SHATTERED SPACES: JEWISH SITES IN GERMANY AND POLAND AFTER 1945

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ABSTRACT

MICHAEL MENG: Shattered Spaces: Jewish Sites in Germany and Poland after 1945
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By 1945, almost all that was left of Jewish life in Germany and Poland were shattered spaces — synagogues, Jewish cemeteries, and Jewish districts. What happened to these damaged and largely abandoned sites after the Holocaust? This dissertation explores this question from a transnational and cross-political perspective; it analyzes the shifting appropriation of Jewish sites in Berlin, Essen, Potsdam, Warsaw, and Wrocław from 1945 to the present. In the early postwar decades, urban planners, historic preservationists, and officials completed the destruction of numerous damaged Jewish sites or allowed them to ruin by neglect. Jewish sites reflected spaces of violence and a minority culture that did not fit into the temporal demands of urban modernism, socialist realism, and the culturally inscribed boundaries of the "historic." But in the late 1970s the appropriation of Jewish spaces started to shift as church groups, residents, political dissidents, Jewish leaders, and tourists became interested in recovering the few traces still left standing. Since 1989, this attraction to Jewish sites and more broadly almost anything perceived to be "Jewish" has increased at an almost dizzying rate as Germans, Poles, Americans, Israelis, and others have searched for the vestiges of the "Jewish past." This surge of interest has not only produced numerous preservation projects, but it has also led to contradictory appropriations of the Jewish past. Jewish sites have come to reflect what I call "redemptive cosmopolitanism," an mnemonic impulse that harnesses the Holocaust for the celebration of democracy's cathartic, redemptive arrival in a post-communist and post-fascist world.

This dissertation analyzes this shifting history to contest arguments about the role of the nation and the cold war in the formation of memory. Historians have long connected collective perceptions of the past with national identity and emphasized some remembrance of the Holocaust in the west compared to the sinister manipulation of it in the east. Although national and political differences certainly mattered, my work uncovers the rich interplay between the local and the transnational. It examines the multiple, conflicting, and shared ways that Poles, Germans, Jews, Americans, and Israelis have appropriated Jewish spaces in the local built environment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have many intellectual debts. My hope is that the footnotes will serve as a series of acknowledgments to the numerous thoughts and ideas of others that have shaped my own thinking about urban space, historic preservation, and historical temporality. I would, however, like to point out two books that shaped my thinking at an early stage — Rudy Koshar's *Transient Pasts* and Gavriel Rosenfeld's *Munich and Memory*. I read these books just out of college the summer before I left for Germany on a Fulbright scholarship prior to entering graduate school. These books got me interested in the interplay of the built environment and memory. Indeed, when I arrived in Potsdam, I dropped my earlier project and started a new one on the reconstruction of the city I was living in. Rosenfeld and Koshar brought me to the built environment, which in turn lead me to another book that initiated the series of questions that I have been thinking about for the past six years. One afternoon, browsing through a stack of books on Potsdam in the local library, I came upon a small, slim volume on the city's synagogue. I was struck by the time line printed at the end of the book, especially its last entry: "1958 — synagogue torn down." I went to the local archive and discovered a fascinating history about the building's relationship to postwar urban reconstruction. I presented my findings in Professor Heinz Reif's doctoral seminar at the Technische Universität Berlin. Fresh out of undergraduate studies, I will confess now that I was not prepared for the bombardment of questions that came my way that afternoon but I am certainly glad for the experience because it pushed me to think beyond Potsdam and beyond Germany. Needless to say, my first and perhaps largest debt is to the Fulbright organization for giving me such a wonderful year of intellectual exploration where I could take the ideas of Rosenfeld and Koshar into different directions.

There were, of course, a number of people who were instrumental in getting me to Germany in the first place. I was fortunate to have excellent teachers and mentors at Boston College where I completed my undergraduate degree. John Heineman taught me that history is above all about analysis; he pushed me constantly to think insightfully and creatively about the past, demanding in the margins of my papers "deeper analysis." Michael Resler — a true *Mensch* — probably read my Fulbright essay ten times. Stephen Schlosser probably did the same; one day he printed out Orwell's "The Politics of the English Language" and said simply —– "read this!" Finally, Larry Wolff, now at NYU, got me thinking about Europe's "eastern" parts.

I have also had excellent mentors at UNC-Chapel Hill who turned me into a professional historian. Christopher Browning and Konrad Jarausch have been precisely the supportive, yet tough critics that I sought out when selecting a graduate program. They have written countless letters, read numerous drafts, and sat through many hours listening to my ideas. I cannot thank both of them enough. Chad Bryant has been exceptionally generous with his time as well. His comments on my chapters have been sharp, astute, and tough; they will be of much help as I revise the manuscript for publication. Madeline Levine took me on as a student of Polish. We met every week in her office to work on my translating skills and to discuss my research. When the year ended we continued our meetings at the Daily Grind, talking and debating about Polish-Jewish relations over a cup of coffee. Karen Hagemann generously came on board just as she arrived at UNC. Although my course work ended just as she came, I have gotten to know and admire her sheer energy and enthusiasm for research; I have lost count how many conferences, workshops, and seminars she has organized in the mere three years that she has been at UNC.

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Although funding is absolutely necessary to getting over to Europe, the actual work of archival research is impossible without the assistance of archivists and librarians. I want to thank the staffs at the numerous archives and libraries that I visited in my research in Germany, Poland, Israel, and the United States. They often greeted me with warmth and friendliness. Many of them also responded to my requests ahead of time with detailed information and advice. The interlibrary loan staff at the Davis Library at UNC-Chapel Hill has simply been tremendous; they deserve special thanks for the several hundred requests that they filled for me over the years of research and writing.

Finally, I want to thank a number of friends who helped me along the way. In Warsaw, I survived a cold, dark winter in the good company of fellow graduate students Audrey Kichelewski and Anat Plocker, while in Berlin Winson Chu and Karolina May-Chu welcomed me into their home countless times. Having coffee and a *Berliner* with Winson and Jennifer Miller after the *Mensa* was such a pleasant weekly habit. In Chapel Hill, Kristin Knight read

through many drafts of my work and tolerated my long absences with patience. It is has been particularly fun for us to use as an excuse the completion of a chapter (or, failing that, just a "bad writing day") to try out a new restaurant in the Triangle.

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INTRODUCTION

SHATTERED SYMBOLS AND INTERPETATIONS OF THE PAST IN THE MIDST OF THE HOLOCAUST

In July 1944, the great Yiddish novelist Isaac Bashevis Singer looked back on the Jewish life that had once existed in the capital city of his native Poland. A year earlier, the Nazis had brutally crushed the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, leveling the area that had confined Jews since the early years of the war and had made up the main district of pre-war Jewish Warsaw. In 1918, there were 320,000 Jews living in the city who comprised 42 percent of its total population. Just twenty years later, an additional 50,000 Jews were living in the Polish capital. Warsaw had become one of the largest cities of Jews in the world rivaled only by Moscow and New York. Most Jews lived in the northern part of the capital, clustered in three areas, with the district of Muranów being the most heavily populated where Jews made up no less than 90.5 percent of the inhabitants.[1] As the mass murder of European Jewry had now virtually come to an end, this area was nothing more than a field of smoldering ruins, layered with mounds upon mounds of crushed cement and broken glass. Jewish Warsaw was simply no more.

> On Saturday morning the streets were full of the scent of cholent and kugel. The sound of Sabbath songs rang out from all windows. Here was the Land of Israel. ..."Those" streets included the following: Dzielna, Pawia, Gęsia, Miła, Niska, Stawki, Muranowski Square and first and foremost Nalewki and Franciszkańska. Those Jews traded before the First World War with Vladivostok, Petropavlovsk and even China. They had their stores packed up to the rafters with merchandise. … It is hard to imagine that all of that pulsating and glittering life has been extinguished, that this gigantic collection of human singularities was wiped off the face of the earth.[2]

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[1] Statistics located in Gabriela Zalewska, *Ludność żydowska w Warszawie w okresie międzywojennym* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1996), 63.

[2] Yitskhok Varshavski, "Yede Yidishe Gas in Varshe — Geven a Shtot Far Zikh," *Forverts* July 2, 1944; quoted in Jan Jagielski, *Jewish Sites in Warsaw* (Warsaw: City of Warsaw, 2002), 14-15.

After the Holocaust, the main traces of Jewish life in Germany and Poland were the shattered streets, synagogues, districts, and buildings that had caught Singer's mournful attention.[3] Since so few Jews survived Nazi Germany's "Final Solution" and many of those who did left for Canada, Latin America, the United States, or Palestine, the physical spaces of Jewish life was all that was left in most places. A region that once had 3.6 million Jews had by the early 1950s a mere 90,000. Germany and Poland, two countries with deep and rich histories of Jews, became after 1945 landscapes of shattered Jewish traces scattered from the smallest village to the metropolis. Indeed, writing some fifty years after Singer, Agata Tuszyńska told of her own mournful, melancholic search for the "world of Polish Jewry" through "shattered symbols" — those found in the pages of Singer's novels and those located on the streets of her hometown "in the remnants of synagogues, the remnants of traces."[4] "My movie theater — severe, cold, devoid, to be sure, of the particular melody of prayerful voices, but obviously wiser than any ordinary move house — was a Jewish synagogue," she writes.[5] Located on otherwise ordinary, everyday streets, these "shattered symbols" captured the lowest and most tragic moment in the history of Jewish-gentile relations in Germany and Poland. One might initially assume that this catastrophic past would simply have faded away, that it simply would have lost its immediacy among the many other demands of postwar reconstruction, among the sea of rubble that was the urban landscape of Poland and Germany. But it simply did not. Although the presence of Jews in the two Germanys and Poland was extremely small throughout most of the postwar period until recently, the problem of Jewish-gentile relations hardly went away and only intensified as it became refracted through the prism of the Holocaust. Jewish sites, broken, fractured, and ruined,

[3] Given that the last chapter discusses the appropriation of Jewish spaces after 1989, I say "Germany" for the sake of simplicity when referring to 1949-2008. When speaking specifically about the 1949-1989 period, I say "divided Germany" or the "two Germanys" when talking about the FRG and GDR together. In short, "Germany" is not meant to be anything more than shorthand for the 1945-2008 period. It is in no way an attempt to homogenize two different states.

[4] Agata Tuszyńska, *Lost Landscapes: In Search of Isaac Bashevis Singer and the Jews of Poland*, trans. Madeline G. Levine (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1998), 3, 8.

[5] Ibid., 5.

were arguably the most visible and everyday reminders of this destroyed relationship. When Germans and Poles rebuilt their bombed-out cities after the war, they faced a complex question. What should be done with the ordinary spaces of Jewish life, the shattered symbols of the past — the synagogues, Jewish cemeteries, Jewish districts left behind in the wake of mass murder?

Few other societies faced the burden of the Holocaust — encountering those empty Jewish streets, synagogues, and cemeteries — quite like Germans and Poles.[6] It was after all in Germany that the "Final Solution" originated and in Poland that it unfolded in the midst of the Nazi's brutal, colonial occupation of the country. In ways similar, yet also clearly different, Germans and Poles became entangled in the Holocaust with a level of intensity matched by few other Europeans.[7] This past made the issue of Jewish-gentile relations all the more central and palpable after the war. Moreover, almost every part of continental Europe had small Jewish communities after the Holocaust, but Poland and Germany were fairly exceptional in just how few Jews decided to stay or return from exile.[8] A sizeable amount of Jewish communal property

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[6] In saying "Germans" and "Poles," I mainly mean non-Jewish Germans and non-Jewish Poles, although Jews living in Germany and Poland — who may or may not consider themselves to be German or Polish — also figure into my analysis. Indeed, one of my main aims is to include the voice of Jews. But given the small size of the Jewish community the majority of those involved in dealing with Jewish property were gentiles. For simplicity, I do not include these distinctions in the text, but I want to mark the complexity of ethnic identity and the heuristic problem of language that scholars writing about these issues today face.

[7] What I mean by this I explore at length in this introduction. Of course, Germany's entanglement in the Holocaust is deeper as the country that designed and implemented the "Final Solution." As historical research on the Holocaust has recently shown, other European societies, even in the face of extreme Nazi brutality directed towards them, became involved in the Holocaust. I find this historiographical trend useful not least because it captures one of the most important aspects of the Holocaust — its geographic scope across the European continent that involved tens of thousands of Europeans. The Holocaust was unique in its spatial breadth, making it different from all other genocides that have been limited to a certain area, nation-state, or region (see Ben Kiernan, *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007)). However, I do think that historians must maintain the centrality of Berlin as they explore the continental dimensions of the "Final Solution." One recent example of such an approach is Christopher Browning's *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939-March 1942* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2004). An insightful analysis of these points is John Connelly's review of Browning's book, "Rule by Inspiration," *London Review of Books* July 7, 2005. In this sense, Jan Gross's historiographical intervention in *Neighbors* could have been even more pioneering had he situated the pogroms against Jews in eastern Poland more squarely within the evolution of Nazi anti-Jewish policy coming from Berlin.

[8] Bernard Wasserstein, *Vanishing Diaspora: The Jews in Europe Since 1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), viii.

now remained abandoned. The absence of Jewish owners put the burden of dealing with it on gentiles to a greater extent than in other countries such as France or Hungary where Jewish communities were larger and more active. The small size of the Jewish community in Poland and Germany also meant that international Jewish organizations and foreign governments, above all the American Joint Distribution Committee, the World Jewish Congress, and the United States State Department, applied particularly intense pressure on German and Polish officials about the legal and physical condition of Jewish sites. No other European states received such intense international scrutiny. This transnational attraction to Jewish space only increased over the postwar years, moving in a number of different directions as international Jewish leaders, tourists, and foreign journalists became interested in the material traces of Jewish life left in both countries in the 1980s and 1990s.

In short, the postwar history of Jewish sites unfolded in a fairly unique and intense way in Poland and Germany. In the early postwar decades, urban planners, historic preservationists, and political leaders generally completed the destruction of numerous damaged Jewish spaces or allowed them to go to ruin by neglect. Jewish sites reflected spaces of violence and a minority culture that did not easily fit into the temporal demands of urban modernism, socialist realism, and the culturally inscribed boundaries of historic preservation. The physical remnants of Jewish life gradually disappeared over the 1950s and 1960s as Germans and Poles rebuilt their cities and restored only those historic buildings deemed worthy of saving. Those Jewish sites that did escape the wrecking ball were either neglected or transformed into new spaces, into movie theaters, storage houses, swimming pools, libraries, exhibition halls. But in the late 1970s the appropriation of Jewish spaces started to shift as a number of different groups of people became interested in recovering the few material traces of Jewish life still left standing. Church groups, local residents, city officials, political dissidents, international Jewish leaders, and tourists became concerned about the ruins of synagogues and cemeteries.

In Essen, city officials, local citizens, and historians restored the city's synagogue to its original interior design after it had been completely altered in the late 1950s to house a museum for industrial products and later an exhibition on German resistance and victimization; East Germany's top political leadership decided on the 85 million-mark restoration of the New Synagogue in East Berlin that had been left bombed-out for four decades; and Poland's communist party restored Warsaw's only remaining synagogue and staged a massive international event at the former site of the ghetto, its rubble buried under apartment complexes and tree-lined avenues constructed in the 1950s and 1960s. In a region of almost no Jews, the fate of Jewish sites started to shift from destruction to preservation before the collapse of communism. Since 1989, this attraction to Jewish sites and more broadly almost anything perceived to be "Jewish" has increased at an almost dizzying rate as Germans, Poles, Americans, Israelis, and others search for the vestiges of the "Jewish past." Just as the Jewish communities of both countries have been growing (especially in Germany), Jewish culture has become something to be touched, experienced, photographed, examined, discovered, protected, preserved, recreated, and restaged. Reunited Germany and post-communist Poland have been witnessing what one might call the reconstruction and musealization of the Jewish past as "authentic" Jewish sites are recreated and Jewish museums are built in old synagogues or entirely new buildings.

This shifting appropriation of shattered Jewish spaces lies at the center of this study. Jewish spaces reflected the violence of the Holocaust and the material articulation of ethnic difference in the built environment. I analyze this spatial appropriation of Jewishness and the Holocaust across the Iron Curtain and Oder-Neisse river, exploring the central question of how much, or how little, national and political differences shaped the interpretation of Jewish sites on the local level. Indeed, one of my main interests is to illuminate the multiple, conflicting, and shared ways that Germans, Poles, Jews and non-Jews appropriated these spaces. Although only small Jewish communities existed in all three cases for most of the postwar period, Jewish leaders vigorously contested the decisions of local authorities regarding Jewish sites. This varied, at times

conflicting engagement with the material traces of Jewish life only increased over the postwar decades. By the 1980s, people both far and near were attracted to Jewish sites for a variety of different reasons — because of tourism, growing discussions about the Holocaust, postmodern fascinations with the "historic," and longings for "cosmopolitanism" in a globalizing world. I analyze this steady transnationalization of Jewish sites in order to explore the interactive, reinforcing, and conflicting dynamics between the local, national, and transnational that together shape the mental and physical politics of space. In so doing, I hope to think through the tensions and contradictions that structure this recent obsession with the past and the urge to essentialize "Jewishness" in the urban landscape, producing what I call at the end "redemptive cosmopolitanism" that harnesses the Holocaust for the celebration of liberal, democratic values in a post-communist and post-fascist Europe.

In pulling together these varied, yet entangled issues, I develop an historical analysis that has yet to be written in terms of its focus on Jewish sites, its comparative approach, and temporal breadth.[9] In the German case, the postwar history of Jewish life has received increased scholarly interest over the past decade, but with the exception of studies on the return of individual Jewish property and the conversion of some Jewish sites into museums little has been written on the physical remnants of Jewish culture.[10] Although Jeffrey Diefendorf, Rudy Koshar, and Gavriel

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[9] No study currently exists that compares these issues in Germany and Poland. Most studies are focused separately on Germany and Poland, creating distinct historiographies that only rarely overlap and interact. Moreover, the current historiography on both countries rarely looks at the entirety of the postwar and post-communist periods. Exceptions include Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit. Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik* (Munich: Beck, 2006); Herbert Marcuse, *The Legacies of Dachau: The Uses and Abuses of a Concentration Camp, 1933-2001* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Michael C. Steinlauf*, Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997); A. Dirk Moses, *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[10] For historiographical overviews of Jewish life in West and East Germany respectively, see Michael Meng, "After the Holocaust: The History of Jewish Life in West Germany," *Contemporary European History* 14, no. 3 (2005): 403-413; Peter Monteath, "The German Democratic Republic and the Jews," *German History* 22, no. 3 (2004): 448-68. On Jewish propety and Jewish museums, see Jürgen Lillteicher, *Die Rückerstattung jüdischen Eigentums in Westdeutschland nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen, forthcoming 2004); Jan Philipp Spannuth, "Rückerstattung Ost: Der Umgang der DDR mit dem 'arisierten' und enteigneten Eigentum der Juden und die Gestaltung der Rückerstattung im wiedervereinigten

Rosenfeld have published pioneering books on urban planning and historic preservation, almost no research has been done on how the traces of minority cultures fit into these wider discussions.[11] Studies on *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, how the two Germanys "came to terms with the past," have also overlooked this problem. Focusing mostly on West Germany, historians have examined the legacies of the Third Reich in a wide range of areas from denazification policies to film to historiography to politics to legal trials to monuments.[12]

Relevant literature on Poland is sparser. The major focus on the postwar period has been on the intertwined issues of antisemitism and the rebuilding of Jewish life after the Holocaust. David Engel, Krystyna Kersten, Dariusz Stola, Jan Gross, and others have written important studies on the violent pogroms just after the war and the anti-Jewish campaign of 1968, while Natalia Aleksiun, August Grabski, and Bożena Szaynok have looked at the organizational, political, and demographic challenges of reconstructing Jewish life during the immediate postwar

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Deutschland" (Ph.D. diss., Universität Freiburg, 2000); Sabine Offe, *Ausstellungen, Einstellungen, Entstellungen. Jüdische Museen in Deutschland und Österreich* (Berlin: Philo, 2000); Jens Hoppe, *Jüdische Geschichte und Kultur in Museen. Zur nichtjüdischen Museologie des Jüdischen in Deutschland* (New York: Waxmann, 2002); Katrin Pieper, *Die Musealisierung des Holocaust. Das Jüdische Museum Berlin und das U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washighton D.C.* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2006).

[11] Jeffrey M. Diefendorf, *In the Wake of War: The Reconstruction of German Cities after World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Rudy Koshar, *Germany's Transient Pasts: Preservation and National Memory in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Gavriel Rosenfeld, *Munich and Memory: Architecture, Memory, and the Legacy of the Nazi Past* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000).

[12] Norbert Frei, *Adenauer's Germany and the Nazi Past: The Politics of Amnesty and Integration*, trans. Joel Golb (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Robert G. Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001); Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Nicolas Berg, *Der Holocaust und die westdeutschen Historiker: Erforschung und Erinnerung* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2003); Eric Santner, *Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990); Rebecca Wittmann, *Beyond Justice: The Auschwitz Trial* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Devin Pendas, *The Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial: Genocide, History, and the Limits of the Law* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau*; Peter Reichel, *Politik mit der Erinnerung. Gedächtnisorte im Streit um die nationalsozialistische Vergangenheit* (Munich: Hanser, 1995); James E. Young, *The Textures of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993); Wulf Kansteiner, *In Pursuit of German Memory: History, Television, and Politics after Auschwitz* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2006).

years.[13] Some recent research has come out that touches on some of the basic problems dealt with here. Jonathan Huener, Michael Steinlauf, and Iwona Irwin-Zarecka have examined Polish memories of the Holocaust and appropriations of Jewishness; Geneviève Zubrzycki has insightfully analyzed the recent controversy about the installation of crosses at Auschwitz; the architectural historian David Ira Snyder has recently finished a dissertation on the clearing of the ghettoes in Prague and Warsaw; and the anthropologist Erica Lehrer has written a fascinating ethnographic study of the transnational appeal and production of Jewish Kazimierz in Cracow.[14] Some interesting work on historic preservation and urban reconstruction has also recently appeared, particularly the studies of Gregor Thum and Peter Oliver Loew, that analyze how Poles dealt with the material traces of German culture in western Poland.[15]

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[13] David Engel, "Patterns of Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland, 1944-1946," *Yad Vashem Studies* 26 (1998): 43-85; Jerzy Eisler, *Marzec 1968. Geneza, przebieg, konsekwencje* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawn. Nauk. 1991); Eisler, *Polski rok 1968* (Warsaw: IPN, 2006); Anna Cichopek, *Pogrom Żydów w Krakowie* (Warsaw: ŻIH, 2000); Krystyna Kersten, *Polacy, Żydzi, komunizm. Anatomia półprawd 1939-1968* (Warsaw: Niezależna Oficyna Wydaw., 1992); Jaff Schatz, *The Generation: The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Communist of Poland* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991); Dariusz Stola, *Kampania antysyjonistyczna w Polsce 1967-1968* (Warsaw: ISP PAN, 2000); Piotr Osęka, *Syjoniści, inspiratorzy, wichrzyciele. Obraz wroga w propagandzie marca 1968* (Warsaw: ŻIH, 1999); Joshua D. Zimmerman, *Contested Memories: Poles and Jews during the Holocaust and Its Aftermath* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003); Bożena Szaynok, *Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach 4 lipca 1946* (Warsaw: Bellona, 1992); Natalia Aleksiun, *Dokąd dalej? Ruch syjonistyczny w Polsce, 1944-1950* (Warsaw: Trio, 2002); August Grabski, Maciej Pisarski, and Albert Stankowski, *Studia z dziejów i kultury Żydów w Polsce po 1945 roku* (Warsaw: Trio, 1997); August Grabski, *Żydowski ruch kombatancki w Polsce w latach 1944-1949* (Warsaw: Trio, 2002); Jan Gross, *Fear: Antisemitism in Poland After Auschwitz* (New York: Random House, 2006); Bożena Szaynok, *Ludność żydowska na Dolnym Śląsku 1945-1950* (Wrocław: Wydawn. Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2000); Ewa Waszkiewicz, *Kongregacja Wyznania Mojżeszowego na Dolnym Śląsku na tle polityki wyznaniowej Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej, 1945-1968* (Wrocław: Wydawn. Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1999).

[14] Jonathan Huener, *Auschwitz, Poland, and the Politics of Commemoration, 1945-1979* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003); Michael C. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997); Geneviève Zubrzycki, *The Crosses of Auschwitz: Nationalism and Religion in Post-Communist Poland* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2006); Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Neutralizing Memory: The Jew in Contemporary Poland* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1989); David Ira Snyder, "The Jewish Question and the Modern Metropolis: Urban Renewal in Prague and Warsaw, 1885-1950," (Ph.D diss., Princeton University, 2006); Erica Lehrer, "'Shoah-Business,' 'Holocaust Culture,' and the Repair of the World in 'Post-Jewish' Poland: A Quest for Ethnography, Empathy, and the Ethnic Self after Genocide," (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2005).

[15] Peter Oliver Loew, *Danzig und seine Vergangenheit. Die Geschichtskultur einer Stadt zwischen Deutschland und Polen, 1793-1997* (Osnabrück: Fibre, 2003); Gregor Thum, *Die fremde Stadt. Breslau 1945* (Berlin: Siedler, 2003).

I. Interpretations of the Past and Spatial Hermeneutics

But while research on the specific problem of Jewish sites is limited, this study touches upon a set of theoretical concerns that is anything but sparse — the analytical category of "memory." The noun "memory" — often preceded by the adjective "collective" — has come to dominate academic discussions in the humanities. In the field of cultural history, it has arguably become the single most important way of analyzing the past, eclipsing the earlier concepts of "identity" and "language" that shaped historical research in the 1980s and 1990s. The now enormous body of literature on memory has made pioneering contributions to the discipline as a whole. It has made scholars more attuned to how the past is perceived, understood, and represented.[16] The study of memory might be fashionable at the moment and its analytical attractiveness will ebb, but it is unlikely to pass as some mere academic fad. It has left too profound a mark on the discipline for it simply to fade away after too much use.

Nevertheless, this recent "memory boom" is not without its own problems. Historians have typically relied on the French scholars Maurice Halbwachs and Pierre Nora for their understanding of "collective memory." Halbwachs argues that memory does not exist solely on an individual level. Going against the long-standing philosophical tradition from Augustine to Locke to Husserl to Freud that accented the individual subjectivity of memory, Halbwachs radically claimed that to remember we must be among others: "a person remembers only by situating himself within the viewpoint of one or several groups and one or several currents of collective thought."[17] Pierre Nora has extended this notion of collective memory to include all of

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[16] Susan Crane, *Collecting and Historical Consciousness in Early Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000); Herf, *Divided Memory*; Dagmar Herzog, *Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Jonathan Huener, *Auschwitz*; Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau*; Moeller, *War Stories*; Reichel, *Politik mit der Erinnerung*; Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991); Santner, *Stranded Objects*; Steinlauf, *Bondage*; Young, *Textures of Memory*; Joan B. Wolf, *Harnessing the Holocaust: The Politics of Memory in France* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004).

[17] Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, trans. Francis J. Ditter, Jr. and Vida Yazdi Ditter (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), 33.

French society. In *Les Lieux de mémoire*, he argues that cultural artifacts such as monuments, film, and literature reflect how certain groups in France remember the past. He understands memory as a force of cultural power that can be manipulated and used. Memory is constructed, managed, suppressed, remembered, and manipulated. As he explains, "[memory] remains in permanent evolution, subject to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of the distortions to which it is subject, vulnerable in various ways to appropriation and manipulation, and capable of lying dormant for long periods only to be suddenly reawakened."[18]

This concept of collective memory as a cultural construct has had a strong impact on the discipline of history. Borrowing generally from poststructural thought, historians have largely continued the argument that memory is a form of cultural power: political and cultural elites construct, appropriate, repress, forget, and reawaken it. By examining historiography, monuments, film, literature, or public debates, they show how dominant elites "manage" or "construct" the "collective memory" of a given society. This approach, however, fails to examine how much this typically public, elite constructed memory reflects the broader "memories" of the general population. It overlooks the complex interaction between memories from "below" and memories from "above." Historians cannot necessarily assume that the publicly articulated memories of political and cultural elites represent those of the broader public — that they in fact make up a "collective memory." As Alon Confino has put it:

> How the narratives of self—how individuals understand their past behavior, place it in a larger context, justify it, how they tell it to family and friends, how they change it over time, and how they translate their memories into social and political actions—are not quite the same as, and certainly not identical with, the narratives of national memory acted by states and institutions in the public sphere.[19]

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[18] Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past,* vol. 1, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 3.

[19] Confino, "Telling about Germany: Narratives of Memory and Culture," *Journal of Modern History* 76, no. 2 (2004): 407. See also Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method," *American Historical Review* 102, Nr. 5 (1997): 1386-1403.

Indeed, one must ask: How collective is "collective memory?" My point in raising this question is not to exaggerate the differences between public and individual memories; political scientists have shown that elites have considerable impact on the shaping of ordinary views, perceptions, opinions, and memories.[20] Through their very monopoly of discursive power, they may very well reflect a collective or shared memory. There is a symbiotic, interactive relationship between the private and public for sure.[21] Rather, I want to suggest that the current conceptualization of memory does not fully take into account the critical fact that the past is often perceived, understood, and interpreted in different ways by different groups of people.[22] Collective memory is not always so collective.

But there is a deeper problem here. If one theoretical conundrum of "collective memory" involves the "collective," another, more fundamental one is no less than the word "memory" itself. Memory often appears as a catchall noun to the point that it has lost its analytical edge. Historians speak of "memory culture," "memory work," or "memory politics" to describe the general process of either suppressing or remembering certain elements of the past. In the specific cases discussed here, the narrative this dichotomy produces is rather predictable and by now well-known: Poles and Germans generally suppressed the Holocaust (1940s-1950s), gradually recalled it (1960s-1980s), and now have come to confront it with general frequency (1990s-2000s). Although there is some validity to this basic periodization, the analytical framework of evaluating a given society's memory culture in terms of either failed suppression or successful remembrance has limitations. This conceptualization in and by itself, to return to Confino, does not "offer any true additional explanatory power" if in the end all it leads to are conclusions about remembrance

[20] David Art, *The Politics of the Nazi Past in Germany and Austria* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[21] See Assmann, *Der lange Schatten*.

[22] Some recent work has moved in this direction. For example, see Marcuse, *Legacies*, and Konrad Jarausch and Michael Geyer, *Shattered Pasts: Reconstructing German Histories* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), chap. 11.

and suppression.[23] What does the above periodization ultimately tell us beyond the facile fact that Germans and Poles supposedly failed to remember publicly the Holocaust for a rather long time?

In my analysis of Jewish space, I move away from the concept of "collective memory" and closer to an hermeneutical understanding of historical temporality that opens up, in my mind, a more penetrating look into how Poles and Germans have interpreted the past. In *Memory, History, and Forgetting*, the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur distinguishes between the capacity to remember (*la mémoire*, memory) and the thing sought out or intended for recollection (*les souvenirs*, memories). This distinction enables him to define memory rather simply as the presence of the absence of a prior reality. Ricoeur emphasizes the temporalizing function of memory by recovering Aristotle's declaration that "all memory is of the past."[24] Indeed, memory is the most fundamental reference to the past that we have. "To put it bluntly," he writes, "we have nothing better than memory to signify that something has taken place, has occurred, has happened *before* we declare that we remember it."[25] In short, Ricoeur strips memory to its fundamental essence as grounded in time. He draws on the ontological problem of historical temporality that Heidegger developed earlier in *Being and Time*. Heidegger claims that temporality defines our existence or our Being (*Dasein*). Human beings are thrown into a world that is shaped by the temporal dimensions of past, present, and future (though Heidegger himself does not use this terminology). Temporality saturates the way we engage in and interpret our world. In this sense, Heidegger's ontological exploration into human existence is hermeneutical by concluding that we interpret our world through time. Since time constitutes both the very essence of what it means to exist and our relation to our existence (our Being and our relation to Being *qua* Being), historical temporality — the constant entanglement of past, present, and future

[23] Confino, "Collective Memory."

[24] Ibid., 6.

[25] Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 21.

at any given moment — structures and frames the very mode of human interpretative understanding. Historical time conditions our understanding of the world.

Following Heidegger's hermeneutical lead, Hans-Georg Gadamer has provided a particularly rich investigation into this crucial point.[26] In his masterwork, *Truth and Method*, he claims that interpretation is the basic state of human understanding, which both history and language shape and structure. Our knowledge is finite in the sense that the "effects of history" (*Wirkungsgeschichte*), disclosed and refracted through language, frame all modes of interpretation and inquiry. We are thrown into a world that already exists, and we interpret that world through the historical and linguistic frameworks that we inherit from the past. Temporality and language make possible the multiple, relative, and normative "standpoints" from which we see and interpret reality. Gadamer's understanding of human knowledge does not lead to a vicious circle of relativism (i.e. the only way to counteract a disputed interpretation is to posit yet another interpretation) nor does it result in the loss of rational autonomy to the stranglehold of the past. Our knowledge is situated in a certain temporal and linguistic framework, but we can freely act upon, modify, appropriate, and shape these "traditions" (albeit in a way limited by those "traditions"). History does not move progressively as a Hegelian Spirit that becomes ever more apparent to itself. Its various meanings shift and change at different moments in time.

The basic thrust of this hermeneutical approach forms the general framework of my analysis of Jewish space. The past is not so much "managed," "worked through," "dealt with," or "confronted." The past is first and foremost *interpreted* as a constituent element of human existence within the temporal framework of past, present, and future. The past conditions and structures interpretations of the past. The Holocaust rendered the ways one thought about, reflected upon, and interpreted Jewish-gentile relations irrevocably different. Poles and Germans cannot transcend this past; it is an integral part of their hermeneutical condition or "standpoint"

[26] In his much fuller understanding of historical temporality, Gadamer departs from Heidegger who places a distinct emphasis on the future dimension of time. Our forward confrontation with our own mortality, what Heidegger calls Being-towards-death, lies at the heart of *Being and Time*.

from which they interpret the world. The Holocaust saturated the stones of the shattered spaces of Jewish life left in its midst. Germans and Poles did not simply ignore and then recover Jewish sites as "suppressed" and "restored" memory. Moreover, interpretations of the past are inherently multiple and varied given the many different standpoints that exist. Many different groups of people interpreted Jewish sites — historic preservationists, urban planners, politicians, Jewish leaders, Church authorities, intellectuals, opposition leaders, ordinary citizens, tourists. I call this multiplicity of meanings and interpretations of an ever-present past "spatial hermeneutics." I use this as an analytical signifier of my point that at issue here is *how* the past gets interpreted at different moments in time and space by different groups of people, not *whether* it gets remembered.

