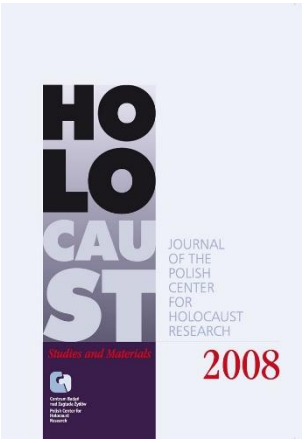


Holocaust Studies and Materials
Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały

2008

ISSN: 1895-247X
eISSN: 2657-3571
DOI: 10.32927
WWW: www.zagladazydow.pl

Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów IFiS PAN
Polish Center for Holocaust Research

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.32927/ZZSiM.80
Strony/Pages: 177-205

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Anti-Jewish Incidents in the Lublin Region in the Early Years after World War II

In the early years after World War II, the Lublin Region was one of the most important centres of Jewish life. In the second half of 1944, in the region's capital there were several organisations that grouped Jewish survivors. Political parties were reactivated, Yiddish newspapers were published, cultural and artistic life flourished, and in November of that year the chief Jewish institution in the country was established, the Central Committee of Polish Jews (Centralny Komitet Żydów w Polsce, CKŻP). In early 1945, i.e. before the central Jewish institutions were transferred to Warsaw and Łódź, Lublin had become a semi-official capital of Polish Jews. Here arrived the most distinguished representatives of Jewish life of the pre-war and occupation periods. From Moscow came the organisers and activists of the Organisation Committee of Polish Jews in the USSR (Komitet Organizacyjny Żydów Polskich w ZSRR) (Emil Sommerstein); from Tashkent, Rovne and Vilna came partisans and Zionists activists (Aba Kowner, Mordechaj Rosman); from the still German-occupied territories came members of the resistance movement in the Warsaw ghetto (Marek Edelman, Cywia Lubetkin, Icchak Cukierman), and active underground politicians (Leon Feiner).

When World War II ended, there were 4,791 Jews living in the Lublin Province. The largest centres of the Jewish population were: Lublin (2,500), Chełm, (350), Kraśnik (300), Zamość (224), Włodawa (220), and Hrubieszów, Międzyrzec and Parczew (200 Jews each).[1] As a result of repatriation from the USSR launched in 1946, around 1,130 Jews arrived.[2] In May 1946, the number of Jews in the Lublin Province rose to over 6,100.[3]

On the other hand, the Lublin Province was, at the same time, one of the most dangerous areas for Jews in the country. According to figures cited by David Engel, between December 1944 and February 1946, 69 cases of murders of Jews were noted in this region, i.e. over 20 percent of all well-documented cases of murder of

[1] Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego (Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute, hereinafter: AŻIH), Centralny Komitet Żydów w Polsce (hereinafter: CKŻP), Wydział Ewidencji i Statystyki (hereinafter: WEiS), cat. no. 236, ch. 1.

[2] *Ibid.*, cat. no. 237, no pagination.

[3] *Ibid*.

Jews committed in the entire country in that period.[4] Only the Kielce region could "compete" in these grim statistics with the Lublin Province.

The problem of Polish hostility already confronted the activists of the first post-war Jewish organisation, the Jewish Committee in Lublin. At the first session of the Committee on 11 August 1944, Nuchim Grin, on behalf of 80 Włodawa Jews requested protection from attacks of "destructive elements".[5] Two days later there ensued a debate of the Committee on the security of the Jews. President Abraham Rozenman proposed to launch efforts to establish militia posts in Perec's House[6] and the locale of the Jewish Committee.[7] The Lublin Jews were advised not to talk in Yiddish on the street and to move around in larger groups.[8] The Committee made the commitment to prepare a special memorial addressed to the authorities, concerning the security of the Jewish population and the establishment of a special commission that "would deal with the protection of the Jewish population outside (the city) and visit larger Jewish centres."[9]

A similar tone can be found in Szloma Herszenhorn's account of his work. He was chief of the Department for Help to the Jewish Population (Referat Pomocy Ludności Żydowskiej), established on 8 August 1944. On 1 September 1944 he informed the Presidium of the PKWN (Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego, the Polish Committee of National Liberation) about murders of Jews committed on the liberated territories and their negative influence on the psychological condition of the survivors (some were afraid to leave their hideouts).[10]

The background of post-war anti-Semitism should be analysed in the context of the then socio-political situation. The fact that there were anti-Semitic attitudes in a country that had just been the scene of the most horrific murder of the Jews is undoubtedly a sociological phenomenon. It became particularly significant in the Lublin region, which was exceptionally affected by the Nazi homicide of the Jews. In the region's capital "Action Reinhardt" was launched in March 1942. In the immediate vicinity KL Majdanek (Lublin), one the harshest German concentration camps, had been established. In the spring and summer of 1942, two more death camps were opened: Bełżec and Sobibór. Most Christian inhabitants of the region witnessed mass murder of the Jews, both local ones and deportees from other Nazi-occupied countries. The oddity of the post-war period, i.e. the sudden eruption of anti-Semitism after the Holocaust, cannot be perceived merely as a product of the

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[4] D. Engel, "Patterns of Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland 1944–1946", *Yad Vashem Studies* 1998, no. 26, 50.

[5] AŻIH, CKŻP, Wydział Organizacyjny (hereinafter: WO), sygn, 3, set of minutes of the Prezydium Pomocy Żydom (later the Jewish Committee in Lublin), for 11 August–22 September 1944, p. 3.

[6] The I. L. Perec Jewish Home of Culture was built shortly before the war, on the initiative of the Lublin branch of the Bund, in the Czwartek district of the town.

[7] AŻIH, CKŻP, WO, sygn, 3, set of minutes of the Prezydium Pomocy Żydom (later the Jewish Committee in Lublin), for 11 August–22 September 1944, 3, cat. no. 3, p. 6.

[8] *Ibid.*, 11.

[9] *Ibid.*, 6.

[10] D. Engel, *op. cit.*, 45.

"traditional" Polish anti-Semitism. The genesis of this phenomenon was complex; just as complex was its scope, range and consequences.

Historians divide the motives of these attitudes into the following categories: psychological, historical, political and economic.[11]

The psychological roots of post-war anti-Semitism were related to a plethora of negative occupation experiences. The enormity of evil, depravity and crime undoubtedly found its reflection in the collective consciousness. Human life lost its former value, crime was widespread, and individual murders, seen against the background of homicide, did not make much of an impression. The brutalisation of life during the occupation led to the "release of moral inhibitions" among members of a certain social group. Also, of fundamental importance for post-war anti-Semitic attitudes was the fact that during the occupation the humiliation, persecution and murder of Jews could be carried out with impunity, by consent of or even encouraged by the occupation authorities.

The German occupier's national policy, which determined the fate of entire social groups based on ethnicity, led to a further separation between Poles and Jews, and as a result the exclusion of the latter from Polish national solidarity.[12] The process of antagonising both communities was further exacerbated by the occupier's propaganda, which, on the one hand, fired up anti-Semitic moods among the Poles, and on the other, discredited the Poles in the eyes of the Jews, portraying them as "organic anti-Semites". The historical motives stemmed from both the pre-war anti-Semitism and war-time experiences. The reminiscences of pre-war anti-Jewish attitudes, particularly on religious grounds, were still vivid among a part of the society. What is interesting, they even intensified, which is confirmed by the appearance of accusations of ritual murder, which, although deeply rooted in Polish folk imagination as early as the inter-war period, were viewed as an anachronism, even by a decisive majority of the ideologues and activists of the nationalist camp, unfriendly to the Jews. The eruption of this type of accusation in the post-war period could be perhaps explained by the reaction of a segment of Polish society to the Holocaust. On the one hand, the occupation led to a civilisational, cultural, and – most importantly – moral regression, reviving the grimmest anti-Jewish stereotypes based on primitive imagination. On the other, the ascription of malicious or even diabolical tendencies to the Jews counterbalanced the sense of guilt among some Poles, particularly those who collaborated with the Germans in the Holocaust. The identification of Jews with demonic creatures that used the blood of Christian children for ritual purposes was conducive to the dehumanisation of the victims, and thus to the reduction of one's own guilt.[13]

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[11] K Kersten, *Polacy, Żydzi, Komunizm. Anatomia półprawd 1939–1968*, Warsaw 1992; Y. Gutman, S. Krakowski, *Unequal Victims. Poles and Jews during World War Two* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1986, particularly the chapter *The Campaign of Anti-Semitic Agitation and Violence*, 365–374).

[12] B. Szaynok, "Polacy i Żydzi lipiec 1944–lipiec 1946", in: Ł. Kamiński, J. Żaryn, eds,, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego* (Warsaw, 2006), 12.

[13] M. Zaremba, "Psychoza we krwi", *Polityka*, 8 July 2006, 72–75.

According to traditional beliefs, ritual murders were to be committed around Easter. In April 1945, a Jewish representative in Chełm, Izrael Kupfer, informed the Provincial Jewish Committee in Lublin:

> Before Easter a Christian child went missing. Immediately there turned up individuals ready to stage some kind of "Bejlis' trial". There were even "witnesses" [who testified] that a Jewish citizen had offered 600 zloty for the child, and on the basis [of their testimonies] three Jews were arrested. After the intervention of the War Commandant, two were released, but the third one was kept in detention and even tortured. As a result of the intervention of the superior authorities, such institutions were terminated and as a result several militia men were arrested.[14]

However, the alleged ritual murders did not necessarily "happen" in the spring. In autumn 1945, Lublin press reported similar events in the city itself:

> On 18 September . . . a gang of NSZ provocateurs tried to stir anti-Jewish excesses, using the disappearance of a fourteen-year-old girl, Zofia Niemczyńska. The Lublin-based imitators of Nazi methods spread the rumour that the Jews had kidnapped the girl in order to kill her for ritual purposes. As a result of the provocation at No. 18 Lubartowska St., a group of the dregs of society were gathering, flared by the provocative NSZ elements, willing to demolish Jewish flats. The case was taken up by the security organs. An investigation was carried out and it was established that on 17 September Zofia Niemczyńska went missing from home. Zofia, who had failed her exam to the 7th grade, forged her school certificate and showed it to her father. He wanted to use it to enrol his daughter in the Vetter gymnasium. On 17 September Zofia, together with her girlfriend, for fear of her father, fled to Warsaw. The father, who did not find his daughter home, informed the militia on 18 September. Currently Niemczyńska lives near Lublin, in the Długie colony with the farmer Wójtowicz Tadeusz . . . .[15]

Traditional anti-Judaism, presenting the Jews as enemies of Christianity, sometimes spawned conspiracy theories, according to which the Jewish community was responsible for all actions against the Church, its institutions, clergy or doctrine. For example, in early spring 1945 in Kraśnik, the Jews were accused of murdering the local priest. The murder took place on 10 March, and its victim was Father Stanisław Zieliński, rector of the Holy Ghost church. The local Jewish committee reported:

> There were people who immediately claimed that the Jews were responsible for this murder. In the meantime the murderer was apprehended, and he is not a Jew, a man by the name of Kapusta. In spite of this, reactionary elements are exploiting this incident to spread the anti-Jewish outcry. They are

[14] AŻIH, CKŻP, WO cat. no. 3, minutes of a plenary session of the WKŻ in Lublin on 15 April 1945, p. 2–3.

