meta-tragedy: a uniformly gloomy picture that silences all experiences that do not conform. Such a focus also disregards any identity other than a victim, an emigrant, or a perpetrator. In other words, it obscures the multiple ways in which Jews and non-Jews encountered each other in postwar Poland. Regional or local histories are especially useful in complicating such meta-narratives, and the Recovered Territories is a good case in point. It illuminates the brief opportunity for the rebuilding of (Polish) Jewish life in the region (unlike elsewhere in Poland) and the continuing terror against (German) Jews, inflicted by local administration and neighbors, often in defiance of the central government.
In the immediate postwar period, successive Polish governments subjected the Recovered Territories to an intense and effective campaign of ethnic engineering—including expulsions, expropriations, repopulation, and repolonization—showing the power of the state apparatus to make and remake a place. The simultaneous loss of the most ethnically diverse eastern territories to the Soviet Union led to the emergence of an anomaly in the long history of the country: a nationally homogenous Polish state. Although Roman Dmowski and his nationalist movement Endecja or National Democrats had called for a “Poland for Poles” since the 1890s, and the prewar Polish government had discriminated against ethnic minorities, actual national homogeneity was never a realistic option. The sheer demographics of prewar Poland made homogeneity a utopian project. Only the massive catastrophe of World War II, the Holocaust, and the subsequent postwar reshuffling of borders, with mass population transfers, could turn Poland into Dmowski’s dream.

After the war, the drive toward the creation of homogenous nation-states through population transfers was not unique to Poland. It reflected a general political trend in Eastern Europe that dated back to the aftermath of World War I: the belief that population transfers were “the only means of ending the ethnic violence that plagued Eastern Europe, and . . . the only path to a stable postwar peace.” Having said that, Polish communists also had national considerations. Krystyna Kersten argued that Polish communism evolved over time toward prioritizing the concept of nation over class, which contributed to the predominance of the dogma of Polish national homogeneity (państwo jednonarodowe) after the war. Moreover, as Marcin Zaremba demonstrated, nationalism (nacjonalizm), with its powerful symbols and rhetoric, was “one of the more important ways (formuły) to legitimize the communist system of power” in the 1940s–80s.

Rampant anti-German sentiment helped to solidify this newly found solidarity. In his study of Polish attitudes to Germans in 1945–48, Edmund Dmitrów wrote that there was “an exceptional convergence and uniformity of views on the German question in Polish political thought of various shades as well as in official propaganda; this uniformity was even more exceptional under circumstances of fierce political struggle and conflict between views of the ruling and the ruled on other national problems.” Calls for justice and revenge dominated private and public discourse. The harassment of Germans had both the political and social stamp of approval, so much so that when
a Jewish woman, Hanna Zajtman, was beaten during the Kraków pogrom in August 1945, she wondered, “Why were they beating me? I’m not a German.”

In consequence, millions of Germans in the annexed territories were exposed to vengeance, discrimination, and persecution after the war. However, it should be noted that for many of them, the terror was not new. The fate of Breslau/Wrocław was particularly revealing. Although non-Jewish Breslauers experienced “an odd kind of vitality” in the wartime economy, as Thum showed, their fate changed in fall 1944, when Hitler declared the city a fortress. By the time the fortress capitulated on 6 May 1945, the city lay in ruins, 80,000 residents had been killed, and hundreds of thousands were forced to leave their homes. In this, they were not exceptional. In the final months and weeks of the war, almost seven million Germans, fearing the Soviet Army and reprisals by the local population, fled the territories of western and northern Poland. Between 600,000 and 1.2 million lost their lives.

The flight and expulsions continued after the war. In June 1945, the Polish Army ruthlessly expelled approximately 400,000 ethnic Germans from the Polish-German borderlands. In the final months of 1945, another half a million Germans left these territories, in what Hugo Service called, “voluntary” migrations “encouraged” by local pressure to leave. The organized mass transfer of the remaining Germans began in February 1946 and lasted until November 1947. Between February and June 1946, more than 700,000 Germans were forced out of Polish territories (200,000 people in June 1946 alone). In the second half of 1946, another 700,000 Germans were expelled. Joseph B. Schechtman estimated that a total of 1.6 million Germans were forced out of Poland in 1946 alone. In 1947, 500,000 Germans were forced to leave.