II. Gazing across National and Political Borders

I study this "spatial hermeneutics" in concrete spaces, in five urban landscapes to be exact — Berlin, Warsaw, Essen, Potsdam, and Wrocław. These cities are brought together here for what they reveal about the postwar history of Jewish sites in Germany and Poland and for the important features that they share. All five cities were heavily destroyed during World War II, making the dual challenge of historic preservation and urban reconstruction urgent and complex. These cities also had prominently in the center of town Jewish sites, which were mainly built in the nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries. Constructed in often grandiose and monumental styles, these Jewish spaces reflected the on-going acculturation of European Jewry that suddenly came to an end with the Holocaust. These traces of Jewish life were left behind while the vast majority of Jews were not. After the war, the official Jewish communities of these cities were either small or non-existent and thus most of the Jewish sites, except for the few used for religious purposes, were abandoned and fell into the hands of local governments.

The selection of Warsaw and Berlin is perhaps most obvious: they were the two most important Jewish cultural centers of Poland and Germany before the Holocaust. The three medium-sized cites of Potsdam, Essen, and Wrocław had a much less celebrated tradition of

Jewish life, but this difference makes them compelling choices to broaden the scope of analysis from the capital cities. As smaller, more provincial locations, they also provide at times closer, more vivid glimpses into how Germans and Poles dealt with the material traces of Jewish life than would otherwise be offered by focusing simply on the two metropolises. But while these five cities have been chosen for specific reasons, they have not been selected as rigid case studies to be compared systematically among each other. I offer comparative and parallel readings of them, but I mainly bring them together here to form a kind of analytical kaleidoscope that offers shifting, various, and conflicting perspectives on the central theme of Jewish sites. Using micro histories to address macro questions, I hope to pull together from the specific urban landscapes of these five cities a broader narrative about the appropriation of Jewish spaces in postwar Germany and Poland. In short, my comparative interest is more global than local in scope, crossing the national boundaries of Germany and Poland and the political divisions of democracy and communism.

In this sense, my analysis draws from recent discussions about transnational history, which has become attractive to French, American, and German historians over the past decade for several key reasons. Historians have gradually moved away from seeing culture as a cohesive system and more toward contested notions of "cultural goods" appropriated and negotiated by different social groups.[27] If culture no longer is what humans produce in a given place *à la* Clifford Geertz, its earlier static, cohesive form fades away and it becomes a web of entangled, overlapping interactions among different societies throughout the world. Postcolonial theory has enabled scholars to study more closely these symbiotic relationships as Europe itself has been

[27] On the earlier view of culture as a stable, coherent system, see Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973). The notion of "cultural goods" comes from Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste,* trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1984). For a probing analysis of both schools of thought see, William H. Sewell, Jr. "The Concept(s) of Culture," in Victoria E. Bonell and Lynn Hunt, eds., *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1999), 35-61.

decentered and provincialized.[28] Whereas before historians studied the colonies as mere subjects, now they consider the impact they had on the colonizer in an effort to move beyond Eurocentric histories. The peripheries and borderlands — where cultures intermingle and bleed into each other — have received emphasis as the idea of a single "national culture" and "national history" has lost its analytical appeal.[29] Moreover, transnational history has developed in opposition to earlier practices of comparative history. Transnational historians claim that comparative history often absorbs national and cultural differences in analyzing the past. Much of this is true. Comparative history has often been based on modernization and Marxist theories that attempt to explain the growth of nations or regions into modern, capitalistic, and industrial societies. These theories rest on a basic historicist assumption of development as modernity and capitalism progressively move from the center to the periphery, from England to Germany, from Europe to South East Asia. The variation in the end result, why some nation-states or regions have reached "modernity" while others have not yet arrived, is usually explained in terms of assumed national or cultural differences.

In order to move beyond these limitations, transnational historians suggest decentering the nation by studying the relational and entangled nature of the past. As one prominent historian has put it, "attention to the relational aspects of historical phenomena is the key, and it differentiates this [transnational] approach from most comparative history, which not only tends to reaffirm the nation as a natural category, but, more important, seldom explores causal links between the two national experiences being compared."[30] But while the aim of moving beyond the nation might be clear, the way of getting there is less so. The problem lies immediately with

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[28] Sebastian Conrad, "Doppelte Marginalisierung. Plädoyer für eine transnationale Perspektive auf die deutsche Geschichte," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 28 (2002): 145-169; Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[29] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 199-244.

[30] Thomas Bender, *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 8.

the word transnational itself. Transnational comes from the Latin words *trans* and *natio* to mean beyond or across the nation, but historians differ on how much weight should be placed on the *natio* part of the word. How beyond the nation should historians go in their analysis? Currently, there are roughly three approaches that place varying degrees of emphasis on the nation: global history that examines the interactions of "civilizations" throughout the world and eclipses the nation altogether; cultural transfer or *histoire croisée* studies that look at interactions between individual nations and generally preserve the nation as an analytical category; and regional approaches that study the entangled history of regions and leave some room for the nation (although how much is left unresolved).[31]

This study fits mainly within the regional approach to transnational history with some caveats. It examines a historical problem that proved to be particularly palpable and enduring to an area of Europe. I do not, however, share the skepticism about the analytical centrality of the nation in writing about the modern period and the European continent.[32] Following the sensible lead of the German scholar Kiran Klaus Patel, I consider transnational history to be a perspective that challenges the "natural" focus on the nation without leading to the questionable aim of post-

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[31] On global history, see Jürgen Osterhammel, *Geschichtswissenschaft jenseits des Nationalstaats. Studien zu Beziehungsgeschichte und Zivilisationsvergleich* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001); Bender, *Rethinking*; Sebastian Conrad and Jürgen Osterhammel, *Das Kaiserreich transnational. Deutschland in der Welt 1871-1914* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004). An example of cultural transfer is Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press,1997). On the regional approach, see Philipp Ther, "Beyond the Nation: The Relational Basis of a Comparative History of Germany and Europe," *Central European History* 36, no. 1 (2003): 45-73.

[32] Three points deserve further elaboration. First, key here is the writing of history concerning the modern period when the nation-state gradually became the central organizing principle of society, politics, and government in Europe (particularly between the 1850s and 1870s). To eclipse the nation altogether in the age of the nation-state would simply be ahistorical. Second, I believe that the nation must remain one among many other *analytical tools* but should not become the central and guiding *framework* for narrating the past as it long has. Third, proponents of transnational history often point out the role historians have played in nation-building in constructing national histories, but they must be equally cautious not to serve broader political agendas that, at the moment, might appear attractive, such as European integration. The French term *histoire croisée* explicitly sets out to uncover the entangled histories of Europe leading to the EU. Jacques Delors, former president of the European Commission, did after all write the preface to the first volume of *histoire croisée* edited by Bénédicte Zimmermann, Claude Didry, and Peter Wagner, *Le travail et la nation: Histoire croisée de la France et de l'Allemagne* (Paris: Maison des sciences de l'homme 1999).

national history when writing about modern Europe.[33] Similarly, the near complete dismissal of comparative history seems unreasonable. Comparative history has certainly been based on research questions that reify national differences with its grounding in modernization and Marxist theories. Historians of Germany and Poland know them all too well: Why did Germany depart from the liberal, bourgeois, democratic model of England and France? Why did "East European" countries like Poland fail to modernize along the lines of the "West"? These are by now worn-out questions based on simplistic comparisons between nation-states and regions.[34] But recognizing the limitations of earlier comparative approaches does not render useless the most central purpose of the craft — understanding similarities and differences.[35] On the contrary, I would argue that comparing should be one of the chief analytical tools available to transnational historians.[36]

Indeed, my analysis rests on two broad comparative levels that cut across national and political borders. It examines first how the different political cultures of the Federal Republic (FRG), the German Democratic Republic (GDR), and the Polish People's Republic (PPR), shaped above all by the cold war, had an impact on the handling of Jewish space. The realities, demands, and political dynamics of the cold war set the basic framework for how Germans and Poles interpreted the past. It did so not just in the way one might predict: a "divided memory" of some remembrance in the democratic west compared to the complete suppression and cynical manipulation of the Nazi past in the communist east.[37] This basic divergence forms part of the

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[33] Kiran Klaus Patel, "Überlegungen zu einer transnationalen Geschichte," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 52, no. 7 (2004): 626-645. See also Deborah Cohen and Maura O'Connor, eds., *Comparison and History: Europe in Cross-National Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

[34] On the paucity of modernization and Marxist comparative approaches to studying the past, particularly in the German context, see Jarausch and Geyer, *Shattered Pasts*.

[35] Hartmut Kaelble, *Der historische Vergleich. Eine Einführung zum 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 1999); Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka, eds., *Geschichte und Vergleich. Ansätze und Ergebnisse international vergleichender Geschichtsschreibung* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 1996).

[36] See also Cohen and O'Connor, eds., *Comparison*.

[37] Herf, *Divided Memory*.

story told here, but more compelling are those moments when the cold war becomes politically contested: when, for example, in the late 1970s and 1980s local groups in both the GDR and PPR challenged the official interpretation of the past partly in opposition to communist rule; or when local citizens, mainly on the Left, contested the "normalization" of the Nazi past that became the hallmark of the conservative government of West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl in the 1980s.

And yet the Iron Curtain was not always so ironclad. The universal similarity of the three cases of the GDR, PPR, and FRG — reflected in the gradual transformation of destroying Jewish sites to preserving them over the past sixty years — stems from the deep entanglement of Poles and Germans with the Holocaust and how they came to interpret that reality afterwards. Whether it was the abandoned synagogue in Essen, the ruins of the Warsaw Ghetto, or the destroyed Jewish cemetery in East Berlin, these remnants of Jewish life symbolized the fractured and catastrophic relationship of Jews and gentiles. The postwar period cannot be untangled from the Holocaust because both the experience of Jewish-gentile relations during the war and the interpretations of that experience afterwards set the central and guiding framework for discussing, debating, and understanding Jewish issues after 1945. It perhaps makes sense then to work through, albeit briefly and generally by necessity, the history of Jewish-gentile relations just before and during the Holocaust. In so doing, I do not intend to suggest a causal determinacy that is reductive and simplistic, making the lowest and most tragic point in Jewish-gentile relations the only and inevitable explanation for what happens afterwards. As I hope to illuminate in the following five chapters, the impact of the Holocaust has shifted in different and contradictory ways over the past sixty years. Its influence is neither stable nor unidirectional but it is omnipresent. My sense then is that a short glance at gentile-Jewish relations just before and during the Holocaust, especially for the Polish case (which will receive more attention), is useful in setting both the background for understanding the postwar period and the necessary context for my argument to unfold more fully.

III. Jewish-Gentile Relations and the Holocaust

In the years immediately preceding the outbreak of the Second World War, Europe's democratic states, which had emerged from the rubble of the First World War, collapsed one after the other. An era that was supposed to be of parliamentary elections turned out to be one of dictatorial decrees as democracy receded in Hungary (1919), Italy (1922), Poland (1926) Portugal (1932-33), Germany (1933), Austria (1934), Estonia (1934), Greece (1935), Romania (1938), and Spain (1939). The collapse of democracy in Europe came with a dramatic and devastating attack on those minority groups that the majority believed stood outside the "nation." The most catastrophic case came of course with the fall of the Weimar Republic and the rise of Nazi Germany, but the failure of German democracy and the emergence of Nazism reflected broader European trends toward authoritarianism, fascism, and anti-Jewish hatred. Although the exceptional severity of the German case cannot be emphasized more strongly, there are compelling reasons to argue that, immediately before the outbreak of the Holocaust, threats to the security of the Jewish communities in Germany and Poland had reached a level of intensity matched by few others on the continent of Europe. Interwar Poland never became a fascist state and never carried out measures on the order of the Nuremberg Laws, but the authoritarian state that took power in Poland, following Marshal Józef Piłsudski's coup-de-etat in 1926, came ever closer to implementing the kind of economic pauperization, boycotts, social exclusion, political subversion, and forced emigration that had defined Nazi anti-Jewish policies before the "Final Solution."[38] This was especially the case after Piłsudski's death in 1935 when the nationalist right-wing greatly increased its attack on Jews.[39]

By 1939, the Nazi regime had crippled and marginalized the Jewish community in Germany to the point that it virtually ceased to exist. In a process of ever-increasing radicalization

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[38] William W. Hagen, "Before the 'Final Solution': Toward a Comparative Analysis of Political Anti-Semitism in Interwar Germany and Poland," *Journal of Modern History* 68, no. 2 (1996): 351-381.

[39] Poland was, of course, hardly alone. See, most recently, Paul A. Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary: Religion, Nationalism, and Anti-Semitism, 1890-1944* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

from 1933, Jews became separated from every aspect of everyday life in Germany until massive forced emigration after 1938 in the wake of *Kristallnacht* and the rapid acceleration of seizing Jewish property. The gradual civic, social, and economic death of German Jewry during these years was dramatic: in the fall of 1941, when the Nazi leadership settled on mass murder as the "Final Solution" to its self-imposed Jewish question, over half of Germany's Jewish community had already been forced to flee the country.[40] In explaining these years of persecution, Saul Friedländer has developed the notion of "redemptive antisemitism" to capture the ideological obsession that Hitler and his closest allies had with the "Jewish question." Believing that the German nation could only be redeemed through the removal of the Jews, they were driven to eliminate the Jewish community from German society because no less than the survival of the nation was at stake. Friedländer argues that this "redemptive antisemitism" remained limited mainly to the Nazi elite, suggesting that most ordinary Germans, though holding highly negative prejudices against Jews, did not adhere to such an extreme form of anti-Jewish hatred.[41]

But while the stereotypes, prejudices, and perceptions of ordinary Germans might not have been as radical as those of the Nazi elite, most Germans supported and participated in the persecution of German Jewry.[42] The campaign against the Jews, pushed and formulated by the Nazi leadership, did not develop in isolation from German society as historians have long believed, arguing that it was the chaotic functioning of the Nazi state or the ideological intentions of a few Hitler henchmen that led to ever more radical proposals to solving the "Jewish

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[40] It is estimated that somewhere between 270,000 and 300,000 German Jews fled by October 1941 when Jewish emigration from Germany was no longer allowed, leaving about 164,000 in Germany around the time the Nazi regime had decided on the Final Solution.

[41] Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997).

[42] David Bankier, *The Germans and the Final Solution: Public Opinion under Nazism* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992); Ian Kershaw, *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich, Bavaria 1933-45* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Peter Longerich, "*Davon haben wir nichts gewusst!" Die Deutschen und die Judenverfolgung 1933-1945* (Munich: Siedler, 2006); Friedländer, *Nazi Germany*.

question."[43] As historians now know in light of new research that has appeared since the 1990s, the Nazi state enjoyed large support and encountered little opposition from the German population. Organs such as the Gestapo did not have to rely on a vast terror apparatus since many Germans became willing informants and proved forthcoming with information about their neighbors.[44] As one historian has put it, Nazi Germany was a dictatorship of consent, although of course it was also one of coercion (*Zustimmungsdiktatur*).[45] Indeed, the Nazi persecution of the Jews unfolded through the symbiotic interaction of state and society. Ordinary Germans were not just "indifferent" to the plight of their Jewish neighbors, but became actively involved and entangled in the persecution itself.[46] On the local level, citizens and city officials pushed for the exclusion of Jews from German society often ahead of any direct or explicit orders from Berlin; the anti-Jewish measures that emerged in pre-war Nazi Germany came from a combination of pressures from above and from below.[47] This involvement in the persecution of the Jews was often rather ordinary and everyday: shopkeepers showing hostility to Jewish consumers; landlords ending rental agreements with their Jewish tenants; strangers on trams and streets harassing those who "looked" Jewish; friends or acquaintances severing ties with their Jewish neighbors; local citizens taking over Jewish business, homes, and possessions.[48] As Jews became

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[43] On the functionalist-intentionalist debate, see Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (London: Arnold, 2000).

[44] Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[45] Götz Aly, *Rasse und Klasse. Nachforschungen zum deutschen Wesen* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 2003), 246.

[46] On the term "indifference" see the excellent analysis by Carolyn J. Dean, *The Fragility of Empathy after the Holocaust* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), chap. 3.

[47] Wolf Gruner, "The German Council of Municipalities (Deutscher Gemeindetag) and the Coordination of Anti-Jewish Local Politics in the Nazi State," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* (Fall 1999): 171-199; Gruner, "Die NS-Judenverfolgung und die Kommunen: Zur wechselseitigen Dynamisierung von zentraler und lokaler Politik 1933-1941," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 48, no. 1 (2000): 75-126.

[48] These ordinary actions are gleaned mainly from Jewish memoirs, letters, and diaries. See Marion Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

increasingly segregated and excluded from German society, Germans became directly drawn into supporting and contributing to their plight on a daily basis.

Attempting to understand why Germans became involved in the Nazi persecution of the Jews and seemingly showed little concern for their suffering is no easy task. Some acted to advance their own self interests; some went along with the Nazi system as the easiest way to get on with daily life; some felt pressure to conform from the "tyranny of the majority;" some found the ideas and policies of the Nazis attractive.[49] But while keeping in mind the varied nature of human action, emphasis must be placed somewhere in order to explain the sheer commonality of German involvement in the Nazi campaign against the Jews. The historian Carolyn Dean has recently pointed in a useful direction by examining Jewish perceptions of Germans. Analyzing selections from the memoirs of Victor Klemperer, Mihail Sebastian, and Marcel Reich-Ranicki, she argues that the Nazi persecution of Jews had become so banal, so ordinary that Germans came to accept it; hatred toward Jews had become so embedded in daily life that the suffering of the victim had lost all meaning: "the indifference recorded by both Klemperer and Sebastian more accurately describes how this antisemitism manifests itself as a normalized prejudice. Thus it describes not only the sinister antisemitism that became so predominant, but also how society assimilated it, learned it, performed it, believed it, and thus came to conceive it and live it as normal."[50] From the Nuremburg laws to *Kristallnacht* to "Aryanization," anti-Jewish hatred permeated daily life in Nazi Germany to the point that it had become an intrinsic part of it, becoming so normal that not participating in it seemed abnormal.

On the confiscation of property, see See Avraham Barkai, *Vom Boykott zur "Entjudung." Der wirtschaftliche Existenzkampf der Juden im Dritten Reich* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1988); Frank Bajohr, *"Arisierung" in Hamburg. Die Verdrängung der jüdischen Unternehmer 1933-1945* (Hamburg: Christians, 1997).

[49] Frank Bajohr, "The 'Folk Community' and the Persecution of the Jews: German Society under National Socialist Dictatorship, 1933-1945," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 20, no. 2 (2006): 183-206.

[50] Dean, *Fragility*, 101.

This normalization of anti-Jewish hatred, however, did not take hold only in Nazi Germany. It also penetrated everyday life in Poland. By 1921, Poland regained its independence after having been partitioned for over a century by Prussia, Austria-Hungary, and Russia. Poland was a relatively poor and agricultural country with 35.1 million people on the eve of the Second World War. Its population was ethnically diverse with about 65 percent Poles, 16 percent Ukrainians, 10 percent Jews, 6 percent Belorussians, and 3 percent Germans.[51] Poland's constitution of March 1921 established a parliamentary democracy that concentrated power in the legislative branch, but this system proved highly unstable as successive governments failed to secure a parliamentary majority. In 1926, political power shifted dramatically from the parliament to the president when Marshal Józef Piłsudski carried out a military coup and consolidated authority in his hands. Lasting until the dissolution of the Polish state by the Nazis and the Soviets in 1939, this authoritarian regime, called *Sanacja*, emphasized loyalty to the state, anti-corruption, discipline, and the overall restoration of "health" to the political system.[52]

The *Sanacja* regime had a rather mixed approach to Poland's large ethnic population. Poland guaranteed on paper, through both its constitution and the Minorities Treaty, complete equality of rights to its large national minority population, but in practice ethnic minorities, especially Jews, suffered from intense discrimination, bias, persecution, and violence. In the late 1920s, the *Sanacja* regime supported legislation to remove all restrictions that had been placed on Jews during the partition era and were still being enforced in independent Poland. In 1931, after a decade of languishing in parliament, the law was finally adopted, but no sooner had the ink dried on it Jews faced new assaults on their position in Polish society from increasingly vocal right-wing nationalist groups. By the early 1930s, the powerful political movement of National Democracy or Endecja, founded in 1897 by Roman Dmowski, increased its call for the

[51] These percents are based mainly on the 1931 census. See Juliusz Bardach, Bogusław Leśnodorski, and Michał Pietrzak, eds., *Historia ustroju i prawa polskiego* (Warsaw: PWN, 1994), 469-70.

[52] Eva Plach, *The Clash of Moral Nations: Cultural Politics in Piłsudski's Poland, 1926-1935* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2006).

curtailment of rights for Jews and their eventual emigration from Poland. Based on an ethnic vision of the nation that excluded minorities, Endejca was a movement of broad social support that strongly shaped official policy toward Jews, even though it never succeeded in forming a single government during the Second Republic.[53] In 1935, its influence increased dramatically in the wake of Piłsudski's death when the right-wing faction of *Sanacja* established the Camp of National Unity (Oboź Zjednoczenia Narodowego, OZN or OZON). OZON adopted a series of anti-Jewish measures that further curtailed the economic, educational, and political life of Jews that had become increasingly restricted throughout the 1930s.[54] The *Sanacja* government also endorsed the Endecja position that the best solution to the Jewish question was for Jews to emigrate from Poland (the majority of Poland's political elites, except those associated with left-wing parties, shared this view as well).[55] Although no clear program for Jewish emigration had yet to be formulated on the eve of World War II, Poland's political elites were clearly moving toward the permanent removal of Jews from Polish society. In his pioneering analysis of

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[53] National Democratic ideology, which first took hold during the partitions, argued that Poland could emerge strong and independent only through a constant struggle with its national enemies, chiefly Jews. It drew support from petty tradesmen, artisans, farmers, white-collar workers, the clergy, university students, professors, and intellectuals. The movement changed names several times. In the pre-independence period, it was called Stronnictwo Narodowo-Demokratyczne (National Democratic Party). During the interwar period, it was first called Związek Ludowo-Narodowy (National-Popular Union) before changing, in 1928, to Stronnictwo Narodowe (National Party). Dmowski's movement was commonly called Endecja. On the ideology of National Democracy, see Brian Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate: Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth-Century Poland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[54] Hagen, "Before;'" Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1983); Joanna Beata Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other: The Image of the Jew from 1880 to the Present* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), chaps. 3 and 4; Monika Natkowska, *Numerus clausus, getto ławkowe, numerus nullus, "paragraf aryjski." Antysemityzm na Uniwersytecie Warszawskim 1931-1939* (Warsaw: ŻIH, 1999); Waldemar Paruch, *Od konsolidacji państwowej do konsolidacji narodowej. Mniejszości narodowe w myśli politycznej obozu piłsudczykowskiego*, 1926-1939 (Lublin: Wydawn. Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 1997); Szymon Rudnicki, "Anti-Jewish Legislation in Interwar Poland," in Robert Blobaum, ed., *Antisemitism and its Opponents in Modern Poland* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 148-170.

[55] On government support for emigration, see Rudnicki, "Anti-Jewish," Michlic, *Poland's*, and Hagen "Before." On the support of other political parties for emigration, see Włodzimierz Mich, *Obcy w polskim domu: nacjonalistyczne koncepcje rozwiązania problemu mniejszości narodowych 1918-1939* (Lublin: Wydaw. Uniw. Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 1994); Anna Landau-Czajka, *W jednym stali domu: koncepcje rozwiązania kwestii żydowskiej w publicystyce polskiej lat 1933-1939* (Warsaw: PAN, 1998). The main political parties that opposed emigration were the Polish Socialist Party, the Communist Party of Poland, the Democratic Party, the left faction of Sanacja, and other small left-leaning parties.

antisemitism in Poland and pre-war Nazi Germany, William Hagen puts it starkly: "Even though in various ways the Polish regime in fact fell short of fascism, the cumulative effects on the Polish Jews of its hostile policies, as well as of Endek aggression and the consequences of demographic growth amid still widespread economic depression, were threatening them by 1939 with conditions comparable to those to which the German Jews had been reduced."[56]

Contributing to this debilitating condition were the increasingly hostile actions and attitudes of Polish society toward the Jewish population. In the inter-war period, four major waves of anti-Jewish aggression erupted: the first exploded in 1918 during the Polish-Ukrainian War that left 230 Jews dead with the most fatal pogrom in Lwów; the second took place in 1930-33 at universities where students staged anti-Jewish riots and protests; the third, organized by the newly founded National Radical Camp (*Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny*, or ONR), involved anti-Jewish violence in the summer of 1934; and the fourth, occurring between 1934 and 1937, erupted on university campuses when the ONR and student groups such as the All-Polish Youth (Młodzież Wszechpolska) developed "ghetto benches" as the first step at the "dejudaization" of Polish higher education.[57] As these waves of anti-Jewish hatred unfolded in Poland, antisemitism increasingly became an important and defining element of Polish Catholicism. By the 1920s, the Church had adopted the ideological language and concepts of racial antisemitism, developing a "modern militant model of Catholicism" that saw Jews as one of its and Poland's central enemies.[58] This racialized prejudice trumped earlier religious biases to a stunning degree, as one

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[56] Hagen, "Before," 375.

[57] William W. Hagen, "The Moral Economy of Popular Violence: The Pogrom in Lwów, November 1918," in Blobaum, ed., *Antisemitism*, pp. 124-147; Michlic, *Poland's*; Natkowska, *Numerus clauses*; Szymon Rudnicki, *Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny: geneza i działalność* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1985); Jolanta Żyndul, *Zajścia antyżydowskie w Polsce w latach 1935-1937* (Warsaw: Fundacja im. K. Kelles-Krauza, 1994).

[58] Brian Porter, "Antisemitism and the Search for a Catholic Identity," in Blobaum, *Antisemitism*, pp. 103-123. See also Dariusz Lubionka, "Obcy, wrodzy, niebezpieczni: Obraz Żydów i kwestii żydowskiej w prasie inteligencji katolickiej lat trzydziestych w Polsce," *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* (2002): 318-38; Anna Landau-Czajka, "Żydzi w oczach prasy katolickiej okresu II Rzeczypospolitej," *Przegląd Polonijny* (1992): 97-113; Ronald Modras, *The Catholic Church and Anitsemitism: Poland 1933-1939* (Chur, Switz.: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1994).

article published on the eve of the war bleakly revealed: "No person of another race undergoing baptism, for example, a Negro, will be considered a member of the white race simply because a priest belonging to the white race baptized him. The Jew is no exception here. The more so since he falls under the 'rule' that because he was a Jew *racially* and *ethnically before* undergoing baptism, so *racially* and *ethnically* he remains a Jew even *after* undergoing baptism."[59]

The imposition of Nazi rule with the outbreak of World War II exacerbated an already tense relationship between Jews and Poles. In pursuit of grand visions of *Lebensraum*, the Nazis established a brutal and deadly occupation of western Poland during the first twenty-one months of the war.[60] While the Soviets established communist rule in eastern Poland, annexed to them by the Hitler-Stalin pact, the Nazis set out to reconfigure the ethnic make-up of their newly gained territory. The Nazis did not establish a Polish puppet state, but ruled and occupied Polish territory virtually on their own. The Polish government had been destroyed almost in its entirety except for minor bureaucrats who were kept to aid the German administration. If the Nazis had wanted a collaborating regime in Poland, they would have found enough sympathizers to form it, but they had different aims: the Nazis divided Poland into two parts with most of the western area directly incorporated into the Third Reich and the rest turned into the Generalgouvernement. They sought to make the incorporated territories as ethnically German as possible through a massive program of population transfer and mass murder mostly of ethnic Poles in the first months of the occupation.[61] After first pushing Jews and Poles from this area into the "dumping ground" of the Generalgouvernement, the Nazis then transported thousands of ethnic Germans from across

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[59] Quoted in Dariusz Libionka, "Antisemitism, Anti-Judaism, and the Polish Catholic Clergy during the Second World War 1939-1945," in Blobaum, ed., *Antisemitism*, 240.

[60] The occupation of Poland was part of a much broader attempt to build a Nazi empire in the east. See Ulrich Herbert, ed., *National Socialist Extermination Policies: Contemporary German Perspectives and Controversies* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000); Karel C. Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair: Life and Death under Nazi Rule* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Wendy Lower, *Nazi Empire Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

[61] Phillip T. Rutherford, *Prelude to the Final Solution: The Nazi Program for Deporting Ethnic Poles, 1939-1941* (Lawrence, KA: University Press of Kansas, 2007).

northeastern Europe into the homes, businesses, and farms left behind.[62] In these early months of the war, the German military carried out massive violence against Poles and Jews.[63]

Nazi policy toward both ethnic groups aimed toward the general goal of subjugation, persecution, and violence with one important difference. Poles experienced extreme terror and death, but the Jewish population bore the harshest blows of the occupation precisely and simply because they were the supreme racial enemy in Nazi thinking. While Poles could be "tolerated" as slave laborers, there was simply no room for Jews in any capacity within the Nazi empire. In the end, the Nazi occupation proved devastating for both Poles and Jews, leaving a combined total of about five million people dead who had been citizens of the interwar state.[64] But the scale and proportion of the two ethnic groups differed dramatically: Poles lost about 10 percent of their population whereas around 90 percent of the Polish-Jewish population perished. These figures starkly underscore the Nazi goal of the complete and total destruction of the Jewish population in Poland and throughout the entire continent of Europe that was without any other parallel. At the same time, these percentages reinforce the crucial point that the "Final Solution" unfolded within a broader policy of population transfer, occupation, and mass murder that catastrophically impacted the lives of many different ethnic groups under Nazi rule as Karel C. Berkhoff has recently shown for Ukraine (a similar study has yet to be written for occupied Poland).[65]

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[62] Götz Aly, *Endlösung. Völkersverschiebund und der Mord an den europäischen Juden* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1995).

[63] Alexander B. Rossino, *Hitler Strikes Poland: Blitzkrieg, Ideology, and Atrocity* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2003); Jochen Böhler, *Auftakt zum Vernichtungskrieg. Die Wehrmacht in Polen 1939* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2006).

[64] The often-cited number of six million appears to be incorrect. It is estimated that about 2 million non-Jews Poles lost their lives and about 2.9 to 3 million Polish Jews perished for a total of about 5 million Polish citizens. See Czesław Łuczak, "Szanse i trudności bilansu demograficznego Polski w latach 1939-1945," *Dzieje Najnowsze* (1994): 9-14.

[65] Berkhoff, *Harvest*. There are of course important works on Nazi occupied Poland by Czesław Madajczyk, Götz Aly, Alexander B. Rossino, Jochen Böhler, and others, but these works tend to focus more exclusively on either Poles or Jews. What seems to be missing to me is the kind of synthetic narrative that Berkhoff provides for Ukraine.

In the midst of this engulfing terror, what were the dynamics of Polish-Jewish relations? They hinged above all on the actions and attitudes of ethnic Poles for the simple reason that the relationship between Poles and Jews during the war was asymmetrical. Crowded into ghettoes and death camps, Jews simply had little leverage to influence the type of interaction that they had with their Polish neighbors. The question inevitably becomes then less about relations *per se* and more about the general reaction of the Polish population to the Holocaust. Poles responded to the Nazi genocide in different and various ways. As part of the underground state, the organization Żegota (code name for *Rada Pomocy Żydom*, or the Council for Aid to Jews) helped Jews with locating housing, forging documents, medical assistance, and financial support from the fall of 1942 to the end of the war. The extent of and the motivations for rescuing Jews are difficult to know for sure. In Warsaw, the historian Gunnar S. Paulsson estimates that about 27,000 Jews escaped from the ghetto and about 11,500 survived through the aid of perhaps 90,000 Poles (these numbers are debatable and await further research).[66] The motivations for helping Jews varied as greatly as those involved in providing assistance: from anti-Semites to blackmailers to extortionists to good Samaritans. And yet whatever the individual reasons the fact remains that rescuing Jews was an unpopular and infrequent choice. Poles engaged in other illegal acts against the German enemy much more frequently than they did in saving Jews.[67] Many Poles also did not support those who helped Jews, making survival on the "Aryan" side all the more treacherous and risky with blackmailers and denouncers roaming the streets.[68] As one Holocaust survivor put it succinctly: "Hiding Jews was a very dangerous activity and no-one could expect from people

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[66] Gunnar S. Paulson, *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw, 1940-1945* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002).

[67] Jan T. Gross, "A Tangled Web: Confronting Stereotypes Concerning Relations between Poles, Germans, Jews, and Communists," in István Deák, Jan T. Gross, and Tony Judt, eds., *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and its Aftermath* (New Jersey, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 74-130.

[68] Jan Grabowski, *"Ja tego Żyda znam!" Szantażowanie Żydów w Warszawie, 1939-1943* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2004); Barbara Engelking-Boni, *"Szanowny panie Gistapo." Donosy do władz niemieckich w Warszawie i okolicach w latach 1940- 1941* (Warsaw: IFiS PAN, 2003).

such heroism. Nevertheless there was no need for denunciation of one's neighbor because he was hiding a Jew. I myself lived in constant fear that the Germans would kill me but I was even more afraid of Poles who were able to recognize that I was a Jew."[69]

On the very opposite end of the spectrum from assisting Jews is an action that recently has received extensive discussion in Poland: the involvement of Poles in the direct killing of Jews. Brought into the open by Jan Gross's startling book, *Neighbors*, about the massacre of Jews in the small town of Jedwabne, the role of Poles as perpetrators challenges commonly held notions of Polish victimization, martyrdom, and resistance during World War II. It is thus a particularly emotional topic, but one that recently has benefited from important new research in the wake of the intense debate about Gross's book.[70] Although Jedwabne was by far the most deadly case with somewhere between 1,000 and 1,600 Jews perishing, it was not an isolated case. In over twenty other towns, ethnic Poles carried out violence against Jews during the summer of 1941. As far as historians know today, the violence remained limited to the *kresy* (the eastern borderlands) with massacres and pogroms erupting in the Łomża and Białystok regions that had previously been occupied by the Soviets until June of 1941 when the Nazis pushed them out with the invasion of Stalin's Russia.

Explaining why some ethnic Poles would kill their Jewish neighbors is as difficult to grasp as why some would risk their own lives to save them. Both are extraordinary responses to an extreme situation when most ordinary people are thinking about survival rather than acting with heroic strength or catastrophic fragility. The reasons for becoming involved in the Holocaust were various: Some Poles killed Jews because the German soldiers in the area pushed them to do

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[69] Quoted in Michlic, *Poland's*, 190; originally in Marian Turski, ed., *Losy żydowskie: świadectwo żywych* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Żydów Kombatantów i Poszkodowanych w II Wojnie Światowej, 1996), 66.