[15] *Sztandar Ludu*, 23 October 1945, no. 204, 2.

> trying to persuade Polish society that the murderer had been planted by the Jews and, allegedly, generously rewarded by them.[16]

The wave of slanders was accompanied by an economic boycott. Gangs of henchmen gathered outside Jewish shops to prevent customers from getting in. On market days peasants were discouraged from trading with the Jews. Anti-Jewish slogans also appeared in numerous flyers circulated in Kraśnik and the neighbouring localities.[17]

An important historical motive that shaped the post-war anti-Semitic attitudes was the stereotype of "Jewish collaboration" with the Soviets born during the war. This factor was exceptionally powerful in the Lublin region, whose eastern and southern areas were temporarily occupied by the Soviets in September/October 1939. Stefan Sendłak, one of the organisers of the Zamość-Lublin Committee to Help the Jews in Warsaw, recalling this period wrote:

> The quiet life of the town's inhabitants remained undisturbed until the outbreak of the war . . . particularly the moment when the Soviet troops entered Zamość. It was then that the existing relations were not only spoilt, but the Poles began to "formally" hate the Jews, which had disastrous consequences for the Jewish population during the German occupation.[18]

Accusation of collaboration with the Soviets, the formation of the so-called "red militias" and the disarming of Polish soldiers in September 1939, were still quite vivid in the Zamość region after the war. In late June 1945, a group of Jews standing in the Zamość market square was attacked by several drunken Poles. Several people were beaten up, including the secretary of the local Jewish committee, Kisiel Cwilich. According to the testimonies of the injured, the attackers shouted: "Poland without Jews", "Down with the Jews", "Here's blood for matzos". One of the attackers shouted: "You Jewish sons of bitches . . . I'll slaughter you all, you came from Russia to kill our children". During the investigation by the District Court in Zamość, two of the apprehended attackers tried to justify their behaviour by the desire to wreak revenge on the Jews, who in September 1939 were to disarm one of

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[16] Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie (State Archive in Lublin, hereinafter: APL), Urząd Wojewódzki Lubelski 1944–1950 (hereinafter: UWL), Wydział Społeczno-Polityczny (hereinafter: WSP), cat. no. 50, p. 6.

[17] *Ibidem*; AŻIH, CKŻP, WO cat. no. 3, minutes of the plenary session of the WKŻ in Lublin on 15 April 1945, p. 3. One of the flyers read: "Jews! The time of your prosperity is over, in part because of you being mass murdered by the Germans, and the rest of the survivors of the pogrom will be finished off by us. There is no place for you in Poland, your weapons won't help you. Wait a while and you'll find out that this isn't idle talk. Under the German you denounced the Poles, now under the other you do the same. Enough of your rule. Your place is either under the ground or in Palestine." The leaflet was signed with the pseudonym "Cierń" (APL, leaflets published after the liberation, cat. no. 125, ch. 20).

[18] AŻIH cat. no. 302/122, S. Sendłak, *Judenrat w Zamościu*, 12. The original colloquial Polish equivalent to "formally" ("formalnie") is used to mean "virtually" [transl.].

them (at that time he was a soldier in the Polish Army) and hand him over to Soviet captivity.[19]

Another important historical factor was the alleged ingratitude of the Jews to Poles hiding them during the war. This type of accusation also can be found in a leaflet of the Polish Anti-Communist Military Organisation (Polska Antykomunistyczna Organizacja Wojskowa), circulated in Lublin in early April 1945. It contains the following words:

> Jews, you have suffered Nazi persecutions. Each of you survived, won your life, thanks only to the Poles. Now, after the Red Army has arrived, you have left your hideouts only to persecute true Poles, your saviours. You bring doom to those who at the most critical hour extended their hand to help you. Jews! You turned out to be enemies of the Poles.[20]

The political conditions for post-war anti-Semitism were directly related to the situation in the country at that time. The frustration of Polish society with the seizure of power by the communists, and the end of dreams of the reconstruction of a state independent of external influence, exacerbated hostile attitudes toward the Jews, who were generally considered to be eager supporters of the new regime. The identification of Communist rule with the Jews (the stereotype of the so-called "Jewish communists" (*żydokomuna*)) widened the gap between the Poles and the Jews. The latter were treated as a group, alienated from society at large, which supported *en masse* the rulers that were hostile to the nation. The "Jewish communists" stereotype was further reinforced by commonly-held views that the Jews were overrepresented in the party apparatus, the militia, the military and other institutions of the new system. In his recollections of the period, immediately following the arrival of Soviet troops in the Lublin region, and his relations with the Poles, Noach Lasman, at that time a soldier of the Polish Army, stationed in Podlasie, wrote:

> People thought that now, under Soviet protection, there would be "Jewish rule". It was clear to them, because it was the Jews that devised this entire communism! Everyone knows who sits on the division command: Ruskies and Jews, and in Lublin in the Army command, it is hard to find a single Pole. Although none of the boys there had ever been anywhere, but it was commonly known.[21]

Particular emphasis was laid on the "overrepresentation" of Jews in the ranks of the hated security apparatus. In fact, it is difficult to consider the number of Jews or people of Jewish origin in the security apparatus, particularly at the lower and local levels, as overrepresentation. In the Lublin region, as of 1 February 1946, out of 1,122 employees of the Provincial Public Security Office, there were a mere 19

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[19] Archiwum Państwowe w Zamościu (State Archive in Zamość), Sąd Okręgowy (District Court) w Zamościu 1918–1950, cat. no. **987, Trial files of Edward Hubala and others, anti-Jewish** incidents.

[20] Quoted in Y. Gutman, S. Krakowski, *op. cit.*, 376.

[21] N. Lasman, *Wspomnienia z Polski* (Warsaw, 1997), 35.

Jews (1.7 percent).[22] There was a different situation in the Citizens' Militia (Milicja Obywatelska, MO), which had more members of Jewish origin, particularly Jewish partisans from the People's Army (Armia Ludowa, AL).

The impression that the Jews were "overrepresented" in the organs of the new regime was, in some sense, a response to the clash of two factors in the collective consciousness: the pre-war experiences, i.e. the Jews in state institutions at the central or local level were rather an exception, and the situation after 1944, when several key positions in the ruling apparatus were in the hands of alleged or actual activists of Jewish origin.

The politically motivated hostility to the Jews also had a practical dimension, which, for some social groups, facilitated a clear identification of the enemy (the "scapegoat" mechanism), onto which it would be easy, and to an extent with impunity, to transfer one's disenchantment and anger.

The identification of the Communist regime with the Jews can be seen in some flyers circulated by the anti-Communist underground. One of them, signed by the "soldiers of the underground" and posted in Lublin, read:

> Six years have passed since the Polish Nation, having lost its Independence, was sunk in the turmoil of harsh captivity. To this day the suffering continues. Only the torturers have changed. Nazi terror was replaced by the familiar mean, treacherous and barbaric methods of the Jewish-Bolshevik degenerates. . . . The Jews as executors of the current persecutions are the chief fellow culprits of our suffering.[23]

Some murders of Jews by the anti-Communist underground were motivated politically. On 4 November 1944, in a flat at No. 4 Kowalska Street, Hersz Blank, a fighter in the uprising and a refugee from the death camp in Sobibór, was shot. The sentence was carried out by five Home Army (Armia Krajowa, AK) soldiers, under Romuald Szydelski's command. The order to liquidate Blank, accused of collaboration with the UB, was given by Major Stanisław Piotrowski, commandant of the AK Lublin district. Soon after this incident the soldiers who took part in the action were arrested by "Smersh", Soviet counterintelligence.

An investigation against these men was initiated and led to their being sentenced to death in April 1945 at Lublin Castle.[24] In the light of the recollections of Tojwie Blatt, then Blank's flatmate (also a fighter in the Sobibór uprising), the AK charges were completely unfounded. According to Blatt, Blank was a deeply religious Jew, who did not speak Polish very well and kept no contacts with the non-Jewish mi-

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[22] L. Piłat, "Struktura organizacyjna i działalność Wojewódzkiego Urzędu Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego w Lublinie 1944–1945", *Studia Rzeszowskie* 1999, 6, 88–89. *Cf.* A. Paczkowski, *Żydzi w UB – próba weryfikacji stereotypu*, in: T. Szarota, ed., *Komunizm. Ideologia, system, ludzie* (Warsaw, 2001), 196–197; J.T. Gross, *Fear. Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz. An Essay in Historical Interpretation* (New York: Random House, 2006), 229.

[23] APL, leaflets published after the liberation, cat. no. 125, ch. 1.

[24] Z. Leszczyńska, ed., *Straceni na Zamku Lubelskim. Dokumenty procesu 11 żołnierzy AK (kwiecień 1945),* (Lublin, 1995), 98, 143–199.

lieu. These facts, in Blatt's opinion, proved that Blank was completely useless for the UB.[25]

A similar mechanism was in operation on 19 March 1946, when Chaim Hirszman, one of the three Jews that managed to escape from the Bełżec death camp, was shot in his own flat at No. 1 Graniczna Street in Lublin. Hirszman was assassinated by three members of the Secret Military Organisation (Tajna Organizacja Wojskowa), an anti-Communist underground group headed by Jerzy Fryze. The motives of the assassins remain unclear, and interpretations in historical writing range from political assassination, stressing Hirszman's work in the Lublin UB, to a typical anti-Semitic murder. Dariusz Libionka sheds some light on this affair, in principle refuting the former version (at the moment of his death Hirszman was no longer an employee of the state security, and his professional achievements in the service were rather meagre), and emphasising that Hirszman's murder could have been a result of unfortunate coincidences.[26]

Actual or alleged collaboration with the terror apparatus was also the motive of several other murders. On 31 May 1945, on the road between Strzyżów and the Zosin colony in Hrubieszów district, an unidentified AK soldier shot Jankiel Rajs, a horse dealer and a "UB agent". According to the investigation files, Dawid Berger, his twenty-year-old son and a two-year-old baby died with him.[27] In August of the same year in Lublin, soldiers of the underground liquidated an "NKVD agent", Chaim Zylber.[28]

These two cases of murder are perfect introductory material to the principal research problem: the motives behind the murders of Jews committed by the post-war underground. Did Jews die at the hands of the post-war anti-Communist underground as representatives of a hated national minority or, rather, as supporters, activists and functionaries of the regime? Did the ethnic background or religion constitute an important element of the attitude of the underground to the representatives of the new regime, or were they of secondary importance, while many murders were committed because they were involved in the Communist apparatus? It seems that to grasp the scale of this distinction is fairly complicated. In a number of cases, the fact that the victims were murdered because of their engagement in the regime's operations appears to be undisputed. On 5 February 1945 in Zwierzyniec, two soldiers from "Podkowa's" (Tadeusz Kuncewicz) detachment liquidated Dawid Biberman, the commandant of the local MO station, in front of the community building.[29] On the following day in Chodel, a detachment of several men from the fa-

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[25] Tomas (Tojwie) Blatt testimony (in author's archives).*Cf. also* H. Krall, "Autoportret z kulą w szczęce", *Gazeta Wyborcza,* 1992, no. 57, 10-12.