The expulsions and the parallel de-Germanization of the public and private spaces of the Recovered Territories, including the demolition of German monuments and any traces of the German past, were accompanied by a mass “repolonization.” The repolonization required populating the region with “true Poles” to reclaim the land and its “Polish essence,” and to restore “its roots, and its soil.” The government brought in about 2.5 million “resettlers” (przesiedleńcy) from central Poland and 1.3 million “repatriates” (repatrianci) from prewar eastern Polish territories, now annexed by the Soviet Union. Polish Jews were among them. As Józef Adelson found, the Polish government sent about 12.4 trains with Jewish repatriates to forty-two cities (Wrocław, Dzierżoniów, Wałbrzych, Legnica, and others) in the region. More than 80,000 of approximately 136,000 Polish Jews, repatriated from the Soviet Union between February and July 1946, were now brought to Lower Silesia alone, not to mention almost 20,000 Jews sent to western Pomerania, mainly Szczecin (former Stettin). In the beginning of the summer of 1946, there were approximately 90,000 Jews in the area. And although this number decreased precipitously to 50,000–60,000 with the mass emigration after the
Kielce pogrom in July 1946, Lower Silesia remained the largest center of Jewish life in Poland until the mid-1950s.  

This aggregation of Jewish population must be understood in the context of policies toward Jews in postwar Poland in general, and in the Recovered Territories in particular. In the July 1944 Manifesto, the Polish Committee of National Liberation pointed to Jews as a group of particular interest: “The Jews, whom the occupant so bestially annihilated, will now be assured of rebuilding their existence and equality of rights de jure and de facto.” References to death camps and ghettos signaled governmental recognition of the particularity of Jewish victimhood. In January 1945, Prime Minister Edward Osóbka-Morawski proclaimed, “The Jewish population who remain alive will be able to take full advantage of not only de jure but also de facto legal equality.” Thus the central government situated itself as a protector of Jewish survivors and the guarantor of their rights. Although the postwar Polish governments had a fluctuating and ambivalent, if not contradictory, political stance on the national autonomy of Jewish survivors in Poland, they encouraged and supported Jewish national and cultural institutions as long as they served their political aims. The reciprocity was thus expected. As Alina Cała and Halina Datner-Śpiewak argued, the Communist Party of Poland “considered the fight [against antisemitism] to be a significant tactic against [rightist] opponents after the war and counted on the Jewish population for widespread support for political transformations. Communists supported [Jewish] initiatives of self-governance and used the reconstruction of Jewish life as fodder for propaganda, particularly outside of Poland.”

The support of the Jewish community was especially useful in the Recovered Territories, where the government employed Polish Jews in its project of Polish nation-building or repolonization of the region. In Kamil Kijek’s words, “Jewish victimhood from the hands of the Nazis was used by the authorities to legitimize the Polish presence and permanent acquisition of Lower Silesia.” In June 1945, the government declared that Jews in Lower Silesia should be given extensive aid, considering “that, after the martyrdom of German concentration camps, they will be a loyal guard over Polishness in the Recovered Territories.” The Jewish leadership accepted their new role. As the Central Committee of Jews in Poland proclaimed: “Lower Silesia became their fatherland. . . . With Germany’s downfall . . . Jews took guard [objęli straż] of factories and workshops, declaring their Polishness loudly and proudly. They paid dearly with their blood and sweat for the right of citizenship in Lower Silesia.” To build a national, social, and cultural life in the region, they had no choice but to oblige. They also recognized that the government’s invitation meant the inclusion of Jews in the Polish national project, an inclusion that was unseen in the interwar period. However, as Kijek argued, the Jewish participation in the communist nation-building project came with a price tag:
At the beginning, Jews were exceptional as the only ethnic group which was provided with a degree of self-government, and the opportunity to rebuild their connections with Jewish centers outside of Poland. But this was done with many caveats, and one, paradoxically, was participation in the nationalist policies of ethnic homogenization performed by the Polish State in Lower Silesia. The consequence of this paradox was that by fulfilling this condition by supporting the state propaganda and rhetoric of polonizing the “Western Territories,” the Jews were losing their own political subjectivity. They were also losing the capacity to speak their own language and, with that, the ability to express and manifest their Jewish presence in Lower Silesia. Jews who came to the conclusion that they had no other alternative in Poland were thus forced to support the state. . . . And, paradoxically, participation in this policy subverted Jewish autonomy of Lower Silesia and was decisive in spelling the end of Jewish social, cultural, and political pluralism. 39