[70] Antony Polonsky and Joanna B. Michlic, eds., *The Neighbors Respond: The Controversy of the Jedwabne Massacre in Poland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); John Connelly, "Poles and Jews in the Second World War: The Revisions of Jan T. Gross," *Contemporary European History* 11, 4 (2002): 641-58; Marci Shore, "Conversing with Ghosts: Jedwabne, Żydokomuna, Totalitarianism," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 6, 2 (2005): 345-75.

so; others joined in seeking material gain through the seizure of Jewish property; others murdered out of sheer hatred. But what appears most common is that those who became involved in mass murder had lost any sense that the person they were beating with a club or shoving into a burning barn was a human being just like themselves. Prejudice against Jews had become so normalized that the division between "Pole" and "Jew," between "human" and "non-human," had become accepted, assimilated, and integrated into everyday life. This normalized prejudice took hold over years of increased persecution, violence, bias, and separation during the 1930s, but became explosive and murderous in the *kresy* during June-July 1941 for concrete reasons. The *kresy* had endured twenty-one months of Soviet occupation from September 1939 until June 1941 that ushered in dramatic and swift changes in Polish society.[71] One of these many changes involved a small sliver of the Jewish population that became attracted to the equality granted by the Soviets that had long been denied to them by the Polish state. Ethnic minorities could now fill jobs, such as teachers and public officials, that earlier had been closed off to them. A very small number of Jews, perhaps somewhere between 7 and 10 percent of the population, benefited from the Soviet occupation, while the vast majority endured the harshness of occupation, war, economic restructuring, death, and deportation just like everyone else living in the *kresy*.[72] Jews were naturally relieved when the Soviets arrived instead of the Nazis, but they clearly knew that Soviet occupation was the lesser of two evils and experienced rapid deterioration in their everyday life.[73]

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[71] Jan T. Gross, *Revolution from Abroad: The Soviet Conquest of Poland's western Ukraine and western Belorussia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).

[72] Andrzej Żbikowski, *U genezy Jedwabnego: Żydzi na Kresach Północno-Wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej* (Warsaw: ŻIH, 2006).

[73] As far as the current research shows, the Soviets did not develop explicit policies toward ethnic groups in the *kresy*, but the occupation did impact Poles, Jews, Ukrainians, and Belorussians in different ways. On the whole, one can probably say that Jews experienced the most dramatic change to their daily lives: 20 percent of the Jewish population was deported and 22 percent arrested, twice the percent of Jews per the overall population; the suspension of property rights impacted the largely self-employed Jewish craftsmen and tradesmen that dominated the region; and the dissolution of Jewish communal institutions along with Soviet-sponsored secularization transformed dramatically the basic everyday life of Shtetl Jews. See Gross, "A Tangled Web;" Ben-Cion Pinchuk, *Shtetl Jews under Soviet Rule: Eastern Poland on the Eve of the Holocaust* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991); Żbikowski, *U genezy Jedwabnego*.

But Poles *perceived* the overall condition of Jews in a much different way, believing that they had in fact collaborated with the Soviets *en masse*. Refracted through the enduring and powerful anti-Jewish stereotype of "Judeo-Communism" (*żydokomuna*), the reality of the Soviet occupation became utterly twisted to conform to the broad fears of Polish society that Jews had destroyed the Polish nation.[74] This antisemitic fantasy of "Judeo-Communism" became explosive when eastern Poland switched from Soviet to Nazi occupation in June 1941.[75] Some Poles viewed the Germans as "liberators" and became involved in the Nazi murder of the Jews that had now increased dramatically with the invasion of the Soviet Union. By late July 1941, Nazi special military and police units engaged in ever more extensive shootings of Jews.[76] Just as the Nazis began to move closer to the "Final Solution," pogroms and massacres in eastern Poland erupted, encouraged by the Germans on Reinhard Heydrich's orders that "self-cleansing actions" (*Selbstreinigungsaktionen*) occur without leaving any trace of Nazi coordination. It is within this broader context — of *żydokomuna*, of the Soviet occupation, and of the Final Solution — that the violence in Jedwabne and in some twenty other towns in the *kresy* unfolded. Analyzing 61 postwar trials of Poles involved in these attacks, the historian Andrzej Żbikowski notes that Jews were often forced to carry pictures of Lenin and Stalin, sing Russian songs, and bury statues of

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[74] On the history of *żydokomuna*, see Agnieszka Pufelska, *Die "Judäo-Kommune." Ein Feindbild in Polen. Das polnische Selbstverständnis im Schatten des Antisemitismus, 1939-1948* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2007).

[75] One of the central historiographical problems of *żydokomuna* is the tension between the imaginary and the real — the stereotype itself and claims by some scholars that "Jewish collaboration" actually existed. In both *Neighbors* and *Fear*, Gross argues vigorously that "Jewish communism" could not possibly have provoked violence because it simply did not exist. He is absolutely correct, but the anti-Semitic fantasy of *żydokomuna* most certainly did exist. Although I certainly sympathize with Gross's desire to debunk the idea of "Jewish communism," I find it puzzling that he ignores the heuristic value of the stereotype. Indeed, taking *żydokomuna* as an anti-Semitic stereotype would uncover the paucity of any scholarly approach that takes "Jewish collaboration" as real by analyzing the potency of its fantastical, chimeric appeal. For a historiographical analysis of some of these points, see Joanna Michlic, "The Soviet Occupation of Poland, 1939-41, and the Stereotype of the Anti-Polish and Pro-Soviet Jew," *Jewish Social Studies* no. 3 (2007): 135-176.

[76] These units included the *Einsatzgruppen*, Waffen-SS units in the *Kommandostab Reichsführer SS*, and the Order Police battalions.

Lenin during the massacres of June-July 1941.[77] In those summer months, some Poles took up the chance to expunge *żydokomuna* from eastern Poland for good. Mass murder became possible in the midst of war, occupation, prejudice, and hatred, conceived as an attempt to cleanse eastern Poland from the fantastical Jewish-Communist menace and to avenge the horrors of Soviet occupation that it allegedly had caused.

Since the murder of Jews by ethnic Poles has received extensive discussion recently, it must be stated clearly that the direct participation of Poles in the Holocaust was exceptional. If on a spectrum of social behavior killing Jews is on one end and saving them is on another, one can safely say that the overwhelming majority of Poles were neither heroic rescuers nor cold-blooded murders. Instead most Poles became drawn into, took advantage of, or benefited from the persecution of their Jewish neighbors in a much more ordinary and everyday way even in the face of a brutal Nazi occupation directed against them. It is not just that Poles and their government officials in exile observed the Holocaust with hardened indifference as historians have often concluded; many governments and societies certainly did the same, including those powers that possibly could have done something such as Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union.[78] Terms like "indifference" or "passive complicity" do not capture precisely enough how entangled and enmeshed in the Holocaust ordinary Poles became. In a country where Jews made up 10 percent of the overall population and where in many small villages Jews comprised nearly half of the town's population, the persecution, ghettoization, deportation, and mass murder of three million people over five years intersected with the lives of ordinary Poles to such a degree that historians cannot possibly reconstruct with any sense of completeness.

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[77] Andrzej Żbikowski, "Pogromy i mordy ludności żydowskiej w Łomżyńskiem i na Białostocczyźnie latem 1941 roku w świetle relacji ocalałych Żydów i dokumentów sądowych," Paweł Machcewicz and Krzysztof Persak, eds., *Wokół Jedwabnego* vol. 1 (Warsaw: IPN, 2002), 159-271.

[78] See, for example, David Engel, *In the Shadow of Auschwitz: The Polish Government-in-Exile and the Jews, 1939-1945* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1987); Engel, *Facing a Holocaust: The Polish Government-in-Exile and the Jews,* 1943-1945 (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Steinlauf, *Bondage*.

The entanglement of the Holocaust with everyday Polish life took on many different forms from identifying Jews to the Nazis to blackmailing those few Jews living on the "Aryan" side (*szmalcownictwo*) to moving into the enormous number of homes left behind now considered to be *pożydowski* (a peculiar Polish word invented to denote formerly Jewish property). One could cite many instances to illuminate the everydayness of these interactions, but the famous writer and literary critic Michał Głowiński provides one remarkable example in his memoir worthy of briefly highlighting. He recalls an experience in a café in Warsaw on the "Aryan" side. While his aunt, who looked "Aryan," went to make a phone call, the young Głowiński, sitting by himself, piqued the interest of the women surrounding him who became increasingly anxious about his presence:

> In the beginning, it seemed to me that all was calm … Yet after a while I couldn't escape the realization that the scene was playing out otherwise. It was difficult to harbor any doubts that I had become the center of attention. … The women stared at me as if I were an extraordinary monster, whose very existence called into question the laws of nature, and as if they would have to decide what to do with me that very moment, for things could not remain as they were. … I heard "A Jew, there's no question, a Jew. She certainly isn't, but him — he's a Jew." … I heard one of them say, "We have to let the police know." … Most often they spit out the threatening word "Jew," but also, most terrifying, they kept, repeating "We have to let the Police know." I was aware that this was the equivalent to a death sentence. If I'd then known something about Mediterranean mythology, I would doubtlessly have thought I'd landed in the possession of the Erinyes, the Furies, desirous of mutilating me. Yet would such an analogy be appropriate? For those women were not possessed by an uncontrollable hatred. … These were normal, ordinary women, in their own way decent and resourceful, hardworking, undoubtedly scrambling to take care of their families in the difficult conditions of the occupation. … They had found themselves in a situation that felt to them trying and threatening, and they wished to confront it directly. They only did not think at what price. Perhaps this transcended their imaginations — although they must have known how it would end if they were to "let them know" — or perhaps such thoughts were simply not within the boundaries of moral reflection accessible to them.[79]

One might be tempted to consider these interactions with the Holocaust to be forms of "complicity," "cooperation," or "collaboration." But such elegant labels overlook the utter everydayness of these actions. Poles who took over Jewish apartments, blackmailed Jews on the tram, or threatened to call the police did not, in their own moral universe, see these actions as

[79] Michał Głowiński, *The Black Seasons*, trans. Marci Shore (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2005), pp. 93-96.

forms of collaboration with the German enemy. Their moral economy did not consider these ordinary intersections with the Holocaust as problematic. Thus the austere effects of the normalized prejudice that penetrated Polish society emerge: looking the other way, blackmailing, or taking over someone's "former" possessions became so ordinary that the suffering and humanity of the victims was completely erased from everyday consciousness. Such actions did not seem wrong.

Since German occupied Poland was the site where the Nazis implemented the "Final Solution," Polish society inevitably became drawn into the Holocaust in a particularly intimate, anguished, and raw way. But as mass murder unfolded in Eastern Europe, German society was of course no less entangled in it, albeit in a much greater and different way. The conditions that shaped German behavior during the Holocaust must be clearly distinguished from those that impacted Polish actions. Polish society was terrorized by the occupation, war, and mass murder that the Germans had designed and implemented. The unequivocal responsibility of Nazi Germany for the Holocaust obviously meant that German society became involved in the mass murder of Jews on a scale of much greater proportions. In the midst of a brutal war against the Soviet Union, the Nazi elite decided to solve its self-imagined Jewish problem through the mass murder of European Jewry. Many Germans became directly implicated in implementing this policy from bureaucrats in Berlin to soldiers on the frontline. The Holocaust did not emerge simply from the functioning of a massive bureaucracy that, once set into motion, just kept going on as historians earlier argued, but through the participation of many different segments of German society from church leaders to industrial barons.[80] The earlier bifurcated image of state

[80] On the earlier view, I mean the pioneering work of Raul Hilberg, Martin Broszat, and Hans Mommsen: Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961); Broszat, *The Hitler State: The Foundation and Development of the Internal Structure of the Third Reich*, trans. John W. Hilden (New York: Longman, 1981); Mommsen, *From Weimar to Aushwitz: Essays on Germany History*, trans. Philip O'Connor (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991). On the involvement of various sections of German society, for example the Catholic Church and German industry, see Michael Phayer, *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930-1965* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000); Kevin Spicer, *Resisting the Third Reich: The Catholic Clergy in Hitler's Berlin* (Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois

and society, whereby one carries out the horrendous crimes while the other remains uninvolved in it, has been severely undermined by historical research about the role of ordinary Germans in carrying out mass murder from those in the reserve police battalions to the enlisted army.[81]

Nevertheless, most ordinary Germans, apart from those directly designing, perpetrating, and implementing Nazi policy, faced considerably less often the kind of up-close encounters with Jews that characterized Polish-Jewish relations during the war for the simple reason that the number of Jews who still lived in Germany when the Nazi elite decided on mass murder was proportionally miniscule. Since Germany was not the epicenter of where the Holocaust took place, the reaction and behavior of German society as a whole took on different forms thanks simply to its geographical distance from the death camps and frontlines of the east. Issues crucial to the Polish case — for example the dynamics of gentile-Jewish relations on the "Aryan" side of the ghetto or the generally low societal approval for saving Jews — either do not apply at all or are not nearly as central to the German situation.[82] Instead, when studying the role of German society during the Holocaust, historians have focused on a different set of questions. What did ordinary Germans know about what was happening in Eastern Europe? How did they react to this knowledge? Did it impact in any way their support for the Nazi regime?

University Press, 2004); Suzanne Brown-Fleming, *The Holocaust and Catholic Conscience: Cardinal Aloisius Muench and the Guilt Question in Germany* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006); Peter Hayes, *Industry and Ideology: IG Farben in the Nazi Era* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[81] Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992); Edward B. Westermann, *Hitler's Police Battalions: Enforcing Racial War in the East* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2005).

[82] A particularly rich portrayal of this point — of the up-close nature of Polish-Jewish relations even during ghettoization — is found in the massive new study edited by Andrzej Żbikowski, *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939-1945. Studia i Materiały* (Warsaw: IPN, 2006), esp. chaps. 4-10. I place this study in its historiographical (and political) context in Michael Meng, "Did Poles Collaborate or Resist the Nazis? Problems with Narrating the Holocaust in Poland," in Jonathan Petropoulos, Lynn Rapaport, and John K. Roth, eds., *Memory, History, and Responsibility: Reassessments of the Holocaust, Implications for the Future* (Northwestern, forthcoming).

Over the past twenty-five years, extensive research has shattered the popular postwar refrain that ordinary Germans did not know anything about the Holocaust. Although Germans were not fully aware of the scope and method of the Final Solution, they had access to general information about the mass extermination of Jews in Eastern Europe. In fact, anyone who wanted to know about the "extermination" or "destruction" of Jews merely had to turn to the party-controlled media. Hitler's regime did not reveal specific details, but it did willingly and openly discuss its broad and central plan to destroy European Jewry in its newspapers and radio programs.[83] Outside the party-run press, Germans heard about the Holocaust through letters from the front, soldiers returning from duty, and press coverage by international news organizations such as the British Broadcasting Company (BBC). The way Germans reacted to this information was clear. Ordinary Germans tellingly resisted Hitler's policies when they directly impacted their own lives, whether it was against the Nazi euthanasia program, the taking down of crucifixes, or the deportation of Jews married to non-Jewish wives in Berlin.[84] But when circumstances were otherwise, the vast majority of Germans expressed no protest and seemingly went along with the genocidal policies of the Third Reich with only a few noble exceptions. In his important study on popular opinion in Nazi Germany, Ian Kershaw has shown how Germans grumbled about small, ordinary annoyances with the regime, but voiced virtually no opposition when it came to the Nazi persecution of the Jews.[85]

This silence largely stemmed from the basic fact that most Germans generally supported the Nazi regime and its persecution of the Jews for reasons that are open to interpretation.[86] In

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[83] Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2006).

[84] Henry Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Kershaw, *Popular Opinion*; Nathan Stoltzfus, *Resistance of the Heart: Intermarriage and the Rosenstrasse Protest in Nazi Germany* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996).

[85] Kershaw, *Popular Opinion.*

[86] On the general support of the German population for the persecution of the Jews, see Bankier, *Germans* and Longerich, *Davon*.

2005, the historian and journalist Götz Aly published a book that explored why Germans so willingly and enthusiastically supported the Nazi regime even in the last throes of an immensely deadly war that the regime was now losing. Taking seriously the socialist part of National Socialism, he posits the seductively simple argument that the Nazi regime satisfied the material needs of German society by redistributing the wealth that had been stolen from the Jews throughout Europe. Nazi Germany was an ethnically homogenous social-democratic state that became a "pleasing or accommodating dictatorship" (*Gefälligkeitsdiktatur*) for those members of the racially pure *Volksgemeinschaft*.[87] The political scientist Daniel Goldhagen has put forward a much different argument about German society. In his highly discussed book, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, he claimed that a peculiar form of "eliminationist antisemitism" explained why ordinary Germans became involved in and supported the mass murder of European Jewry.[88] Embracing a murderous ideology unique only to Germany, Germans killed out of pure hatred and often expressed sheer enjoyment in doing so. If ideology plays no role in Aly's materialist interpretation, it explains everything in Goldhagen's monocausal analysis.

Both of these interpretations fall severely short by either ignoring or over determining ideology, but the phrases "pleasing dictatorship" and "eliminationist antisemitism" have analytical appeal. When taken out of the problematic strictures that Aly and Goldhagen have placed them in and radically reconceptualized, they provide a useful way of thinking about the relationship between German society and the Nazi elite. As the reaction of German society to the persecution of Jews before the Holocaust shows most clearly, ordinary Germans generally supported the erosion of Jewish life from Germany that took place between 1933 and 1939. In these years, there was no doubt at all that they clearly understood the aims of the Third Reich as a steady stream of anti-Jewish policies unfolded that impacted every facet of everyday life and

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[87] Götz Aly, *Hitlers Volksstaat. Raub, Rassenkrieg und nationaler Sozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 2005).

[88] Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Knopf, 1996).

every ordinary interaction with Jews from who could sit on a park bench to who could own property. In a way not entirely different from most Poles, most Germans wanted Jews removed from their economic, social, cultural, and political life; a general consensus existed between the Nazi elite and the German population that the Jewish question had to be solved by eliminating the Jewish menace from Germany. This eliminationist antisemitism — conceived here broadly as the basic, shared belief that Jews must *somehow* be removed from a given society — involved different modes of implementation.[89] Germans accepted emigration as the best way to remove Jews from their nation, and the Nazi elite officially pursued this policy as late as October 1941.

But in the end Hitler and his closest allies decided on a much different method, and Germans became directly involved in mass murder or simply did nothing as they watched Jews being deported from their cities and villages. They reacted in this way not out of some innate, bestial hatred as the careful work of David Bankier, Omer Bartov, Christopher Browning, Peter Longerich, Edward Westermann and others have shown.[90] Instead they acted partly out of their general consent to the anti-Jewish policies of the Third Reich; Nazi Germany was, indeed, a "pleasing dictatorship" not just because it delivered the material goods, but also because it fulfilled one of its most clearly stated and important policy goals — the removal of Jews from German society.[91] Most ordinary Germans were doubtlessly not concerned about the presence of Jews in France, Poland, the Ukraine, or anywhere else in Europe. They cared above all about their own local/national situation. They were not pushing for the "Final Solution." Genocide emerged from the "redemptive antisemitism" of the Nazi elite during World War II with the general

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[89] My conception of "eliminationist antisemitism" departs from Goldhagen's definition of it exclusively as genocidal and singularly located in Germany. I think the formulation, when extracted from Goldhagen's analysis, usefully captures the basic belief that Jews should be removed from society through a variety of different methods, such as segregation, economic exclusion, emigration, and genocide. Moreover, I do not believe that the idea of removing Jews was unique only to Germany, but also emerged in other European societies such as in Poland as I have argued here.

[90] Bankier, *Germans*; Bartov, *Hitler's Army*; Browning, *Ordinary Men*; Longerich, *Davon*; Westermann, *Hitler's Police Battalions*.

[91] In his important new book, Jeffrey Herf moves in a similar direction without putting it this clearly. See Herf, *Jewish Enemy*.

knowledge of the German population, but it did not reflect a broad desire for mass murder. Nonetheless, the general approval and desire for the removal of Jews from German society paved the way for the continent-wide program of mass murder that Hitler and his closest allies pursued in the midst of war with the Soviet Union.[92]

In November 1938, the Nazi party carried out a massive attack on Jewish property that historians have long interpreted as the one instance when the bourgeois sensibilities of German society became frazzled by Nazi anti-Jewish policy, which had left their usually clean and orderly streets piled with broken glass. The day after the pogrom a remarkable photo emerged of Potsdam's lightly damaged synagogue. A sizeable crowd, dressed in long overcoats and top hats, is gathered in front of the building, some leaning close to each other as if in conversation, while others are standing by themselves, perhaps just stopping by for a quick look before moving on with their day's schedule, their bicycles, in fact, nearby to ride them away. A small group of kids, perhaps eight in total, are perched on the sills of the synagogue's two large bottom windows as they peer through the glassless frames. One of the large doors, held open, allows some an even closer glimpse inside, but at the moment they do not seem to be edging all the way in. No single face can be seen in this photo as the crowd gazes at the towering synagogue located on Potsdam's central *Wilhelmplatz*. Is this crowd shocked? Are they concerned? Or are they curious? Or perhaps even a little bit amused by the almost theatrical-like display of broken windows, burning rooftops, and the growing group of spectators? One can only conjecture what this particular crowd's reaction might have been, but what we do know is that, while the Jewish community clearly interpreted *Kristallnacht* as the last sign that it was now time for them to leave, German society as a whole did not protest strongly against the *purpose* of the pogrom as one more attack against the Jews, even if they did not like all the glass on their sidewalks and squares. After some six years of Nazi rule, the persecution of Jews had become so normalized that the meaning for the

[92] On the importance of what I am calling here the Nazi elite in designing the Final Solution, see Browning, *Origins of the Final Solution*.

victims of a violent act such as *Kristallnacht* had become lost on those gawking at the broken windows and burnt-out remains of their town's synagogue. Unlike Poles, Germans often did not face during the Holocaust intimate encounters with Jews; they did not run into them in the pastry shops of their capital city or in the forests of their smallest village. But as knowers and observers of the persecution they faced the same question of how best to act; many Germans decided to pass by with perhaps some concern but generally not worried about what was happening to a minority group they no longer considered part of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

In these different and similar ways, German and Polish society became entangled in the Holocaust. Germany became obviously more so as the architect and implementer of the Final Solution, but Poland became drawn into it, not by choice, as the epicenter of where the mass murder unfolded. Both societies shared a relatively similar history of gentile-Jewish relations marked above all by the integration into everyday life of a normalized prejudice that rested on the basic notion that Jews should somehow be eliminated from German and Polish society. The division between Jews and gentiles had become so clear that many Germans and Poles came to believe that it was time for Jews to leave; forced emigration became a seriously considered option in interwar Poland and became the official policy of the Third Reich until the invasion of the Soviet Union. In studying this period, historians often confront the difficult problem about how belief shapes behavior. They construct narratives about the "indifference" of Polish and German society to the Holocaust with varying degrees of emphasis on the impact of anti-Jewish beliefs, biases, and prejudices on engendering this reaction. I have argued here that notions of indifference, collaboration, and complicity are either too intricate or too vague to be of much use; they fail to capture the much more common and direct way that the Holocaust intersected with the everyday lives of Germans and Poles.[93] A coherent, stable, and sophisticated ideological belief system did not shape the behavior and actions of most Poles and Germans. Instead a much more basic prejudice about Jews as fundamentally separated from German and Polish society became

[93] I have developed these thoughts further in the Polish case. Meng, "Did Poles Collaborate."

so integrated into everyday life that behaving or reacting with empathy toward Jews seemed peculiar and abnormal. In this moral economy, taking over "former" Jewish property, threatening to call the police, gawking at a damaged synagogue, severing ties with Jewish neighbors, or watching the deportation trains go by did not make one complicit in something awful. For it to do so, one would first have to interpret the surrounding reality as, in fact, awful, catastrophic, and morally alarming.

By the end of the war, interactions between Jews and gentiles in Germany and Poland had become so severed, so frayed, so broken that it is difficult to think of other places in Europe that experienced such deeply fractured relations. Jewish spaces powerfully conjured up the complex nature of this past; fractured, shattered, confiscated, and abandoned, they were the physical symbols of violence, destruction, and persecution, scattered along otherwise ordinary, everyday streets. How Germans and Poles dealt with these sites — how they interpreted the history of gentile-Jewish relations during the Holocaust in the midst of that history — shifted over the postwar decades. Refracted through different present and future concerns, the past took on different meanings, implications, and significances as Poles and Germans gradually interpreted the tragic nature of their relationship with Jews and started to preserve the last remnants of their cultural heritage.

Of course, no other European country after the war — with perhaps the exception of Austria — faced such a clear and heavy burden for the mass murder of European Jewry as Germany. In this sense, Poland's relationship to the Holocaust has often been more oblique. While the notion of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* inherently assumes that the "past" needs to be "dealt with" in some way, a similar demand has not emerged as forcefully in Poland (or France, the Ukraine, etc).[94] What dark pasts would need to be "worked through" regarding one of the

[94] Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Mass., 1991); Joan B. Wolf, *Harnessing the Holocaust: The Politics of Memory in France* (Stanford, 2004); Wilfried Jilge, "The Politics of History and the Second World War in Post-Communist Ukraine," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* no. 1 (2006).

most heroic and catastrophic periods in Polish history? To be sure, over the past twenty-five years critical debates about Polish-Jewish relations during the Holocaust have challenged the basic premise behind this question, but Poland's asymmetrical relationship to the Holocaust is one of the defining differences between it and Germany.[95] Poland has not embraced the "stigma" of the Holocaust nearly as much as Germany has in part because its own hermeneutical standpoint, shaped by its past as a destroyed, occupied — indeed "martyred" — country, does not interpret the mass murder of the Jews as a clear, unequivocal national stain.[96] What is striking, however, is that in spite of this central, historically conditioned difference Poles and Germans have often interpreted and appropriated shattered Jewish spaces in many shared ways. The first part of this parallel and divergent narrative begins right after the war as Poles and Germans confronted the problem of what to do with the legally confiscated properties of their now largely absent Jewish communities.

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[95] Polonsky and Michlic provide a useful summary of these debates in their *Neighbors Respond*. See also chap. 4 of this dissertation.

[96] The notion of the Holocaust as "stigma" comes from Moses, *German Intellectuals*. To be sure, similar narratives of victimization exist in Germany, but there is an important, historically conditioned difference. While in the German case these narratives focus on German victimization during and just after the war, the Polish case draws on a much broader set of national, iconic moments of tragedy and renewal: the colonial partitions, the Nazi and Soviet occupation, the betrayal of the allies, and the communist regime. Poland is conceived as the martyr nation *par excellence*. As its Romantic writers imagined in the early nineteenth century, Poland is the "Christ among the Nations" that will come to save and redeem Europe. For an exceptionally concise, yet insightful summary of this messianic nationalism and its permutations from the nineteenth century to the present, see Zubrzycki, *Crosses*, chaps. 1 and 2.

CHAPTER ONE

"ABANDONED" AND "HEIRLESS:" THE LEGAL APPROPRIATION OF JEWISH SITES

As Nazi Germany implemented the "Final Solution" to its self-imposed Jewish question, it carried out a massive seizure of property throughout Europe that fell into the hands of the Nazi state, local governments, and ordinary residents. After 1945, dealing with this confiscated property was the first, most immediate issue regarding Jewish sites that Germans and Poles had to confront. It was no easy task. Since so few Jews survived the Holocaust, the legal possibility of giving back what had been taken away seemed daunting: Who should receive this heirless property? Just before and immediately after the Holocaust ended, Jewish leaders in the United States and Palestine became concerned about finding a solution to this unprecedented problem. They wanted to make sure that confiscated Jewish property did not remain in control of the German state and its accomplices. Jewish leaders of the World Jewish Congress (WJC), the Jewish Agency, and the American Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC) pushed the allies after the war to make the return of Jewish property and the broader issue of restitution a central element of Europe's postwar reconstruction. Although Germany naturally became the primary focus, international Jewish leaders also worked with local Jewish officials in Poland to put pressure on the state to return Jewish property there.

But no matter how much Jewish leaders emphasized to international, national, and local officials the importance of carrying out a resolute, speedy, and thorough handling of confiscated Jewish property the issue became embroiled in a web of complications, controversies, bureaucratic maneuvering, and political opposition. Perhaps this was to be expected to a certain

extent: returning property involved material possessions that had been taken by people, states, business, and organizations that did not, to put it mildly, come around very easily to the idea that now they suddenly should help the Jews by giving back what had been taken from them. Moreover, the emerging cold war division of Europe complicated matters. Pushed strongly by American military authorities, West Germany adopted a fairly wide-ranging program of restitution, while the Soviet bloc states, including the GDR and PPR, eschewed any form of returning Jewish property. Restitution became a political tool of the cold war, especially between the two German states, as the FRG sought to show that it was morally superior to the "totalitarian" dictatorship in the east, while the GDR claimed that it was the true antifascist Germany by removing fascist, capitalist measures such as property rights in the first place. This cold war division is not surprising but it could not have been predicted at the time: Why would the Christian Democrat-dominated West Germany eventually support a restitution program, while the leftist, theoretically egalitarian GDR and PPR oppose it?

Historians who have focused on restitution have implicitly absorbed this cold war framework into their analysis. The research is acutely lopsided with a large amount of work on the FRG, a few titles on the GDR, and virtually nothing on the PPR.[1] In the first two cases, West Germany appears as a country that dealt with *Wiedergutmachung* in a moderately successful way, while the GDR balked at any responsibility for the Nazi past and pursued a relatively sinister

[1] Herf, *Divided Memory*; Constantin Goschler, *Wiedergutmachung. Westdeutschland und die Verfolgten des Nationalsozialismus, 1945-1954* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1992); Goschler, *Schuld und Schulden. Die Politik der Wiedergutmachung für NS-Verfolgte seit 1945* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2005); Goschler and Philipp Ther, eds., *Raub und Restitution. "Arisierung" und Rückerstattung des jüdischen Eigentums in Europa* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2003); Goschler und Jürgen Lillteicher, eds., *"Arisierung" und Restitution. Die Rückerstattung jüdischen Eigentums in Deutschland und Österreich nach 1945 und 1989* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2002); Jürgen Lillteicher, *Raub, Recht und Restitution. Die Rückerstattung jüdischen Eigentums in der frühen Bundesrepublik* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007); Angelika Timm, *Jewish Claims against East Germany: Moral Obligations and Pragmatic* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1997); Jan Philipp Spannuth, "Rückerstattung Ost: Der Umgang der DDR mit dem 'arisierten' und enteigneten Eigentum der Juden und die Gestaltung der Rückerstattung im wiedervereinigten Deutschland" (Ph.D. diss., Universität Freiburg, 2000); Dariusz Stola, "Die polnische Debatte um den Holocaust und die Rückerstattung von Eigentum," in Goschler and Ther, eds., *Raub*, 205-224.

approach toward its Jewish population.[2] In the PPR, recent research has dealt with anti-Semitic violence and Jewish emigration in 1945-50 rather than with Jewish property, but to the extent that scholars make broader arguments about the period the early decades appear as a mix of benign neglect and general repression with a gradual increase in opposition culminating in the storm of anti-Jewish hatred in 1967-68.[3] To be sure, this basic cold war framing of the past makes a certain amount of sense, but the task here is to peer underneath it and address how three different states across both sides of the Iron Curtain dealt with the shared problem of confiscated Jewish property. West Germany certainly proved more able to push forward restitution, but it encountered significant political opposition and became entangled in a long process of bureaucratic maneuvering that required constant outside pressure for it to be implemented. The PPR and the GDR obviously did not even put forward a program to dispute, but this opposition to restitution begs a puzzling question: Why did officials on the Left, who had either supported or at least not opposed Jewish rights before 1945, develop policies toward the survivors of Nazi persecution that oscillated between benign neglect and outright hostility? What happened to communism in Europe after the Holocaust?

This chapter addresses these central issues by examining the general legal state of Jewish sites. This legal dimension is not only an important part of the postwar history of Jewish sites in divided Germany and Poland, but it is also crucial for understanding the physical handling of Jewish spaces. In all three cases, Jewish communal property was legally designated as "abandoned" and "heirless" and ultimately fell into the ownership of local municipal authorities who determined what to do with these sites. Although Jewish leaders in the two Germanys and

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[2] On West Germany, see Geller, *Jews*; Hans Günter Hockerts, "Wiedergutmachung in Deutschland: Eine historische Bilanz 1945-2000," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* no. 2 (2001): 167-214; Goschler, *Wiedergutmachung*. On East Germany, see See Lothar Mertens, *Davidstern unter Hammer und Zirkel: Die Jüdischen Gemeinden in der SBZ/DDR und ihre Behandlungen durch Partei und Staat, 1945-1990* (New York: Olms, 1997); Ulrike Offenberg, *"Seid vorsichtig gegen die Machthaber:" Die Jüdischen Gemeinden in der SBZ und der DDR, 1945-1990* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1998); Jutta Illichmann, *Die DDR und die Juden: Die deutschlandpolitische Instrumentalisierung von Juden und Judentum durch die Partei- und Staatsführung der SBZ/DDR von 1945 bis 1990* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1997).

[3] Aleksiun, *Dokąd dalej*; Gross, *Fear*; Szaynok, *Pogrom*; Szaynok, *Ludność*; Engel, "Patterns."

Poland vigorously protested this legal move and believed that the postwar Jewish communities were the legal successors to pre-war communal property, they were fighting against an intractable series of legal measures. These conflicts emerged mostly on the national rather than the local level with only some variation from city to city. The legal appropriation of Jewish property was not surprisingly more centrally governed by a series of unified laws than was the actual physical treatment of Jewish sites. This chapter mirrors this difference by focusing more broadly on the national, moving to the local only when a particular city, mainly Berlin, deviates significantly from the dominant legal situation.

I. Conflicts over Returning Jewish Communal Property in West Germany

Even before the mass killing of Jews ended in Europe, Jewish leaders in the United States and elsewhere began pushing for the return of Jewish property that had been confiscated or sold by the Nazis. In 1944, the World Jewish Congress (WJC) passed a sweeping resolution in favor of restitution at the War Emergency Conference held in Atlantic City. "It is urged that *uniform* laws be enacted," the resolution read, "in all territories formerly occupied, annexed, dominated, or influenced by Axis powers guaranteeing to the Jews resident in these countries … full and speedy compensation of property, rights, and positions and compensation for losses suffered."[4] In that same year, the jurists Siegfried Moses and Nehemiah Robinson published two books that articulated the need for reparations and the return of Jewish property.[5] These works were highly influential in giving initial shape and inspiration to Jewish demands for restitution. In September

[4] CZA, C3/1676, WJC, "Report on Restitution," November 15, 1946.

[5] Siegfried Moses, *Die jüdischen Nachkriegsforderungen*, reprint (Münster: Lit, 1998); Nehemia Robinson, *Indemnification and Reparations: Jewish Aspects* (New York: Institute of Jewish Affairs of the American Jewish Congress and World Jewish Congress, 1944).

1945, Chaim Weizmann drew on Robinson's basic ideas in a letter to the four Allied governments urging them to force Germany to pay reparations.[6]

As these demands emerged over 1944-45, leaders from the American Jewish Conference, the American Jewish Committee, the WJC, the Jewish Agency, and the AJDC formed a working committee that became instrumental in advocating for and drafting the first allied restitution law promulgated in the US zone of occupation in 1947.[7] This intense pressure from the outside pushing for restitution quickly became concentrated on the western zones of occupied Germany where the Americans and more grudgingly the British were fairly sympathetic to the demands of Jewish organizations. In particular, the U.S. military put the security and future welfare of Germany's Jewish population high on its list of priorities partially because it fit into its notion of democratization. The Americans stressed the importance of individual rights in promoting democracy in Germany and believed that both fighting anti-Semitism and pushing forward restitution were important steps toward that broader goal.[8] American Commander Lucius D. Clay stressed the need for rebuilding Jewish life in Germany, and John J. McCloy, the High Commissioner for Germany, wrote in 1952 when leaving his post that "I have always had a deep conviction that unless Germany dealt with the problems of restitution we had little hope for the future of Germany."[9]

Indeed, already in May 1945, the U.S. military force under General Eisenhower enacted a directive that placed all stolen property under allied control in preparation for its subsequent

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[6] CZA, C7/1194/3, Weizmann letter of September 20, 1945; Schalom Adler-Rudel, "Aus der Vorzeit der kollektiven Wiedergutmachug," in Hans Tramer, ed., *In Zwei Welten. Siegfried Moses zum fünfundsiebzigsten Geburtstag* (Tel-Aviv: Bitaon, 1962), 210-12.