[26] D. Libionka, "The Life Story of Chaim Hirszman: Remembrance of the Holocaust and Reflections on Postwar Polish Relations", *Yad Vashem Studies* 2006, vol. 34, 219–247.

[27] R. Wnuk, *Lubelski Okręg AK DSZ i WiN 1944–1947* (Warsaw, 2000), 319.

[28] *Ibid.*, 336

[29] Several days before this action Zygmunt Klukowski wrote in his diary that Biberman was well informed of the local situation and "is extremely . . . pernicious and malicious" (Z. Klukowski, *Zamojszczyzna,* vol. II, *1944–1959,* Warsaw 2007, 156). The action was carried out by Tadeusz Niedźwiedzki "Sten" and Zdzisław Jóźwiakowski "Huzar". One should add that the former took

mous "Zapora" (Hieronim Dekutowski) division tried to assassinate the local militia commandant, Abram Tauber, who had allegedly killed several helpless partisans. However, when "Zapora's" men seized Tauber's post, he was not there.[30] In March 1945, during a raid on an AK soldiers' camp in Błudek, Tomaszów district, a public prosecutor (name unknown) of Jewish origin was killed.[31] In the same month in Piaski, an MO platoon sergeant, Mordka Honig, was killed.[32]

Sometimes soldiers of the Internal Security Corp (Korpus Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego, KBW), MO or UB functionaries of Jewish origin died accidentally, but their deaths, it seems, did not have anti-Semitism in the background. On 1 May 1945, near the village of Annówka, Zygmunt Kęski's ("Świt") detachment, having seized Kock, set an ambush for a truck carrying reinforcements of the functionaries of the District Public Security Office and militia men from the District Command in Łuków. Among those killed was militia man Chil Finkielstein. Four MO functionaries were let off, whereas five, including Mojżesz Mancarz and Chaim Kaufman, were abducted. The five vanished without a trace.[33] In June 1945 in Łęczna two Jewish soldiers were killed: Rozenblum of Łódź and Tafler of Równe.[34] On 19 March 1946, in the Biała Podlaska region (near Klonowica), a twenty-man strong underground detachment attacked a vehicle carrying KBW soldiers and a few Jews. During the action four soldiers and one unidentified Jew were killed.[35] In August of that year, on the road to Lublin near Włodawa, a convoy of vehicles carrying detainees was attacked. In the gunfire a KBW officer, a Jew, was killed.[36]

Inasmuch as the people of Jewish origin were probably accidental victims of direct combat, sometimes Jews were murdered after the combat, following a selection of the captured soldiers or functionaries in terms of ethnicity. In the second half of April 1945, in Kanie, Chełm district, an NSZ detachment under Mieczysław Pazdreski, "Szary" (responsible for the subsequent murder of nearly 200 Ukrainians at the village of Wierzchowiny in June 1945), disarmed a Polish Army unit of 50 men. Those disarmed who were identified as Jews were shot on the spot (five

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part in a number of bandit attacks, including one on Klukowski himself, whom he robbed and beat up severely. Despite that he was not expelled from the organisation. He was liquidated by "Podkowa" only in early March 1945 (*ibid.*, 128–129, 163). In autumn 1942 Niedźwiedzki, a blue policeman, "made a particular contribution" during the liquidation of Jews in Szczebrzeszyn. Dawid Biberman was born on 13 October 1908 in Szczebrzeszyn (see I. Caban, E. Machocki, *Za władzę ludu*, Lublin 1975, 181). It is not known where he had been during the war, because his personal file cannot be found in the IPN Archives in Lublin. In any case, he was the only Jew in Szczebrzeszyn at that time.

[30] Wnuk, *op. cit*, s. 279. No functionary under such a name is listed in the archives of the Lublin IPN.

[31] *Ibid.*, 290–291.

[32] IPN Archives in Lublin (hereinafter: AIPN), cat. no. Lu. 04/636 ch. 29.

[33] R. Wnuk, *op. cit.*, 306.

[34] *Sztandar Ludu*, 7 July 1945, no. 104. However, the circumstances of the two soldiers' deaths were not given.

[35] R. Wnuk, *op. cit.*, 364. See also R. Wnuk e.a., eds, *Atlas polskiego podziemia niepodległościowego 1944–1956* (Warsaw, 2007), 144.

[36] R. Wnuk, *op. cit*., s. 408.

men).[37] An undisputed anti-Semitic motive was behind the murder of 9 March 1946 in Janów Podlaski by a thirty-man strong detachment of Kazimierz Harmida, "Lech". At night, "Lech's" men attacked a flat with 5 Jews inside. Two of them were shot on the spot. The other three and a Polish woman and her child, who was living with one of the Jews, were transported out of town in wagons, where they were shot, and the bodies were thrown into the Bug river. One of those assassinated was a soldier of the Polish Army.[38] Similar motives were behind three partisans of Stanisław Wójtowicz's "Iwan" detachment, who on 4 December 1945 in the building of a cooperative in Bełżyce, opened fire at two Jews. Szloma Szajbrun was killed on the spot, and the wounded Szloma Peres was taken to hospital. Two of the assassins (Jan Pruszkowski and Czesław Broda) went to the hospital and finished him off.[39] A similar attack on Jews staying in a hospital also took place in Lublin in June 1945. Two armed individuals barged into the Sisters of Charity hospital and started to shoot Jewish patients. The following were badly wounded: Junak Milsztajn, a militia man from Lublin, and the locksmith Szyja Konowicz, who died shortly.[40]

Sometimes murders of Jews committed by soldiers of the underground were motivated by robbery. Zygmunt Klukowski noted the murder of the director of the Zwierzyniec brewery, Emanuel Luft and his son. The former was on his way to Zamość, carrying a large sum of money: "On the way, the 'forest boys' terrorised the wagon driver and Luft, and there took proper care of Luft and let the driver go."[41] In June 1946, a partisan who had the pseudonym "Zdybek" shot a Jew and a Ukrainian in Borek, Chełm district, and took their boots and 2,000 zloty.[42] Similarly, robbery was behind the activity of "Sęk's" (Kazimierz Syroka) sabotage squad, which at the turn of 1944/1945 carried out a few "requisition actions" in Lublin, including some involving Jews. In December, 40,000 zloty belonging to a certain Szwarcman were requisitioned. In February, there was a failed attempt at requisition at the home in Okopowa Street of Abram alias Józef Opatowski, the owner of a currency exchange office.[43]

The attitude of the Polish post-war underground to the Jews stemmed from complicated socio-political causes. Poles and Jews had diametrically different approaches to the post-war reality. To the former, the Red Army brought captivity and suffering. The latter welcomed the Soviets as true liberators, in whom they saw their saviours from annihilation. To the Poles, the Communist regime brought political incapacitation and destruction of the structures of the underground state; to the Jews it brought formal equal rights and partial political freedom.

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[37] *Atlas polskiego podziemia niepodległościowego*..., 136.

[38] *Ibid.*, 144; AIPN, cat. no. Lu 055/11, ch. 114; *R. Wnuk, op. cit.*, 362.

[39] *Ibid.*, 347.

[40] AIPN, cat. no. Lu 04/635, ch. 189; *Sztandar Ludu*, 7 July 1945, no. 104. The article does not mention that Milsztajn was an MO functionary.

[41] Z. Klukowski, *Zamojszczyzna*, vol. II, 198.

[42] R. Wnuk, *op. cit.*, 385.

[43] *Ibid.*, 349, 355; M. Opatowski, *Zapamiętajcie, co przeżyłem*, in: J.J. Bojarski, ed., *Ścieżki pamięci. Żydowskie miasto w Lublinie losy, miejsca, historia*, Lublin–Rishon LeZion 2001, 73–77.

The favourable attitude of the new regime, at least in the official propaganda, remained in sharp contrast with the pre-war Jewish experiences in their contacts with the Polish administrative structures. Past grudges and the difference between what the two sides fighting for power in post-war Poland offered to the Jews were behind the acceptance of the new reality by a majority of the Jews.

It should be borne in mind, however, that the attitude of the anti-Communist underground to the Jews was not uniform. Definitely anti-Semitic were organisations that had a clear nationalist ideology. On the other hand, the underground post-AK circles were less hostile to the Jews. In these organisations there were significant differences in the attitude to the Jews between high-ranking commanders and the lower cadres, where anti-Semitic attitudes were rooted in the general social mood. This type of dependence can be confirmed by an analysis of the press published by AK–DSZ–WiN, where Jewish issues were rarely mentioned (only in 10 percent of papers can one find the words "Jew" or "Jewish communism"). This percentage was higher in the press published by lower levels of the organisations (around 40 percent of the leaflets).[44]

Hostility toward the Jews was frequently motivated by economic factors. A part of Polish society was afraid that the Jews returning to their home towns would try to claim their property, which had been taken over by the Poles during the war. Marian Adler, former chairman of the TSKŻ in Lublin, in his recollections of the immediate post-war years wrote: "In 1947 we organised a congress of Lublin Jews. Hundreds or more came. Rumours were circulated that they came to take back the homes and panic broke out."[45] Aware of these sentiments, many Jews did not even try to return to their homes. For those who decided to take such a risk, attempts to restitute their lost property sometimes ended tragically. In April 1945, in the village of Rogów, Puławy district, Szmuel Goldfarb and Zalmen Aszkenazy, who had gone there to "take care of some property issues", were murdered. Both were hiding during the war in Rogów. They never returned to Lublin, where they had settled in 1944. They were murdered in Karczmiska, shot from a passing wagon.[46] In June Jakub Dragoczyński was shot in Biała Podlaska. The murder was to avenge the restitution of a mill in Janów Podlaski.[47] In early June a resident of Częstochowa, Fajga Himelbau, arrived in Czemierniki in order to restitute her family's house. She was murdered in the village of Stoczek, where she was trying to claim her sewing machine. According to the information given to the Provincial Jewish Committee in Lublin, the perpetrators "tormented and terribly tortured the victim before she was killed . . . ."[48] Fajga Himelblau had returned a few weeks earlier from a concentration camp in Germany.