Still, in the first postwar years Polish Jews could create vibrant national and cultural centers of Jewish life in the region. 40 Although in 1945 and 1946 Lower Silesia was as dangerous (high rates of robbery, murder, and rape) for Jews as any other part of Poland, it became a unique milieu for the “revival” of Polish Jewish life from as early as the summer of 1945. 41 In 1947 leaders of the Lower Silesian Jewry spoke openly about their enthusiasm for the local conditions. Dr. Shalom Treisterman (Trojstman), the chief rabbi of Wroclaw, felt that the conditions in 1947 were “much better,” and he believed that seventy-five thousand, or 75 percent, of all Jews in Poland would remain there. 42 Indeed, although antisemitism by no means disappeared, it was not a major problem in Lower Silesia after 1946. The laws against antisemitism, and the population’s rising fear of the governmental penal system, played a role in improving Jews’ safety. Even more significant were the specific conditions in the region. Although newcomers from central and eastern Poland brought their anti-Jewish prejudices with them, they also faced new conditions that generated new priorities and new preoccupations. They were all uprooted “resettlers” and “polonizers”; they all started anew. 43 They also had a common German “enemy” around whom the main conflicts in the annexed territories revolved, including tensions around “formerly German” (poniemieckie) property with a myriad of goods, houses, businesses, and pieces of land up for grabs. 44 “Formerly Jewish” (pożydowskie) property was much less of a concern here than in central or eastern Poland, where wartime robbery and postwar restitution of Jewish property became the major source of anti-Jewish hostility and violence. 45 Germanness was thus the most significant irritant in the region, which can explain the contrasting treatments that Polish and German Jews received there. While Polish Jews had governmental support for their rebuilding efforts, the small community of German Jews did not enjoy similar backing. Although their numbers were small, the
tensions around their legal status, and the discrimination they suffered, can provide an important insight into the Jewish (and national) politics in the region. As Kijek pointed out, the language of “rhetorical collectivism” or “public speaking in strict and clearly defined categories of large social and national groups, with extensive use of stereotypes and aggressive images . . .” was used against the German population in the Regained Territories, and justified not only their Polish resettlement, but for a time, also the reconstruction of Polish Jewish national life in a new place, in Lower Silesia.”

Unlike Polish Jews, German Jews were on the receiving end of that rhetoric, used by the Polish administration, the population at large, and Polish Jewish institutions. As Katharina Friedla showed, although initially Polish Jews extended a helping hand to German Jews, eventually the two communities found themselves at odds with each other in the region.

Estimates of the number of German Jews who lived in Poland during the first two years after the war are imprecise. Szyja Bronsztejn wrote of 135 “indigenous Jews” (autochtoni-Żydzi) living in Lower Silesia immediately after the liberation of 1945. Friedla estimated that a year later, in February 1946, 1,600 German Jews (including spouses and children from mixed marriages) lived in Wrocław alone. It must have been a younger population, since Ewa Waszkiewicz found records of only twenty-seven German Jewish funerals in the city between 1945 and 1946. In the summer of 1947, there were only 30 German Jews left in Wrocław. They were the tiny remnant of a thriving Breslau Jewish community of more than 20,000 in the 1920s, devastated by expropriations, expulsions, and then deportations to concentration and death camps in World War II. Their persecution, alas, did not cease with the end of the war.