[7] Ayaka Takei, "The 'Gemeinde Problem:' The Jewish Restitution Successor Organization and the Postwar Jewish Communities in Germany, 1947-1954," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 16, no. 2 (2002): 269.

[8] Kauders, *Democratization*, 63-73.

[9] Geller, *Jews*, 70; NA-College Park, RG 466/250/84/23/7, McCloy to Ferencz, July 19, 1952.

return through the passage of a restitution law.[10] At first, American military leaders hoped to gain approval for a unified restitution law for all of occupied Germany through the allied command, but they failed to reach a compromise among the four powers. The Soviets were the most unpredictable since Stalin did not know exactly what he wanted to do with eastern Germany in general, and preferred on this matter that the state take over confiscated Jewish property rather than give it back.[11] The French were the least powerful occupying force and generally followed the American-British lead, but insisted on a broader, nondenominational restitution law. The British were the most ambiguous and complicated; they recognized the need for returning Jewish property in principle, but preferred "indirect rule" over the more interventionist stance of the Americans and argued that German courts should handle the property issues themselves. Moreover, restitution became entangled with Britain's policy toward the Middle East; the British feared that money regained from property would be directed toward illegal emigration to Palestine. [12] Isolated on this issue by all its allies, the U.S. military thus decided to act alone and issued on November 10, 1947 a restitution law for its zone of occupation.[13] Both pressure from Jewish organizations on the State Department and support from U.S. military governor Lucius D. Clay, who personally promised to Jewish leaders his commitment to restitution a year earlier, ensured passage of the law.[14] The French soon followed suit with a similar measure for their zone, but it took the British two years before they finally agreed to pass a law. Although it took time for a unified policy to emerge, in the long run the allies remained committed to the

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[10] Joint Chiefs of Staff Directive No. 1067 of May 11, 1945; discussed in Goschler, *Wiedergutmachung*, 60-62.

[11] On the indecisiveness of Stalin toward eastern Germany, see Norman M. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995).

[12] Lillteicher, *Raub*, 53-61 and 68-76.

[13] Military Government Law 59, November 10, 1947 in *Amtsblatt der Militärregierung Deutschland — Amerikanisches Kontrollgebiet*, Ausgabe G, pg. 1. On the history of measure, see Goschler, *Wiedergutmachung*, 106-126.

[14] Ibid., 111.

restitution process and did not scale it back as they did with other occupation policies such as denazification. Without the continued support and insistence of the allies, especially the Americans and eventually the British, the return of Jewish property probably would not have taken place on the scale that it did in the early FRG.[15]

The role of the allies was pivotal indeed because the restitution laws had quickly provoked intense opposition from parts of German society. Local, grass-roots anti-restitution organizations emerged throughout Germany that emphasized the hardship of the "buyers" of Jewish property. Anti-Semitic attacks about Jewish "revenge" became frequent as these groups sought to uncover the "real" intentions behind restitution.[16] A basic denial of the anti-Jewish impetus behind the seizure of Jewish property underpinned these assaults. As one organization founded in Berlin put it, restitution had created "new injustices" because the "purchase" of Jewish property had often occurred in good faith out of concern for Jews. The confiscation of Jewish property was simply a consequence of the war that had no right to be repaid now:

> The adversity that Jews suffered during the Nazi period through the sale of their property … is being shifted to the current owners of the former Jewish property. … The restitution laws are based on the assumption that all sales of property by Jews between 1933 and 1945 rested on threat and force. … The restitution laws do not take into account that in many cases friends of Jews bought the property in order to supply financial means for emigration. The friend bought in order to help. … The losses caused by bombs, the losses in the eastern territories, the losses associated with the refugees, and the losses created by inflation cannot be settled. The sacrifices that the Jewish population had to make between 1933 and 1945 were losses of the war.[17]

This assault on restitution is bold in its denial and relativization of the Nazi persecution of the Jews, but even more so given just how prevalent such attacks had become in West Germany. In 1950, the U.S. military noted that "a large part of the German population considers the restitution

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[15] This is the central conclusion of Lillteicher's *Raub*. The historiography, however, is not unanimous on this point with some seeing restitution as a successful part of West Germany's "learning process" and transition to a liberal, civil society. See Hockerts, "Wiedergutmachung." I find Lillteicher's extensively research and finely argued study more compelling.

[16] Numerous articles articulating such views were published in the monthly, *Die Restitution*, which served as the main mouthpiece of the anti-restitution movement.

[17] "12 Punkte zur Rückerstattung 1933-1945 angeblich entzogener jüdischer Vermögenswerte," Vereinigung gegen Entrechtung der nach 1933 entrechteten Besitzer jüdischen Vermögens in Deutschland, LAB B Rep. 025-11, Unterlagen zu den IRSO-Globalverträgen.

law unjust" since the transactions were conducted in "'good faith' for 'good money.'"[18] This broad opposition strengthened the anti-restitution movement across Germany. On May 4, 1950, many of the organizations representing "persons injured by restitution" across the FRG came together to form an umbrella organization to advance their interests — the *Bundesvereinigung für loyale Rückerstattung* (The Federal Association for Loyal Restitution).[19] In that same year, the journal, *Die Restitution*, began publishing articles about the political and economic injustice of the restitution laws. One of the most central targets of the anti-restitution movement were the Jewish successor organizations that emerged in the three western zones of occupation. Established by the allied restitution laws, these organizations were set up to petition for and then legally become the owners of heirless Jewish property. They became the source of incessant attacks from the anti-restitution movement as large, anonymous apparatuses that were out to harm the German economy.[20]

The Jewish successor organizations also received harsh criticism, albeit for starkly different reasons from a rather unpredictable source — German Jewish leaders. The largest and most important organization, the Jewish Restitution Successor Organization (JRSO), which was established by the U.S. military in 1947, became drawn into a tense and long conflict with German Jewish leaders over the fate of Jewish communal property. The U.S. military government declared all Jewish communal property abandoned and heirless and appointed the JRSO as the official successor to it even in towns where a *Gemeinde* existed after the war.[21] The Americans based this decision on the dissolution of the Jewish community during the Nazi period. In 1938-39, the Nazis removed the legal status of the *Gemeinde* as a public entity (*Korperschaft des*

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[18] Weekly intelligence report no. 21, May 24, 1950, NA-College Park, RG 466/250/84/23/7.

[19] Some of these self-described "people injured by restitution" (*Rückerstattungsgeschädigte*) also referred to themselves as "people injured by Jews" (*Judengeschädigte*). Lillteicher, *Raub*, 137.

[20] *Die Restitution*, No. 11, February 1951; *Die Restitution*, No. 1, April 1950.

[21] Arts. 8-11, Government Military Law 59.

öffentlichen Rechts) and dissolved the legal rights of the individual Jewish communities by incorporating them into the Reich Association of Jews. The U.S. military could have simply declared this legal dissolution of the *Gemeinden* invalid under its repeal of Nazi law (Military Government Law No. 1), but it decided to uphold it in light of concern among international Jewish leaders who feared that the small, seemingly temporary *Gemeinden* of postwar Germany would not be able to reclaim and take over the vast amounts of property that had once belonged to the Jewish community.[22] The last thing they wanted was for unclaimed synagogues, community centers, and Jewish cemeteries to remain in the hands of the very state that had caused the destruction of German and European Jewry. Jewish leaders also planed to use the funds from the sale of reclaimed property to benefit Holocaust survivors throughout the world.[23] Their aim was to regain the property as quickly as possible and then resell it; they believed they were making the best out of a difficult and complicated situation

But German-Jewish leaders resented the presence of the JRSO and relations between both groups quickly became nothing less than acrimonious.[24] The JRSO tried to stave off a dispute by creating an Advisory Committee that included German Jewish leaders, but this did little to mollify German-Jewish concerns since the board could not make any policy decisions.[25] German-Jewish leaders not only resented this imbalance of power, but they contested the very right of the JRSO to reclaim Jewish communal property. No matter how hard the JRSO tried it could not

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[22] Goshler, *Wiedergutmachung*.

[23] Takei, "Gemeinde Problem."

[24] The other main organization, the Jewish Trust Corporation (JTC) in the British Zone established two years later, dealt with a much smaller volume of claims and learned from the mistakes of the JRSO by nurturing at the outset direct relations with the *Gemeinden* about their role in the decision-making process. The third and final Jewish successor organization in postwar Germany, the Branche Française de la Jewish Trust Corporation, processed a very small number of claims and never became a major player in negotiations with the *Gemeinden*.

[25] Indeed, the issue of power over decisions remained a constant problem as German Jewish leaders continued to demand representation on the Executive Committee, which was the main policy-making body. E.g.: AAJDC-Jerusalem, Geneva IV, 9/1a, file 2, Minutes of Meeting on *Gemeinde* Problem, October 21, 1953.

overcome the deep bitterness of German-Jewish leaders toward its basic purpose who firmly believed that the postwar *Gemeinden* were the legal successor to Jewish communal property. As the Jewish leader Philipp Auerbach in 1948 bluntly put it, the present Jewish communities were a "continuation of the former (pre-Nazi) *Gemeinden* and therefore there could be no discussion about 'successor' to the *Gemeinde* property."[26]

The JRSO attempted to work with German Jewish leaders to reach a workable compromise. In 1949, it agreed that properties the Jewish communities needed to carry out their religious duties would be returned to them, while any others they did not need would be handed over to the JRSO.[27] But German-Jewish leaders remained adamant that they receive all properties in locations where a *Gemeinde* existed.[28] They were also concerned about the complicated issue of how to distribute the money from the sale of regained properties and reparation payments for damaged Jewish property. The JRSO wanted to use most of the funds to support social welfare programs outside Germany, while German Jewish leaders wanted to secure as much money as possible to sustain a future Jewish life in Germany. As these competing interests collided, an overarching agreement remained elusive and the JRSO decided to negotiate individual compromises with each *Gemeinde*. In the early 1950s, most Jewish communities had reached an agreement with the JRSO about the distribution of property and funds.[29]

Yet just as these agreements were being signed relations between the JRSO and German Jewish leaders reached a nadir. The conflict typically stayed within the confines of private letters and internal meetings, but occasionally erupted into the open with public attacks by men such as Karl Marx, Heinz Galinski, and Hendrik George van Dam. As the general secretary of the Central

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[26] CZA, S35/196, Minutes of Budget Advisory Committee Meeting, December 20, 1948.

[27] CZA, S35/196, Nussbaum to JRSO Headquarters, January 14, 1949.

[28] Ibid.

[29] By 1955, all Jewish communities were in agreement with the JRSO. AAJDC-Jerusalem, Geneva I, Box 124a, file 7, Survey of JRSO Agreements with Re-Established Jewish Communities, April 6, 1955.

Council of Jews (*Zentralrat der Juden*), a new umbrella organization founded in 1950 to serve the interests of all Jewish communities in the FRG, van Dam emerged as by far the most vocal and strident opponent of the JRSO.[30] In a moment of clear frustration, one JRSO official even referred to the overall problem with the *Gemeinde* as "this van Dam (or should I say damn) issue."[31] The JRSO recognized van Dam as someone who was simply attempting to look out for the wellbeing of "his constituency," but nonetheless grew tired of his often lengthy letters that emphasized the same point over and over again that the JRSO was not the legal successor to the community's property. He insisted that it had created a "problem in this unpleasant manner" by refusing to reach "fair agreements" with the *Gemeinden* and by "dictating" its interest with the "complete exclusion" of the German Jewish community.[32] In 1952, van Dam launched his boldest attack when he brought the matter to public attention in an article published in the *Allgemeine Wochenzeitung der Juden in Deutschland*. While repeating his basic claims about the exclusion of German Jews from the decision making process, he posited a new line of reasoning that depicted the JRSO's existence as no less than an "act of one-sided seizure" that had led to the unfair confiscation of the Jewish community's property:

> This property has been transferred to the successor organizations by military government law. We are dealing here with the heritage of German Jews … It is the heirless estate of German Jewry, which above all is to be used for Jews from Germany who are still alive and for those living in Germany. We are not dealing here with the property of perished American, French, or British Jews, but rather with the [property] exclusively of Jews who once lived in Germany …[33]

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[30] On the *Zentralrat*, see Geller, *Jews*; Geller, "Die Entstehung des Zentralrates der Juden in Deutschland," in Susanne Schönborn, ed., *Zwischen Erinnerung und Neubeginn. Zur Deutsch-Jüdischen Geschichte nach 1945* (Munich: Meidenbauer, 2006); Jürgen Zieher, "Weder Privilegierung noch Diskriminierung. Die Politik des Zentralrates der Juden in Deutschland von 1950 bis 1960," *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 13 (2004): 187-211.

[31] AAJDC-Jersusalem, Geneva IV, 9/1a, file 2, Haber to Kagan, December 18, 1952.

[32] AAJDC-Jerusalem, Geneva IV, 9/1a, file 2, van Dam to Ferencz, August 20, 1953.

[33] H.G. van Dam, "Das Erbe des deutschen Judentums," *Allgemeine Wochenzeitung der Juden in Deutschland* May 8, 1952, 1.

The JRSO was taken aback by this attack; impassioned letters and speeches in meetings it could take, but bringing the dispute into the public it could not. Benjamin Ferencz, one of the leading JRSO negotiators, responded immediately. In a spirited letter, he criticized van Dam's "nationalistic principle that German property should be used only for German Jews" and emphasized that without the occupying powers restitution would have been severely limited since German state officials "have persistently been trying to undermine" it. "Perhaps one day," he continued, "you will have an opportunity for a free hand in trying to convince the German officials about German restitution problems without the interference of Americans. I would not be surprised if our actions up to now would be regarded as an 'usurpation,' as you call it, but I expected such criticism to come from the Germans and not from the *Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland*."[34]

In a sense, this response failed to grasp the real source of the conflict. On the surface, German Jewish leaders simply wanted back what they believed was their own property, but their continued discomfort with the JRSO stemmed from a much deeper, internal Jewish-Jewish dialogue about whether or not Jews should live in the "land of the perpetrators." Most German Jews decided neither to stay nor return to the Federal Republic, but those who did, especially its community leaders, became strongly committed to rebuilding Jewish life even as they remained acutely aware of the continuing presence of anti-Jewish prejudices in German society.[35] They

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[34] AAJDC-Jerusalem, Geneva IV, 9/1a, file 2, Ferencz to van Dam, May 16, 1952

[35] See Michael Brenner, *Nach dem Holocaust. Juden in Deutschland, 1945-50* (Munich: Beck, 1995); Y. Michael Bodemann, ed., *Jews, Germans, Memory: Reconstructions of Jewish Life in Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1996); Jael Geis, *Übrig Sein—Leben "danach." Juden deutscher Herkunft in der britischen und amerikanischen Zone Deutschlands 1945-1949* (Berlin: Philo, 2000); Ruth Gay, *Safe Among the Germans: Liberated Jews After World War II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Jay Geller, *Jews*; Anke Quast, *Nach der Befreiung. Jüdische Gemeinden in Niedersachsen seit 1945* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2001); Anthony Kauders, *Democratization and the Jews: Munich, 1945-1965*(Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); Kauders, *Unmögliche Heimat: Eine deutsch-jüdische Geschichte der Bundesrepublik* (Munich: DVA, 2007); Lynn Rapaport, *Jews in Germany after the Holocaust: Memory, Identity, and Jewish-German Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Schönborn, *Erinnerung*; Donate Strathmann, *Auswandern oder Hierbleiben? Jüdisches Leben in Düsseldorf und Nordrhein, 1945-1960* (Essen: Klartext, 2003); Jürgen Zieher, *Im Schatten von Antisemitismus und*

were hardly naïve about the challenges of living in postwar Germany, but they deeply resented the disapproval that they often received from Jews outside of Germany for their choice to stay.[36] The JRSO, no matter how good the larger cause it served, only exacerbated this tension not least because its very existence assumed that Jewish life in Germany had basically ended. In 1952, Karl Marx, editor of the *Allgemeine Wochenzeitung*, directly pointed to this basic, underlying tension in his response to Ferencz's reply to van Dam. He went out of his way to emphasize that the existence of Jewish life in Germany "no longer can be denied" and that all Jews "must support with all their heart the task of strengthening these communities." He stressed the solidarity of the German Jewish community with Israel before concluding with the hope that Jews in Germany will soon have the "feeling that they are not being treated as if they could not manage their own affairs, but are regarded as having equal rights."[37]

This resentment and anger toward the JRSO reached a key turning point in the early 1950s when German-Jewish leaders decided not to settle just for tough words but to fight for their "equal rights" in court. In towns and cities throughout Germany, Jewish communities registered claims for the return of the same property that the JRSO did. In some cases, German courts or local officials upheld the rights of the local *Gemeinde* in clear contradiction of American military law. It is not clear if German authorities were showing solidarity with the Jewish communities or simply attempting to undermine the restitution process by going against the JRSO. The most important and potentially damaging case for the JRSO occurred in the southern German city of Augsburg where a postwar community of thirty-five Jews successfully regained its property. The first two German courts that handled the JRSO's appeal, the Augsburg restitution chamber (*Wiedergutmachungskammer*) and the Munich appellate court (*Oberlandesgericht*), ruled in favor

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Wiedergutmachung. Kommunen und jüdische Gemeinden in Dortmund, Düsseldorf und Köln 1945-1960 (Berlin: Metropol, 2005).

[36] Geller, *Jews*, 276-80.

[37] AAJDC-Jerusalem, Marx to Ferencz, June 4, 1952.

of the Jewish community in a stunning rebuke of American restitution law. The JRSO immediately responded by referring the matter to the Court of Restitution Appeals (CORA), the highest arbiter of restitution matters in the U.S. zone made up of American jurists and run by the U.S. High Commission.[38] In 1954, CORA overturned the earlier rulings of the German courts. Although it recognized the needs of the local Jewish community, it concluded that the restitution law was an "unprecedented remedy necessitated by the commission of unprecedented wrongs." The ruling continued: "The authority that enacted the legislation, and saw it fit to make sweeping exceptions from the usual measures of legal redress, was equally competent to restrict restitution … to successor organizations approved by it, in order to accomplish the greatest good for the greatest number of victims."[39] This ruling finally settled the legal dispute between the JRSO and the *Gemeinden*.[40]

But as this conflict eventually dissipated, the JRSO faced a new and potentially more serious challenge. Growing opposition to restitution in West German society and politics threatened to limit its ability to settle thousands of claims it had accrued over the years.[41] As anti-restitution groups became more organized and vocal, the JRSO feared exactly what it wanted to avoid — becoming involved in a protracted legal process that would prevent it from quickly dispensing of funds for Holocaust survivors and social welfare programs. In 1950, the JRSO turned to John McCloy, the American High Commissioner for Germany and long-standing supporter of restitution, with a possible idea for settling its claims in a fair, yet quick way. It

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[38] Until August 1955, when the Supreme Restitution Court Third Division replaced CORA, the court was made up entirely of Americans. Afterwards, the court had two Americans, two Germans, and one "neutral" justice, and conducted hearings in both English and German. The British and French followed the same model, meaning that the allies had the final say in restitution matters.

[39] CZA, L47/31/1, CORA, Case No. 1237, October 29, 1954.

[40] However, German Jewish leaders continued to press their case for a larger share of the proceeds gained from property sales and reparation payments. See AAJDC, Geneva IV, 9/1c, file 1, Report on *Gemeinde* Problems in Germany, January 26, 1955.

[41] In 1950, three years after the introduction of the restitution law in the US zone, the JRSO still had 150,000 unsettled claims. Goschler, *Wiedergutmachung*, 175.

proposed to negotiate global agreements with each German state to settle the vast majority of its outstanding claims for an agreed-upon sum of money. The JRSO emphasized the clear benefit of settling thousands of claims quickly, even if it meant a substantial loss in money than would otherwise be gained by pursuing each claim individually. McCloy supported the idea and agreed to put pressure on the German states to negotiate with the JRSO. Much pressure was needed in the end as the German states were hardly willing to enter into bulk agreements and stalled as long as they possibly could.[42] One of the reasons was that the settlement actually sold the property to the individual states, meaning that they would now have to force the "buyers" during the Third Reich to either pay for the property or give it up. The German states did not want to become claimants against their own citizens, and did not want to become owners of Jewish communal property such as synagogues and Jewish cemeteries that they would then have to maintain. But after much haggling and intense pressure from McCloy, four out of the five states in the U.S zone finally agreed to enter into global settlements in 1951-52.[43]

The lone state government that did not was West Berlin. Controlled by three different foreign powers, West Berlin did not begin the restitution process in until 1949 when the British government finally passed a restitution law for its zone of occupation, making way for a unified law to be enacted for the city.[44] At first, all three Jewish successor organizations in the French, American, and British zones filed claims for heirless property, but in 1950 the JRSO reached an agreement with them that it would be the sole representative for Jewish property in West Berlin.[45] As the JRSO decided that same year to reach global settlements with the German states, it became the central negotiator for the West Berlin agreement. Although Jewish communal

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[42] Research on this aspect of restitution is limited. For a general overview, see Goschler, *Wiedergutmachung*, 172-80.

[43] Hessen (02.13.1951), Bremen (6.28.1951), Württemberg-Baden (11.06.1951), Bavaria (07.29.1952).

[44] Rückerstattungsanordnung (REAO) für Berlin oder BK/O (49) 180. *Berliner Verordnungsblatt* I, 221, July 26, 1949.

[45] Agreements located in AAJDC-Jerusalem, Geneva IV, 10/1b, file 25.

property made up a relatively small amount of the JRSO's total claims, it proved to be one of the main obstacles to reaching an amicable agreement with the city. West Berlin had the largest Jewish community in the FRG with about 6,000 members led by Heinz Galinski, a relentless advocate for the community and for the existence of Jewish life in Germany after the Holocaust. Sharing the views of van Dam and other Jewish leaders, he believed that the postwar *Gemeinde* was the legal successor to the prewar community's property and filed restitution claims for the same property that the JRSO did.[46] He also argued incessantly that the Jewish community should receive a greater share of the revenue from the sale of property and reparation payments than had originally been agreed upon with the JRSO.[47] Galinski developed close relations with the Berlin government since he knew that its support was crucial to sustaining Jewish life and he used his contacts to stress to city officials that they must look after the community's interests in negotiations with the JRSO.[48] Berlin officials advocated strongly on behalf of the community partly out of solidarity with it against the JRSO, but also for purely financial reasons: the more money allotted to the *Gemeinde* from a JRSO agreement meant less money the city had to pay out overall. This mutually beneficial alliance between Galinski and city officials strained relations with the JRSO, which knew that both parties were pushing the other to force concessions from it.[49]

The Jewish community was, however, hardly the main obstacle to reaching a fair global settlement. The JRSO encountered intense opposition from West Berlin officials who simply did

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[46] Claims filed by both the Jewish community and the JRSO can be found in the files of the Berliner Kommission für Ansprüche auf Vermögenswerte laut Kontrollratdirektive Nr. 50, LAB, B Rep. 79.

[47] The agreement, signed on August 14, 1951, gave the community property valued at 1.2 DM (of 2,067,255.00) and allotted 40 percent of any indemnity payments to the *Gemeinde*. AAJDC-Jerusalem, Geneva I, Box 124a, file 7.

[48] E.g. LAB, B Rep. 002, 4866, Bd. II, minutes of meeting, 26 June 1950; LAB, B Rep. 002, 4866, Bd. I, notes on meeting, October 15, 1952.

[49] On problems with Galinski, see AAJDC-Jerusalem, Geneva IV, 9/1b, file 2, Ferencz to Kagan, October 5, 1953; AAJDC-Jerusalem, Geneva IV, Box 9/1c, file 1, Report on *Gemeinde* Problem, January 26, 1955; AAJDC-Jerusalem, Geneva IV, 9/1b, file 5, Ferencz to Kagan, July 3, 1955.

not seem interested in brokering an amicable agreement. In negotiations that stretched over three years, the JRSO essentially had to cut its losses and sign an agreement of 13.5 million DM, which was drastically smaller than the total value of its assets in West Berlin estimated at 75 million DM.[50] After final negotiations with the Berlin financial department, the JRSO ended up with an even lower settlement of just over 9 million DM, one million of which had to go to the Berlin Jewish community in a one-time, unconditional payment that was added to the agreement at the last moment.[51] This clear defeat for the JRSO stemmed from a combination of bad fortune and basic bad will on the part of Berlin city officials. In 1952-53, the JRSO had developed a good relationship with mayor Ernst Reuter (SPD) who seemed determined to work out a fair and honest agreement with the JRSO, although he was uncomfortable with the idea of the state taking over Jewish religious sites that it would have to decide to preserve or tear down.[52] But in September 1953 Reuter suddenly died; the person whom the JRSO considered to be "one of the few friends we might count on in Berlin" was now gone and chances of the settlement seemed grim.[53] As one JRSO official summed up the situation, "it appears that the JRSO global settlement with Berlin is out of the window – if not for ever than at least for a long time to come – – for Reuter was the only one with the prestige and the apparent desire to do something in connection with a global settlement for Berlin restitution and compensation."[54]

Indeed, West Berlin's new mayor, Walther Schreiber (CDU), expressed strong unease with the work of the successor organization. In a meeting with the JRSO in January 1953, he insisted that the Berlin Jewish community was the legal successor to the property and that the entire idea of restitution relied on outdated, allied legislation that had been imposed on Germany.

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[50] AAJDC-Jerusalem, Geneva IV, Box 9/1b, file 1, Jacobson to Beckelman, September 10, 1954.

[51] AAJDC-Jerusalem, Geneva IV, 9/1b, file 3, Berlin Office, Statement of Income and Expenditures, December 31, 1959.

[52] AAJDC-Jerusalem, Geneva IV, 9/1b, file 1, Ferencz to Kagan, August 21, 1953.

[53] AAJDC-Jerusalem, Geneva IV, 9/1b, file 2. Ferencz to Kagan, October 3, 1953.

[54] AAJDC-Jerusalem, Geneva IV, 9/1b, file 1, Harber to Jordan, September 30, 1953.

He reportedly went on to stress that Germans had suffered from the war and that no one spoke of restitution for them.[55] Two months later, Schreiber followed up on these remarks with a rather stunning letter to the JRSO that challenged the organization's claims and came close to rejecting restitution altogether. He noted that the city's "permanent concern" lies with "helping Berlin's economy with every power" and that Berlin's "economic weakness" meant that it could not dispense with all restitution claims. Settling all claims in bulk could lead to "unfair treatment" toward the current owners of the property since the city would de facto be forced to prosecute them. As for those pieces of property that had already been returned to the JRSO, the mayor indicated that the city was not "indisposed" to purchasing them provided that they served a "public interest."[56] In short, Schreiber had all but relieved Berlin of responsibility for restitution claims except those for which it was "directly liable under the law."[57]

This letter rattled JRSO officials and they directly appealed to Chancellor Konrad Adenauer whom they tended to see as sympathetic to their cause. The chancellor reportedly said that his fellow CDU counterparts were "fools" and indicated that he would talk to them.[58] In a private meeting with the mayor and his associates, the chancellor apparently urged them to conclude an agreement with the JRSO.[59] This appeal from Adenauer had some effect as not too long afterwards the JRSO and Berlin officials verbally agreed on 20-25 million DM as a total settlement, but then the finance department came back with a much smaller amount in the spring of 1955 of 12-13 million DM. This news shocked the JRSO's main negotiator, Benjamin Ferencz, who could not hold back his frustration: "At the moment it looks like the end of the bulk settlement, so that after 2.5 years of intensive negotiations and firm promises by three

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[55] AAJDC-Jerusalem, Geneva IV, 9/1b, file 1, Ferencz to Kagan, January 18, 1954.

[56] AAJDC-Jerusalem, Geneva IV, 9/1b, file 1, Schreiber to JRSO, April 8, 1954.

[57] AAJDC-Jerusalem, Geneva IV, 9/1b, file 1, Kagan to JRSO Executive Committee, May 10, 1954.

[58] AAJDC-Jerusalem, Geneva IV 9/1b, file 1, Ferencz to Kagan, April 17, 1954.

[59] AAJDC-Jerusalem, Geneva IV 9/1b, file 1, Ferencz to Lowenthal, July 29, 1954.

Buergermeisters we are, in a thinly disguised form, being told to accept a crumb for our bother or go to hell."[60] On June 23, 1955, the Berlin senate passed the official offer with only a slightly higher proposal of 13.5 million DM. The JRSO realized that it had virtually little choice other than to accept it.[61] Ferencz wrote to his superior:

> We have been negotiating this bulk settlement for over three years. We have had negotiations with Berlin's last three mayors. We have brought to bear political pressures ranging from Adenauer to Conant to Dulles, and the major political parties inside Germany. … Nevertheless, the history of these negotiations has been the history of broken promises by the German authorities and continuous concessions by the successor organizations. The failure to conclude an agreement has been a clear indication that there never has been a strong desire to reach an agreement. All this is clear evidence of the lack of public interest and the general hostility to the restitution program. In Berlin we have, step by step, been beaten back into retreat since we lacked the power or the possibility to do anything else. Our back is now against the wall. … In the face of the existing and increasing hostility I cannot say with certainty that if we go on we will, within the next few years, be successful in meeting more than Berlin now offers.[62]

Ferencz's analysis sums up well the tenuousness of restitution in West German politics and society. Forced into an agreement with the JRSO after much obstinance, Berlin ultimately paid out a paltry sum for property that it now officially owned. In comparison to either the GDR or to the PPR, the West German case seems rather impressive: there was no other country in Europe that adopted a more wide-ranging restitution program than it. But lying just below the surface were serious tensions, contradictions, and conflicts in practice. Although the existence of restitution was never in doubt — American backing made that certain — the basic lack of support for this "imported, victory justice" made its implementation difficult to put it mildly. West Germans ignored, dismissed, or directly opposed the return of Jewish property. Part of this obstinance stems from the dominant narratives of victimization and redemptive survival that emerged in the early FRG.[63] Jewish claims for property appeared as only further evidence that the German population was being victimized after the war and not just by the allies but by Jews.

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[60] AAJDC-Jerusalem, Geneva IV, 9/1b, file 5, Ferencz to Kagan, May 11, 1955.

[61] AAJDC-Jerusalem, Geneva IV, 9/1b, file 5, Kagan to JRSO Executive Committee, July 12, 1955.

[62] AAJDC-Jerusalem, Geneva IV, 9/1b, file 5, Ferencz to Kagan, July 2, 1955.

[63] Moeller, *War Stories*. Frank Biess, *Homecomings: Returning POWs and the Legacy of Defeat on Postwar Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

Some associated with the anti-restitution movement even called themselves *Judengeschädigte* ("people injured by Jews").[64] Anti-semitism played a central role in creating opposition to restitution, if perhaps less forcefully articulated in public than in the GDR and PPR given the government's officially philosemitic posture.

II. Debating the Return of Jewish Communal Property in East Germany

In September 1950, Julius Meyer, head of the State Association of Jewish Communities in the GDR, sent a letter to the finance ministry inquiring about the current state of Jewish communal property. Throughout the immediate postwar years, he and other Jewish leaders had requested, though with little success, the return of Jewish property. With the occupation now over, Meyer hoped that the newly formed East German state might be sympathetic to the needs of the *Gemeinde*. He noted that the Jewish community had "still not acquired its own property" since most of it remained "under the control of the state" or in the hands of those who had seized it during the Nazi program of "Aryanization." Meyer also pointed out that the *Gemeinde* needed money to reconstruct the numerous synagogues and Jewish cemeteries that had been damaged during *Kristallnacht* and World War II. "We ask," he explained, "that you take into consideration the fact that the Jewish community, because of the extermination policy of the fascist state, finds itself in a situation like no other religious community."[65]

Meyer's remarks underscore the challenges of rebuilding Jewish life in post-Holocaust Germany, but they also uncover a problem that became in effect East Germany's Jewish question, one debated and pushed aside for four decades: what to do with confiscated and damaged Jewish communal property. At first glance, it seems puzzling that this would become an issue at all in East Germany. When the GDR came into existence in 1949, its ruling communist party of Socialist Unity (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, or SED), showed little sympathy

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[64] Lillteicher, *Raub*, 137.

[65] CJA, 5B1, Nr. 28, Meyer to Ministry of Finance, 30 September 1950. These agreements have not received much scholarly attention.

toward the needs of the *Gemeinde* and rejected calls to develop a wide-ranging policy of *Wiedergutmachung*, whether it involved supplying payments to Israel, returning individual Jewish property, or providing reparations to East German Jews. In justifying its decision, the SED argued that the GDR represented neither the legal nor historical successor to the Third Reich. It claimed further that returning individual Jewish property made no sense in a system where property rights did not exist, reparations had already been paid to the Soviet Union, and supporting Israel conflicted with the growing anti-Zionist stance of Moscow. Moreover, the SED understood restitution in a distinctly socialist way. In 1949, it agreed to give assistance for health, housing, and employment to those recognized as persecuted by the Nazi regime (though it made a distinction between Communist, antifascist fighters and Jewish victims). Eschewing the "capitalist" model of individual reparation payments and property rights, the SED had settled on a social welfare solution to the question of restitution.[66]

There were, however, some in the SED who advocated for taking a different approach. In 1948, a small group of SED officials, consisting of the party functionaries Helmut Lehmann, Paul Merker, and Leo Zuckermann, drafted a restitution law that built on measures recently passed in the U.S. zone. But top leaders in the SED (above all Walter Ulbricht) and Soviet authorities strongly opposed following what they saw as a western, capitalist solution to the problem; the proposed law conflicted directly with their project to build a communist Germany by removing one of the key elements of capitalism—property rights.[67] As early as September 1945, the Soviets began confiscating both privately owned estates and communal property seized during the Third

[66] Karin Hartewig, *Zurückgekehrt. Die Geschichte der jüdischen Kommunisten in der DDR* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2000), 300-12; Spannuth, "Rückerstattung."

[67] Although he does not deal directly with Jewish property and the issue of restitution, see Naimark's *Russians* for the wider context of seizing property in the SBZ.