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[44] For more on the attitude of the post-war underground to the Jews see R. Wnuk, *op. cit.*, 199–219.

[45] M. Niezabitowska, T. Tomaszewski, *Ostatni współcześni Żydzi polscy* (Warsaw, 1993), 24.

[46] APL, UWL, WSP cat. no. 50, p. 33.

[47] *Ibid*.

[48] *Ibid.*, 36.

Characteristically, the plunder of Jewish property did not end with the German withdrawal from the Lublin region; on the contrary, it continued and sometimes took more hideous forms than before. The Provincial Office in Lublin informed the Jewish Committee in Tomaszów Lubelski that since the end of military operations, the property of the Jews murdered in the Bełżec death camp was constantly being stolen from the former camp's premises. Groups of local inhabitants regularly dug up mass graves of the murdered, seeking gold and other valuables. This horrific form of plunder also had its victims. In autumn 1945, near Bełżec, Szmul Pelc, the chairman of the Jewish Committee in Tomaszów, who had informed the provincial authorities of the continuing plunder, was murdered. The murderers were the local peasants who dug up the graves.[49]

It is difficult to assess how many acts of violence against the Jews were motivated economically. Undoubtedly, there was a rise in the crime rate during the post-war period, and the Jews were an attractive target for the many gangs of robbers active at that time. Many Jews who were getting ready for emigration accumulated valuables and foreign currencies, as well as selling their property.[50] Furthermore, it seems that even though the restitution of property lost during the war involved a tremendous risk, relatively many Jews succeeded. The archives of the municipal court in Włodawa contain over 240 cases filed during 1944–1947 by former Jewish owners, concerning the restitution of property lost during the war. Such cases constituted a decisive majority of all civil cases at that time.[51] The restituted property covered real estate, houses and farm buildings, as well as animals, wagons and home furnishings. For example, an Abram Roter attempted to restitute some elements of his mill plundered during the war (including the motor and the wheels).[52]

The above attempt to classify anti-Semitic motives is far from exhaustive. The complexity of the post-war situation and the fact that the majority of the archive sources do not contain a clear description of the background of the individual anti-Jewish incidents often makes it possible only to give a general indication of such events.

Thus in summer 1944, on the road from Piaski to Lublin, Józef Honig's father and brother were forced off a wagon and shot dead.[53] On 20 December 1944 Kalman Orzeł was shot in front of his own house in Siedlce, where on 25 February 1945 Jankiel Omielina was also shot dead.[54] In February 1945, an armed assault on one Jewish family took place in the village of Paprotnia. A grenade wounded the mother

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[49] D. Blatman, "The Encounter between Jews and Poles in Lublin District after Liberation, 1944–1945", *East European Politics and Societies,* 2006, vol. 20, no. 4, 618.

[50] R. Wnuk, *op. cit.*, 218.

[51] APL, Chełm Branch, Sąd Grodzki (Municipal Court) we Włodawie [1919] 1929–1950.

[52] *Ibid.*, cat. no. 430, 431.

[53] Józef Honig's account, in author's archives.

[54] AŻIH, CKŻP, Secretariat, cat. no. 132. The letter of the Jewish Committee in Siedlce to the Central Committee of Polish Jews, requesting that security be provided to the Jews, Siedlce 12 March 1945, quoted in A. Cała, H. Datner-Śpiewak, *Dzieje Żydów w Polsce w latach 1944–1968. Teksty źródłowe* (Warsaw, 1997), 23–24.

and her two small children.[55] In December, in Moszenki, Jastków community, an armed gang attacked the house where Boruch Wasserman's family lived. Once the Jews had been separated from the rest of the tenants, they were robbed, and left alive only after desperate begging of the neighbours.[56]

Dawid Engel, referring to a report on the living conditions of the Jewish community in the Lublin region, prepared in Lublin, says that twelve Jews were to have been killed in January 1945 in Janów Lubelski.[57] In February, six Jews were killed in the village of Wohyń, Radzyń district, and a dweller of the Siedliszcze community, Lejba Rojzen.[58] In early March 1945, three women of the Luksemburg family were killed in Dęblina-Irena: Lacia, the mother, Gitel, the daughter, and Frida, the daughter-in-law.[59] In March eight Jews were killed in the village of Mokobody.[60] In the same month, an unidentified Jew was killed in the village of Kamień, Chełm district.[61]

On 10 April 1945 in Uchanie an unidentified Jew was killed, and several days later, on the Chełm–Hrubieszów road two Jews were forced off a wagon and shot dead. At the same time, a note was thrown into the house of a Jew living in Hrubieszów which read: "We pity your children, your assassination is planned."[62] On 21 April Gitla, Srul and Mordko Szczupak, residents of the Poniatówka colony, Wojsławice community, were murdered.[63] Nine days later in Janów Lubleski unidentified persons shot Abram and Cuker Zeltman.[64]

In June 1945 a grenade was thrown into Józef Wajberg's shop.[65] In the same month in Żelechów, an armed gang attacked at night a house where six Jews were sleeping. Four of them were murdered: Szlojma Hefner of Żelechów, Saba Edelman of Warsaw, Perla Fajgenzucht and an unidentified pregnant woman.[66] Exactly one year later in Krzywda, Łuków district, unidentified men shot four Jews, repatriates from the USSR, in front of a shop.[67] In 1946 in Międzyrzec Podlaski a young Jewish couple was murdered.[68]

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[55] *Ibid*.

[56] AIPN, cat. no. Lu 04/636 ch. 29

[57] D. Engel, *op. cit.*, 46.

[58] AŻIH, CKŻP, Secretariat, cat. no. 132. The letter of the Jewish Committee in Siedlce . . . , quoted in A. Cała, H. Datner-Śpiewak, *op. cit.*, 24; AIPN, cat. no. Lu 3/187, 23. (I am grateful to Mariusz Zajączkowski for making this document available).

[59] A. Abenshtein, *Murdered after the Liberation*, in: D. Shtokfish, ed., *Demblin-Modzjitz Book* (Tel Aviv, 1969), 500.

[60] AŻIH, CKŻP, Secretariat, cat. no. 132. The letter of the Jewish Committee in Siedlce . . ., quoted in A. Cała, H. Datner-Śpiewak, *op. cit.*, 24

[61] APL, UWL, WSP cat. no. 50, p. 13, 16.

[62] AŻIH, CKŻP, WO cat. no. 3, minutes of a plenary session of the WKŻ in Lublin on 15 April 1945, p. 4

[63] AIPN, cat. no. Lu 3/187, p. 24.

[64] R. Wnuk, *op. cit.*, 305.

[65] *Sztandar Ludu*, 7 July 1945, no. 104.

[66] Kh. Ashlak, "My Tragic Night Zhelekhov", in: J. Kugelmas, J. Boyarin, *From a Ruined Garden* (New York, 1983), 246–247.

[67] R. Wnuk, *op. cit.*, 392.

[68] M. Niezabitowska, T. Tomaszewski, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

In none of the above-described murders can one determine the motives of the perpetrators beyond doubt. Both the press and the militia and administration documents quite frequently contain attempts to assign the perpetrators a given political affiliation. This was the case when attempts were made to accuse the Lublin Jews of ritual murder (the article describing the circumstances behind Zofia Niemczyńska's disappearance was entitled "The Lublin Hitler's followers' provocation exposed", and those who tried to stir up anti-Jewish incidents were described as "a gang of NSZ provocateurs"), and the same is true about the June murder of Jews at Żelechów (according to the *Dos Naje Lebn* newspaper, the perpetrators were NSZ members, who attacked "a group of Polish democratic activists").[69]

Attempts sometimes made to determine the actual motives of anti-Jewish incidents usually lead to a fiasco, and historians, who have limited sources, can only construct more or less reliable hypotheses. This research problem is clearly exemplified by the case of the murder of Leon (Lejb) Felhendler (in Lublin), who was one of the leaders of the uprising in Sobibór. So far this case has not been seriously or exhaustively described by historians.

Felhendler[70] arrived in Lublin in spring 1944, after the Germans were driven out of the Lublin region. He lived with other refugees from Sobibór in a tenement house in No. 4 Kowalska St. He began to do some business, and eventually opened a tannery in the Kalinowszczyzna district, which employed Jewish survivors.

Some time later, Felhendler married the widow of the murdered Hersz Blank, a Jewish woman from Krasnystaw.[71] Apparently, wanting to achieve some stability in life, he moved out of the overcrowded flat in Kowalska St. to No. 6 Złota St.[72] Disaster struck in early April 1945. According to Felhendler's wife:

> On 2 April, before 7 p.m., we were sitting in our room. This was the last room, and we were subtenants. I heard some commotion in our landlord's room. I was lying on the couch, reading a book. He was doing some writing. I had a

[69] D. Engel, *op. cit.*, 75.

[70] Leon Felhendler was born in Turobin in 1910. The following year his family moved to Żółkiewka, where Leon's father, Symcha Felhendler took the post of chief rabbi. During the occupation he became the chairman of the Żółkiewka Judenrat and the president of the [local] branch of the Jewish Social Self-Help. In mid-October 1942, together with the remaining Żółkiewka Jews, he was deported to the transit ghetto in Izbica, and later to the death camp in Sobibór. In early 1943 Felhendler became the informal leader of the camp underground. In September 1943, the camp conspirators were reinforced by Jewish POWs from the Red Army, with Aleksander ("Sasza") Pieczerski at the head. Thanks to the co-operation of both groups on 14 October 1943 an uprising broke out in the camp. Around 300 prisoners (out of a total of 600) managed to escape to the neighbouring forests. After his escape from Sobibór, Felhendler and another refugee, Meir Ziss (alias "Majorek"), together with a refugee from the Izbica ghetto, Moszek Honig, found shelter in Maciejów Stary near Żółkiewka, on a farm belonging to the brother and sister Jan and Katarzyna Wieleba. Several months later they all moved to another hideout in the same village, prepared by Piotr and Stefania Sadło, where they stayed until the arrival of the Red Army (AIPN, cat. no. OKL/Dz. 4/87. Minutes of interrogation of witnesses: Henryk Sadło and Marian Honig).