Anti-German discrimination and harassment from Soviet soldiers, local administration, and the population at large affected German Jews immediately after the war. In her analysis of the German Jewish community in postwar Wrocław, Friedla succinctly described their experience:

Their situation was particularly difficult because, on the one hand, they did belong to the world of German culture but, on the other, they had been victimized by the National Socialist racial policies. For both the Soviet soldiers and the freshly established Polish civil administration, the Jewish survivors of Wrocław were problematic. The Red Army soldiers were seen as liberators, but simultaneously they elicited fear and terror. For most survivors the encounters with Soviet soldiers were traumatic. Robberies, violence, humiliations, and rapes became daily occurrences. Age, sex, religious affiliation, or nationality made no difference. German Jews were usually treated like the other German inhabitants of Wrocław, and were seen as belonging to the nation of the persecutors—after all they did speak only German.
Despite the problems they faced, German Jews in Wroclaw created their own community and tried to reconstitute their institutional life there, often competing with Polish Jews. As Friedla summed up: “Deep differences between the eastern and western European Jewish worlds were not bridged. Diverse ways of thinking, different cultural values, and social status proved too significant to be overcome. For this reason, the traumatic experience of the Holocaust, although common, did not help to establish bonds based on solidarity.”

In July 1945, the Ministry of Public Administration regulated the status of German Jews, promising to enforce “legal equality in every sphere and in every respect [w każdej dziedzinie i pod każdym względem] between German Jews and Polish Jews.” The ministry extended the eligibility for certificates/passes of Polish nationality (zaświadczenia polskiej przynależności narodowej) to former citizens of Germany and the Third Reich who, “on 31 August 1939, resided in the territories recovered by Poland in 1945 and maintained Polish nationality; who were not members of the NSDAP . . .; and who would sign a statement of loyalty to the Polish nation [złożą pisemną deklarację wierności narodowi polskiemu].” The certificates shielded the holder from discrimination, guaranteeing exemption from forced labor, displacement, and deportation; the right to regular food rations; and temporary residence until a final determination of legal status (citizenship) in Poland could be made. The ministry also instructed the lower administration to issue attestations of Polish nationality to people persecuted by the Nazi government because of their nationality or marriage. The instruction specifically pointed to victims who were of “Jewish nationality” and ethnic Germans who had been discriminated against because they refused to divorce their Jewish spouses.

Correspondence between local Jewish committees and local and central government shows, however, that ministerial regulations had limited bearing on bureaucratic practice at the local level. In August 1945, the Jewish committee in the Gdańsk province had to remind their voivode (head of the province administration) that German Jews, despite their foreign citizenship, should enjoy the same rights as Polish citizens due to their suffering during the war:

People, who were submitted to painful or even horrific personal persecutions and property reprisals from Germans, who have not gotten civil rights since 1933 . . . are now, after the expulsion of Germans and downfall of the murderous Nazi regime, in an unchanged situation . . . In the absence of relevant laws, the Polish authorities treat them as German citizens with all consequences, i.e., loss of property, forced labor, and, recently, even resettlement from the territory of the Gdańsk province . . . Then it seems supremely right and fair that the new democratic Polish State does not identify [these Jews] with Germans but rather treats them equally with its own citizens considering the oceans of wrongs, tears, and blood that these people suffered from Germans.
The Jewish committee also requested that German Jews be removed from deportation lists and their resettlement be suspended per the ministry’s regulation. In the same month, the plenipotentiary of the central government in Jelenia Góra (Lower Silesia) requested information on how to deal with “Jews whose loyalty during the war was under suspicion,” suggesting that the provincial authorities did not trust German Jewish survivors and suspected them of collaboration with the Nazis, thus tapping into both anti-German and anti-Semitic tropes at once. In September 1945, a national security office in Jelenia Góra demanded that a local Jewish committee remove all German Jews from its membership: “We cannot allow that members of your institution would be ‘a half-Jew’ or a ‘quarter-Jew,’ not to mention Germans,” seemingly replicating well-learned Nazi racial categories. In October 1945, the same plenipotentiary asked his superiors in Lignica (Lower Silesia) if the local Jewish committee should admit and issue Jewish committee certificates to German Jews persecuted by Nazism. Bożena Szaynok found that the national security office banned several district Jewish committees from issuing such certificates to German Jews.