Reich, including a large amount of holdings previously owned by individual Jews and the Jewish community.[68]

Jewish communal property proved to be somewhat of an exception to these wider policies. Since *Gemeinde* property involved claims from organizations rather than individuals, the SED did not completely reject the idea of returning some of it. Indeed, on April 29, 1948, the SMA decreed order Nr. 82 that called for the "return of property confiscated by the Nazi state to democratic organizations." While designed mainly for communist groups, the law also called for the return of property to "church or humanitarian" institutions.[69] For the first and what proved to be the only time in the history of the SBZ and later the GDR, this order provided a legal basis for Jewish communities to reclaim their confiscated property.[70] But the order was not without significant limitations. The SMA demanded that all organizations submit their claims within two months. Since most Jewish communities lacked the organizational resources to file the paperwork themselves, responsibility for doing so fell to the newly formed State Association of Jewish Communities in the SBZ (*Landesverband der Jüdischen Gemeinden in der Sowjetbesatzungszone*). Although the association tried to recover as much communal property as possible, its own scarce resources severely limited its efforts; it simply did not have the logistical capacity to track down in such short time all the holdings that the Nazis had confiscated. Nevertheless, it was able to recover about 122 pieces of property such as synagogues, Jewish cemeteries, and community centers throughout the SBZ, though the level of success varied

[68] Spannuth, "Rückerstattung Ost," 136-41 and 143-47.

[69] BLHA, Rep. 203, Nr. 1830, SMA Order Nr. 82, 29 April 1949.

[70] There is one important exception to this statement. In 1945, the parliament of the state of Thuringia passed a restitution law (*Wiedergutmachungsgesetz*); it was the only one that directly dealt with the issue of restitution for Jews in the SBZ. However, in 1952, under intense pressure from top GDR officials, the parliament repealed the law. See Thomas Schüler, "Das Wiedergutmachungsgesetz vom 14. September 1945 in Thüringen," *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* (1993): 118-138.

greatly by region.[71] The state of Brandenburg, where Potsdam is located, faired by far the worst of any area in the SBZ. Without a Jewish community to aid the process, the *Landesverband* found it especially difficult to gather all the necessary information to file the claims. In the end, it had to submit an incomplete list and ultimately recovered a mere four properties in the entire state.[72] A year later, the *Landesverband* sought to reverse this decision. Its director, Julius Meyer, asked Brandenburg's state president to return thirty-seven pieces of Jewish communal property that had not been placed on the original list.[73] In response, the state wrote to the SMA and argued that Meyer's request should be granted given that the association's "members had been treated especially hard by the measures of the National Socialist leadership."[74] For four months, the state's letter languished until the SMA finally decided that the interior ministry of the newly formed East German state must now handle the case.[75] After inspecting the claim, the interior ministry authorized the return of some property to the *Landesverband*, but Potsdam's synagogue and Jewish cemetery were not among those given back.[76]

The East Berlin *Gemeinde* would ultimately face a similar defeat with a much larger amount of property at stake. Unlike any other Jewish community in postwar Germany, the Berlin *Gemeinde* had to deal with four occupying powers rather than just one. While Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and the United States agreed in principle to cooperate through the Allied Command for Berlin, in practice they conflicted on almost every policy with the return of Jewish property being no exception. By 1949-50, the Berlin *Gemeinde* had made at least some progress in the

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[71] Angelika Timm, *Hammer, Zirkel, Davidstern: Das gestörte Verhältnis der DDR zu Zionismus und Staat Israel* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1997), 70-80.

[72] They were a piece of unknown property in Rathenow, a Jewish community home in Wolzig, the Jewish cemetery in Prenzlau, and a Jewish children's center in Miersdorf.

[73] BLHA, Rep. 203, Nr. 1828, Meyer to Brandenburg's President, 21 July 1949.

[74] Ibid., state of Brandenburg to SMA, 1 August 1949.

[75] Ibid., SMA to state of Brandenburg, 1 November 1949.

[76] See the exchanges between the Landesverband and the interior ministry, CJA, 5B1, Nr. 107.

western zones with the help of international Jewish successor organizations, but negotiations with the Soviets had yielded no results regarding the release of a fairly sizable amount of property located in East Berlin (about 70-80 pieces). Complicating matters even more, SMA order Nr. 82 had no jurisdiction in East Berlin. Since the city remained under the control of all four powers, no SMA order applied to the eastern sector and all Jewish holdings were confiscated by the state as a result.

Beginning in December 1947, Berlin's city council moved to overturn this decision. At the suggestion of the SED political faction, the council proposed to draft a citywide restitution law (*Wiedergutmachungsgesetz*) that included the return of Jewish property. In the debate on the matter, members of the council argued that the city must give back what had been stolen from the Jews. One member in particular—a SED party member—suggested that the Nazi persecution of the Jews warranted the passage of a citywide restitution law. While opposition to returning Jewish property remained widespread among the SED's leadership, it had not yet taken hold over all German communists:

> Ladies and Gentlemen. The proposal brought before us signifies the moral and political need to make justice out of injustice. … No one would ever claim that Jewish property was legally acquired, given that the Jews were already being subject to persecution at the time. . . . I don't need to recount the details of *Kristallnacht* of 1938, but allow me to go through a few numbers that show the horrible havoc that persecution and destruction reeked on German and Berlin Jewry. Before 1933, 186,000 Jews lived in Berlin. Of these 186,000 about 40,000 Jews emigrated.[77] Of the 146,000 Jews that were still in Berlin before *Kristallnacht* only 7,400 returned, which means that around 138,000 fell victim to annihilation by the Nazis.[78]

Following additional comments by other members in support of the SED measure, the city council passed the proposal and requested the *Magistrat* (city government) to prepare a law for the "prompt return of formerly owned Jewish property located in the city of Berlin."[79] Two

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[77] The following numbers that he gives are incorrect. Before 1933, Berlin Jews totaled 160,564. In 1941, when the Nazis began deporting Jews from the city, Berlin's Jewish population was at around 60,000-75,000. From October 1941 until December 1945, the Nazis transported 50,535 Jews to the death camps in the East. He is, however, correct that about 7,000 Berlin Jews survived.

[78] LAB, C Rep. 100-01, Nr. 49, Proceedings of the debate, 4 December 1947.

[79] LAB C Rep. 100-05, Nr. 812, Decision of the *Stadtverordnetenversammlung*, 26 February 1948.

months later, the *Magistrat* submitted a draft and on 10 June 1948, the council started debating the measure.[80] Discussions involved technical and legal issues about a wide-ranging proposal.[81]

But this measure ultimately came too late. On June 24, 1948, Stalin responded to the introduction of the new Deutschmark in the western zones by cutting off all road, rail, and water routes into the city. The Berlin Blockade and the subsequent division of the city shattered the prospect of the *Wiedergutmachungsgesetz*. Just two months later, even as local SED leaders were still debating the law, the SMA ordered the removal of all Jewish property in its zone that earlier had been put into a citywide trust and placed it under their direct control. Headed by a city official named Otto Stockfish, this new trust held somewhere between 1,400 and 2,800 pieces of property, of which about seventy belonged to the Jewish community.[82] Since the Soviets had already established a policy of confiscating property in East Berlin, this decision did not bode well for the *Gemeinde*.

Despite this ominous development, Jewish community leaders continued to press their case. From 1949 until roughly 1953, Julius Meyer and Heinz Galinski sent a number of requests to the newly formed *Magistrat* in East Berlin.[83] Although the city's department of finance initially expressed little interest, it eventually came around to settling some of the Jewish community's claims. After discussing the issue with East Berlin Mayor Friedrich Ebert, the department suggested giving back those holdings that the *Gemeinde* needed provided that the city was not

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[80]LAB, C Rep. 100-05, Nr. 811, Protocol of *Magistrat* meeting, 25 February 1948.

[81]LAB, C Rep. 001, Nr. 145, Debates about the law from 10 June 1948 to 11 November 1948.

[82]The total amount comes from East Berlin's finance ministry estimations of 1957. See SdBARoV, Vol. 7, p. 205, Notes to the Finance Minister, May 1956. For the amount of communal property, see BA-Berlin (SAMPO), DO 4, Nr. 1337, VJGvGB to the Central Committee of the SED, 5 November 1959; BA-Berlin (SAMPO), DY 30/IV 2/14, Nr. 249, Memo of the State Office for Church Affairs, 22 October 1953.

[83] See the letters sent to the Magistrat and the Stockfish trust located in LAB C Rep. 104, Nr. 382, C Rep. 105, Nr. 6912, and BA-Berlin (SAMPO), DY 30 IV/2/14, Nr. 249.

already using them.[84] The proposal involved returning forty-four buildings for a community no larger than 2,000 at the time, clearly much more than it officially needed.[85] But no sooner had it been submitted, than it ran into an emerging problem. It was drafted just as opposition toward Jews in East Germany started to increase dramatically. Just as the earlier *Wiedergutmachungsgesetz* had fallen victim to wider political changes, so too would this measure.

By the end of 1951 and the beginning of 1952, accommodation toward Jews became a political liability in the GDR. As cold war tensions intensified and Ulbricht centralized the state along the lines of Stalin's dictatorship, East German Jews became targets of the SED. Drawing on the show trial against Rudolf Slansky, a Jewish functionary in the Czechoslovak Communist party, the SED initiated a purge of "cosmopolitanism" that targeted veteran communists of largely Jewish origin. Defined loosely as a "key element of reactionary bourgeois ideology and American imperialism," cosmopolitanism blended Stalin's own personal antisemitism with more traditional stereotypes of the Jew as carriers of capitalism and bourgeois culture.[86] One of the highest government officials affected by the purge was Paul Merker. While himself not Jewish, Merker's alleged connections with the West and his plan to return confiscated Jewish property became the primary reason for the SED's campaign against him.

The 1952-53 purge has recently received considerable attention from historians. Most historians have simply interpreted the campaign as "a kind of tactical antisemitism" imported

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[84]For petitions of the Jewish community, see BA-Berlin (SAMPO), DY 30 IV/2/14, Nr. 249, VJGB to Magistrat, 23 February 1950; LAB, C Rep. 104, Nr. 382, VJGB to Magistrat, 7 November 1950. Regarding Ebert's approval, see CJA, 5 A 1, Nr. 1271, Ministry of Finance to VJGB, 14 March 1951. For the department's conditions, see CJA, 5 A 1, Nr. 127, Minstry of Finance to VJGB, 14 March 1951.

[85]LAB, C Rep. 104, Nr. 382, Proposed decision of the Magistrat, Department of Finance, September 1951.

[86] Herf, *Divided Memory*, 109. The SED purged a number of non-Jewish veteran communists, but Jews were among the most prominent targets. See Catherine Epstein's important chapter on the topic in her *The Last Revolutionaries: German Communists and their Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 130-157.

from Stalin's Russia with two important exceptions.[87] Suggesting that 1952-53 was a "*sonderweg* in new clothes," Jeffrey Herf has argued instead for a uniquely German form of antisemitism: "The links between Jews, capitalism, American imperialism, France, and Israel all evoked deep-seated, long-standing antisemitic traditions of anti-western German nationalism. These traditions had, of course, been at the core of the ideological origins of National Socialism."[88] In contrast, Thomas Haury has located East German antisemitism in communist ideology, emphasizing the structural links between antisemitism, communism, and nationalism.[89] These two arguments are not entirely convincing. Herf's sweeping view of German history assumes a stable progression of antisemitism and overlooks the fact that late nineteenth-century German Jewish hatred was more deeply rooted in Christian prejudices than a supposed anti-western, völkish ideology.[90] Haury's argument falls short when one looks beyond the GDR: antisemitism in Poland, Romania, and the Ukraine did not reach the alarming levels during the early 1950s that it did in East Germany and Czechoslovakia. Thus, rather than essentializing East German antisemitism—seeing it as either an intrinsic part of a given society or a political system—it needs to be situated within the historical context of the early 1950s.

At the height of the purge, the SED associated the Jews with the ideological enemies of communism: capitalism, American culture, and imperialism. Although this antisemitism drew on earlier stereotypes of the Jews as western, foreign, conspiratorial, and capitalistic, it operated within an entirely new framework. The SED did not target Jews because of their racial make-up or religious background (though some communists looked down upon religiously observant Jews), but rather because they represented what the party hated. East German antisemitism

[87] Monteath, "German Democratic Republic," 455.

[88] Herf, *Divided Memory*, 112 and 158.

[89] Thomas Haury, *Antisemitismus von Links: Kommunistische Ideologie, Nationalismus und Antizionismus in der frühen DDR* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2002).

[90] Recent research has uncovered important links between Christian-based and modern antisemitism. See Till van Rahden, "Ideologie und Gewalt. Neuerscheinungen über den Antisemitismus in der deutschen Geschichte des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts," *Neue Politische Literatur* 41 (1996): 11-29.

became a "cultural code," a symbol of the SED's fight against U.S. imperialism, capitalism, and increasingly the state of Israel.[91] The Jews were neither the source of the SED's greatest apprehensions nor at the center of its politics, but they were highly visible symbols of the party's broader fears. This strand of antisemitism was not violent as earlier outbursts of Jewish hatred often were and certainly was not "redemptive" as in the case of the Third Reich.[92] In fact, it stood in direct opposition to these earlier forms. Equating antisemitism with fascism, the SED proclaimed that it had eliminated Jewish hatred by removing the main cause of the Third Reich: capitalism. But while rejecting as "fascist" any racial-biological bias against Jews, the SED had developed in reality a new form of prejudice—a distinctly antifascist antisemitism.

What triggered this form of antisemitism to take hold in East Germany? Stalin's paranoia about Jews and his growing antipathy toward Israel clearly had an impact, but he alone does not explain why the SED so vigorously carried out the campaign. Internal developments in the GDR and the cold war also played key roles. In the early 1950s, the GDR was hardly stable: agricultural collectivization forced thousands to flee to the West, significant challenges to Ulbricht's power still existed, and growing mass discontent erupted onto the streets in June 1953. The cold war, which the East German leadership experienced especially acutely with West Germany so close, only exacerbated these internal tensions. Thus as the SED looked to remove perceived internal and external threats to the GDR's security, it turned to those with alleged ties to the West and capitalism—the Jews. The emergence of this kind of antisemitism—targeting Jews at the height of political and social instability—represents a classic example of what the

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[91]I am applying to the East German case Shulamit Volkov's concept of antisemitism as a cultural code. Volkov, "Antisemitism as a Cultural Code: Reflections on the History and Historiography of Antisemitism in Imperial Germany," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* (1978): 25-46.

[92] On antisemitic violence in modern German history, see Werner Bergmann, Christhard Hoffmann, and Helmut Walser Smith, eds., *Exclusionary Violence: Antisemitic Riots in Modern German History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002). The term "redemptive antisemitism" comes from Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*.

medievalist Gavin Langmuir has called a "xenophobic assertion," the tendency to project onto the Jewish minority the fears and anxieties of the majority.[93]

The core elements of this prejudice appeared in a key document of the 1952-53 purge. On January 4, 1953, the SED published in its main newspaper, *Neues Deutschland*, an article entitled "Lessons from the Trial against the Slansky Conspiracy Center." Written by Hermann Matern of the SED's Central Party Control Commission (*Zentrale Parteikontrollkommission*), the document charged Paul Merker with harboring ties to American imperialism and Zionism. Merker's call for the return of Jewish property was merely an attempt to enrich his "rich Jewish émigrés" and to "allow USA-finance capital to penetrate into Germany." Matern argued further that Merker's close affiliation with Jews and Zionist organizations had become a grave danger to East Germany. Zionism had infected the working class with the "poison" of "chauvinism," "cosmopolitanism," and "reactionary bourgeois ideology." The Zionist movement stood in direct opposition to the ideological aims of communism: "[it] has nothing in common with the goals of humanity. It is ruled, directed, and commanded by USA-Imperialism, serving exclusively its interests and the interests of Jewish capitalists."[94]

The impact these antisemitic charges had on the East Berlin proposal to return some Jewish communal property proved decisive. In the spring of 1953, the city suddenly ceased negotiations with the Jewish community in East Berlin, even going so far as to refuse to supply a simple list of its property.[95] Two years later, it developed a general policy toward Jewish property as a whole that effectively precluded any future negotiations with the Jewish community. After three years of internal debate in which some SED members feared that Jews tied to "international

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[93] Gavin I. Langmuir, *History, Religion, and Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California, 1990), 275-305.

[94]"Lehren aus dem Prozess gegen das Verschwörerzentrum Slanksy," *Dokumente der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, vol. 4 (Berlin, 1954), 202, 204, 206, and 207.

[95]LAB, C Rep. 101, Nr. 1816, Office of Church Affairs to Ebert, 21 April 1953; LAB C Rep. 104, Nr. 382, Ebert to the Department of Finance, 5 June 1953.

Zionist organizations" might find out about the decision, the city passed an unpublished measure that allowed Jewish property (mostly individual) to be given back to those *currently* holding legal rights to it—those who "bought" the property in the 1930s (provided that they were still legally listed as the owner).[96] Since administering the holdings proved an unexpected drain on the city's budget, it wanted to see the property given back to someone, but just not to Jews (not least because most of them lived abroad). Reflecting a mix of cold war antagonism and outright prejudice, the city stated this directly: returning the property to its original owners (*Voreigentümer*) would follow the undesirable West German model of supporting "Israeli capitalists" through a policy of "restitution."[97] As the principal owner of the *Gemeinde's* property, it now retained control over all its property with the exception of five pieces that it allowed the community to use as if it were the owner (*Nutzung als Eigentümer*).[98] This policy remained in effect for the next four decades.

III. Confiscating "Former" Jewish Property in Poland

In Poland, the handling of confiscated Jewish property overlapped in several ways with developments in the two Germanys, but was refracted through a qualitatively different historical condition. When the Nazis invaded Poland in 1939, the confiscation of Jewish property took place in the western areas along with the seizure of Polish property. In the incorporated territories, the *Haupttreuhandstelle Ost* (Main Trusteeship for the East, or HTO) was set up to deal with the confiscation of Polish and Jewish property that was used for the resettlement of ethnic Germans and the general benefit of the Third Reich.[99] The HTO was charged with

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[96]SdBARoV, vol. 7, p. 227, Decision of the Magistrat, 11 March 1958. On the debate see the letters in SdBARoV, vol. 7, p. 201-226. See also Spannuth, "Rückerstattung Ost," 226-231.

[97]BARoV, Nr. 513, City Department of Finance to the GDR Ministry of the Finance, 19 September 1955.

[98] The war-damaged synagogue on Oranienburger Straße 28; the Jewish cemetery on Schönhauser Allee 22-25; the Jewish cemetery on Herbert Baum Straße in Berlin Weißensee; the retirement home on Friedrich Wolff Straße 20-38; the synagogue on Rykestraße 53.

[99] Andrzej Dmitrzak, *Hitlerowskie kontrybucje w okupowanej Polsce 1939-1945* (Poznań: UAM, 1983); Czesław Łuczak, *Polityka ludnościowa i ekonomiczna hitlerowskich Niemiec w okupowanej Polsce*

expropriating all Polish private and state property as part of Himmler's grand designs to Germanize this part of Poland. Although these utopian plans eventually proved impractical and fell to the wayside as Hitler prepared for war against the Soviet Union, they involved the forced deportation of no less than 500,000 Poles and Jews to the "dumping ground" of the Generalgouvernement.[100] All of those deported — mostly non-Jewish Poles at this point — lost their possessions, homes, businesses, and farms as they were forced to make room for incoming ethnic Germans.

In central Poland, the Nazi seizure of property was much more selectively focused on Jewish possessions. The Nazis took whatever Polish property they needed or desired, but the seizure of Jewish property became linked to the ghettoization and mass murder of Polish Jewry.[101] In a process that was both regulated and *ad hoc*, a variety of different owners took over Jewish property: some went directly to the Nazi state; some was stolen by German soldiers who were looking for their share of the war loot; some became controlled by Nazi-created trusteeships in Poland; and some fell into the hands of ordinary Poles who took over Jewish belongings left behind. The possibility for confiscating Jewish property came obviously from the German occupiers, but the actual process of identifying and taking it over involved the active participation of numerous Poles. In the GG, the Nazis created trusteeships that included Poles as managers. The Nazis preferred to have either *Reichsdeutsche* or *Volksdeutsche* fill these posts, but settled for Poles because they needed someone to do the job. In the Warsaw district, Poles made up no less than thirty percent of the trustees.[102] Smaller cities had an even higher percentage not least

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(Poznań: Wydaw. Poznańskie, 1979); Czesław Madajczyk, *Polityka III Rzeszy w okupowanej Polsce*, vol. 1 (Warsaw: PWN, 1970), 509-528.

[100] Rutherford, *Prelude to the Final Solution*.

[101] Jeanne Dingell, "Property Seizures from Poles and Jews: The Activities of the Haupttreuhandstelle Ost," *Confiscation of Jewish Property in Europe, 1933-1945: News Sources and Perspectives* (Washington: USHMM, 2003), 33-41.

[102] *Raporty Ludwiga Fischera, gubernatora Dystryktu Warszawskiego 1939-1944* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1987), 108.

because local Polish mayors were often the ones who suggested to the German authorities the names of potential trustees. In the town of Otwock, for instance, only three Germans of 67 applied to manage Jewish property, while in Pruszków not one single German was a trustee.[103]

Polish participation in the seizure of Jewish property was also at times more direct. In eastern Poland, local Poles simply moved into the homes, apartments, and shops left behind by Jews who were killed on the spot by the *Einsatzgruppen* or deported to the death camps. In some cases, Jews handed over their possessions to Polish friends, but more often than not those seeking material gain grabbed Jewish property once it became available. "The dregs of society poured out into the city," Zygmunt Klukowski wrote in his diary, "with their wagons from the countryside as they stood waiting the entire day for the moment when they could start looting. News is coming from all directions about the scandalous behavior of segments of the Polish population who are robbing abandoned Jewish apartments."[104] Indeed, the seizure of Jewish property in eastern Poland became connected with the participation of some Poles in the persecution and mass murder of the Jews. The plunder of Jewish property was one of the main motivating factors for the wave of pogroms and massacres that erupted in over twenty towns in the Łomża and Białystok regions during the summer of 1941.[105]

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[103] Jan Grabowski, "Polscy zarządcy powierniczy majątku żydowskiego. Zarys problematyki," *Zagłada Żydów* no. 1 (2005): 255-56.

[104] Zygmunt Klukowski, *Dziennik z lat okupacji zamojszczyzny 1939-1945* (Lublin: Lubelska Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1958), 255. An English translation of this important diary exists, but unfortunately it is abridged.

[105] Machcewicz and Persak, *Wokół Jedwabnego*, vol. 1, 40. To date, there is no work devoted to the seizure of Jewish property in occupied Poland. Any such study would have to delineate between the GG and eastern Poland after 1941 when Jewish property, after having been nationalized by the Soviets, was then seized in four different Nazi administrative spheres (the Białystok district was annexed by Germany, the Lwów district was attached to the GG, and the rest of eastern Poland was administered by the Commissariat for the Eastern Lands and the Commissariat for Ukraine). For brief sketches, see Grabowski, "Polscy;" Klaus-Peter Friedrich, "Collaboration in a 'Land without a Quisling:' Patterns of Cooperation with the Nazi German Occupation Regime in Poland during World War II," *Slavic Review* no.4 (2005): 711-746; Gross, *Fear,* 39-47; Isaiah Trunk, *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe under Nazi Occupation* (New York: Stein and Day, 1972), 61-71; Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, rev. ed. (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1985), 239-49.

What happened to this confiscated property once the war ended? Were there ever calls from Polish society or moves by the communist-dominated government taking hold in Poland to give Jewish property back to surviving heirs or to Jewish organizations? These questions emerged at a particularly precarious time for Poland. The country was ravaged by war, occupation, and genocide. Numerous Polish cities, industries, roads, and bridges lay in ruins; an astounding five million Polish citizens had died; and the country's pre-war minorities, once making up one-third of the population, were virtually gone after the Holocaust and the forced removal of Germans, Ukrainians, Lemkos, Belorussians, and Lithuanians.[106] No other geographic space in Europe with the exception of Soviet Ukraine and Belarus experienced such massive destruction and upheaval.[107] The Nazi seizure of property created a massive, complex problem that was made even more complicated in the early postwar years. Poland's border had shifted nearly 125 miles to the west as 47 percent of its prewar territory in the east became part of the Soviet Union (Poland lost in the end about a sixth of its size after gaining former German territory). As Germans were forced out and Poles were brought in from the lost territories of the east, property was lost and then gained as thousands had to leave their homes and move into new ones. The very idea of rightfully owned property — including that once belonging to Jews — was severely undermined in the midst of an unprecedented loss, transfer, destruction, and confiscation of property across Poland. All the while, Polish communists were transforming Poland's political

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[106] The expulsion of the Germans has received by far the bulk of the attention, so I refer to the useful essays by Stainsław Jankowiak, Claudia Kraft, and Bernard Linek in Philipp Ther and Ana Siljak, eds., *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944-1948* (New York: Oxford, 2000). The transfer of Ukrainians and Lemkos to the Soviet Union from the south-eastern parts of the now newly defined Poland was agreed upon during negotiations for the repatriation of Polish citizens (both Polish and Jewish) who were deported to the Soviet Union during the war. Some Belorussians and Lithuanians living in north-eastern Poland were also forced to leave. See Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, and Belarus, 1569-1999* (New Haven: Yale, 2004), 187-91; Igor Hałagida, *Ukraińcy na zachodnich i północnych ziemiach Polski 1947-1957* (Warsaw: IPN, 2002); Orest Subtelny, "Expulsion, Resettlement, Civil Strife: The Fate of Poland's Ukrainians, 1944-1947," in Ther and Siljak, *Redrawing*, 155-72; the essays in *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej* no. 8 (2001): 37-58.

[107] See Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair*; Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde. Die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weissrussland 1941 bis 1944* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1999); Lower, *Nazi Empire Building*.

system as they consolidated power between the years of 1944-47. By the late 1940s, Poland was a very different country indeed.

The problem of confiscated Jewish property also emerged at a critical moment in Polish-Jewish history. In June 1946, the Jewish population in Poland reached its postwar height of 240,000 after thousands of Polish Jews returned home from the Soviet Union where they had survived the Holocaust.[108] By 1949, the number had dropped to around 98,000. A surge of violence against Jews caused the massive emigration of Jews. In 1945-46, somewhere between 500 and 1,500 Jews were murdered in villages and towns across Poland.[109] This outbreak of violence had a direct impact on the issue of returning Jewish property. The violence itself stemmed partially from property claims. As Jews came back to Poland and sought what had been stolen from their families, some ethnic Poles physically attacked them in order to dissuade them from reclaiming their possessions.[110] Moreover, the anti-Jewish hatred diverted much-needed attention and resources from the issue of returning Jewish property. As Jewish organizations in Germany were pressing for restitution, those in Poland had to worry first and foremost about security. Poles who expressed public concern about the condition of Jews in Poland — mostly intellectuals writing in left-wing social and literary journals — became equally overwhelmed by contemporary events and overlooked the problem of property almost altogether.[111] There were

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[108] *Zarys działalności CKŻP w Polsce za okres od 1 stycznia do 30 czerwca 1946* (Warsaw: CKŻP, 1946).

[109] The number of Jews present in Poland, as well as those killed by anti-Jewish violence, is difficult to know for certain, but these estimates are probably as reliable as possible. See Albert Stankowski, "Nowe spojrzenie na statystyki dotyczące emigracji Żydów z Polski po 1944 roku," in Grzegorz Berendt, August Grabski, and Albert Stankowski, eds., *Studia z historii Żydów w Polsce po 1945 r*. (Warsaw: ŻIH, 2000), 103–51; Engel, "Patterns;" Józef Adelson, "W Polsce zwanej ludową," in Jerzy Tomaszewski, ed., *Najnowsze dzieje Żydów w Polsce w zarysie (do 1950 roku)* (Warsaw: PWN, 1993). Gross has recently argued that it should be about 1,500. Gross, *Fear*, 35.

[110] Gross, *Fear*; Engel, "Patterns." Gross makes this argument forcefully, whereas Engel sees property disputes as one of many other factors. At the moment, I think Engel's argument is more compelling because Gross does not put forward any concrete evidence to support this claim.

[111] Gross, *Fear*; Joanna Michlic, "The Holocaust and Its Aftermath as Perceived in Poland: Voices of Polish Intellectuals, 1945-1947," in David Bankier, ed., *The Jews are Coming Back: The Return of the Jews to Their Countries of Origin after WWII* (New York/Jerusalem: Berghahn Books and Yad Vashem, 2005), 206-30.

only a few exceptions. One member of the Council for Aid to Jews demanded in 1945 that Polish society "go after at last all of those who took over Jewish property from the hands of the occupiers and made a fortune; for it is precisely they who today are most interested in the extermination of the remaining Jewish survivors."[112] But such pleas were rare as those few Poles who were interested in working through their fractured relationship with Jews focused more on the on-going problem of antisemitism than with the question of Polish complicity in the Holocaust through such actions as the seizure of Jewish property.[113]

The anti-Semitic violence in Poland also sent a clear signal to Polish communists about the prevailing mood of society. In a country where the anti-Semitic stereotype of *żydokomuna* held particular sway, they quickly realized that any overt association with Jews was politically caustic to say the least. Some communists recognized the needs of the Jewish community, but knew that the costs of offering support were simply too high: fighting for the rights of such a tiny minority group was bound to yield many more political loses than possible gains. As Jan Gross has succinctly put it, most Polish communists were running away from "any putative association between Jews and Communism, which was hurting the Party and which they knew was on the public's mind."[114] Jews in Poland lacked political allies. They had virtually no one who was willing to press for their needs in a consistent, sustained, and vigorous manner.[115] In this sense, the political condition of Polish Jews differed from that of Jews in occupied Germany who could at least count on the support of the U.S. military and a handful of politicians from the SPD and

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[112] "Z historii Rady Pomocy Żydom w Polsce," *Dziennik Ludowy* September 9, 1945, 3.

[113] On the broad issue of Polish complicity in the Holocaust, there were notable exceptions such as Stefan Otwinowski's investigation into denunciation: Otwinowski, "Wspólny los," *Odrodzenie* August 12, 1945. But the majority of publications on Polish-Jewish relations immediately after 1945 focused on the broad central issue of antisemitism. See Michlic, "Holocaust."

[114] Gross, *Fear*, 215.

[115] On the national level, see Gross, *Fear*. For the local level, see Daniel Blatman, "The Encounter between Jews and Poles in Lublin District after Liberation, 1944-1945," *East European Politics and Societies* vol. 20, no. 4 (2006): 598-621.

the early SED. This does not mean that, ironically, "Jews were safe among the Germans," as one author has shortsightedly put it.[116] Jews found relative safety and support first and foremost among the *occupiers* of Germany. Polish Jews did not.[117] They were, in effect, abandoned from all sides: the Soviets appeared oblivious to their plight; the communists, even if they wanted to help, were running away from them in their grab for political power; and the major political opposition — the Polish Peasant Party and the militia bands made up mainly of right-wing groups — were either generally silent about Jewish matters or embraced an ethnocentric vision of a future Polish state that did not include Jews.[118]

Indeed, there are perhaps few other issues that reflect Poland's abandonment of its Jewish population more starkly than the problem of Jewish property. There was simply no social, legal, moral, or political pressure pushing to return it. Part of the reason for this stemmed from the catastrophic condition that Poland found itself in after the war. Almost every Polish family in some way had been directly affected by the occupation and the postwar realignment of the country's borders. The Nazi seizure of property and the postwar migration left tens of thousands without properties that they had once owned. The entire concept of rightfully owned property had to have been lost on many. But the issue of Jewish property also became entangled in the particularities of Polish-Jewish relations. After the war, Poles viewed individual and communal property as simply "abandoned." The property was declared, perceived, and believed to be

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[116] "Safe among the Germans" is the title of Ruth Gay's rather rosy depiction of Jewish life in Germany after the Holocaust. Jan Gross's misplaced use of irony by evoking Gay's title sets up a flawed and unfortunate dichotomy between Germany and Poland: "… Jews were running away from Poland, fleeing for their lives to, of all places, Germany. *Safe Among the Germans* — Ruth Gay's book about Jewish life in DP camps — is largely about Polish Jews who fled their mother country after the war." Gross, *Fear*, 43.

[117] I base this conclusion on my research in Polish, German, American, and Israeli archives where I have found no documentary evidence to suggest that the Soviets were even remotely concerned about confiscated Jewish property in either Poland or eastern Germany. It is possible that evidence exists in Russian archives that either confirms or complicates this conclusion, but unfortunately requests for access to it were unsuccessful. I wish to kindly thank Adam Fuss for his assistance in Moscow.

[118] On the illegal opposition, see Andrzej Paczkowski, *Zdobycie władzy 1945-1947* (Warsaw: Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1993), 58; Andrzej Friszke, *Opozycja polityczna w PRL 1945-1980* (London: Aneks, 1994), 45-66, and Kersten, *Między wyzwoleniem a zniewoleniem. Polska 1944-1956* (London: Aneks, 1993), 28-36.

ownerless and now could rightly be owned by someone else. A new linguistic phrase emerged that justified this confiscation of Jewish space — *mienie pożydowskie*. The Polish prefix "po" indicates the leaving behind of something that is now gone; it translates as "formerly Jewish property," but the sterility of the English does not capture its discursive power in Polish. The phrase reflected and produced a moral economy that justified the wartime and postwar seizure of Jewish property. In March 1946, the Marxist literary journal *Odrodzenie* republished a poem by the writer Zuzanna Ginczanka that powerfully captured this possession of *mienie pożydowskie*. Taking as the title a line from one of Horace's odes about his own eternity, *Non omnis moriar* (Not all of me will die), she wrote bitterly and sardonically about what will survive the destruction of Jews like herself — the material objects that now remain in the hands of those who took them:

> Non omnis moriar. My grand estate—
> Tablecloth meadows, invincible wardrobe castles,
> Acres of bed sheets, finely woven linens,
> And dresses, colorful dresses—will survive me.
> I leave no heirs.
> So let your hands rummage through Jewish things,
> You woman of Chomino, you from Lvov, you mother of a Volksdeutscher.
> May these things be useful to you and yours,
> For you are near and dear to me; no lute playing, no empty words.
> I am thinking of you, as you, when the Gestapo underlings came,
> Thought of me, in fact reminded them about me.
> So let my friends break out holiday goblets,
> Celebrate my wake and their wealth:
> Kilims and tapestries, bowls, candlesticks.
> Let them drink all night and at daybreak
> Begin their search for gemstones and gold
> In sofas, mattresses, blankets and rugs.
> Oh how the work will burn in their hands!
> Clumps of horsehair, bunches of sea hay,
> Clouds of fresh down from pillows and quilts,
> Glued on by my blood, will turn their arms into wings,
> Transfigure the birds of prey into angels.[119]

Jews might be gone from Poland, but not everything associated with them had died, *non omnis moriar*. Their belongings might now have new owners, but they were understood, absorbed, and

[119] Zuzanna Ginczanka, *Non omnis moriar* (probably 1942), Translated by Nancy Kassel and Anita Safran, *AGNI magazine*, On-Line Edition, http://www.bu.edu/agni/poetry/online/2006/kassell.html (last accessed July 14, 2008).

ascribed as being connected to Jews, as *mienie pożydowskie*. The property was at once "formerly Jewish" and yet still "Jewish." It is precisely this uneasy, constant relationship with the past that avoiding a thorough return of Jewish property promised to transcend. To embark upon a complete engagement with Jewish property would have opened up and interrogated just how entangled with the Holocaust Polish society had become; it would have involved looking into when, how, and why the property had been confiscated in the first place.