[71] T.T. Blatt, *Sobibór. Zapomniane powstanie*, Włodawa–Chełm, b.r.w., 159.

[72] Tomas (Tojwie) Blatt's account (in author's archives).

> premonition. I only said: "Leon, it's them." He went to the door. A shot rang out. One shot through the door. He stood there, pale. I jumped up, unaware what was going on. "Let's run through the back door", I said. "I can't". "Why?" "I got a bullet, here" . . . I pulled him by the hand and we ran out onto the street. I caught a droshky. We drove to the hospital. Several hours later they operated on him. The operation was successful, but the doctors did not believe he would get better, not for one moment. . . . He suffered for three days, and I didn't want to give him water, they wouldn't allow it. This is how another chapter of Sobibór ended.[73]
>
> According to the case book of the St Vincent de Paul Hospital, Leon Felhendler was admitted to the surgical ward on 3 April 1945, with the diagnosis: "shot through the lower part of the chest, intestines and stomach."[74] The patient died three days later, on 6 April. This entry is the only archive document indirectly concerning the murder of Felhendler.[75] There is nothing to suggest that an investigation was initiated after the murder. Situation reports of the Lublin MO for 1945, kept in the Lublin IPN Archives, contain no trace of this incident, event though cases of murder committed in the city were scrupulously noted. What is interesting, the report of 5 April mentions a murder committed in the flat at No. 6/4 Złota St., i.e. in the Felhendlers' flat. However, the victim is identified as a Hanna Gil.[76]

As the culprits were not found, the motives of Leon Felhendler's murder remain a mystery. According to a testimony of a pre-war resident of Żółkiewka, Jerzy Kołodziejczyk, it could have been murder motivated by robbery.

> In 1944 or in early 1945, I met L. Felhendler in Lublin. He invited me to a café and talked about his experiences concerning his escape from the death camp. He was living in Lublin at that time and dealt in gold illegally. He was very reckless, because during our meeting he boasted that he had some gold, showing me, in a crowded café, a handful of golden coins. . . . according to a version I heard in Lublin, Felhendler was killed by robbers, so I suppose that he was not killed in connection with anti-Semitism.[77]

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[73] Yad Vashem Archives, Felhendler's wife's testimony, cat. no. 016/464, 24–25.

[74] APL,. ST. Vincent de Paul hospital in Lublin case book, cat. no. 40, entry no. 427.

[75] Apart from an abbreviated testimony concerning Sobibór in ŻIH Archives, given by Felhendler before the Jewish Historical Commission in Lublin, the author, despite fairly thorough archive research, was unable to find other immediate post-war historical sources, which would at least mention the name of the leader of the Sobibór uprising. Felhendler's name does not appear in any of the censuses of Jewish Holocaust survivors carried out during 1944–1945 or in the substantial documents of the Lublin Jewish institutions of that time. The archives of the Lublin Civil Registry Office do not contain references to Felhendler's marriage or his death.

[76] AIPN, MO situation reports from Lublin (Raporty sytuacyjne MO z Lublina). cat. no. 04/635, ch. 22. According to the testimony given to the author by Tomas Blatt, Hanna Gil could have been a maid employed by the Felhendlers. However, Felhendler's wife, in her fairly detailed testimony, does not mention that they had a maid, nor does she mention that someone else apart from Leon Felhendler was murdered in No. 6/4. Złota St.

[77] Jerzy Kowalczyk's testimony (in author's archives).

Some anti-Jewish incidents were directed not so much against individual people, but against entire groups of Jews. In mid-August 1945 in Chełm, a group of war invalids first attacked people in the Jewish Committee, and later began to rob and beat up Jews in the streets of the town. The incidents lasted for about six hours, and several people were severely beaten up.[78] On the night of 19/20 June of the same year, an armed gang tried to barge into Ryki and start a pogrom. The attackers were repelled by the MO, but they managed to kill two Najtajler brothers and two young Jewish women, who had recently returned from a concentration camp.[79]

However, the loudest resonance was caused by the Parczew pogrom of February 1946. According to state security employees from Włodawa, who reported to the WUBP (Provincial Public Security Office) in Lublin, the plan of attack on Parczew and on the Jewish residents of the town dates back to late 1945. In a conversation between employees of the [security] office employees and an Antoni Kulik (who identified himself as "the regional AK commandant"), he was to have stated that "their organisation is very large and they will organise one more assault on Parczew in order to wipe out the Jews."[80] According to a memoir of the Włodawa District WiN commander, Edward Taraszkiewicz, "Żelazny", the direct initiators of the assault on the town were, apart from the author: his brother Leon Taraszkiewicz, "Jastrząb", Stanisław Łukasik, "Ryś" and a "Tygrys". All four persuaded "Orlis" (Klemens Panasiuk), who was the then deputy Włodawa District WiN commandant, to take part in the action. Ultimately, the assault team was led by "Jastrząb" and Piotr Kwiatkowski, "Dąbek" (according to different sources, the strength of the attackers ranged from 30 to 50 men).[81] The action began on 5 February 1946 at night. The partisans were able to seize the bridge without firing a single shot and disarm two Jewish guards. On their way to the town centre they captured a third Jew. They seized the post office building, but they were unable to seize the MO station, which was located on the first floor of a tenement house. Having cut off the telephones, the attackers began to plunder Jewish shops and flats. The stolen goods were loaded onto stolen trucks and wagons. Jewish property of limited value was destroyed on the spot. They also checked the identity of suspect-looking people, and some partisans were ordered to go to the flats "of prominent Jews and seize them."[82] According to "Żelazny's"

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[78] State Archive of New Records in Warsaw, Prezydium Rady Ministrów, cat. no. 133, p. 68–69. Report of the department for help to the Jewish population of the Ministry of Labour and Social Help on the state of security of Jews, Warsaw, August 1945, quoted in A. Cała, H. Datner-Śpiewak, *op. cit.*, 31–33.

[79] *Sztandar Ludu*, 7 July 1945, no. 104.

[80] Report of section II on the course of work of the District Public Security Office in Włodawa for 27 November 1945–6 December 1945, Włodawa, 6 December 1945 (document from the archives of the Lublin Branch of the IPN, made available by Dariusz Libionka).

[81] The Jewish witnesses of the pogrom spoke of as many as 100–120 men. Probably they also counted Parczew inhabitants, who spontaneously joined the action. *Cf.* Por.: State Archive of New Records in Warsaw, Prezydium Rady Ministrów, cat. no. 133, p. 65. Minutes prepared by the Provincial Jewish Committee in Lublin, forwarded to the President of the Council of Ministers by the CKŻP, quoted in A. Cała, H. Datner-Śpiewak, *op. cit.*, 39–40.

[82] APL, AK–WiN, Okręg Lublin, Inspektorat chełmski, Oddział Włodawa, cat. no. 101, vol. II, ch. 20.

memoirs, a number of Parczew residents were actively involved in the robbery and the tracking of the Jews:

> The local population, having realised what was going on, ignoring the gunshots, goes out into the streets to see the "boys from the forest." Parczew youths, mostly from the local gymnasium, bravely assist us in tracking the Jews, loading the wagons, etc. 4–5 hours later, everybody gathers in one place at an agreed rocket signal. Our group and "Dąbek's" unit is getting into the car . . . . we leave Parczew in a happy mood.[83]

Three Jews died during the action: forty-two-year old Dawid Tempy, thirty-one-year old Mendel Turbineri, and forty-three-year old Abram Zisman. The fourth Jew, Lejba Frajnberg, was wounded.[84] It is impossible to determine conclusively what the functions of the murdered were (all three were captured arms-in-hand). As it seems, the attackers decided that they were UB, MO or ORMO (Ochotnicza Rezerwa Milicji Obywatelskiej, Volunteer Reserves of the People's Militia) functionaries. Characterising the Jew captured on the bridge, "Żelazny" wrote: "One of them was a UB sergeant, known as 'Bocian'. He was a mean kike in his attitude to the Poles."[85] In another fragment of his memoirs, he described the bridge guards as "Jewish ORMO men, who watched a complex of buildings inhabited by Jews."[86] The latter piece of information might mean that the victims were members of a volunteer guard, co-operating with the ORMO, established by the Central Committee of Polish Jews to protect the Jewish inhabitants of Parczew. Their formal membership in the security apparatus or the militia is not confirmed in UB reports or documents, either. The victims are described as "citizens of Jewish nationality who were on duty as municipal guards."[87] According to these documents, during the action two MO functionaries from Dębowa Kłoda were abducted, but managed to escape their captors. State security documents mention a fourth fatality, a former blue policeman from Parczew, the then MO functionary, Wacław Rydzewski.[88]

The day after these events, a KBW and UB Task Force under Rozenker set up an ambush near the village of Wielkie Łazy for the withdrawing perpetrators of the pogrom. In the ensuing combat four KBW soldiers were killed and the group was forced to withdraw, but it forced "Jastrząb's" detachment to abandon the stolen goods.[89]

Before the Parczew pogrom, the town had around 200 Jewish inhabitants, a majority of whom as a result left the town and moved to larger towns.

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[83] *Ibid.*, ch. 21.

[84] R. Wnuk, *op. cit.*, 216–217, 356–357.

[85] APL, AK-WiN, Okręg Lublin, Inspektorat chełmski, Oddział Włodawa, cat. no. 101, vol. II, ch. 20. His identity is unclear, as no personal files or file cards of any of the victims of the action in Parczew were found in the IPN. Therefore they could not have been UB or MO functionaries.

[86] *Ibid.*

[87] AIPN, cat. no. Lu 0237/591, ch. 10.

[88] *Ibid.*

[89] R. Wnuk, *op. cit.*, 357.

A similar scenario was repeated in Rejowiec, where in spring 1945 about 20 Jewish inhabitants, former Auschwitz prisoners, left the town because of threats. They found refuge in the locale of the Jewish Committee in Chełm.[90] In spring 1946, all the Jews left Bełżyce as well. Their flight was triggered by the murder of two Jews on 14 March by a WiN detachment under Stanisław Łukasik, "Ryś" (one of the initiators of the Parczew pogrom).[91]

In February 1946, when the mass repatriation from the USSR began, some anti-Communist underground detachments launched attacks on trains carrying Jews returning to Poland. The so-called "train action" had a significant number of victims nationwide (Józef Adelson writes about 200 murdered, but this number is definitely too large).[92] Descriptions of this type of incident in the Lublin region preserved in the archives demonstrate their entire cruelty and brutality; apart from anti-Semitic banditry, it is difficult to find any other motives, including political ones.