In the same month, the central government further modified the rules and emphasized loyalty to the nation as the primary criterion for the issuance of certificates of Polish nationality. Half a year later, in April 1946, the government confirmed that patriotic conduct carried the same weight as ethnicity, language, and culture:

Article III: Persons who will submit required application and prove their Polish origins or show their unity with the Polish Nation and will declare loyalty to the Nation and the State of Poland will be considered persons of the Polish national affiliation [posiadające polską przynależność narodową].

Article IV: The interested persons can prove Polish national affiliation by all evidence available, in particular:

1. Polish origin can be proved by ID cards or registrar records, or by the sound of a family name, or by blood relations [pokrewieństwo] with Poles,

2. Unity with the Polish Nation could be proved by membership in Polish organizations or participation in the fight for the Polish cause [sprawa polska], or by the inner attitude [postawa wewnętrzna] and language, or by cultivation of Polish customs in family, or by the connection with the Polish folk culture and the life of Poles, or by the outer attitude [zewnętrzna postawa] during the Nazi rule showing solidarity with Poles while exposing oneself to danger.
Thereby the central government confirmed a framework that allowed Polishness to be *earned* through patriotic behavior and opened the door, at least on paper, to citizenship for all Jews in postwar Poland, regardless of their previous citizenship and native language.\textsuperscript{61} I should note that these regulations were part and parcel of a broader process of “verification” or *weryfikacja* of the residents of the Recovered Territories.\textsuperscript{66} In theory, the verification was to reclaim the “Polish essence” of the land “recovered” from Germany. In practice, the verification served to increase the number of “indigenous Poles” (*autochtoni*) to repolonize and populate the region and thus regulate the distribution of property.\textsuperscript{67} Prewar residents who declared “local” or “here” (*tutejši*) nationality before the war and “neutral” after the war became the main target of the verification process. Once they claimed Polish nationality and expressed their desire to stay in the country, they had to undergo an assessment of their “Polishness.” If approved, they obtained a certificate of Polish nationality and had to pledge their loyalty to the nation and the state.

That these prescriptions were often ignored further illuminates the disconnect between the governmental regulations and administrative practice on the ground. The following story illustrates some of that dynamics in a small town in Lower Silesia. In April 1946, Capitan Kulczycki of the Border Defense Troops and his family took over a lodging house belonging to a German Jewish woman, Augusta Sara Thiel, who had survived Theresienstadt.\textsuperscript{68} The takeover was violent. Three months after the fact, Thiel reported that she was “slapped in the face, thrown on the ground, and threatened with a revolver.”\textsuperscript{69} She and her coworkers were then locked in a bathroom for twenty-four hours, after which they were allowed to take a few essentials and were forced to leave.\textsuperscript{70} Apparently the mayor of the district (*starosta*) offered to return the house to Thiel, which she refused unless the German coworkers/tenants could return as well.\textsuperscript{71} The mayor then suggested that Thiel leave her house “voluntarily,” in solidarity with the German tenants.\textsuperscript{72} Her temporary certificate of Polish nationality, which stated that “Thiel Sara-Auguste . . . should be treated as a person excluded from the German population and therefore should not come under the law concerning Germans,” was dismissed.\textsuperscript{73} It may have been dismissed with due cause, as it expired in February 1946. More likely, however, it was dismissed because Thiel was treated as a German and her property was too tempting to pass up. After all, the expulsions of Germans were closely interconnected with the grand-scale robbery of their property.