This physical, cultural, and linguistic possession of *mienie pożydowskie* became coded into law by the communist-influenced provisional government. In May 1945, the state passed a law concerning "abandoned and deserted properties" that treated Jewish property — both individual and communal — as "abandoned" and "heirless." In terms of individual property, the law allowed direct heirs (children, parents, spouses, brothers, and sisters) the possibility to reclaim property left behind, lost, or confiscated during the occupation.[120] A year later, the measure was slightly altered and reissued as a decree regarding "abandoned and formerly German property" (*majątki opuszczone i poniemieckie*) to include more specifically possessions that had been left behind by Germans expelled from western Poland.[121] In both measures, "abandoned property" was a euphemism for *mienie pożydowskie*. The architects of the law intentionally limited the line of successorship with this in mind against the expressed reservations of Jewish leaders. In discussions about the measure in May 1945, Emil Sommerstein, chairman of the newly created Central Council of Jews in Poland (CKŻP), argued that legal successorship should be extended to other family members such as cousins, aunts, and uncles since the current regulation would be disadvantageous to Jews who had lost so many direct family members. His suggestion was rejected on the grounds that broadening the line of heirs would place too much property in the hands of a small group of Jews and would potentially trigger anti-Semitic attacks

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[120] "Ustawa z dnia 6 maja 1945 r. o majątkach opuszczonych i porzuconych," *Dziennik Ustaw Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, May 6, 1945.

[121] "Dekret z dnia 8 marca 1946 r. o majątkach opuszczonych i poniemieckich," *Dziennik Ustaw Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej,* April 19, 1946.

by increasing the number of restitution claims.[122] Several months later, he and other members of the CKŻP discussed similar problems about the measure, but decided not to voice their concerns publicly any more.[123]

Polish Jewish leaders probably realized that a more sweeping return of Jewish property conflicted with what the communists hand in mind. In February 1945, Władysław Gomułka, at the time chairman of the PPR's Central Committee, made clear the direction the communists were moving in: "It is also common knowledge that part of the capital before 1939 rested in Jewish hands and that [now] this capital is ownerless because the Germans killed the Jews. … It is clear that we do not want to put the nation's vast property back into the hands of private owners."[124] Gomułka points here to one of the central facts that shaped the handling of Jewish property in Poland — the sheer "vastness" of the holdings previously owned by Jews. Although Polish Jewry was of the lower middle class, it made up nearly one-third of Poland's urban population. For communists, putting this property back into "Jewish hands," which historically worked in commerce, industry, and the professions, could be interpreted through the lens of their own anti-Jewish biases as giving it to "capitalists." Moreover, returning property to either individual Jews or to a Jewish successor organization like the JRSO would in fact create fairly sizeable, non-state property owners. Reporting from Warsaw in 1948, the AJDC underscored this point directly: "A very ticklish political question arises with respect to Jewish property in Poland. It should be borne in mind that in pre-war Poland, the Jews owned over 30 percent of all property

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[122] AAN, KRN B 7678, protocol of session, May 3-6, 1945.

[123] AŻIH, Prezydium CKŻP, 303/1, protocols of meetings on August 8, September 11, September 18 1945.

[124] "Referat pierwszego sekretarza KC PPR Władysława Gomułki wygłoszony na rozszerzonym plenum KC 6 lutego 1945 r. w Warszawie," in *Polska Partia Robotnicza. Dokumenty programowe 1942-1948* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1984), 283.

in Poland. If, of course, all such property was restituted, either to individual Jews or to a successor organization, Jews would be the largest property holders other than the state."[125]

In short, returning all Jewish property would mean taking it away from a significant number of Poles who had occupied this "formerly Jewish" space. Gomułka expressed a clearly materialist desire not to disrupt the wartime and postwar spoilage of genocide. If the line of heirs were to be extended, or if a Jewish successor organization were to take control of all heirless property, a not too small number of Poles would have been forced to give up what they had gained.[126] A Polish historian has recently estimated that at least 500,000 Poles took over Jewish property, which does not take into account the additional family members occupying it.[127] The reluctance to extend the line of heirs stemmed partially from the basic realization that doing so would displace thousands of Poles precisely at a moment when hostility toward Jews was reaching a deadly pitch. Since no research has been done on this topic and it would take several historians to sift through the hundreds of files located in municipal archives across Poland, it is impossible to guess how many Jews actually filed claims and of them how many were able to get their property back under the law on abandoned and former German property.[128] There is, however, little doubt that the number was extremely small given that only ten percent of Polish

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[125] AAJDC-Jerusalem, 45/54, file 779, Memorandum on Handling of Individual Claims in Poland, April 4, 1948.

[126] Some Polish Jewish leaders attempted to push for a successor organization. See AAN, MAP 786, CKŻP to premier, June 6, 1946. Similarly, the Ichud and the Jewish Democratic Party demanded the return of all Jewish organizational and communal property. See Szymon Rogoziński, "Drażliwa kwestia," *Opinia*, July 25, 1946; political proclamation of the Jewish Democratic Party, January 1947, republished in August Grabski, *Działalność komunistów wśród Żydów w Polsce (1944-1949)* (Warsaw: ŻIH, 2004), 199.

[127] Wojciech Lizak, "'Niepamięć zbiorowa' — z perspektywy ludu," *Tygodnik Powszechny* November 7, 2004.

[128] For example, the local archive in Łowicz, which holds the files of the municipal civil court (Sąd Grodzki w Łowiczu), has 855 files of documents related to this process. I kindly thank Jakub Petelewicz of the Polish Center for Holocaust Research in Warsaw for giving me a copy of his survey on the files located in this archive.

Jewry survived the Holocaust and those who did were fleeing Poland.[129] The legal process of going through local courts also took time and money from a population that had neither.[130]

Although governed by the same law on abandoned and former German property, Jewish communal property was handled rather differently. The provisional government did not allow even the slightest possibility of it being returned. Instead the state confiscated synagogues, Jewish cemeteries, schools, and community centers across Poland. The legal justification — cited continually throughout the history of the PPR even as late as the 1980s — stemmed from a single measure published in 1945 by the newly formed Ministry for Public Administration (*Ministerstwo Administracji Publicznej*, or MAP). In a circular on "provisionally regulating matters of the Jewish religious population," the MAP declared that ten or more Jews in a locality could establish a "Jewish religious association" (*kongregacja*). This organization would not be given the same legal rights afforded to the prewar Jewish community (*gmin*), which the circular indicated had ceased to exist and would not be reconstituted. This meant that, while local religious organizations could use some of the "former" property of the Jewish community, they

[129] Although it was possible to file claims from outside Poland, Jews had to give power of attorney to a local lawyer, had to transfer in advance money to cover court fees, and had to find someone to either manage or sell the property once it was given back. The AJDC office in Paris estimated that it cost about 25,000 zł in fees and taxes for the total process for Polish Jewish residing in France, noting that out of 70 cases recently dealt with 12 claimants were unable to pay the costs. In 1947, the AJDC indicated that its foreign exchange for these proceedings was one USA dollar to 100 zł. AAJDC-Jerusalem, 45/54, file 779, Paris to New York office, January 5, 1948; memo on property rights in Poland, October 8, 1947.

[130] Local Polish courts handled the claims that began first with a special procedure to certify birth, wedding, and death certificates before moving onto the actual claim of the property. This legal process was understandably necessary given the destruction of files throughout Poland and the possibility for fraud, which turned out to be a legitimate concern as some Jews and Poles worked together to lodge false claims. Given the lack of research on this topic, it is not clear how great of a problem fraudulent claims were, but it was significant enough for the AJDC to write: "The Polish courts have become increasingly alerted to the 'racket' of some Jews in going around making a business of making claims for the restitution of property belonging to people they know or did not know, alleging that they are relatives or that they are the persons to whom the property belongs." AAJDC-Jerusalem, 45/54, file 779, Memorandum on Handling of Individual Claims in Poland, April 4, 1948. For a case study of fraudulent claims, see Machcewicz and Persak, eds., *Wokoł Jedwabnego*, vol. 2, 375-413.

could not legally reclaim it since there was no legal connection between them and the prewar communities.[131]

Since these regulations were supposedly "provisional," the newly formed Jewish organizations in Poland had reason to believe that they could perhaps change this understanding of legal successorship. In October 1946, the Organizing Committee of Jewish Religious Congregations requested that all "abandoned property of former Jewish religious communities, foundations, and other organizations" be returned.[132] In that same year, the CKŻP made a similar request to Polish authorities and noted that "the demands presented here do not require any justification given that they emerge behind the backdrop of the murder of 95 percent of the Jewish community by the occupiers, an exceptional barbarity in the history of mankind."[133] Jewish organizations requested their property back for both moral and practical reasons. The CKŻP argued that it was necessary for the rebuilding of Jewish life in Poland and saw restitution as a "partial undoing of the moral injustice committed against the Jews by the occupiers."[134] Moreover, it wanted Jewish organizations to control its property in order to protect the cultural heritage of Polish Jewry. The CKŻP was aware of the misuse and destruction of Jewish sites that was occurring in towns throughout Poland as synagogues were being used for other purposes and Jewish cemeteries were being cleared away to make room for new building projects. Returning the property directly to Jewish organizations was the only way to preclude the continued defilement, mismanagement, and neglect of these sites.[135]

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[131] USHMM, RG 15.089, reel 1, MAP circular, February 2, 1945.

[132] AAN, MAP 786, KO-ŻZR to Prezydium Rady Ministrów w miejscu, October 9, 1946.

[133] AAN, Map 786, CKŻP to premier, June 6, 1946.

[134] USHMM, RG-15.089, Reel 1, CKŻP to AJDC, January 27, 1948.

[135] The MAP officially did not approve of Jewish sites being used in any way that went against its previously religious purpose. For example, the MAP insisted that the synagogue in Kolno should not be used for any purposes that would "collide with its previously sacral character (movie theater, dance and performance hall)." AAN, MAP, 1095, B-2612, MAP to Main Liquidation Office, October 6, 1947.

The MAP saw matters differently. It effectively blocked the return of Jewish communal property by quickly turning a "provisional" regulation into a permanent one. Its 1945 circular indicated that Jewish communal property would "provisionally remain in control of the state until the introduction of a law on abandoned property." [136] Such a law came into existence a mere three months later but included an important provision. Article twelve stated that abandoned property could be "used and managed" by "public service institutions, cooperative and social institutions, cultural and educational organizations as well as help organizations for groups of people who were particularly persecuted by the Germans."[137] At first glance, this clause would seem to give Jewish organizations the chance to reclaim their property. Numerous Polish officials on the local level thought that it might and wrote to the MAP for clarification. In late 1945, the Białystok regional government (*Urząd Wojewódzki*) asked if Jewish communal property was considered "abandoned" and, if so, whether the Jewish religious associations were legally allowed to reclaim it as "organizations continuing with the legal recognition of the former religious communities."[138] In this and many other cases, the MAP explained that Jewish communal property was in fact "abandoned" given that the former Jewish communities no longer existed, but that it could not be given back since the postwar *kongregacje* were not the legal successors to the prewar *gminy* as stated in its circular of 1945. It had deliberately created a circular reasoning that precluded the return of Jewish communal property. Local Jewish congregations could only "use and manage" those properties it needed for religious purposes. The state granted itself permission to confiscate any other Jewish communal holdings not being used by local Jewish congregations. The MAP clearly understood that this would lead to the wholesale confiscation of Jewish communal property throughout Poland, for it knew the facts on the ground: the few Jews who survived the

[136] USHMM, RG 15.089, reel 1, MAP circular, February 2, 1945.

[137] Art. 12, par. 2 (fn. 119).

[138] AAN, MAP 1099, BUW to MAP, November 11, 1945.

Holocaust were leaving Poland by the thousands precisely as it was deliberating about these issues in 1945-46. The amount of property the Jewish congregations needed was dwindling day by day.[139] In areas where no Jewish congregation existed — hundreds throughout Poland — the MAP allowed third parties to take over the property.[140] Polish archives are filled with correspondence between officials in Warsaw and local authorities about seizing abandoned synagogues, schools, hospitals, and Jewish cemeteries.[141] The MAP almost always approved the transfer of the property. Although in theory local authorities had to consult with it about the future use of the building, in reality this was only rarely done and numerous Jewish sites over the years were turned into storage houses, museums, movie theaters, libraries, factories, cafeterias, archives, and schools.[142]

As this transfer of property was going on in town after town throughout Poland, Jewish leaders in Warsaw continued to press authorities to approach the issue with some degree of flexibility. At this point, their most likely chance was to persuade MAP officials to allow the CKŻP to take over the property as a centralized, state-approved organization. Created by the provisional government in 1944, the secular CKŻP had from the outset more leverage with Polish authorities than the religious Jewish congregations.[143] Although no concrete proposal was probably ever drafted, the MAP did express its general support for possibly returning some

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[139] MAP was the main government department informed about the demographics, security, and problems of the Jewish population (e.g. AAN, MAP, 786 and 788). Although the largest wave of Jewish emigration occurred after the Kielce pogrom of July 1946 (and hence after the drafting of these laws), Polish Jews were leaving Poland in larger numbers even before it, especially in the summer of 1945 when the first of two major waves of postwar anti-Semitic violence broke out. From July to December 1945, 36,605 Jews left Poland. Stankowski, "Nowe spojrzenie, 110-11; Engel, "Patterns," 50.

[140] AAN, MAP, 1099, MAP to BUW, December 27, 1945; MAP to GUL, August 19, 1947.

[141] Dozens of files located in AAN as well as in local archives hold these correspondences. A particularly rich collection is found on two rather long microfilms in AAN, B-2612 and B-2613.

[142] AAN, UdsW, 132/273, registry of synagogues not being used for religious purposes, December 12, 1979.

[143] David Engel, "The Reconstruction of Jewish Communal Institutions in Postwar Poland: Central Committee of Jews in Poland," *East European Politics and Societies* no. 1 (1996): 339-370.

Jewish property to the CKŻP. In 1946, it pointed out that the CKŻP's position as the only legally recognized Jewish organization would justify its "actual claims to take over the property of the former Jewish religious communities and Jewish foundations."[144] The CKŻP even expressed cautious optimism that some property would be returned, writing at one point to the World Jewish Congress that the "restitution of immovable property belonging to associations and societies seems to be quite probable and is only a matter of time."[145] In another correspondence, it suggested that a "concrete possibility" existed for the return of some Jewish property, although it recognized that "hundreds and even thousands of properties … belonging to Jewish associations and organizations remains to the present day in the hands of third parties."[146]

It is not entirely clear what caused this cautious optimism. The files of the MAP that exist today at least do not indicate any concrete plan to return communal property to the CKŻP. In some letters to local officials, the MAP indicated that authorities should wait until "a definitive regulation of the matter of the successorship of Jewish communal property" was put forward, but these were rare cases among numerous others in which it simply agreed to the seizure of the properties.[147] In all probability, the likelihood of returning Jewish communal property to the CKŻP was slim because time was rapidly running out. By the fall of 1947, the Polish communist party had gained political control of the country after the farce elections in January and after destroying its last political rivals in the spring. It now had the political power to implement its wide-ranging economic plan that rested in part, as Gomułka anticipated in 1945, on the

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[144] AAN, MAP 788, MAP to GUL, August 3, 1946. The Jewish congregations were officially not recognized as legal entities; they did not have *osobowość prawna*, which the CKŻP did. See Ewa Waszkiewicz, *Kongregacja Wyznania Mojżeszowego na Dolnym Śląsku na tle polityki wyznaniowej Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej, 1945-1968* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1999), 42-46 and 55.

[145] USHMM, RG 68.045, reel 50, Jewish World Congress, Geneva Office, "Brief information about restitution problems in Poland," undated, but before 1948.

[146] USHMM, RG 15.089, reel 1. CKŻP to AJDC, January 27, 1948.

[147] E.g. AAN, MAP 1095, B-2612, MAP to GUL, August 18, 1947; AAN, MAP, 1528, B-3139, GUL to GUL in all provinces, October 6, 1947.

nationalization of property. At the same time, the Stalin-Tito split and the growing suspicion of "right-wing nationalist deviation" was transforming political life in Poland. Gomułka's insistence on the "national way to socialism" and his conciliatory tone toward the Polish Socialist Party led to his ouster as general secretary of the party in September 1948, opening the way for a purge of suspected "deviators" throughout Poland.[148] In the case of the CKŻP, this meant above all targeting Zionists. Since the very beginning of its existence, the CKŻP had been riddled with political conflicts, but now the time was ripe for Jewish Communists to settle old scores for good.[149] They decided to dissolve the CKŻP in favor of a new organization more subservient to the newly formed PZPR. In October 1950, the Socio-Cultural Association of Jews (TSKŻ) was established and focused on developing a secular Jewish life in Poland.[150] This new organization did not continue the important advocacy work of the CKŻP in legal and restitution matters. The clamor against "right-wing nationalist deviation" had silenced the main voice arguing for restitution.

But it did not quiet all Jewish voices. There were still some Jewish leaders around who remained concerned about the fate of confiscated Jewish property and continued to press the party on the issue. Indeed, it was, paradoxically, after the PZPR consolidated its power and dissolved the CKŻP that the most significant and drawn-out dispute over the handling of Jewish communal property in the history of the PPR took place. Although it remained limited to one specific case – – the Jewish congregation in Cracow — the conflict had much broader implications throughout Poland and involved some of the highest officials of the PPR. The conflict began in early January 1956 when municipal authorities in Cracow officially became the owners of the Jewish

[148] Overview in Friszke, *Polska* and Paczkowski, *Spring*.

[149] Aleksiun, *Dokąd dalej*, 245-66; Aleksiun, "Zionists and Anti-Zionists in the Central Committee of the Jews in Poland: Cooperation and Political Struggle, 1944-1950," *Jews in Eastern Europe* vol. 33 (Fall 1997): 32-50; Hana Shlomi, "The Communist Caucus in the Central Committee of Jews in Poland, November 1944-February 1947," *Gal-Ed* 13 (1993): 81-100.

[150] Contrary to what most scholars have repeated in their work, the initiative to close the CKŻP down did not come from the PZPR but from Jewish communist leaders as August Grabski has discovered: "Sytuacja Żydów w Polsce w latach 1950-57," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* no. 4 (2000): 504-519.

congregation's property and attempted to transfer some of its holdings. This legal move was a mere formal confirmation of the confiscation of the property that had taken place during the 1940s. The law on abandoned and former German property stipulated that the state would officially become the owner of any "abandoned" property that it had managed after ten years (the legalese was ownership through positive prescription). The Jewish congregation in Cracow was furious with what it saw as spurious legal moves not least because it had been using some of the holdings the state now claimed to own. In a series of lengthy and impassioned letters, it argued forcefully that the city had no legal right to take over its property and that the PPR should settle the problem of Jewish communal property altogether by simply giving it all back to the Jewish congregations.

"All property belonging to the Jewish Religious Community," one letter tersely wrote in underlined letters, "should be returned to the congregations without any exclusions."[151] The Jewish congregation argued this position on several grounds: the law on abandoned and German property allowed organizations like itself to become owners of the property after ten years; Jewish congregations were legal entities with successorship to the property of the Jewish communities; and the claim that "abandoned" Jewish communal property belonged to the state was erroneous since "the exterminating actions of Nazi hordes" did not mean the end of the *gmin's* legal existence.[152] The Jewish congregation also pointed out that the state's control of Jewish communal property was "in reality leading to the destruction" of Jewish sites across Poland.[153] It pleaded that "every piece of property" be returned as the "only way to avoid the

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[151] AAN, UdsW 26/476, Jewish Congregation in Cracow (JCC) to attorney general (prokurator generalny), July 30, 1957.

[152] Ibid; AAN, UdsW, 26/476, JCC to Ministry for Public Utilities and Housing, August 13, 1956; AAN, UdsW 26/476, JCC to premier, August 19, 1957.

[153] Ibid., from August and July 1957 letters. The letters give examples of destroyed Jewish property in the towns of Nowy Targ, Olkusz, Brzesko, Myślenice Dąbrowa Tar, Szczurowa, Zakopane, Cracow and in "many other places."

desecration of religious sites."[154] The Department for Religious Affairs, the successor to the MAP, responded by simply reiterating the basic approach that the PPR had taken toward Jewish communal property since the end of the war. Since the Jewish congregation was a "completely new religious organization" with no legal ties to the prewar Jewish community, the property had rightfully been declared "abandoned" and escheated to the state. As for the on-going destruction of Jewish sites, the department explained that local officials were doing everything possible to protect them, but that "time and the effects of the weather were above all contributing" to their ruin.[155]

Such obstinance did not force the Cracow Jewish Organization to back down. In an unprecedented legal move, it took the issue to the courts and met with limited success. In December 1958, the local court in Cracow sided with the Jewish congregation and ordered that its name be placed on the land registry (*księga wieczysta*) as the owner of fourteen pieces of property that had formerly belonged to the Jewish community. The court based its decision on a series of correspondences written by municipal authorities in 1946-1947 that declared it "the appointed institution … in place of the former Jewish religious community for religious and social purposes."[156] This statement seemingly implied that the Jewish congregation was the legal successor to the former Jewish community, or at the very least was not an entirely new organization without any legal connection to the prewar *gmin* as the MAP and the Department for Religious Affairs had long maintained.

Officials in Warsaw were not enthused with this decision to put it mildly. They decided to appeal the decision to Poland's supreme court, but limited their petition to only one piece of property: the old synagogue, the *Stara Bożnica*, that the Jewish congregation allowed the city to

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[154] Ibid., July 1957 letter.

[155] AAN, UdsW, 26/476, UdsW to JCC, April 1958 (draft copy).

[156] AAN, UdsW131/512, Cracow Provincial Government to District Liquidation Office, September 22, 1947; AAN, 131/512, Certificate from Cracow Provincial Government, July 26, 1946.

renovate and incorporate into its Museum of History. It is not clear why the state decided to limit its appeal to this property alone; perhaps it thought that a building renovated by state funds stood no chance of losing in court and would easily achieve the larger aim of setting a legal precedent for its confiscation of "abandoned" Jewish property. If this was its strategy, it only worked so well. In a cautiously written decision, the supreme court ruled that the Jewish congregation technically had no legal right to reclaim property of the former Jewish community. The court had no legal basis to recognize the congregation as the successor to the prewar *gmin*. The court had upheld the state's position that the Jewish congregation had no legal claim to successorship; its confiscation of the property was therefore legally sound. But then, in an intriguing twist away from the strictures of the law, the court added that "in this concrete case" the state had "abused the law" by "demanding" to own the property. The court came to this view in light of the "notorious destruction of the Cracow Jewish population by the German invaders" and the "indisputable cultural-historical character" of the synagogue. "It is the opinion of the supreme court that the People's Republic has a moral responsibility to respect the above-mentioned emotions of its citizens."[157] It ordered that the Jewish congregation be allowed to manage the synagogue.

This decision reflected a subtle rebuke of the postwar handling of Jewish communal property. Bound by a series of legal maneuvers set right after the war, the court reaffirmed the basic fundamentals of the case that the Jewish congregation was not the successor to the prewar Jewish community's property. It did not challenge the premise that the property was abandoned and in the end it only gave the Jewish congregation the right to manage the synagogue. The decision changed nothing in terms of the legal state of Jewish communal property throughout Poland, but it did indicate that at least some jurists in the PPR — and no less than those sitting on the bench of the supreme court — recognized the limitations, if not even the absurdity, of a law that declared a synagogue abandoned that had been serving Jewish religious needs since the early

[157] AAN, UdsW 131/512, Decision of Supreme Court, October 15, 1960.

sixteenth century and was located in a city with a Jewish congregation that spiritually, psychologically, and legally saw itself continuing in that long tradition.

The Department for Religious Affairs could barely hold back its frustration with the court's decision. In numerous internal letters sent to Cracow officials, the courts, and the justice department, it strongly criticized the decision for making it "very difficult to take up legal action in the matter" of Jewish communal property.[158] It then clearly emphasized that the Cracow case had no legal precedent and that local Jewish congregations had no legal basis for filing motions before the courts.[159] In 1961, it legally reinforced this point by officially granting the Religious Association of the Jewish Faith (ŻRWM), an umbrella organization of the local Jewish congregations, status as a public entity. This measure allowed *solely* the ŻRWM to represent the legal interests of the religious Jewish population and thereby prevented any other Jewish organizations from turning to the courts. It also opened the way for the ŻRWM to become the owner of a handful of properties that the Jewish congregations were currently using, while still maintaining that it was not the "legal successor to the former Jewish religious communities."[160] Although this regulation solved the immediate problem of other individual Jewish congregations going to court, it tabled the longer-term and pricklier issue of the state owning the vast majority of Jewish communal property since the amount the ŻRWM was allowed to manage was negligible.[161] This shortsighted move later proved to be a mistake for the PPR as the "Jewish problem" of property reemerged more strongly and complicated than ever in the 1970s and 1980s.

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[158] AAN, UdsW, 131/512, UdsW to Cracow Department of Religious Affairs (CDRA), April 24, 1963.

[159] E.g. AAN, UdsW, 131/512, UdsW to CDRA, October 22, 1962; UdsW to CDRA, April 24, 1963. For earlier letters expressing a similar line of reasoning, see AAN, UdsW, 131/512, UdsW to Finance Ministry, July 31, 1958; AAN, UdsW, 131/78, UdsW to Justice Ministry, February 21, 1959.

[160] AAN, UdsW, 131/512, Notes on property used by the ŻRWM, December 28, 1964.

[161] For example, of 522 Jewish cemeteries registered by the Office for Religious Affairs in 1974, 455 were owned by *Skarb Państwa*, while a mere 67 were controlled by local Jewish religious organizations. AAN, UdsW, 132/272, Jewish cemeteries in the PRL, September 6, 1974.

IV. Conclusion

In certain ways, the issue of returning Jewish property and restitution fell along the lines of the Iron Curtain. While the Federal Republic returned confiscated Jewish property and paid billions of marks in reparations, the GDR and the PPR pursued policies toward Jews defined by indifference, ambivalence, and at times open hostility. The political cultures shaped by communism and democracy had an important impact. The SPD, even if cautiously, endorsed restitution the most often of any other political party in the early FRG and its support was crucial for the passage of measures such as the Luxembourg Agreement that supplied reparations to Israel. Such voices of support for Jewish issues could not be expressed as easily or as publicly in the Soviet bloc countries precisely as the SED was embracing antifascist anti-Semitism and the PZPR was running away from any overt association with the Jews in the face of *żydokomuna*. Indeed, in both the GDR and the PPR, anti-Jewish bias shaped the handling of Jewish property, albeit in different ways and to different degrees. Anti-Semitism had the most overt impact in the GDR. From the very beginning, East German "antifascism" did not place much emphasis on the Jewish fate during World War II and the SED settled on a distinctly socialist approach to restitution. At the same time, some room still existed for possibly returning Jewish communal property in East Berlin, but the SED decided to cease negotiations with the *Gemeinde* at the height of its campaign against cosmopolitanism. In the formative years of the GDR, the party made anti-Semitism part of its antifascist politics.

In Poland, the PZPR's decision not to return Jewish property came from a combination of its own ambivalence toward Jews and the anti-Jewish violence that erupted in 1945-46. Communist leaders declared Jewish property "abandoned" partly because it did not want to consolidate a large amount of property outside the state and partly because it knew that confronting the issue was not politically expedient. The presence of the belief in *żydokomuna* in parts of Polish society and the outbreak of violence against Jews made Polish communists skittish about providing overt support to Jews. One recent estimate that around 2.5 million Poles were

connected to the use of Jewish property is admittedly tentative and imprecise, but it gives at least a rough sense of the problem that the communists were facing: the possibility of alienating a fairly sizeable percent of the population for a minority group that totaled no more than 250,000 at its height and was shrinking with each passing month.[162] Anti-Jewish attitudes among Polish communists also reinforced this tactical distancing from Jews. The numerous legal moves to find any possible way to obstruct returning even the smallest amount of Jewish communal property underscores the ambivalence of the PZPR toward Jewish life in Poland. In the 1950s, the Polish communist party did not unleash a public assault against Jews like its counterparts did in East Germany, Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Soviet Russia. It even nurtured the closest diplomatic ties with Israel of any Soviet bloc country (its purge of "Zionism" would come later in 1967-68).[163]

Nevertheless, Polish communists were hardly strong promoters of Jewish issues. The PZPR was a uniquely fractious party in the Soviet bloc, but a number of its members in leadership positions or rising into power embraced an ethnically exclusive notion of the Polish nation.[164] This ethno-nationalization of Polish communism stemmed in no small part from the actual demands of serving the needs, desires, and concerns of a society that, after the Holocaust and the postwar removal of Germans, Ukrainians, Lemkos, Belorussians, and Lithuanians, had become almost exclusively Polish. The few Jews left in Poland were essentially the last minorities of Poland and the communists preferred that they not stay, which they made plainly clear by leaving the emigration gates open when they were closed off to the rest of the

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[162] Lizak, "'Niepamięć zbiorowa.'"

[163] Albert Stankowski, "Poland and Israel: Bilateral Relations 1947-1953," *Jews in Eastern Europe* no. 37 (1998): 5-23.

[164] Michlic, *Poland's*; Stola, *Kampania*; Marcin Zaremba, *Komunizm, legitymizacja, nacjonalizm. Nacjonalistyczna legitymizacja wladzy komunistycznej w Polsce* (Warsaw: Trio, 2001).

population.[165] As the Polish premier Edward Osóbka-Morawski put it bluntly, "the government will not hinder the emigration of its Jewish citizens."[166] This was not done out of some conscious, burning malice, although some in the PZPR hardly minced words about Jews.[167] It reflected rather the ascendancy of an idea of the Polish nation that was in its mildest form exclusively Polish and in its most extreme form outright xenophobic.[168] As in East Germany and other Soviet bloc states, Polish communism underwent a transformation after the war as it gradually embraced the ethno-nationalism that had largely been the hallmark of the political right.[169]

This rather remarkable ideological shift in communism is one of the most significant consequences of the communist seizure of power in Eastern Europe. Anti-Jewish biases and attitudes had been present in socialism and communism from the very beginning; critiques of capitalism, industrialization, and the middle class could easily slip into anti-Semitic attacks. Still, there was no other political movement in Europe before the war that supported and defended the Jews more consistently than socialism and communism. But communists in Eastern Europe found themselves in a much different position after 1945. Seizing power in countries that did not want them, they had to choose their political battles wisely and could not afford to fight for issues that might weaken their still shaky political hold. Since the 1930s, the situation for Jews had

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[165] From 1944 to 1970, around 280-290,000 Jews left: 1944-47 (160,000); 1947-49 (29,000); 1949-1951 (30,000); 1951-1955 (3,000); 1956-1960 (51,000); 1961-1967 (4,000); 1967-1970 (13,000). Stankowski, "Nowe spojrzenie," 146-47. Exceptions were also made for Germans. See Dariusz Stola, "Das kommunistische Polen als Auswanderungsland," *Zeithistorische Forschungen*, Online-Edition, 2 (2005), H. 3, www.zeithistorische-forschungen.de/16126041-Stola-3-2005.

[166] Edward Osóbka-Morawski, "Najbliższa przyszłość Polski. Przemówienie programowe premiera Edwarda Osóbki-Morawskiego wygłoszone na otwarcie 8 sesji KRN w Warszawie 21.07.1945." Quoted in August Grabski, *Żydowski ruch kombatancki w Polsce w latach 1944-1949* (Warsaw: Trio, 2002), 37.

[167] Padraic Kenney, "Whose Nation, Whose State? Working-Class Nationalism and Antisemitism in Poland, 1945-1947," *POLIN: Studies in Polish Jewry* vol. 13 (2000): 224-35.

[168] Zaremba, *Komunizm*. Paweł Machcewicz, *Polski rok 1956* (Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawn. Mówią Wieki, 1993).

[169] Mikolaj Kunicki, "The Polish Crusader: The Life and Politics of Boleslaw Piasecki, 1915—1979," (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 2004).

deteriorated in almost all parts of Europe, but especially in those countries that later came to make up the Soviet bloc.[170] It was after all in this region that the Holocaust intersected most directly with the lives of Europeans who became involved in or at least passively indifferent to the Nazi persecution of the Jews.[171] By 1945, anti-Jewish hatred had become a normal aspect of European politics and society. Any communist official with even an ounce of political acumen doubtless realized that fighting for the rights of the Jews made simply no sense. Turning away from the Jews and even directly attacking them was an "implicit 'give' for the 'take' of power" in Ulbricht's East Germany, Gomulka's Poland, Gottwald's Czechoslovakia, and Gheorghiu-Dej's Romania.[172] An antifascist anti-Semitism became a central element of communism in Eastern Europe: while rejecting as "fascist" the category of the "Jew" and the method of physical assault, the communists went after "Zionists" and "cosmopolitans" in vicious campaigns of linguistic violence throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

It is perhaps then of little surprise that Polish and East German communists placed little priority in the return of Jewish property. They did so not just out of political calculation but also because, crucially, there were no outside or internal pressures suggesting that they act differently. The Soviet Union did not push the East Germans or the Poles to return Jewish property and no Jewish successor organization formed in either country. The only main advocates for restitution came from local Jewish leaders who insisted as strongly as they could that returning confiscated property was important and necessary. Polish and East German authorities largely did not listen to their pleas with the exception of some members in the SED who eventually were silenced in

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[170] Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the Two World Wars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983); Hagen, "Before the Final Solution;" Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary*.

[171] Randolph L. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide: The Holocaust in Hungary* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000); Radu Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania: The Destruction of Jews and Gypsies under the Antonescu Regime, 1940-1944* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000); Martin Dean, *Collaboration in the Holocaust: Crimes of the Local Police in Belorussia and Ukraine, 1941-44* (New York: St. Martins, 2000); Andrew Ezergailis, *The Holocaust in Latvia: The Missing Center* (Riga: The Historical Institute of Latvia, 1996); Wendy Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building*; Karel Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair*.

[172] Gross, *Fear*, 243.

1952-53. Although Polish and East German intellectuals, writers, poets, and politicians wrote at times rather passionately about the need to fight anti-Semitism in 1945-1950, one cannot say that they reflected or sparked any significant level of social interest in dealing with the problem of Jewish property and restitution. In the absence of both outside and internal pressure, the GDR and the PPR could rather easily reject the requests of Jewish community leaders whose views alone were simply not persuasive or important enough.