The first assault on Jews travelling by rail took place in the Lublin region even before the repatriation action began, i.e. in summer 1945. According to testimonies given before the Provincial Jewish Committee in Lublin by two inhabitants of Biała Podlaska, a cruel murder of Jews took place on 29 June on a freight train between Łuków and Biała Podlaska.

> Modliński Jakub and Zylbersztajn Izrael, having received aid packages for the town of Biała Podlaska in Lublin, took a train . . . to Łuków. They arrived in . . . Łuków early in the morning, and at 4 p.m. boarded a freight train to get to Biała Podlaska. The train stopped at the Sieniawy station and the men were joined by a young (22-year-old) girl, who was heading for Międzyrzec. Two men wearing railway men's caps entered the same car. About 1 km away from the Sieniawy station, these two individuals, behind the back of Modliński Jakub, Zylbersztejn Izrael and the girl, Starcówna Rywka, who stood there talking, drew revolvers and started shooting. The first to be wounded was cit[izen] Zylbersztejn in the (left) arm and the neck; next Modliński Jakub was killed, shot (in the chest) with 10 bullets. They took his boots off and threw the body off the train. The murderers ran out of bullets, so the girl, Starcówna Rywka, was killed by slashing her throat and leaving her bleeding on the train. The girl's body was not found until the train arrived in Międzyrzec.[93]

The wounded Zylbersztejn jumped off the train and, helped by Russian officers, reached the hospital in Łuków.[94]

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[90] AŻIH, CKŻP, Secretariat, cat. no. 138. Minutes prepared by the CKŻP on the basis of data obtained from the branch office in Chełm. Warsaw, April/May 1945, quoted in A. Cała, H. Datner-Śpiewak, *op. cit.*, 27

[91] AIPN, cat. no. Lu 08/102, vol. III, 5; R. Wnuk, *op. cit.*, 363; S. Jadczak, *Bełżyce. Monografia miasta i gminy* (Bełżyce, 2002).

[92] *Cf.* J. Adelson, " W Polsce zwanej ludową," J. Tomaszewski, ed., *Najnowsze dzieje Żydów w Polsce w zarysie* (*do 1950 roku*) (Warsaw, 1993), 393.

[93] APL, UWL, WSP cat. no. 50, p. 34.

[94] *Ibid.*

On 12 May 1946 in the town of Gródek, Włodawa district, a WiN detachment under Leon Taraszkiewicz attacked a train carrying postal money. During the action nine NKVD and four UB employees were killed. When the passengers' identity was checked, two identified Jews were shot on the spot.[95]

The first assault on a train carrying repatriates from the USSR took place on the railway line Susiec–Długi Kąt, Tomaszów district. It was carried out by the companies of "Bystry" (Antoni Kusiak) and "Ligota" (Witold Kopeć).[96]

On 18 September 1946 in the village of Sokula, Radzyń district, a 100-man strong detachment under "Kłos" (Stanisław Miszczuk) stopped the Warsaw–Terespol train and shouting "Jews and Soviets out!" began chasing people out of the cars and checking their identity. According to Lejbko Goldberg's testimony:

> One of the Jews, Srulek Zylberstein (engaged in partisan activity near Minsk), afraid of being killed, started to flee. The bandits shot him on the run. They also killed a woman, Ginia Aderstein of Biała Podlaska (a former Auschwitz prisoner), having previously checked her identity. A Polish pathfinder, riding in the same compartment, told the bandits that four Jews were riding on the train. The rabbi of Biała Podlaska, Auerbach, managed to save his life, because he had an "Aryan" appearance and appropriate papers. The fourth Jew, Srulek Bekerman, who also had an "Aryan" appearance, was identified by one of the thugs, but was able to buy himself out. The victims were robbed of everything and stripped naked. The corpses of the murdered were transported by the Russians to Biała Podlaska, from where they were transported to Międzyrzec by the Jewish Committee.[97]
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> According to the testimony of the same witness, on 17 September 1946, on the Łuków–Siedlce route, a Winderbaum of Radzyń Podlaski was murdered.[98]
>
> Another "Kłos" detachment train action was carried out on the night of 2/3 October 1946 in Szaniawy, Łuków district. A train carrying Red Army soldiers from Berlin to Moscow was attacked. The partisans disarmed several dozen of them and abducted a few KBW officers of Jewish origin.[99]

Intensification of anti-Jewish incidents in the spring and summer of 1946 was not very visible in the Lublin region, perhaps because the Lublin Province was not among the chief areas of settlement of repatriated Jews, and a small percentage of those returning home decided to stay in the area. However, even the Lublin region was affected by the intensification of anti-Jewish actions, particularly by the aftermath of the Kielce pogrom of 4 July 1946. After the Kielce pogrom, panic broke out among the Jews, and their number in the capital of the region dropped by more than a half (from 2,300 in early July to 1,013 in August). The decline on the provincial scale was even greater and was about 75 percent (over 6,100 people in May

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[95] R. Wnuk, *op. cit.*, 381; *Atlas polskiego podziemia niepodległościowego…*, 144.

[96] R. Wnuk, *op. cit.*, 385. This action, without giving any details, was noted in Klukowski's diary (*Zamojszczyzna*, vol. II, 240).

[97] *Ibid.*, 413; AŻIH, Lejbko Goldberg's testimony, cat. no. 301/1869, p. 1., Adam Kopciowski, *Zajścia antyżydowskie na Lubelszczyźnie…,* 144.

[98] *Ibid.*

[99] R. Wnuk, *op. cit.*, 417.

and 1,562 in August).[100] Most of those who decided to leave the Lublin region also decided to emigrate, especially given that in mid-July 1946, the Minister of National Defence, Marian Spychalski, opened the border for Jewish emigrants.[101]

The desire to leave the country was so powerful that even the PPR (Polish Workers' Party) cell at the WKŻ in Lublin, traditionally hostile to the Zionist pro-emigration campaign, in the wake of the Kielce incidents took a more lenient position. Lejzor Fajertag, a member of a PPR cell, said: "We are experiencing a terrible tragedy. But we cannot force [people] to stay. What we should discourage is only chaotic emigration."[102]

Intensified emigration caused serious perturbations in a number of areas of Jewish life in Lublin. The secretary of the same party cell, Munisz Izraelicz, reported in the second half of the year: "After the Kielce incidents, a part of society was struck with panic, which made our work difficult in the sphere of productivisation [sic] of the Jews. Almost all Jewish employees of the tannery have left, so some craftsmen have also left. A group of workers had already been hired for railway work, i.e. for concrete labour . . . Influenced by Zionist agitators, these people have left."[103]

Following the example of local Committees, members of the PPR cell were contemplating the option of supplying all willing Jews with weapons and establishing a self-defence unit.[104] Finally, it was decided to put up armed guards in front of Perec's House and the WKŻ locale. Eleven armed guards watched the assigned places as late as 1948.[105]

The Kielce incidents also affected the Polish population. The gradually waning anti-Jewish agitation intensified anew. In Lublin leaflets calling for a pogrom of the Jews were put up.[106] In October 1946, in the very heart of the city (the market hall in Lubartowska St. and the walls of a destroyed building in Pijarska St.) posters were put up.

Some of them read: "Lublin must follow Kielce. Death to the Jews", "We want a Jew-free Poland. Death to the Jews", "Let every Pole strive to annihilate the Jews", and "Death to jews [sic] and Jewish lackeys."[107] Sometimes attempts were made to put these threats into action. The Information Bulletin of the MBP (Ministerstwo Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego, Ministry of Public Security) reported about one of them. In Lublin, on 19 August 1946:

> At 9 p.m. two officers wearing Polish Army uniforms, pistols in hand, attempted to initiate a pogrom by shouting: "Let's get the Jews!" Several Jews were beaten up. The militia intervened immediately. The officers fired their

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[100] AŻIH, CKŻP, WEiS, cat. no. 242, no pagination.

[101] J. Adelson, *op. cit*., 412.

[102] APL, Municipal PPR Committee (hereinafter: KM PPR), Organisational Division (hereinafter: RO), minutes of the POP (fundamental party cell) at the WKŻ 1945–1948, cat. no. 8/VI/150, p. 103.

[103] *Ibid.*, cat. no. 8/VI/151, p.10.

[104] *Ibid.*, 101.

[105] AŻIH, CKŻP, Wydział Opieki Społecznej, cat. no. 99, no pagination.

[106] APL, leaflets published after the liberation, cat. no. 122, ch. 73, 78

[107] *Ibid*. (some original spelling retained).

> pistols. Thanks to MO's energy, the culprits were apprehended. It turned out that they were KBW officers: 2nd Lieutenant Wróblewski Stanisław, 2nd Lieutenant Kałczyński Franciszek. The apprehended [officers] stated that they had to do the same as in Kielce. During their transport to the Town Command [of the Polish Army], they were freed by KBW soldiers, who severely beat up the officers from the Town Command of the Polish Army.[108]

It seems that the reactions of the majority of the society of the Lublin region were balanced between ambivalence and approval. Discussion about the pogrom aroused powerful social emotions, but it is difficult to find traces of sympathy for the victims. Rallies organised by the authorities, aimed at condemning the Kielce pogrom, frequently turned into meetings that were saturated with an anti-Semitic atmosphere hostile to the Jews. In July 1946, at a rally organised in Dęblin by the PPR, the majority of 1,500 participants did not hide their aversion to the speakers that condemned the Kielce pogrom. Official speeches were interrupted by such shouts as: "Down with the Jews", "They came to defend the Jews, shame", "The Jews killed 13 Polish children and . . . they came to defend them", "Bierut will not dare to sentence them [i.e. the participants in the pogrom] to death", "Jews [are] UB leaders", "we want democracy, but without the Jews".[109] Anti-Semitic incidents were not restricted to the anonymous crowd. One of the organisers of the Dęblin rally, a PPS (Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, Polish Socialist Party) member, Chodkiewicz, during another meeting in a Lublin cinema, "Apollo", expressed the same opinion as the crowd. In his justification of the Kielce incidents, he remarked: "We don't like the Jews, and other nations don't like them either."[110]

According to Bożena Szaynok, apart from anti-Semitism, such attitudes could have been influenced by political factors. Communist propaganda readily used anti-Jewish incidents to discredit the opposition, particularly in the eyes of influential Jewish milieus in the West. Because the Jewish issue was turned into a political problem, the opposition, accused of anti-Semitism (pro-independence organisations, PSL [Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe, Polish Peasants' Party], the Catholic Church) often got involved in a discussion from the point of view of the "besieged fortress". Therefore protests against the meetings and resolutions prepared by the authorities had another layer to them: apart from anti-Semitism there was also protest against propagandistic manipulation by the communists.[111]

The position taken by the Catholic hierarchy in the Lublin region is also unclear. Izrael Gutman, citing an account of a Jewish journalist, Szmuel Lejb Sznajderman,

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[108] *Biuletyn Informacyjny MBP. 1946 r.*, Warsaw 1996, 18. *Cf*. APL, UWL, WSP, cat. no. 196, no pagination. Reports of district MO commands of the Lublin district on robberies during 1945–1946.