The local administration kept denying German Jews certificates of Polish nationality as late as July 1947, when the chairman of the provincial Jewish committee, Jakub Egit, complained to the Central Committee of Polish Jews:

[These German Jews] have not obtained Polish citizenship yet and their applications for [being declared] “indigenous population” have been denied. Local authorities
want to start resettling these people to Germany where [Jews] dread to go to live among their enemies. By treating them like Germans, the local authorities contradict a political stance of the government, which granted protection to people of Jewish nationality, persecuted by the Nazi regime. . . . We request an intervention with the central authorities, so they will instruct local officials on how to treat these people [German Jews] in order to enable them to stay and keep their apartments and property.74

If the lower administration had treated wartime conduct as the primary criterion for exclusion from anti-German policies, German Jews would not have faced bureaucratic problems. Their Jewishness and their persecution at the hands of the Nazis would have served as a protective shield, as prescribed by the central government. That this was not the case illustrated, on the one hand, bureaucratic incompetence and corruption, and on the other hand, the persistence of traditional markers of nationality.75

Local administrators had their own understanding of nationality and citizenship, embedded in local social relations and cultural codes, which did not always concur with governmental prescriptions. In other words, the local apparatchiks shared the convictions, fears, and prejudices of the local population. One example was the belief that a language itself stood for good patriotic conduct and as such signified nationality. “Why should we declare to be Poles or non-Poles when that piece of paper with a signature does not say anything about our nationality, but actions do, like participation in the uprisings, the Polish language, customs and habits, and our Polish hearts,” wrote representatives of Poles in Prudnik (Upper Silesia).76 If the Polish language signified a quintessentially Polish “action,” then the use of German was a disqualifying non-Polish behavior. Whatever the interpretation, language undeniably played an important role in the bureaucratic determination of nationality.

How did these problems affect German Jews’ decisions to stay or leave? Many shared a common belief that the German-Polish borders were temporary and would soon shift. For example, the leaders of the German Jewish community in Szczecin had no intention to apply for Polish citizenship because they believed that “when Szczecin is a free city and the German authorities come back here, they will disband our union if we have foreign [Polish] citizens in our ranks.”77 Still, those German Jews who intended to stay in Poland had the option to do so. Szaynok showed that those who applied for Polish citizenship in Lower Silesia ultimately received it.78

The majority of German Jews, however, did not stay. Facing discrimination from all sides, they left the postwar Recovered Territories as early as the summer of 1945. As Friedla summed up: “From August to the end of September 1945, a dozen transports of German Jews left Wroclaw for Erfurt. By the end of 1945, about twelve hundred German Wroclaw Jews had reached Thuringia, and many of them settled in Erfurt.
Others came to Germany in trains. With the approval of the Polish authorities, the first transports were organized at the beginning of November 1945, and they continued until the summer of 1946.” Others came to Germany in trains. With the approval of the Polish authorities, the first transports were organized at the beginning of November 1945, and they continued until the summer of 1946.”79 German Jews elsewhere in the Territories followed suit. Polish Jews stayed longer, although they eventually left as well. Thousands left the region and the country after the Kielce pogrom of July 1946. Those who stayed saw their “space for Jewish national subjectivity,” in Kijek’s words, “drastically limited and, ultimately liquidated.”80 After 1948, whenever the borders and emigration opportunities opened up, the majority of Polish Jews opted to leave.81

Although by the 1960s there were hardly any Jewish communities left in Poland in general, and in the annexed territories in particular, the hindsight of their ultimate emigration should not obscure the brief, albeit complex, history of the possibilities and challenges of Jewish life in the country in the wake of the war. A closer analysis of the treatment of the Polish and German Jewish communities in the Recovered Territories shows that antisemitism does not suffice as an exhaustive explanation for the ultimate decline of Jewish communal life in postwar Poland. Rather, it points to tensions between the central and local administration in the region over who belonged there and who did not. The central government, focused on national politics in its quest for legitimacy, was willing to employ both Polish and German Jews in its nation-building project. It regularly issued policies to protect both communities from antisemitism and anti-Germanism. However, it was not the central government but bureaucrats in local offices who made decisions on who could keep or acquired property, who could get a job, and who could receive citizenship. That Polish Jews could rebuild their communities and stay longer than German Jews demonstrates that, over and above antisemitism and material greed, bureaucrats were primarily motivated by anti-German sentiment. As described in these pages, the German Jews faced administrative discrimination of a kind not experienced by the Polish Jews. Their Germanness, more than their Jewishness, sealed their fate.