In this sense, the West German case diverged from the two communist examples: there was significant pressure pushing German authorities on the issue of restitution in the FRG, although it tellingly came from the outside. Without disregarding the important actions of a few West German politicians, it is safe to say that without the forceful and constant insistence of the Americans and much more grudgingly the British the course, manner, and scope of restitution in the FRG would not have taken the shape that it did. The Americans pushed through the first, zone-wide restitution law that established a Jewish successor organization. The creation of the JRSO provoked immense tension among Jewish leaders in Germany, but its importance cannot be stressed too strongly because it fought tirelessly for restitution in the face of growing opposition among German authorities by the late 1940s. The long, drawn-out process to reach a final settlement in SPD-dominated West Berlin of all places and the emergence of grass roots anti-restitution groups formed to protect the "rights" of those "damaged by Jews" are two of numerous examples that underscore the tensions and conflicts that underlie the implementation of restitution in the FRG. Without the continued presence of outside pressure groups like the JRSO and the American military there doubtlessly would have been even more conflicts, if not even an eventual scaling back of the restitution laws.[173]

It was, however, the very presence of the Americans that paradoxically made restitution so difficult to implement. By being able to dismiss restitution as "victor's justice," West German

[173] Indeed, had the allies become less interested in forcefully pushing through restitution like they did with other postwar polices such as denazification, its scope probably would have been more limited. See Frei, *Adenauer's Germany*; Lillteicher, *Raub*.

society could distance itself from both the need for returning Jewish property and its active involvement in confiscating it during the Third Reich. The impetus for returning Jewish property did not stem from an engagement with the most recent past that reflected upon German complicity in the persecution of the Jews. With the exception of a few politicians motivated by a variety of different concerns and interests, most German intellectuals, church leaders, writers, journalists, and ordinary citizens were not pushing their political leaders to confront the problem of confiscated Jewish property. Such social pressure simply did not exist in the early FRG; restitution did not become assimilated and normalized into West German politics and society. It became an official element of West German democratization during the 1950s, but not a part of the "internal democratization" of West German society as a whole.[174] As West Germans thought of themselves as the victims of the war, they simply ignored claims for the return of Jewish property. Some even directly opposed Jewish claims for their property. After watching, supporting, and participating in the Nazi persecution of the Jews, significant parts of West German society in the early postwar years continued to embrace anti-Semitic prejudices. Indeed, the normalization of anti-Jewish hatred took much longer to weaken in everyday life than it did in the highest echelons of West German politics.[175]

It is perhaps then on this deeper level of social acceptance and normalization that the seemingly sharp cold war trajectories of east-west begin to fade away. In all three cases, the need for restitution and working through the injustices brought upon the Jewish population remained absent; there was no social norm that called for or sanctioned the return of Jewish property in the FRG, GDR, and PPR. In the immediate postwar years, both Germans and Poles had to deal with rebuilding their lives after enduring two starkly different military campaigns, had to confront the influx of new populations and border changes, and had to adjust to the new political realities that

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[174] "Internal democratization" from Konrad H. Jarausch, *After Hitler: Recivilizing the Germans 1945-1995* (New York: Oxford, 2006).

[175] Geller, *Jews*; Kauders, *Democratization*.

were rapidly taking place between 1945-1949. Perhaps it is partially understandable that restitution would be low on their list of priorities. It must have been difficult to initiate a dialogue about what just happened and how possibly to repair broken relationships when there was no food on the tables, no lights on in the bombed-out houses, no water running through the pipes. But this material situation did not last long and a basic desire for reconciling with past deeds had to exist in the first place, no matter what conditions were like on the ground. This urge did eventually emerge among certain segments of German and Polish society, but it was largely not present in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In the two Germanys, the population after all had lived through, absorbed, and become directly involved in the persecution and mass murder of the Jews. It was then above all the entanglement of German society with twelve years of anti-Jewish persecution that precluded *Wiedergutmachung* from becoming a widely accepted social norm.[176]

In this regard, the Polish case is clearly different given the brutality of the Nazi and Soviet occupations. Poles had a large amount of their property confiscated in the incorporated territories, were deported in the hundreds of thousands to the Third Reich, the General Government and Siberia, and about two million died between 1939-45.[177] The issue of restitution became refracted through the perspective of the colonized. Ordinary Poles could rather easily dismiss or simply not even think about the need for restituting crimes committed by someone else during an occupation that also severely altered their own lives. In comparison certainly to the FRG and to some extent even to the immediate postwar years of East Germany, the return of Jewish property was much less central for government officials and Polish society as a whole. One could even go so far as to say that it was barely an issue at all in a society that had experienced enormous destruction, the realignment of its borders, and massive postwar migration. The sense of rightly owned property, including that once belonging to Jews, had been lost in the

[176] Analyzing the broad central issue of anti-Semitism among the various parties, Kauders provides evidence for this central conclusion, even if he does not put it in these terms. Kauders, *Democratization*.

[177] Böhler, *Auftakt*; Broszat, *Nationalsozialistische Polenpolitik*; Gross, *Revolution* and *Polish Society*; Kalbarczyk, "Zbrodnie;" Madajczyk, *Polityka*; Rossino, *Hitler*; Rutherford, *Prelude*.

massive upheaval of war, genocide, and expulsions. This perspective rested, however, on an interpretation of the past that blurred the ways that the Holocaust intersected with the lives of ordinary Poles. The Holocaust was not some distant affair but became entangled in everyday Polish life as the issue of property reveals in an especially vivid way.[178] Although the bulk of Jewish property went to the Nazi state, possibly hundreds of thousands of Poles became involved in the management, seizure, and use of "formerly Jewish property." Returning this property would not just mean a material loss but would mean confronting one's own complicity in crimes more easily thought to have been carried out exclusively by someone else.

[178] One of the most stunning portraits of how the Holocaust became intersected with ordinary Polish lives is Klukowski, *Dziennik*.

CHAPTER TWO

JEWISH SPACES, URBAN MODERNISM, AND SOCIALIST REALISM

Warsaw and Berlin, two of Europe's largest and most culturally productive Jewish capitals, became after 1945 cities of shattered Jewish spaces. The Nazi campaign against European Jewry destroyed the Jewish communities of both cities and afterwards the few Jews who miraculously survived generally opted to flee Poland and Germany for North America, Latin America, and the Middle East. Only a small number of Jews decided to stay and rebuild their lives in the region. In the early 1950s, the Jewish communities of Warsaw had a mere 150 members, East Berlin around 1,000, and West Berlin about 6,000.[1] In the GDR and the PPR, a very small population of non-religious Jews also existed who saw themselves more as communists than as Jews but the overall population remained miniscule.[2] A complicated and peculiar question thus emerged in these Jewish cities of so few Jews: What now was to be done with the synagogues, Jewish cemeteries, and districts that had distinctly marked the urban landscape of Berlin and Warsaw?

This unprecedented problem played out just as Germans and Poles went to rebuild their war-ravaged capitals. In 1945, Berlin and Warsaw lay in ruins after enduring military attacks with fundamentally different intentions and aims. The Nazis destroyed the Polish capital in

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[1] Harry Maòr, "Uber den Wiederaufbau der jüdischen Gemeinden in Deutschland seit 1945," (Ph.D. diss., Universität Mainz, 1961); Kazimierz Urban, *Mniejszości religijne w Polsce 1945-1991. Zarys statystyczny* (Cracow: NOMOS, 1994).

[2] On the attraction of Jews to Marxist-Leninism, see Karin Hartewig, *Zurückgekehrt. Die Geschichte der jüdischen Kommunisten in der DDR* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2000); Jaff Schatz *The Generation: The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Communists in Poland* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Marci Shore, *Caviar and Ashes: A Warsaw Generation's Life and Death in Marxism, 1918-1968* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

deliberately savage attacks of the ghetto and the rest of the city. This two-prong destruction occurred as the Nazis brutally squashed the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943 and the Warsaw Uprising of 1944.[3] These two acts of demolition were obviously different, even if the destructive effect on the built environment was the same. Although the Nazis intended to destroy the ghetto even before the uprising, the devastation of the rest of the city was a brutal response to the rebellion of 1944. In both cases, the Nazis clearly had no military or strategic reason for engaging in such massive destruction. They pursued a ruthless campaign against the Jews left in the ghetto and then a year later expelled the city's population as savage revenge for the Warsaw Uprising. These campaigns against Warsaw's civilian population reflect the overall brutality of the Nazi occupation of Poland that left ninety percent of its Jewish population and ten percent of its non-Jewish population dead. The destruction of Berlin was different in important ways. It occurred primarily as a consequence of military operations — Allied air raids and Soviet assaults — intended to defeat Hitler and thus ceased once victory had been achieved. In short, the allied military attacks against German cities were means to achieve the end of victory and the cessation of hostilities, while the Nazi attacks on the civilian populations of Polish and other East European cities were post-victory war aims of genocide and racial imperialism that were implemented after military resistance had been crushed.[4]

These fundamental differences, however, did not matter much at the time to the postwar planners who had to rebuild divided Berlin and Warsaw. They had before them the enormous task of reconstructing two ravaged cities despite what had caused the destruction. Urban planners

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[3] The Warsaw Uprising has received the least amount of attention, but fortunately a new book, recently translated from the German by a leading Polish historian, has been published: Włodzimierz Borodziej, *The Warsaw Uprising of 1944,* trans. Barbara Harshav (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006). See also Miron Białoszewski, *A Memoir of the Warsaw Uprising*, trans. Madeline Levine (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991). Finally, Norman Davies has recently written a popular account of the uprising: *Rising '44: The Battle for Warsaw* (New York: Penguin, 2004).

[4] Thomas Childers, "Facilis descensus averni est: The Allied Bombing of Germany and the Issue of German Suffering," *Central European History* no. 1 (2005): 75-105. In contrast, the Nazi starvation of Kiev: Karel Berkhoff, *Harvest of Despair: Life and Death in Ukraine under Nazi Rule* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), chap. 7.

confronted a shared set of questions: How should the city be rebuilt? Should it be reconstructed in an entirely new way? What role should the city's historic core play in the rebuilding effort? At a surprisingly early stage, a general consensus emerged in both capitals about the framework for reconstruction. A modernist impulse for the "new" — whether it was to be in the spirit of interwar functionalism or postwar socialist realism was to be negotiated later — defined the basic contours of urban reconstruction in divided Berlin and Warsaw, although the degree of emphasis varied considerably in each city. Engaged in direct competition with each other, the two Berlins staked out the most radical position that left little of the city's historic buildings standing, whereas Warsaw developed an exceptional blend of the "old" and the "new." Imagined as Poland's "martyr city," Warsaw became the metonym for Poland's renewal from the destructiveness of Nazism. The PZPR rebuilt its old town in a massive project of historic reconstruction and built the rest of the city on the basic principles of urban modernism with influences from socialist realism in the early 1950s. This embrace of the "new," the "modern," and the "socialist" might appear to be a flight into the future, but in actuality it remained deeply entangled with the past. While Warsaw and Berlin were heavily destroyed during the war, most of their buildings remained standing in some form after 1945 so that almost every erection of the "new" involved clearing away the "old."

This chapter analyzes this negotiation of future and past. In so doing, it aims to enrich our understanding of the cultural appropriation, interpretation, and use of historic spaces in cities dominated by urban modernism and socialist realism. The historiography of postwar reconstruction and historic preservation has only started to untangle the cultural meanings embedded in physical spaces. Much of the scholarship has long focused on the technical aspects of the rebuilding process such as architectural discussions about planning and institutional practices of preservation.[5] But some important exceptions have recently come out. Rudy Koshar,

[5] Klaus von Beyme, *Der Wiederaufbau: Architektur und Städtebaupolitik in beiden deutsche Staaten* (Munich: Piper, 1987); Sigrid Brandt, *Geschichte der Denkmalpflege in der SBZ/DDR. Dargestellt an*

Gavriel Rosenfeld, Gregor Thum, and Joshua Hagen have offered insightful analysis into the interplay of national identity and memory in the urban landscape.[6] Some of these studies draw on the pioneering work of cultural geographers and architectural historians such as J.B. Jackson, Simon Schama, and M. Christine Boyer.[7] This chapter builds on this literature, while also pushing it in largely unexplored directions. Little research has been done on the treatment of historic buildings and spaces of cultural-ethnic minorities that often times do not easily fit into local, national, or regional identities. This chapter examines how ethnicity became inscribed and appropriated in the built environment. There was, in short, a "Jewish question" in the urban landscapes of divided Berlin and Warsaw: Jewish sites reflected a minority culture that had long been excluded from the nation and empty Jewish spaces laid bare just how "hateful" that nationalism had become during the Holocaust.[8]

This shared question unfolded, however, in different ways depending on the local dynamics of each city. In Warsaw, the Nazis destroyed the main area of prewar Jewish life that was heavily concentrated in the district of Muranów (the main part of the Warsaw Ghetto). There

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Besipielen aus dem sächsischen Raum 1945-1961 (Berlin: Lukas Verlag, 2003); Jeffrey M. Diefendorf, *In the Wake of War: The Reconstruction of German Cities after World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Werner Durth and Niels Gutschow, *Träume in Trümmern: Planungen zum Wiederaufbau zerstörter Städte in Westen Deutschlands, 1940-1950* (Braunschweig: Vieweg, 1988); Jan Górski, *Warszawa w latach 1944-1949: Odbudowa* (Warsaw: PWN, 1988); Burkhard Körner, *Zwischen Bewahren und Gestalten. Denkmalpflege nach 1945* (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2000); Peter Müller, *Symbolsuche. Die Ost-Berliner Zentrumsplanung zwischen Repräsentation und Agitation* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 2005); Bohdan Rymaszewski, *Klucze ochrony zabytków w Polsce* (Warsaw: Ośrodek Dokumentacji Zabytków, 1992); Józef Sigalin, *Warszawa 1944-1980: Z archiwum architekta* (Warsaw: PIW, 1986).

[6] Joshua Hagen, *Preservation, Tourism, and Nationalism: The Jewel of the German Past* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006); Rudy Koshar, *Germany's Transient Pasts: Preservation and National Memory in the Twentieth-Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1997); Peter Oliver Loew, *Danzig und seine Vergangenheit. Die Geschichtskultur einer Stadt zwischen Deutschland und Polen, 1793-1997* (Osnabrück: Fibre, 2003); Gavriel Rosenfeld, *Munich and Memory: Architecture, Memory, and the Legacy of the Nazi Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Gregor Thum, *Die fremde Stadt. Breslau 1945* (Berlin: Siedler, 2003).

[7] M. Christine Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1994); J.B. Jackson, *The Necessity for Ruins* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1980); Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Vintage, 1996).

[8] The act of becoming "hateful" I take from Brian Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate: Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth-Century Poland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

were virtually no Jewish sites left in the city with only a few exceptions. Religious Jewish life had virtually come to an end in the Polish capital. The question became then not so much what to do with specific Jewish sites, but what to do with an entire ruined landscape: how was the ghetto space to fit into Warsaw's rebirth both materially and mnemonically? What place was the ghetto to have in postwar appropriations of the city's past and future, in its eclectic embrace of historic reconstruction, urban modernism, and socialist realism? In divided Berlin, the questions were framed differently. Berlin never had one single, concentrated "Jewish" district like Warsaw since its prewar Jewish community lived and worshiped in all parts of the city. Numerous damaged Jewish sites still remained standing after the war and were scattered across the city. Thus the postwar history of Jewish sites in divided Berlin is not about the appropriation of one central district, but about the physical handling of numerous individual sites. Moreover, Jewish leaders in divided Berlin strongly contested the postwar treatment of these shattered spaces. This kind of conflict occurred less often in Warsaw given the sheer destruction of Jewish communal property and the extremely small size of the community there (in the early 1950s West Berlin's community was thirty times the size of the one in Warsaw, East Berlin's five times). Finally, Berlin was a divided city right in the center of the cold war battle. Its reconstruction became deeply entangled in cold war competition. Jewish space became a part of this broader confrontation, but one of the central questions that this chapter hopes to explore is exactly how much political divisions shaped the appropriation of Jewish space in three different urban landscapes. Can one speak of a distinct "divided memory" across the Iron Curtain in divided Berlin and Warsaw? Did the appropriation of Jewish sites differ starkly in the modernist and socialist realist reordering of urban space? How did the shattered symbols of Jewish life fit into, if at all, the temporal and ideological demands of reconstructing cities ravaged by war?

I. Jewish Warsaw

By the interwar period, Warsaw had become one of the largest cities of Jews in the world. In January 1918, there were 320,000 Jews living in the soon to be capital of independent Poland,

comprising 42 percent of the city's total population and twenty years later that number had increased by almost 50,000.[9] This emergence into a "Jewish city" took place during the nineteenth century when Warsaw was located in the Kingdom of Poland, a semi-autonomous region under Russian rule during Poland's partition by Prussia, Russia, and Austria-Hungary.[10] Although the earliest documentary trace of Jewish life in Warsaw dates back to the fifteenth century, the Jewish community experienced its greatest growth from roughly 1800 onward: in 1792, about 6,750 Jews lived in a city of 81,300 people (8.3 percent), which grew over the nineteenth century by an astonishing 46.4 percent to reach 320,030 Jews in 1918 (of 758,411 total people, or 42.4 percent).[11] The changing regulations about where Jews were allowed to live in the city precluded the emergence of a distinct Jewish district from developing until the mid-nineteenth century when Jews living in the Kingdom of Poland were granted legal emancipation.[12] Jews were now allowed to live wherever they wished and gradually gravitated to the northwestern section of the city. Jews lived in all parts of Warsaw, with large numbers around Grzybowski square, the old town, and in Praga, but the northern districts, especially Muranów, became the cultural, economic, social, and religious center of Jewish life.[13] In 1938, Jews comprised no less than 90.5 percent of all inhabitants in this district alone.[14]

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[9] Statistics located in Gabriela Zalewska, *Ludność żydowska w Warszawie w okresie międzywojennym* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1996), 344.

[10] The Congress Kingdom of Poland was created as a small compromise by Tsar Alexander during the Congress of Vienna (1814-15). The degree of "autonomy" the Congress Poland enjoyed varied during different periods of the nineteenth century. See Jerzy Lukowski and Hubert Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland,* rev. ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 109-89.

[11] Artur Eisenbach, "The Jewish Population in Warsaw at the End of the Nineteenth Century," in Władysław Bartoszewski and Antony Polonsky, eds., *The Jews in Warsaw: A History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1991), 108; Zalewska, *Ludność*, 49-53.

[12] The tsarist reforms of 1862 granted Jews living in the Kingdom of Poland emancipation, but not those residing in the Pale of Settlement. The best, if now dated survey of Jewish emancipation in the Kingdom of Poland remains Artur Eisenbach, *The Emancipation of Jews in Poland, 1780-1870,* trans. Janina Dorosz (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1991).

[13] Peter J. Martyn, "The Undefined Town within a Town: A History of Jewish Settlement in the Western Districts of Warsaw," in Bartoszewski and Polonsky, eds., *Jews*, 55-83.

Making up one of the most densely populated areas in the city, Muranów epitomized Warsaw's sudden, yet uneven and conflict-ridden transition to industrialization and modernity over the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Tied to the Russian imperial economy, the Kingdom of Poland became one of the most economically productive regions for tsarist Russia, supplying 40 percent of its coal, 25 percent of its steel, 19.5 of its textiles, and 42 percent of its linen.[15] This economic development enabled Warsaw to turn into a modern, industrial metropolis, but its sudden growth went unchecked by municipal authorities. Restricted by the harsh political conditions set by tsarist Russia following the failed Polish uprising of 1863-64, Warsaw's government had little power to meet the demands of the booming population that came with sudden industrialization. The city's development into a modern metropolis occurred haphazardly, which became clearly evident in the built environment. Warsaw lacked the kind of grand monumental building projects of central railroad stations, opera houses, museums, libraries, and stock exchanges that dominated late nineteenth-century urban development in Europe, as well as a clear, unified approach to managing the city's economic and demographic growth.[16] Some small building projects did occur, but they were not integrated into a general plan for Warsaw and were eclipsed by much grander buildings constructed in "Russian" style such as the erection of the towering, onion-domed shaped Russian Orthodox Church.

Indeed, few other areas of the city reflected Warsaw's disorganized, chaotic growth more starkly than Muranów. Between 1875 and 1890, 800 tenement houses based on the Berlin *Mietskaserne* model were erected in Muranów, but they were not nearly enough to meet the

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[14] Zalewska, *Ludność*, 63.

[15] Joshua D. Zimmerman, *Poles, Jews, and the Politics of Nationality: The Bund and the Polish Socialist Party in Late Tsarist Russia* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 11-12.

[16] An exception was the building project along Senatorska street, Plac Teatralny, and Plac Bankowy designed by Antoni Corazzi in the 1820s and 1830s, an area that had previously been inhabited by Jews. See Snyder, "Jewish Question," 304-323.

booming demand.[17] With municipal authorities unable to regulate its growth, Muranów became one of the most overcrowded districts in Warsaw with 590 people living to the hectare. Filled with shops, workshops, small factories, and markets, it was a bustling economic area made up mainly of small craftsmen and retailers that provided the city with many of its basic consumer goods and services (half of Warsaw's clothing and linen was bought there). The Jewish population was generally poor, but it produced an exceptionally rich intellectual, political, cultural, and religious life that made Warsaw one of the most vibrant Jewish cities in the world.[18] Speaking mostly Yiddish and largely orthodox in religious belief, the population in Muranów distinguished itself from the rest of the capital; it was a city within a city that was clearly Jewish to the general population and to itself. [19] As Poland transitioned from a rural to an industrial society, the district reflected the important economic position of Jews in that transformation, and naturally elicited a mixture of reactions from Poles who saw it at as a place of bustling energy to one of disease, crime, and decay.[20]

But Muranów was not the only part of "Jewish Warsaw." There was also a small group of Jews, generally wealthier and considered to be of the middle class, who had acculturated into

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[17] Martyn, "Undefined Town."

[18] Stephen D. Corrsin, *Warsaw Before the First World War: Poles and Jews in the Third City of the Russian Empire, 1880-1914* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1989); Ezra Mendelsohn, *Jews of East Central Europe between the Wars* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1983); Jerzy Tomaszewski, ed., *Najnowsze dzieje Żydów w Polsce: w zarysie (do 1950 roku)* (Warsaw: PWN, 1993).

[19] For Jewish recollections of Muranów, see Bernard Mark, "Literarysze Trybune i Tłomackie 13," *Księga wspomnień 1919-1939* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1960); Bernard Singer, *Moje Nalewki* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1959); Isaac Bashevis Singer, "Every Jewish Street in Warsaw Was a City Unto Itself," *Forverts* July 4, 1944, pp. 4-5 (in Yiddish).

[20] Ibid., 36-37; Robert Blobaum, "Criminalizing the 'Other': Crime, Ethnicity, and Antisemitism in Early Twentieth-Century Poland," in Blobaum, ed., *Antisemitism*, 81-102; Blobaum, "The Politics of Antisemitism in Fin-de-Siècle Warsaw," *Journal of Modern History* vol. 73 (June 2001): 275-306; Hagen, "Before the Final Solution;" Theodore R. Weeks, "Fanning the Flames: Jews in the Warsaw Press, 1905-1912," *East European Jewish Affairs* vol. 28 (1998-1999): 63-81.

Polish society and became proponents of the Jewish Enlightenment (*Haskala*).[21] These "progressive" Jews tended to live further south on Marszałkowska, Królewska, and Nowy Świat streets. Their greatest mark on Warsaw's urban landscape was the construction of the *Wielka Synagoga* (The Great Synagogue). In 1870, a group of Jews purchased a plot of land on Tłomackie street next to *Plac Bankowy* (bank square) where the synagogue, designed by the Italian architect Leandro Marconi, was unveiled in a grand ceremony in 1878. Located in Warsaw's economic core that had been grandly redesigned by Antonio Corazzi in the 1830s, the synagogue made a bold statement about the presence of Jewish life in the capital. Built in a classical style that fit into the surrounding architecture of *Plac Bankowy*, it reflected the acculturation of Jews into Polish society and placed Judaism on the same level as the other religious faiths.

But its sheer presence also underscored just how marginal the *Haskala* was in Warsaw. In contrast to the numerous architecturally rich synagogues of Berlin, the cultural center of the *Haskala*, Warsaw had only two other houses of Jewish worship of architectural prominence: a rotunda building in Praga that was erected in 1839 and the Nożyk synagogue on Grzybowski square completed in 1901 in a neo-Romanesque and neo-Byzantine style. The vast majority of the city's other synagogues — totaling some three hundred by the interwar years — were simple, small, private, orthodox prayer houses scattered in the areas where Jews lived and worked. In short, for all its grandeur and symbolism, the *Wielka Synagoga* reflected only a small sliver of the Jewish population; Warsaw Jews — and for that matter Polish Jewry at large — expressed little interest in acculturating into Polish society with Zionism, socialism, and orthodoxy offering more attractive ways of life and the rise of antisemitism lessening the desire to embrace *polskość*

[21] Shmuel Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*, trans. Chaya Naor (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

(Polishness).[22] This general absence of acculturation did not make Polish Jewry less "modern" than its *exceptional* counterparts in the Bohemian lands, Germany, France, and Britain; the dominance of Zionism, socialism, and orthodoxy simply reflected different ways that Jews experienced and responded to modernity (and for that matter by far the most common Jewish engagement with modernity).[23] Still, the effect was clear. Just as the *Wielka Synagoga* attempted to bring the Jews out of the ghetto, Muranów in essence kept them back in: "The ghetto had been abolished long ago," the Polish-Jewish journalist Bernard Singer wrote about Muranów, "but there still existed an invisible wall which separated the district from the rest of the city."[24] The isolation of Muranów became all the more clearly articulated as the main center of urban life in Warsaw moved south to Krakowskie Przedmieście, Nowy Świat, and Marszałkowska streets over the course of the mid-to-late nineteenth century.

The ultimate separation of Muranów came, however, with the Nazi invasion of Poland in September 1939. The Nazis immediately targeted the city's Jewish population with discriminatory measures. On November 15, 1940, they created Europe's largest ghetto that held at its height 460,000 Jews.[25] Most of central Warsaw, bordering along the old town in the east, including the entire area of Muranów in the north, and stretching almost all the way down to Aleje Jerozolimskie in the south, had now been separated from the rest of the city by ten-foot walls. After the deportation of 280,000 Jews to Treblinka in July-August 1942, the ghetto shrunk in size and came to a tragic, final end with the outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in April 1943. The Nazis leveled the entire northern-most part of the ghetto following a month of fighting

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[22] A good survey on the limits of acculturation among Polish Jewry is Theodore R Weeks, *From Assimilation to Antisemitism: The "Jewish Question" in Poland, 1850-1914* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006).

[23] On Jewish modernities in Poland, see David Gershon Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

[24] Singer, *Nalewki*, 7. Publications written by Poles also regarded the district as a ghetto. See Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak, *Getto warszawskie. Przewodnik po nieistniejącym mieście* (Warsaw: PAN, 2001), 34.

[25] Engelking and Leociak, *Getto*, 66.

and left in their wake a field of ruins that was previously Muranów; the district became one of the most heavily destroyed areas of Warsaw. In one final, triumphant act, the Nazis exploded the *Wielka Synagoga* on May 16, 1943. Jewish Warsaw was largely no more.

But there were some traces of it that remained after the war. The immense emptiness of the ghetto space in the center of the city served as grim, even surreal portrait of Nazi brutality. In rebuilding the new Warsaw from the ruins of the war, urban planners and historic preservationists remained distinctly ambivalent about what place these material ruins of Jewish life should have in the city's "rebirth." As the last traces of Jewish life disappeared throughout the 1950s, Warsaw's urban landscape became almost entirely ethnically Polish with only the fewest traces of the Jewish minority remaining. The Holocaust and the systematic destruction of Warsaw in the last throes of World War II largely account for this dramatic transformation in the city's urban form, but the near complete absence of Jewish Warsaw today also stems from the type of urban planning that developed immediately after the war. In an eclectic combination of modernism, socialist realism, and historic preservation, Warsaw's urban reconstruction aimed to secure at once the socialist future and preserve the "Polish" past, a dual move that left little room for Jewish space.

II. Resurrecting Warsaw among Sacred Ruins

On August 1, 1944, the Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*, AK) initiated the Warsaw Uprising against the few German troops still stationed in the capital city.[26] Within three days, it controlled most of Warsaw, but the Nazis quickly responded by sending in reinforcements and aerial bombardments over the next 63 days before fighting ceased when Polish supplies ran out. As the Red Army sat idle on the east bank of the Vistula river in the Warsaw neighborhood of Praga, the Nazis brutally destroyed the Polish opposition and set the city ablaze in one final act of an immensely fatal occupation. Since Stalin wanted to extend control of the newly established provisional communist state, called the Polish Committee of National Liberation (PKWN), he

[26] Borodziej, *Warsaw Uprising*.

refused aid to the AK and did not allow Allied aircraft to use Soviet controlled airfields to bring in desperately needed supplies. He simply decided to wait for the Nazis to do him the favor of crushing one of the last nuisances to his rule in Poland. A confederation of resistance groups backed by the Polish government-in-exile, the AK did not pose any significant military challenge to the now triumphant Soviet army, but its anti-Soviet leanings were well known and only reinforced by the exile government's refusal to recognize the authority of the PKWN. By the end of the Warsaw Uprising, about 150,000 civilians and 16,000 soldiers had died, bringing the total number of Varsovians who perished during the Nazi occupation to around 685,000.[27] The main opposition to Soviet rule, the AK, had lost a demoralizing battle. The imposition of communism in Poland now proceeded apace with the western Allies largely conceding to Stalin's demands at Yalta and Potsdam.[28] Thousands of guerillas and armed groups continued to fight against Soviet and Polish forces, but their efforts were in vain as Soviet support for communism in Poland proved unyielding. Stalin's clear position regarding Soviet domination in Poland was much different from his rather ambiguous policy toward eastern Germany in the immediate postwar years.[29]

In 1945, Warsaw stood eerily silent — a ghost town of desolate streets among burnt-out, smoke-billowing ruins. Almost its entire Jewish population had been killed. Its civilian population had vanished after the Nazis expelled the last 150,000 people in no less than four days in early October 1944. Its urban landscape was ravaged: 11,229 of 25,498 buildings were totally

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[27] "Varsovians" is conceived here broadly as anyone living in Warsaw, even though a small number were not actually from Warsaw originally (e.g. Jews deported to the Warsaw ghetto from nearby towns west of the capital, from Germany, and from western Poland). Małgorzata Berezowska, "Obraz demograficzny Warszawy czasu wojny i okupacji," in *Straty Warszawy 1939-1945. Raport* (Warsaw: Urząd Miasta Stołecznego Warszawy, 2005). 283-307.

[28] Andrzej Paczkowski, *The Spring Will Be Ours: Poland and the Poles from Occupation to Freedom,* trans. Jane Cave (University Park, PN: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003); Andrzej Friszke, *Polska. Losy państwa i narodu 1939-1989* (Warsaw: ISKRY, 2003).

[29] Norman M. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995).

destroyed and 3,879 suffered partial damage.[30] The total cost of damages in Warsaw amounted to 21.9 billion złoty, which today would be about 54.6 billion dollars.[31] Recovering from this immense disaster became one of the most pressing tasks of the newly formed communist state. In comparison to divided Berlin, the rebuilding of Warsaw moved at an astonishingly quick pace. The PZPR quickly realized that it could use the reconstruction of the capital to gain support among a population that had historically shown little interest in communism.[32] Publishing two newspapers about the rebuilding effort, *Stolica* and *Skarpa Warszawska*, the regime tactfully turned Warsaw into a "martyr city" whose "rebirth" served as a larger metonym for the destruction and reemergence of the Polish nation. Warsaw's reconstruction was hardly just a matter of rebuilding streets, apartments, and offices; it was a sacred effort to restore what the Nazis had ruthlessly destroyed.

Plans for Warsaw's rebuilding emerged immediately after the war and stemmed largely from left-wing, avant-garde architects who had formed the backbone of interwar Poland's small, yet active modernist movement. Centered mainly at the Warsaw Polytechnic School of Architecture, this modernist milieu, which included architects such as Roman Piotrowski, Helena and Szymon Syrkus, Barbara and Stanisław Brukalski, Bohdan Lachert, and Józef Szanajca,

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[30] Krystyna Czarnecka, Grażyna Kurpiewska, Joanna Szapiro-Nowakowska, "Straty w nieruchomościach," in *Straty Warszawy*, 373.

[31] Wojciech Fałkowski, "O mieście, które miało zginąć. Prace nad opisaniem i oszacowaniem strat Warszawy i jej mieszkańców," in *Straty*, 12.

[32] In independent Poland, communism was a tiny movement partly because of the Polish-Bolshevik war of 1918-21, which threatened Poland's newly gained independence after World War I. Jan Gross's recent estimate of about 25,000-30,000 communists in a country of 35 million speaks for itself (*Fear*, 196). After the Soviet occupation of eastern Poland in 1939-1941 and such debacles as the Soviet response to the Warsaw Uprising, one can easily imagine the general unpopularity of communism after 1945. Finally, the powerful anti-Semitic stereotype of *żydokomuna* (Judeo-Communism) made communism all the more unattractive to the Polish population, which the PZPR understood by not being too sympathetic to Jewish issues (see chapter one of this work and Gross, *Fear*, 192-243). However, in making these points, I do not want to continue the trope of an eternally resistant Polish society against communism (see fn. 219 below), but merely want to highlight the central challenge of political legitimacy that the PZPR faced as it established communist rule. This was certainly the case in most of Eastern Europe as well. See Łukasz Kamiński, *Polacy wobec nowej rzeczywistości, 1944-1948* (Toruń: Adam Marszałek, 2000); Bradley F. Abrams, *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation: Czech Culture and the Rise of Communism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004).

followed international developments in Germany, France, and the United States and attempted to apply modernist, functional designs to Warsaw's notoriously chaotic, cramped urban layout. Publishing articles in experimental journals such as *Blok* and *Praesens*, these architects focused mostly on providing solutions to housing and became involved in international discussions about modern architecture through meetings such as the *Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne* (CIAM).[33] During the Nazi occupation, they joined together to form the underground Architecture and Town-Planning Studio (*Pracownia Architektoniczno-Urbanistyczna*, or PAU) that worked on plans for Warsaw's reconstruction.

In 1945, Poland's communist provisional government created the Office for the Rebuilding of the Capital (*Biuro Odbudowy Stolicy*, BOS) that oversaw Warsaw's reconstruction. Filling the ranks of BOS, Poland's interwar architects now had the unprecedented opportunity to carry out in practice what before they had only imagined on paper: a modern, functional Warsaw of green areas, socially progressive housing complexes, and a sensible transportation system.[34] Created for a maximum population of 1.2 million, the first plan for Warsaw organized the capital into functional parts of housing, industry, leisure, green space, and areas for work.[35] The design received an enthusiastic response in Poland and a warm reception in the United States during a tour entitled "Warsaw Lives Again."[36] Walter Gropius and Lewis Mumford praised the creativity of the design, and Wacław Ostrowski, head of the BOS Division for Urban Planning, clearly noted the significance of the work: "Poland has today the possibility of building a capital that fully satisfies the needs of the state and the nation. If we seize this opportunity, Warsaw will

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[33] Adam Milobedzki, "Polish Architecture in the Period 1918-1939," *Rassegna* (1996): 6-13; Jadwiga Roguska, "The Radical Avant-Garde and Modernism in Polish Interwar Architecture," *Rassegna* (1996): 14-37.

[34] Initial plans drew on ideas developed by Szymon Syrkus and Jan Chmielewski in their Functional Warsaw (*Warszawa Funkcjonalna*) presented at the 1933 CIAM meeting: *Warszawa funkcjonalna. Przyczynek do urbanizacji regjonu Warszawskiego* (Warsaw: SARP, 1935).