[109] A. Paczkowski, ed., "Raporty o pogromie", *Puls* 1991, no. 50, 107–111. See also J. Michlic--Coren," Polish Jews during and after the Kielce Pogrom: Reports from the Communist Archives," *Polin. Studies on Polish Jewry*, 2000, vol. 13, 260–261.

[110] APL, KM PPR, RO, minutes of the POP (fundamental party cell) at the WKŻ 1945–1948 cat. no. 8/VI/150, p. 102

[111] B. Szaynok, "Strach. Antysemityzm w Polsce po Auschwitz. Esej historyczno-interpretacyjny" [review of J. T. Gross, *Fear. Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz*], *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* [*Holocaust Studies and Materials*], 2006, no. 2, 491–492.

who visited Poland in 1946, listed a number of interventions by the members of the Jewish Committee in Lublin with the Lublin bishop, Stefan Wyszyński. The meeting was initiated by a group of foreign journalists, who appealed to the bishop via representatives of Lublin Jews and requested him to issue a statement on the Kielce incidents. At first, the bishop, having become acquainted with the background of those events, including the information about the rumour of the ritual murder, said: "The causes (of the pogrom) are far deeper, [because] they are rooted in a general hatred of the Jews, as the Jews are actively involved in current Polish political life . . . the Germans attempted to exterminate the Jewish nation because the Jews promulgate communism."[112]

Commenting on the Kielce incidents, the bishop said: "From the point of view of Christian ethics, I condemn every kind of crime. However, as regards Kielce [incidents], I have nothing to add, nor do I find anything to specially condemn, because the Church continually condemns evil." When the delegation asked about the attitude to the accusations of ritual murder, the bishop stated: "In Bejlis's trial, numerous Jewish books, both old and new, were collected, but the questions concerning the ritual use of blood by the Jews have not been conclusively explained."[113]

It should be stressed that Bishop Wyszyński's statements concerning the Kielce pogrom were not very different from the position taken by other members of the Church hierarchy during that period. At a press conference of 11 July 1946, Cardinal August Hlond dismissed the racist motivation of the Kielce pogrom, and saw its roots chiefly in political factors. In his opinion, Polish anti-Semitism was largely caused by the Jews themselves, as they occupied prominent positions in government administration and tried to impose systemic forms that were not accepted by the majority of society.[114]

Initially, the reactions of the Jews themselves to anti-Semitic incidents were cautious and restrained. At the aforementioned session of the Jewish Committee in Lublin on 13 August 1944, the majority did not support the motion of Chairman Rozenmann to initiate efforts to set up militia posts outside Jewish institutions. One of the members of the committee justified this as follows: "We should not create a Jewish problem and raise panic."[115] Another motion to turn to the Polish and Soviet authorities in security matters was also met with substantial scepticism. The proposal to appeal to the Soviets in matters of security met with definite disapproval. The members of the committee were afraid of the accusations that the Jews, as an ethnic group, enjoyed particular favours of the founders of the new regime; hence they did not want to make the Soviet authorities arbiters in Polish-Jewish matters. The committee secretary, Wolf Sztajnlauf said: "We should turn in all matters only

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[112] Sh. L. Schneiderman, *Between Fear and Hope* (New York, 1947), quoted in Y. Gutman, S. Krakowski, *op. cit.*, 66–67.

[113] *Ibid.*; N. Aleksiun, "The Polish Catholic Church and the Jewish Question in Poland, 1944–1948, *Yad Vashem Studies*, 2005, vol. 33, 143, 159–160.

[114] *Ibid.*, 155. Because post-war materials in the Archdiocesan Archives in Lublin are unavailable, this statement could not be verified.

[115] AŻIH, CKŻP, WO, cat. no. 3, set of minutes of the Prezydium Pomocy Żydom (later the Jewish Committee in Lublin), for 11 August–21 September 1944, p. 6.

to the Polish authorities; it is also necessary to act tactfully, which could only be beneficial to us."[116] Another member of the committee, Ludwik Gutmacher, expressed a similar opinion: "We should, in all matters, appeal only to the Polish authorities, and any other manner of dealing [with such matters] is not advisable."[117]

Caution and restraint in security matters was also characteristic of the activists of Lublin Jewish institutions later on. Sometimes one has the impression that anti-Jewish incidents were deliberately disregarded and were not published in order to avoid further tensions with Polish society. At one session of the Lublin committee, Ludwik Gutmacher stated directly: "In Lublin, there's no issue of security, so one should not unnecessarily create a Jewish question, as it is undesirable."[118]

Also attempts were made to avoid decisive interventions with the local authorities, and their indolence in providing security and protection to the Jewish populations was explained more by inefficiency than lack of good will or more or less hidden anti-Semitic attitudes. Frequently planned interventions were not carried out. Thus during one session of the Lublin committee in August 1944, the decision was made (but never acted upon) to appeal to mayors of towns where anti-Jewish incidents had taken place, requesting them to issue condemning proclamations.[119] Furthermore, the Lublin Jewish institutions announced the establishment of a special commission to supervise the state of security of Jews in the provinces; this decision was not acted on either. On the other hand, the lack of any response to the original appeals sent in 1945 by Jewish institutions – to mention but one, the Provincial Office – discouraged the committee from taking up such interventions. Equally futile were also individual interventions by Jewish representatives with the members of the Church hierarchy. Symptomatic was the reaction of the administrator of the Lublin diocese, Józef Kruszyński, to whom Jewish representatives appealed (probably as the first member of the Church hierarchy) to issue a special proclamation condemning anti-Semitism. The bishop advised Emil Sommerstein (the chairman of the CKŻP), who came to intervene, to appeal directly to the Cracow metropolitan, because, as he said, he did not want to be the first to issue such a proclamation. In his recollections of the visit, Bishop Kruszyński noted: "Those demands contained such obsessive elements that I could not get rid of that Jew's obtrusiveness."[120]

The lack of external activity was sometimes compensated for by postulates to introduce changes within the Jewish community, which were aimed at eliminating the causes of anti-Semitic behaviour. At a WKŻ session in Lublin in April 1945, its chairman, Majer Ryps, said: "We should not aggravate the [existing] relations. Primarily, we should call on the Jewish masses to re-stratify in order to break off

[116] *Ibid*. 7.
[117] *Ibid*.
[118] *Ibid*. 9.
[119] *Ibid*. 6.
[120] Quoted in D. Libionka, "Antisemitism, Anti-Judaism, and the Polish Catholic Clergy during the Second World War, 1939–1945", R. Blobaum, ed., *Antisemitism and its Opponents in Modern Poland* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005), 263.

with the existing lifestyle. (Jewish) committees must help them to do that."[121] Apart from the postulates of professional productivisation, the Jews were advised to be more considerate in their contacts with the Christian population, e.g. as was the case in Międzyrzec Podlaski, where the local Jewish Committee prohibited the Jews from applying for restitution of property expropriated during the war.[122] It should be noted, however, that the Provincial Jewish Committee in Lublin, established in March 1945, was far more interested in security matters than the Jewish Committee in Lublin, active until as late as August. Primarily, attempts were made to interest the local authorities on a greater scale by supplying them with precise descriptions of anti-Jewish incidents in the Lublin region. It was also important that the Committee extended its protection not only to Lublin, but also the provinces, where the security of the Jews was definitely worse than in the region's capital. These efforts by the provincial committee culminated in a "Memorial on the security of the life and property of the Lublin Jewry", prepared in March 1946 and sent to the Governor of the Lublin Province and the Bishop's Curia.[123] The document listed numerous cases of murder committed in early spring 1946 (two Jewish employees of the mill in Chełm, four Jews in Janów Lubelski, a handicapped woman without legs in Radzyń Podlaski, two Jews in Lublin itself, the murder of Chaim Hirszman, one of the victims of the Parczew pogrom), and mentioned threats directed at Jewish institutions, as well as the hostile attitude of some local administration officials toward the Jews. The authors of the memorial demanded that the administration, political parties and the Church take resolute action against the "perpetrators of the murders" and those who "spread racial hatred". They expected that the authorities would hold the culprits accountable and organise a large-scale propaganda action "in order to eradicate the poisoned seed of hatred, planted during the occupation." At the same time they expressed the hope that "such an action, properly organised, with its headquarters in Lublin, and represented via appropriate channels throughout the province, not only would yield desired results for us, but would also be conducive to the development of higher moral standards in society and the enhancement of the authority of the state in international relations."[124]

The memorial did not bring any concrete results, save propagandistic effects. The initiative was welcomed by the Lublin PPS and the province governor, Wacław Rózga, who incorporated its main theses in circulars sent out to district governors, the superintendent of schools, head of the Provincial Office of Information and Propaganda, the chief of the WUPB and the municipal commandant of the MO.[125] The reaction of the bishop's Curia was ambivalent. Its representatives promised to reply in writing to the Jewish postulates, but, on the other hand, they did not think

[121] AŻIH, CKŻP, WO, cat. no. 3, minutes of a plenary session of the WKŻ in Lublin on 15 April 1945, p. 5.

[122] *Ibid.*, 3–4.

[123] Full text of the memorial in APL, UWL, WSP cat. no. 50, p. 47–50.

[124] APL, UWL, WSP cat. no. 50, p. 48–50.