NOTES

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1. Hereafter I use the term Recovered Territories without quotation marks. There is a rich historiography on the postwar history of these territories. Among the notable works

2. The Potsdam decision was provisional. The treaties of 1950, 1970, and 1990 formally established and guaranteed the Polish western borders.

3. For insightful explorations of the long-term impact, see Thum, *Uprooted*; and Curp, *A Clean Sweep?*


11. For the most recent work on these processes, see Thum, *Uprooted; and Service, Germans to Poles*.

12. Out of a population of 32 million, by religion there were 20.6 million Catholics, 7.1 million Orthodox and Greek Orthodox, 3.1 million Jews, and more than 800,000 Protestants; by language, there were 22 million speakers of Polish, 3.2 million of


19. Thum, Uprooted, 18.


23. Service, Germans to Poles, 100.

26. Thum, Uprooted; and Service, Germans to Poles, 126–49.
30. For excellent analysis of the Polish Jews’ position in the broader communist politics of the late 1940s, see Kijek, “Aliens in the Lands of the Piasts,” 234–55.
32. Program declaration of Prime Minister Edward Osóbka-Morawski, January 2, 1945, quoted in Olejnik, Polityka narodowościowa, 353.
33. The government expected that Jewish communal life would take on a more cultural than national character. Eugeniusz Mironowicz, Polityka narodowościowa PRL (Białystok: Wydawnictwo Białoruskiego Towarzystwa Historycznego, 2000), 86. Tomasz Szarota insightfully noted that the Jewish communities in Lower Silesia were a “national minority enclave in-the-making” in a “nationally homogenous state in-the-making.” Szarota, Osadnictwo miejskie na Dolnym Śląsku, 160–62.
36. Circular of the ministry of public administration, June 6, 1945, in Szaynok, Ludność żydowska na Dolnym Śląsku, 24 (emphasis added).
38. I am grateful to Kijek for this observation.
40. See note 5. For more details, see Cichopec-Gajraj, Beyond Violence, 179–212. Also see

41. For the conditions in Lower Silesia, see Marcin Zaremba, *Wielka trwoga: Polska 1944–1947; Ludowa reakcja na kryzys* (Kraków: Znak, 2012), 158–62. After the Kielce pogrom, “there was not the urgent haste which was present elsewhere”; nonetheless, almost half of Lower Silesian Jews left. See “Report on the Jewish Population in Poland” (September 30, 1946), collection 45/54, file 734; and “Survey on Community Interrelations: Poland,” S. D. Wolkowicz for the World Jewish Congress (September 1947), collection 45/54, file 731, JOINT Archives. Also see note 30; Kijek, “Aliens in the Lands of the Piasts,” 239–40.

42. “Report on a Two-Day Tour of Jewish Communities in Lower Silesia, 1947,” collection 45/54, file 731, JOINT Archives. See the opinion of Dr. Shalom Treistman (Trojstman), the Chief Rabbi of Wrocław, in “Report of Rabbi Philip S. Bernstein to General Joseph T. McNarney in Germany” (August 2, 1946; received on September 3, 1946), collection 45/54, file 734, JOINT Archives. Also see “Lower Silesia, Statistical Data” (Summer 1947), Collection of Central Archives of Modern Records (AAN) in Warsaw, Office of the Government Commissar for Productivity of Jews in Poland, RG 15.003 M, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), Washington, DC.

43. Thum, *Uprooted*.


50. Waszkiewicz, *Kongregacja wyznania mojżeszowego*. Waszkiewicz also pointed out that the correspondence of the Jewish Religious Congregation was written mainly in German and Hebrew. Also see Szaynok, *Ludność żydowska na Dolnym Śląsku*.

54. “Letter from the Jewish Committee in Wroclaw to the Plenipotentiary of the Government in Lower Silesia Concerning the Legal Status of Jews/Former German Citizens” (July 30, 1945), Collection of the Voivode Office in Wroclaw (hereafter UWW), UWW VI-269, 9, State Archives in Wroclaw, Poland (hereafter APW).
56. Letter from the minister of public administration, July 10, 1945, quoted in Misztal, Weryfikacja narodowościowa, 210. Also see a short discussion of the decree (L.dz. 9337/II/P.909/45) in Berendt, Żydzi na gdańskim rozdrożu, 42.
57. Misztal, Weryfikacja narodowościowa. Also see Misztal, Polityka władz polskich, 65.
58. Letter from the District National Security Office to the Jewish Committee in Jelenia Góra (August 2, 1945), Collection of the UWW, UWW VI-269, 3, APW.
59. Note from the District National Security Office to the Jewish Committee in Jelenia Góra” (September 15, 1945), Collection of the UWW, UWW VI-269, 30, APW. Also see Szaynok, Ludność żydowska na Dolnym Śląsku.
60. “Letter from the Plenipotentiary of the Central Government in Jelenia Góra to the Plenipotentiary of the Central Government in Lignica” (August 2, 1945), Collection of the UWW, UWW VI-269, 27, APW.
61. “Note from the District National Security Office to the Jewish Committee in Jelenia Góra” (September 15, 1945), Collection of the UWW, UWW VI-269, 30, APW. Also see Szaynok, Ludność żydowska na Dolnym Śląsku.
62. The plenipotentiary stressed that “in order to avoid abuses of power [nadszyczaj], the issuance of such certificates by his Office was necessary.” “Letter from the Plenipotentiary of the Central Government in Jelenia Góra to the Plenipotentiary of the Central Government in Lignica” (October 2, 1945), Collection of the UWW, UWW VI-269, 27, APW.
63. Szaynok, Ludność żydowska na Dolnym Śląsku, 43.
64. Directive of the ministry of the Recovered Territories concerning the attestation of Polish nationality for the residents of the Recovered Territories, 6 April 1946. In Misztal, Weryfikacja narodowościowa, 350. For the translated fragments of the directive see, Cichopec-Gajraj, Beyond Violence, 241–42.
65. Berendt, Żydzi na gdańskim rozdrożu. Jewish committees were supposed to routinely certify Jewish nationality with a document that included the following phrase: “Based on the submitted ID … and a birth certificate … we testify that … the citizen … is a Jew and as such was persecuted by national-socialist fascism [emphasis added],” “Attestation Concerning Jewishness of Wálther Kurnik (November 16, 1946), Collection of the UWW, UWW VI-270, 32, APW. Also see Szaynok, Ludność żydowska na Dolnym Śląsku, 42–43.
66. The verification process was separate from the rehabilitation. The former was designed
to separate the Polish from the German “autochthonous” population to grant them a path to Polish citizenship. The latter was offered to ethnic Germans who signed the “volksliste of III and IV degree” during the war. For more on the rehabilitation policies, see Sylwia Bykowska, “Karać czy rehabilitować? Powojenne ustawodawstwo polskie wobec osób wpisanych na niemiecką listę narodowościową,” *Czasopismo Prawno-Historyczne*, 64, no. 1 (2012): 149–67.


68. “Letter from Augusta Sara Thiel to the Ministry of Public Administration in Warsaw” (July 16, 1946), Collection of the UWW, UWW VI-270, 39–40, APW.


71. “Letter from the Voivode of Wroclaw to the Ministry of the Recovered Territories” (October 31, 1946), Collection of the UWW, UWW VI-270, 33, APW.

72. “Letter from the Mayor of Jelenia Góra District to the Voivode’s Office in Wroclaw” (October 21, 1946), Collection of the UWW, UWW VI-270, 34, APW.


74. Letter from Jakub Egit to the CKŻP, June 11, 1947, quoted in Szaynok, *Ludność żydowska na Dolnym Śląsku*.

75. In his book on the verification process, Misztal suggested that language lost its importance as an ethnic marker after the war because many residents of western Poland had “a sense of developed separate national consciousness” (poczucie rozwinionej odmiennej świadomości narodowej) without the ability to speak the Polish language. While language may have had a limited impact on individual self-identification, it did remain an important indicator in bureaucratic practice. Misztal, *Weryfikacja narodowościowa*.


77. Mieczkowski, *Żydzi, Niemcy i Ukraińcy*.

78. Szaynok, *Ludność żydowska na Dolnym Śląsku*.


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