[125] *Ibid.,* 54-59.

that "the Jewish issue should be discussed from the pulpits."[126] Furthermore, the memorial did not put an end to the occasional insults directed at the committee over the telephone or in writing. In late May 1946, the committee received a letter full of anti-Semitic slogans such as: "Down with the Jews", "The Jews are Poland's doom", "Jewish rule is the death of a million workers", "The Jew is your enemy".[127]

The favourable response of the province governor was something new in the relations between the local administration and Jewish institutions. In principle, all Jewish interventions to the Provincial Office were ignored until the spring of 1945. The provincial authorities occasionally intervened in matters of security of the Jewish population, but usually not on their own initiative but as a result of the intervention of central-level institutions. In the second half of March 1945, the Political Department of the Ministry of Public Administration sent a circular to the provincial governor in Lublin, ordering the subordinated offices to issue relevant instructions to "rectify the existing state of affairs" in Polish-Jewish relations.[128] On 17 April, the Provincial Office sent out copies of the circular to fifteen district offices and mayors of three separate towns, with the instruction to immediately react to any anti-Jewish incidents and inform the Socio-Political Division of the Provincial Office about them.[129]

Reports from district offices coming in May 1945 were astonishing. Only the Krasnystaw district governor announced strict punishment of the perpetrators of anti-Jewish incidents. Seven others (the district governors of Biłgoraj, Biała, Lubartów, Łuków, Puławy, Radzyń and Zamość) reported that there were no anti-Jewish incidents in their areas, and even that there were no Jewish residents (which was not true in any of those cases).[130] It seems that providing inaccurate information was more a result of negligence and a lack of good orientation in the existing situation than ill will. The report of the Włodawa district governor was completely different. He informed, as the others did, the Provincial Office that there were no anti-Jewish incidents in his district, but also decided to add his own remarks on Polish-Jewish relations. In his opinion the society of the Włodawa district had a "broad grudge" toward the Jews, because "during the first months of independence they were too aggressive toward the rest of the population", and they "are unable to co-exist with it." According to the district governor, particularly detrimental to Polish-Jewish relations was the presence of Jews in the security apparatus and in the militia, and their "hostile" attitude to "the other nation". He cited as an example the shooting of "two Aryans" by a "Jewish militia man", which disturbed the "harmonious co-existence in the spirit of democracy". In his summary, the Włodawa district governor wrote that the issue of relations with the Jews would resolve itself if the number of Jews in militia cadres dropped.[131]

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[126] APL, KM PPR, RO, minutes of the POP (fundamental party cell) at the WKŻ 1945–1948, cat. no. 8/VI/150, p. 91.

[127] AŻIH, CKŻP, WO, cat. no. 106, minutes of a WKŻwL session of 25 May 1946.

[128] APL, UWL, WSP cat. no. 50, p. 7.

[129] *Ibid.,* 8.

[130] *Ibid.,* 11, 12, 20, 21–24, 28.

[131] *Ibid.,* 29.

It is difficult to conclude to what extent such a way of thinking, based on stereotypes fairly common in Polish society and on a language borrowed from the terminology used during the occupation, was characteristic of the representatives of the local administration of the province. A similar report came from the Siedlce district governor, who, informing of the murders of two militia functionaries of Jewish origin, connected them with political factors, but did not see the possible anti-Semitic motives behind those incidents.[132] It seems that the very presence of Jews in towns and villages of the province was a troublesome burden for the local authorities.[133] Their attitude to Jewish issues was a particular mixture of indifference, organisational inefficiency, and, but to a lesser extent, aversion or hostility. Characteristically, in those cases where the local authorities made efforts to formulate a "more profound" analysis of the underpinnings of anti-Jewish incidents, virtually the only conclusion was to shift the blame onto the Jews themselves. They were said to exhibit aversion toward the Polish population and "overrepresentation" and "overeagerness" in the security apparatus. No wonder, therefore, that sometimes the local administration made efforts to get rid of the unwanted burden, either completely or in part. In February 1945, the Ministry of Public Administration was informed that the Municipal Board and the Citizens' Militia made it difficult for Jews returning to Dęblin-Irena to obtain residence permits. When Jews applied for registration in Dęblin-Irena, the municipal authorities were to inform [them] that only three towns in Poland had been marked as places of residence for the Jews.[134] In November of the same year, similar tactics were adopted by the authorities of Biała Podlaska, refusing to register Jews in the town. Giving an explanation before the Provincial Office, the Biała [Podlaska] district governor initially said that the town was overcrowded, but finally admitted that his decision was motivated by factors other than demography.[135]

> Given that nearly all the Jewish residents of Biała Podlaska are involved in illegal trade, purchasing various items from the passing Soviets, which is detrimental to the economic, social and cultural relations of all residents of Biała Podlaska, I thought it fit to refuse some persons [the right] to settle in Biała Podlaska.[136]
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> The new extensive administration was not created out of a void; it employed "ordinary" people, residents of the Lublin region, who as officials were motivated by their notions of contemporary reality, characteristic of the rest of society. When one judges their attitudes, one should bear in mind that among the functionaries of the new regime, there were also people of definitely anti-Semitic views, or even those who had Jewish blood on their hands. This was the case, to name but one, in Uchanie and nearby Raciborów, where four of the local militia men turned out to have murdered the Mehl family in July 1944.[137]

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[132] *Ibid.*, 25.
[133] D. Blatman, *op. cit.*, 619.
[134] UWL, WSP 50, p. 1.
[135] UWL, WSP, 50, p. 39, 42.
[136] *Ibid.*, 43.
[137] M. Rudawski, *Mój obcy kraj?* (Warsaw, 1996), 165–166; AIPN, cat. no. Lu 04/406, ch. 31.3.

It also appears quite likely that a more resolute attitude of the local authorities, combined with some good will, could have alleviated to an extent the Polish-Jewish antagonism. This is demonstrated by the situation in Międzyrzec Podlaski of early spring 1945. Initially, the municipal authorities displayed hostility toward the Jews. The mayor did not allow a Jewish doctor to open his practice, and the militia turned a blind eye on cases of demolishing Jewish houses. The acrimonious relations were to have been made good by a "[State] Security delegate", who according to the testimony of a member of the Międzyrzec Jewish committee, Manperl, "reconciled the Poles and the Jews." There was even an "agreement" signed between the two communities, and according to information of the delegate to the Provincial Jewish Committee in Lublin: "the relations are now good."[138]

The wave of anti-Jewish incidents in the Lublin region, as well as throughout the country, gradually ceased in autumn 1946. In the following year such incidents did not occur again.

It is obvious that the post-war wave of anti-Semitism had a profound influence on the subsequent fate of the Jewish community in Poland. The most direct and most telling result of the wave of violence during 1944–1946 was a long list of from 600 (there are as many well-documented cases) up to 3,000 (the upper limit given by some Israeli historians) murdered Jews.[139]

In order to summarise all the cases of murder of Jews quoted in this article, one should verify the existing findings concerning the number of Jews killed in the Lublin region in the early post-war years.

Table 1. Number of Jews murdered in the Lublin region between summer 1944 and autumn 1946

Period	Number of murders
1944	4
January–March 1945	40
April–June 1945	39
July–September 1945	3
October–December 1945	3
January–March 1946	16
April–June 1946	7
July–September 1946	4
October–December 1946	–
1946 (month not established)	2
TOTAL	118

[138] AŻIH, CKŻP, WO cat. no. 3, minutes of a plenary session of the WKŻ in Lublin on 15 April 1945, p. 4.

[139] A. Cała, H. Datner-Śpiewak, *op. cit.*, 15.

The first recorded case of murder of Jews in the Lublin province took place in July 1944, the last one in September 1946. A surge of killings is apparent in the first half of 1945, when as many as 68 percent of all murders were recorded. In the first three months of the following year (another rise in murders) there were less than 14 percent.

The most dangerous districts for Jews were: Janów (23 victims), Siedlce (16), Chełm (15) and Radzyń (11). Seven Jews were murdered in Lublin itself.

Characteristically, out of the 118 murders of Jews noted in this article, no more than 24 cases (about 20 percent), could have been motivated by political, rather than racial reasons. This number comprises nine soldiers of the Polish Army and the KBW, eight UB and MO functionaries, three alleged or actual informers, three Jewish guards with connections to the ORMO, and one public prosecutor. One could surmise, therefore, that 80 percent of all murders of Jews in the Lublin region (94 cases) could have been motivated by anti-Semitism or (and) robbery.

It should also be noted that 118 victims definitely do not comprise the actual number of murders of Jews in the Lublin region. For a number of reasons, establishing the fact of the case is impossible.

It seems that fear for one's safety was an important factor that influenced the consciousness and plans of the Jews who were inhabitants of the post-war Lublin region. It largely affected the demography of this milieu (emigration, migration from the provinces to bigger centres), and influenced changes in views and political opinion (increased popularity of Zionist ideas and parties). However, this was not the only factor; nor was it, according to Jan T. Gross's opinion expressed in his latest publication on post-war Polish-Jewish relations, the most important one.[140] As Bożena Szaynok rightly notes, the principal cause of Jewish emigration after 1944 was not anti-Semitism, but the experience of the Holocaust, and the reluctance to live on the land where the most horrific murder of Jews had taken place.[141] Furthermore, the Kielce pogrom only accelerated emigration which, after all, had been going on since 1944. In this context it should be borne in mind that Lublin was one of the chief centres coordinating illegal *aliyah*, where the second (after Vilna) leadership of Bricha (Zionist Coordination) was established and Zionist leaders who prepared the transport of people to Palestine were operating.

It is extremely difficult to determine the scope of anti-Jewish attitudes in post-war Polish society. The pre-war lines of division became in part blurred during the German occupation and after the war, whereas the new divisions were completely fluid. It would be an oversimplification to ascribe anti-Semitic attitudes only to definite milieus, former followers of nationalist ideas, detachments of anti-Communist underground (NSZ and the post-AK partisans), the new owners of former Jewish

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[140] J.T. Gross, *op. cit.*, 258.

[141] B. Szaynok, *Recenzja...*, 494. According to the quoted CKŻ document of winter 1946, which discussed the causes of emigration, the main factor for the decisions to emigrate was the inability to live in those localities which had "turned into cemeteries"; others were the desire to reunite with the family and the surge in Zionist sentiments. Anti-Semitism was listed as the last motive. (Archiwum Akt Nowych w Warszawie, Ministerstwo Administracji Publicznej, cat. no. 788, p. 51–53).

property, etc. Anti-Jewish attitudes, to a varying degree, were characteristic of the majority of society. Even milieus that traditionally distanced themselves from xenophobia radically changed their face. Furthermore, the intensification of anti-Semitic attitudes was caused by the instrumental treatment of anti-Semitism by the Communist regime, which used it in the current political struggle in order to discredit the opposition.

It seems that post-war anti-Semitic attitudes were both active and, in the majority, passive submission to the general atmosphere of hostility toward the Jews. Active anti-Semites were obviously the perpetrators of murders, motivated by various reasons and the authors of propagandist actions of sorts, directed against the Jews. The latter type of attitudes comprised primarily the passive acceptance of anti-Semitic actions, mainly typical of the local levels of state administration.

It remains an open question how to classify the post-war Jewish victims in the broad context of the then socio-political situation. Undoubtedly anti-Semitic attitudes were among its elements and formed tenets of the worldview of a number of Polish milieus opposing the new regime. Some of the victims (around 20 percent in the Lublin region) were those who lost their lives because of their affiliation with the structures of the Communist state (although several of the cases discussed here were primarily to do with the racial factor) and died in armed combat. The remaining 80 percent can, with a high likelihood, be considered as murders that did not have much to do with the combat of the pro-independence underground against the Communists.

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