[35] Stainsław Dziewulski, Adam Kotorbiński, Wacław Ostrowski, "Zadanie odbudowy Warszawy," *Studia Warszawskie* vol. 11 (Warsaw: PWN, 1972), 294-317.

[36] Stanisław Albrecht, *Warsaw Lives Again* (1946).

come back to life from catastrophe better and more beautiful. If we miss this only chance, it will be a new catastrophe for the capital."[37]

Ostrowski had little reason to fear. In 1949, the PZPR announced the *Six-Year Plan for the Reconstruction of Warsaw* that guided the bulk of the capital's rebuilding.[38] The plan kept the basic modernist, functional design intended to alleviate the city's cramped, disorganized layout, but departed from earlier proposals in several key ways. Although socialist realism with its monumental, ornamental, and representative architecture had not yet permeated the rebuilding of Warsaw, the ideological basis for building a "socialist city" had become much more clearly articulated in the *Six-Year Plan* than it had earlier. The plan stressed two main elements of socialist Warsaw: the development of industrial production as befitting a "city of workers" and the building of new housing complexes that transcended the cramped, poorly accommodated tenement houses of the capitalist, bourgeois past, which had deprived the workers of "greenery, recreation grounds, and cultural facilities."[39] The Six-Year Plan also departed from earlier designs by clearly including in Warsaw's reconstruction the rebuilding of the city's "historic" core. Since 1945, BOS had been cataloguing and rebuilding Warsaw's *stare miasto* or old town, which the Nazis had flattened, but central plans for Warsaw's reconstruction just after the war barely touched on this effort. The impulse to build a modern city eclipsed the importance of historic preservation until 1949 when the *Six-Year Plan* made rebuilding the *stare miasto* the centerpiece of Warsaw's reconstruction. The old town became central to Warsaw's rebirth from the destruction of war. Warsaw was a city that "now lives through the apogee of its martyrdom;" it

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[37] Gropius recounted in Helena Syrkus, "Warszawa oskarża — Warszawa żyje," in Tadeusz Barucki, ed., *Fragmenty stuletniej historii 1899-1999. Relacje, wspomnienia, refleksje* (Warsaw: SARP, 2000), 277-8; Lewis Mumford, "Warsaw Lives," in Stanisław Albrecht, *Warsaw Lives Again*, exhibition pamphlet, 1946. Ostrowski quoted in *Straty*, 659.

[38] Bolesław Bierut, *Six-Year Plan for the Reconstruction of Warsaw* (Warsaw: Polskie Wydawn. Gospodarcze, 1949).

[39] Ibid., 125 and 77.

was "in one word, a gigantic Oświęcim for the whole nation."[40] The old town personified this martyrdom and Warsaw's "rebirth" would have been impossible without its reconstruction.

The *Six-Year Plan* was then, at its core, a highly symbolic attempt to portray Warsaw's reconstruction as a metaphor for Poland's regeneration after the ravages of occupation, war, and genocide. In the opening statement of the *Six-Year Plan*, the symbolic meaning of Warsaw's "resurrection" from the "sacred" ruins could not have been clearer:

> As late as January 1945, when the Nazi armies caught in a deep encircling movement were already fleeing in mortal fear — special squads of destroyers of Warsaw were with sadistic precision boring holes in the walls of the remaining historic buildings. … Six months of planned destructive activity was not sufficient to raze everything to the ground, as was the case almost two years earlier in the northern part of the city — the Ghetto. All the same, the Nazi criminals left Warsaw convinced that nothing could ever bring about its reconstruction. … It was clear that for the majority of [Varsovians] what counted above all was their love for the heroic city and their veneration for the sacred ruins of Warsaw.[41]

As the capital, as a city flattened by the Nazis, and as the site of the greatest Polish effort to oppose Nazism, Warsaw epitomized Polish suffering, martyrdom, and resistance. In both a real and imagined sense, Warsaw was *the* symbol for Poland's wartime and postwar condition; destroyed and broken, yet resilient and invincible, its "sacred ruins" represented Poland's tragically heroic past and its "resurrection" from near total destruction. The PZPR used this symbolism as much as it could to underscore the basic, simple point that the party was the guardian and patriarch of the nation: the future sustenance of Poland remained secure in the hands of the communists who were meticulously rebuilding the historic core of the *naród*.

Yet this blending of the past with modernist, functional urban planning was not just a move by the party to gain political legitimacy. The fate of Warsaw's "historic" and "cultural" monuments animated discussions about the rebuilding of the city that went deeper than mere politics. Although a few voices opposed the idea of reconstructing buildings that virtually no longer existed, a general consensus emerged that some portion of Warsaw's "past" had to be

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[40] *Warsaw Accuses: Guidebook to the Exhibition Arranged by the Office of Reconstruction of the Capital* (Warsaw: Ministry of Culture and Art, 1945), 19 and 26.

[41] Ibid., 39.

preserved.[42] In the opening essay to the first issue of *Stolica*, the illustrated weekly published by BOS, the crucial role of the "old" had already been clearly staked out. Surrounded by pre-war pictures of Warsaw's Royal Castle, medieval Cathedral, and market square, the article acknowledged that the old town would not "be the same as it was before," but its "resurrection" would bring back its old "atmosphere." The old town had to be reconstructed in order to restore what the Nazis had destroyed and show the indestructibility of the Polish nation by locating it in an eternal past:

> Warsaw has her own eternal, living beauty. She has not lost it even now when many of her most beautiful monuments were totally exterminated. Whether it is the area of the Royal Castle, lying in a shapeless pile of ruins, the beautiful gothic cathedral, lying in one large heap of rubble, or the old-town market square where only three tenement houses remained in small fragments — this tragic spell rivets the people today and draws them to the ruins. … There was no dispute, there were no two ways about it among Polish society that monuments of cultural and architectural value in Warsaw — from the Royal Castle to the Cathedral to the Old Town — must be resurrected. … The resurrected walls of the old town will not be a lifeless creation, but will stand as a living link connecting the past to the present and the future. … We are not a nation whose history began in January 1945 at the moment when the barbarians from the west were chased away. Our history dates back to the tenth century of the Christian era.[43]

In an observant, Catholic country, the religious casting of Warsaw's resurrection from sacred ruins implied a clear set of meanings. It reified the past by locating Warsaw's present in a pure, eternal, historical moment that provided stability and normality for a society ravaged by war, occupation, and genocide. Drawing implicitly on the deeply rooted perception of Poland as the "Christ among Nations" — a country crucified for the sins of the world that would return to rescue humanity — it portrayed Warsaw as an innocent, martyr city that was now determined to come back from its death. The reconstruction of the old town was not a nostalgic flight into a lost, romanticized past. This past had not been lost: Warsaw's "eternal beauty" remained lying in the ruins that were to be rebuilt. The historic recreation of the old town rested on a teleological, sacrosanct sense of time that possessed, altered, and utilized the past for the present and future.

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[42] Bohdan Rymaszewski, *Klucze ochrony zabytków w Polsce* (Warsaw: Ośrodek Dokumentacji Zabytków, 1992), 56-66.

[43] "Piękno Warszawy której już niema, a która wskrzesimy," *Stolica* November 3, 1946, 6.

The main person charged to put this utopian vision into practice was the historic preservationist Jan Zachwatowicz who became Poland's General Conservator for Historic Monuments in 1945. This newly created position within the Ministry of Culture and Art gave Zachwatowicz an unprecedented opportunity to reshape the field and practice of historic preservation in Poland. He is often claimed to have developed the "Polish School of Conservation" that insisted on reconstructing war-torn historic buildings literally from the ground up. Zachwatowicz later denied that any new school had been created, insisting that the massive destruction of World War II had simply created an exceptional situation that demanded an unprecedented rebuilding program.[44] "It isn't a school," he is known to have often said, "it is simply good work done by Poles."[45] But such patriotic modesty aside, the uniqueness of his approach cannot be denied. Active in saving from destruction art and other cultural artifacts in Warsaw during the war, Zachwatowicz set out immediately afterwards to reconstruct what the Nazis had torn down. With smoke still billowing from the ruins of his beloved Warsaw, he formulated a fundamentally new approach to historic preservation that rejected the long-standing predilection for conservation among preservationists and boldly advocated for the reconstruction of old buildings that virtually no longer existed.[46]

Imbued with a strong sense of patriotism, he passionately argued that the reconstruction of Poland's historic buildings was absolutely necessary for the revitalization of the Polish nation after the Second World War: "The experiences of recent years — when Germany wanted to destroy us as a nation and demolished our historic monuments — have brought into dramatic clarity the significance of the monuments of the past for the nation. For the nation and its cultural

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[44] Jan Zachwatowicz, "O polskiej szkole odbudowy i konserwacji zabytków," *Ochrona Zabytków* no. 1-2 (1981): 4-10.

[45] *In Memoriam. Jan Zachwatowicz 1900-1983* (Warsaw: PKZ, 1983), 25-26.

[46] On historic preservation before WW II, see Jerzy Frycz, *Restauracja i Konserwacja. Zabytków Architektury w Polsce w latach 1795-1918* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1975); Rymaszewski, *Klucze*.

monuments are one."[47] Zachwatowicz expressed little patience with previous concepts of historic preservation and above all the romantic engagement with the past with its melancholic meditation on ruins. The past was to be harnessed for the present and the future; there was no time for melancholy, no time for reflecting on what had been lost, no time for wallowing in the past. A vital task was at hand: historic preservation was about "defending our culture, about fighting for one of the most fundamental elements of our immortal nation. It is not about sentimental affections, oldness, or longings, about that sort of song 'about old Warsaw.'"[48] Poland's war-damaged monuments were appreciated less for their historic value and more for their utility: they were to be rebuilt, recreated, and reconstructed for the future.

And rebuilt they were. Zachwatowicz's ideas influenced the reconstruction of historic monuments across Poland, but his most important project was the meticulous rebuilding of Warsaw's old town that had practically been flattened by the Nazis. This massive reconstruction project represented on the grandest scale Zachwatowciz's vision of utilizing historic monuments for the future. Just after the liberation of the city, Zachwatowicz and others who made up BOS's Division of Historic Preservation (*Wydział Architektury Zabytkowej*) started assessing the damage and cataloguing monuments deemed worthy of reconstruction.[49] In 1945, Zachwatowicz submitted a plan designating many of Warsaw's districts as historic, covering some 4.2 square miles, but this early proposal was not taken seriously.[50] BOS decided instead that Warsaw's old town, along with two important historic streets that flowed into it, would be restored. Lasting into the 1960s (and for some buildings into the 1980s), the reconstruction of Warsaw's old town

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[47] Jan Zachwatowicz, "Program i zasady konserwacji zabytków," *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki i Kultury* 1, vol. 7 (1946), 48.

[48] APW, BOS, file 2062. Jan Zachwatowicz, "Walka o Kulturę," *Kronika Odbudowy Warszawy*, 1 September 1946.

[49] S. Żaryn, "Kronika odbudowy Starego Miasto," *Ochrona Zabytków* no. 2/3 (1953); Jan Bieńkowski and Bruno Zborowski, "Zabezpieczenie budynków zabytkowych w Warszawie w 1945 i 1946," *Biuletyn historii sztuki i kultury* no. 1/2 (1947): 31-33.

[50] Jożef Sigalin, *Warszawa 1944-1980. Z archiwum architekta* (Warsaw: Państ. Instytut Wydaw., 1986), 234-235.

involved carefully rebuilding hundreds of buildings, based usually on photographs and drawings that had been preserved by Zachwatowicz and others during the Warsaw Uprising.[51]

But this notion of historic preservation only included "Polish" historic buildings, a crucial distinction that has been overlooked in discussions about Warsaw's postwar reconstruction. Brushing up just against the perimeter of the old town, the district of Muranów remained absent from any historic preservation plans. Jewish space remained outside the culturally constructed boundaries of the Polish nation and bracketed from the teleological sense of time that shaped Warsaw's rebuilding. In a programmatic essay on Warsaw's reconstruction written in 1945, the sociologist Stanisław Ossowski brilliantly captured the future's past of Warsaw's rebirth and the ambivalence of Jewish space in that temporal framing. Moving through the "conservative" emphasis on restoration and the "radical" focus on the modern, Ossowski advocated precisely for the combination of the "new" and the "old" that later formed the cornerstone of the *Six-Year Plan*.[52] He then went on to describe what parts of "old Warsaw" should be included in building the new metropolis. Making both a temporal and cultural argument, he maintained that those buildings constructed before the November Uprising of 1830 should be included in the "sphere of the historic," although he left the possibility open for some structures built afterwards to be incorporated as well.

Since the failure of the 1830 uprising began a new period of increased repression by tsarist Russia, marking this date as the end point made a clear political-cultural statement that preserving historic buildings erected during one of the lowest moments in Polish history was simply out of the question. Moreover, he claimed that historic buildings should be preserved only if they aspire to "eternity" and "permanence," while clearly fitting into the future needs and

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[51] Jan Zachwatowicz, "Wspomnienia z lat okupacji," Stanisław Lorentz, ed., *Walka o dobra kultury Warszawskiej 1939-1945* vol. 1 (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1970).

[52] Stanisław Ossowski, "Odbudowa stolicy w świetle zagadnień społecznych," in Nina Assorodobraj, Stefan Nowakowski, et. al., eds., *Dzieła* vol. 3 (Warsaw: PWN, 1967): 391-415.

appearance of the city as a whole.[53] Ossowski addressed directly the issue of the ghetto area, but made it clear that this space did not fit into the past worthy of preserving for the future. When referring to the destruction of the ghetto, he noted that "Warsaw did not suffer … any serious loss of its historic monuments" there and pointed out that reconstruction was not necessary since the Jewish population no longer existed.[54] He added that the "Jewish question" had "soured the atmosphere of the capital" and acknowledged that Muranów was "to a considerable extent culturally foreign to Polish society."[55] His demarcation of Muranów as culturally, if not ethnically different are all the more telling coming from someone who published just a year later a penetrating critique of ethnic nationalism in response to the Kielce pogrom.[56] Even he could not fully overcome ethnic notions of difference and separation.

It is perhaps not surprising then that no Jewish sites were ever included on Warsaw's list of historic monuments, and one can search in vain through the hundreds of BOS files located in the Warsaw city archive for any discussion about the "historic" value of Muranów.[57] Jewish Warsaw was not harnessed for the future; it did not fit into the "historic core" of the city's past that was to be rebuilt for future sustenance of the nation. Instead the area of Muranów was used and consumed for an expansive socialist realist housing project. It was to be one of the main "socialist" parts promised by the Six-Year Plan. As Zachwatowicz's team waded through the ruins of the old town scavenging for the minutest architectural piece to be saved, catalogued, and rebuilt, thousands of Varsovians sifted through the rubble of Muranów to find anything that could

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[53] Ibid., 412.

[54] Ibid., 395.

[55] Ibid., 398, 395.

[56] Stanisław Ossowski, "Na tle wydarzeń Kieleckich," *Kuźnica* 38 (1946): 5. On the context of Polish intellectual engagement with postwar anti-Semitism, see Michlic, "Holocaust and its Aftermath."

[57] APW, BOS, 244, "Spis budowali zabytkowych na terenie Wielkiej Warszawy stan w lipcu 1945."

be reused for the rebuilding effort.[58] The ruins of the old town were preserved as "sacred" remnants of Polish culture; the ruins of the ghetto were recycled as material to be consumed and used for something better: "The Muranów housing development stands on the ruins of the former ghetto. However, the ruins are not being removed thanks to skillful planning. … As much as possible, bricks are being taken out from the remaining ruins, which is saving billions in terms of both money and labor. Muranów will not only be the largest housing area, but perhaps the most beautiful one in the capital."[59] A new Muranów to be built from the rubble of the ghetto would transcend both the "antagonism" of Polish-Jewish relations and the cramped, dark tenement houses of the capitalist past; a new Muranów of functional buildings spread out among green spaces would provide comfortable housing for the workers and end the demarcation of this area as distinctly "Jewish."

III. Consuming the Ghetto Space

In the immediate postwar years, the small number of Jewish survivors of the Holocaust became active in postwar Jewish life mainly through the CKŻP, which was founded in 1944 as the main organizing body of Jews in Poland. They naturally perceived the rubble of the burned-out ghetto in a much different way. Organizing commemorations of the uprising, Jews interpreted the ghetto space as the ultimate place of Jewish martyrdom and resistance. For a very brief moment after the war, the significance of the ghetto space as a site of Jewish suffering and opposition was clearly articulated. Already in 1946, the first monument to the ghetto uprising was unveiled. Designed by the architect Leon Marek Suzin, it featured a red circular tablet raised above the ground by stone masonry with the following inscription in Hebrew, Yiddish, and Polish: "To those who fell in the unprecedented heroic battle for the dignity and freedom of the Jewish people, for a free Poland and for a man's liberation. From the Polish Jews." The

[58] "1.5 miliona cegieł w dwu dni. Raźnie pracuje się na Muranowie gdy jest muzyka i bufet," *Życie Warszawy* September 4, 1949, 8; "Z cegieł Muranowa powstanie osiedla. Młodzież zgłasza się do pracy," *Życie Warszawy* September 6, 1949, 8; "Akademicy pracują na Muranowie. 130 cegieł 'wydobycia' na głowę," *Życie Warszawy* October 24, 1949, 3.

[59] *Życie Warszawy*, September 1, 1949, 8.

inscription of this small plaque captured the dominant way that the ghetto became interpreted as carried out by *Polish Jews* fighting for the freedom of both the Jewish and Polish people.

In articles published by Jewish organizations about the ghetto uprising, a general consensus emerged that the ghetto uprising represented a heroic moment of solidarity among left-wing Jews and Poles who fought bravely against the Nazis. The ghetto uprising appeared as the ultimate example of Jewish resistance and martyrdom carried out by the same left-wing forces who were now fighting for democracy and socialism in postwar Poland.[60] On the second anniversary of the uprising, Yitzhak Zuckerman, active in the youth Zionist movement and the last commander of Jewish Combat Organization (*Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa*, or ŻOB), proclaimed that a broad left-leaning alliance of the Bund, the PPR, Polaj-Zion, Zionists, and workers had carried out the uprising. His take did not differ greatly from the Jewish-communist historian Ber Mark's commentary, which also stressed the solidarity of the left.[61] The political divisions among Jews in postwar Poland — especially between Zionists and Communists — had not yet colored how the most recent past was viewed. In 1947, the CKŻP reinforced this broad message of left-wing heroism by announcing the change of two prominent street names in Muranów: Nalewki street, the heart of the Jewish district's once bustling economic life, was renamed The Ghetto Fighters's Street and Gęsia street was now called Mordechai Anielewicz street after the leader of the ŻOB.[62]

As Jewish groups took the lead in interpreting the ghetto space, urban planners dealt with the rebuilding of Muranów only partially aware of this discursive negotiation with the past. From the earliest plans, BOS decided to turn Muranów into a large housing complex as a key element

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[60] Marci Shore, "Język, pamięć i rewolucyjna awangarda. Kszałtowanie historii powstania w Getcie Warszawskim w latach 1944-1950," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* (December 1998): 44-61.

[61] Yitzhak Zuckerman, "W trzecią rocznicę powstania," *Nasze Słowo* April 1946, 1 Ber Mark, "W rocznice powstania w getcie warszawskim," *Trybuna Wolności* May 1, 1946, 20-21.

[62] Ibid., 48. Shore indicates that the Ghetto Fighter's Street name lasted only for a very short time in the PPR.

of Warsaw's transformation into a socialist city.[63] The plans stemmed from heady designs created during the interwar period by a group of *avant garde* architects who dreamed of building a modern, functional Warsaw. Since Muranów was a heavily cramped tenement area, it became one of the main areas for implementing a new, socialist conception of housing that transcended the limitations of capitalism. Muranów presented, however, a particularly difficult task for BOS's architects. They not only had to deal with the enormous amount of rubble, especially in the northern part of the district that had been flattened completely, but also with the symbolism of the space itself — an area that the Nazis had created to imprison and then later annihilate Warsaw's Jewish population.[64] Most urban planners tellingly paid little or no attention to the fact that it was the center of Jewish life, now lying in a heap of ruins so thick that officials determined it would be too costly and too time consuming to remove all the broken stone. Published in 1946-47, the first plans for the district focused solely on the specific details of the housing complex to be built there.[65] In 1948-49, a new architect, Bohdan Lachert, took over the project and proved to be more conscious of the symbolism of the ghetto space than any other designer that worked on it before or after him.[66] As a young, *avant-garde* architect during the interwar period, Lachert had designed a number of housing complexes for the Warsaw Residential Cooperative. He understood the unprecedented opportunity that Warsaw's destruction presented to architects like himself. "The task of rebuilding Warsaw is great," he said before a meeting of BOS architects, "we are standing

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[63] "Zarys nowej Warszawy. Referat kierownika BOS inz. Piotrowskiego na VII sesji KRN," *Życie Warszawy* May 23, 1945, 3; APW, *Biuletyn Wewnętrzny BOS* January 31, 1946, 3.

[64] Indeed, the problem of rubble in general was one of the more difficult issues that urban planners had to confront. See, for instance, "Problem gruzu," *Stolica* May 23, 1948, 6-7; "Co zrobić z gruzem?" *Stolica* July 18, 1948, 4.

[65] "Plan odbudowy Warszawy. Muranów," *Skarpa Warszawska* No. 26 (1946): 2; "Muranów — dzielnica mieszkaniowa," *Architektura* No. 1 (1947): 8-11.

[66] Muranów was rebuilt from 1949 to 1967 designed by Bohdan Lachert (Muranów South), Wacław Eytner (Muranów North), and Tadeusz Mrówczyński (Muranów West). See *Warzawskie osiedla ZOR* (Warsaw: Arkady, 1968), 25-35.

before the greatest architectural competition of all times in our history."[67] Following his own enthusiastic charge, Lachert set out on an ambitious plan for Muranów to implement a new district of geometrically square, functional, unadorned apartment buildings erected among ample green space.

But Lachert was also well aware that his new project would be sitting on top of the former ghetto. Partly out of practical reasons and partly for symbolic effect, he decided to build the apartments directly on top of the ruins and to use the rubble mixed with concrete for the foundation of the buildings, dramatizing the idea of Warsaw reemerging back to life from the death and destruction of the war. He also left the front of the apartment buildings unstuccoed with a dark red, rusty brick that was intended to capture the somberness of the ghetto space in a redemptive narrative of material renewal. "The history of the great victory of the nation," he wrote, "paid for through a sea of human blood, poured out for the sake of social progress and national liberation, will be commemorated in the Muranów project. … The building of a new residential district in Muranów for the working class, on a mound of rubble, will testify to the emergence of a new life on the old ruins of social relations, on an area that commemorates the great barbarity of Nazism and the heroism of the Ghetto fighters."[68]

Lachert intended the rebuilding of Muranów to complement the symbolic meaning of the Warsaw Ghetto Monument that had just been erected in 1948 slightly north of the area of his housing complex. The idea of building the monument came from the CKŻP, which launched an international funding campaign to pay for the monument. The Central Committee settled on a design by the Polish-Jewish sculptor Natan Rapoport that heroically and triumphantly commemorated the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, depicting on its western side proletarian-looking figures brandishing arms as they almost jump out from the granite in which they are carved. The

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[67] APW, BOS, 2059, Bohdan Lachert, "Przemówienie wygłoszone na zebraniu pracowników BOS," January 7, 1946.

[68] Bohdan Lachert, "Muranów — Dzielnica mieszkaniowa," *Architektura* Nr. 5 (1949): 129 and 132.

eastern side, in a much more subtle way, shows twelve Jews, their heads slouched, reluctantly moving to their fate.[69] Bohdan Lachert, on the board of experts for evaluating the ghetto monument, praised Rapoport's design and tellingly stressed how it would fit into the larger rebuilding of Muranów:

> The grim atmosphere of this great mausoleum, erected among a cemetery of ruins, soaked with the blood of the Jewish nation, should remain, as new life comes into existence. The architectural project, carried out in the rebuilding of Muranów, should not reduce these artistic elements, which the sculptor Rapoport created through a magnificent sculpture of bronze and granite … The ruins, in the largest possible amount, should remain in place, remembering the days of terror and resistance, constituting the ground on which a new city, a new life will be raised.[70]

In a symbolic sense, Lachert's apartment buildings constructed from the rubble in a rusty red brick would be an extension — even a dramatization — of Rapoport's monument. The spatial design of the apartments on top of the ruins would contribute to the monument's impact by maintaining the "grim atmosphere" that pervades Muranów. "Built from red rubble, as if from the blood of Warsaw" was how Lachert's project manager described the symbolic effect.[71] Additional articles published about Muranów recognized Lachert's attempt to capture the ghetto as a "symbol of human tragedy and human bestiality."[72]

Indeed, Lachert's sensitivity to the meaning of the ghetto space reflects a broader confluence in the immediate postwar years in how non-Jewish communists and left-wing Jews interpreted the ghetto space. As the historian Marci Shore has convincingly argued, communists and the Zionist-Left shared a common language and a common purpose that can perhaps be best described as Zionist socialist realism, embodied not least of all in Rapaport's monument with its

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[69] The main scholarly work on the monument remains Young, *Texture of Memory*, 155-184.

[70] Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego (AŻIH), CKŻP, Wydział Kulury i Propagandy, 303/217.

[71] Aniela Daszewska, "… a na Muranowie …" *Wieś* nr. 37 1950, 6.

[72] Feliks Weber, "Słowo o Muranowie," *Stolica* October 16, 1949, 4. See also "Osiedle mieszkaniowe Muranów," *Stolica* June 11, 1950.

proletarian ghetto fighters.[73] A common understanding took hold that saw the Ghetto Uprising as a central part of a broader opposition movement against Nazism led by the Polish Worker's Party, Marxist-Zionists, and young, progressive Jews. As the Marxist-Zionist leader Adolf Berman triumphantly proclaimed, "the armed brotherhood of the Polish and Jewish radical workers' movement was not a phrase, but a fact. … The uprising in the ghetto, the first massive, revolutionary rebellion in Poland during the occupation, undoubtedly became one of the sparks that triggered the Polish resistance movement."[74] Similarly, the communist party press stressed solidarity with the Jews in order to brandish its image as a progressive force for Poland: "Our party, the Polish Worker's Party, is proud that its forces, units of the People's Guard, was at the front of those who provided aid to the heroic defenders of the Warsaw ghetto from the 'Polish' side of the ghetto wall."[75] The Polish Left could evoke the meaning of the ghetto uprising much more so than the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, even if only tenuously since non-Jewish participation in the rebellion was limited.[76] For those small number of left-wing Jews committed to staying in Poland, this use of the ghetto uprising did not appear problematic because they, too, largely interpreted it as part of a broader Polish struggle against the Nazi occupier. Other Jews who might have reflected upon the ghetto space differently — and there were probably many — had already fled from Poland by the thousands in the face of anti-Semitic violence.

But this uneasy alliance did not last long once the PZPR consolidated political power in Poland. Fissures had developed already following the grand unveiling of Rapoport's monument. Jewish Communists in the CKŻP claimed that those from the Zionist camp had "aspired to

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[73] Marci Shore, "Children of the Revolution: Communism, Zionism, and the Berman Brothers," *Jewish Social Studies* 10, no. 3 (2004): 23-86; Shore, "Język."

[74] Adolf Berman, "Rocznica wielkiego czynu," *Przełom* 19 April 1948, 1.

[75] "Ghetto warszawskie," Głos Ludu April 17, 1945, 1.

[76] On the broader issue of the underground response to the Jewish fate, see Engel, *Shadow*; Engel, *Facing*; Israel Gutman, *Resistance: The Warsaw Ghetto* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994); Jan Gross, "Tangled Web;" Shmuel Krakowski, *The War of the Doomed: Jewish Armed Resistance in Poland 1942-1944* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1984); Dariusz Libionka, "ZWK-AK i Delegatura Rządu RP wobec eksterminacji Żydów polskich," in Żbikowski, ed., *Polacy i Żydzi*, 15-139.

transform the commemoration into a Zionist demonstration and attained their aim."[77] As the PZPR implemented a one-party dictatorship in Poland, both non-Jewish and Jewish communists started to question the political loyalty of Zionists within the context of the campaign against "right-wing nationalist deviation" that took hold across the Soviet bloc.[78] During the sixth anniversary of the Ghetto Uprising, Gregorz Smolar, the new head of the CKŻP, stressed the importance of communists in initiating the uprising and directly attacked any Zionists left in Poland: "And when we find among ourselves people who, like dratted flies, are buzzing about some greater and more vital *allegedly Jewish national goals*, we will eliminate those people from our society, just as the fighters in the ghetto removed from themselves those who were faint-hearted and cowardly."[79] The political diversity that had once shaped Jewish life immediately after the war now largely came to an end.[80] The PZPR now demanded political support from the few Jews still remaining in Poland and replaced the CKŻP with the newly created Socio-Cultural Association of Jews (TSKŻ) that remained fairly loyal to the regime.[81]

The consolidation of political power under the PZPR also had an impact on Lachert's design for Muranów. As a way to express its ideological priorities in the built environment, the PZPR embraced the tenets of socialist realism by 1950. Socialist realism promised to transcend the cosmopolitan, bourgeois universalistic functionalism of urban modernism by constructing buildings socialist in content and national in form. What exactly this meant in practice was rather

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[77] AŻIH, 303/111, Prezydium CKŻP, Protocol Nr. 56, June 10, 1949.

[78] Indeed, a discussion among communist and Marxist-Zionist Jews erupted just after the fifth anniversary of the Ghetto Uprising. Jewish-Communists claimed that the event had displayed too vividly "Zionist manifestations." See AŻIH, 303/11, CKŻP, Prezydium, Protocoll No. 56, June 10, 1948, and Protocoll No. 57, June 16, 1948.

[79] AŻIH, CKŻP, Kultur i Propagandy, 303/102, Gregorz Smolar, "My, współbojowcy i spadkobiercy powstańców warszawskiego getta," April 19, 1949. Emphasis in the original.

[80] Research on Jewish life in the 1950s is very limited, but see August Grabski, "Sytuacja Żydów w Polsce w latach 1950-1957," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* no. 4 (2000): 504-519.

[81] On the early years of the TSKŻ, see Grzegorz Berendt, *Życie żydowskie w Polsce w latach 1950-1956. Z dziejów Towarzystwa Społeczno-Kulturalnego Żydów w Polsce* (Gdańsk : Wydawn. Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2006).

simple —large, monumental, and ornate buildings that produced in the end a similarly universalistic aesthetic across the Soviet bloc. Warsaw's two most celebrated, socialist realist projects were the towering Joseph Stalin Palace of Culture and Science and the grandiose housing complex on constitution square (*Marszałkowska Dzielnica Mieszkaniowa*). Just as these projects were being designed and implemented, Lachert's plans were strongly criticized for their modernist expression and alleged gloominess on the former space of the ghetto. In a stinging, five-page rebuke, Jerzy Wierzbicki sharply concluded that "Muranów does not attain a fully positive expression."[82] His remarks focused mainly on modernist "premises" that no longer remained valid four years later with the advent of socialist realism and thus his criticism can partly be read as a formulaic rejection of previous "errors" at the peak of Stalinism. But his remarks also dealt specifically with Lachert's architectural representation of the former ghetto space. He recognized "the difficult task" that Lachert faced and acknowledged the general symbolism of the ghetto space: "In 1940, Muranów was included in the ghetto by the Nazis in order to wipe it literally from the face of the earth three years later after murdering the Jews enclosed in the ghetto. That once animated and lively part of the city was turned into a wasteland covered with a layer of rubble several meters deep …"[83] Yet he then attacked Lachert's attempt to give expression to this reality. Wierzbicki criticized the construction of the apartments on top of the ruins, which he claimed had produced "an interesting, flat lay of the land and a monotonous terrain." The buildings themselves were also "monotonous, sad, and grey" with "rubble hallowed brick" creating a somber environment.[84] In a short response to his critics, Lachert defended parts of his project, but conceded that an error had been made in attempting to symbolize the

[82] Jerzy Wierzbicki, "Dzielnica mieszkaniowa Muranów (Próba krytyki)," *Architektura* Nr. 9 (1952): 225.

[83] Ibid., 222.

[84] Ibid., 224.

ghastliness and destruction of the ghetto space (he clearly knew what to say to save his professional career).[85]

The fallout from the criticism of Lachert's project proved decisive. The PZPR decided to stucco Lachert's buildings, claiming that it had received complaints from new residents about the somberness of the district. It then painted on the white surface small designs and implanted on the cornices decorative ornaments. Muranów was to be a cheerful, bright, and colorful place for the working class.[86] This decision reflected the ideological demands of socialist realism with its emphasis on ornamental and monumental architecture. The result was all too clear: the ornamental stuccoing had painted over — both literally and figuratively — Lachert's attempt to represent a space that had been "soaked with the blood of the Jewish nation." The party did not want to meditate upon the death and destruction of the ghetto; it did not want to reflect upon the ghastliness that lay beneath the Muranów apartment buildings; it wanted instead nice, pretty apartments to surround the Ghetto Monument that increasingly represented the heroic, triumphant pages of Polish and communist history. Any sign or symbolic representation of what happened to Jewish Warsaw — both to its inhabitants and its urban landscape — was to be buried under beautiful, stuccoed apartment buildings. In a certain sense, this change in Lachert's design was probably bound to occur; he appears to have been the only architect advocating at the time for even the most oblique representation of the ghetto space. In 1949, the official announcement of the *Six-Year Plan* made only fleeting and vague reference to the ghetto space; instead the urban landscape of Jewish Warsaw was to be consumed and used for building the socialist future.[87]

With its eastern most edge bordering the old town, Muranów reflected the unique blending of the socialist and the nationalist — of the new and the old — that shaped Warsaw's

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[85] Bohdan Lachert, "Muranów z doświadczeń 3 lat prac urbanistyczno-architektonicznych," *Miasto* no. 9 (September 1952): 29-32.

[86] "Tynkowanie Muranowa," *Stolica* May 15-31, 1951, 3.

[87] Bierut, *Six-Year,* 201.

rebuilding. Historic preservation and socialist realism were two co-existing and intertwined aspects of Warsaw's reconstruction. The meticulous reconstruction of the old town represented the revitalization of the Polish nation from the ruins of war, while Muranów reinforced the importance of the new, communist order in that rebirth. Both supported a redemptive narrative of material and mnemonic renewal. While Warsaw's old town was perceived as a great national loss that must be restored, its rubble carefully sorted and picked through for even the most minute surviving architectural piece, Muranów was ultimately seen as scattered debris, ruins that could be shoveled up for the building of the socialist future: "New, bright houses grow on the ruins of the ghetto; a new life grows, which prevails over destruction and mass extermination. These houses and the forest of scaffoldings that are rising up throughout all of Warsaw are evidence of the constantly growing power of peace and socialism."[88]

The transformation of Muranów into a socialist realist housing project signaled the near complete disappearance of "Jewish Warsaw" with the exception of a few notable Jewish sites that were still standing, although most of them would also soon vanish. The *Wielka Synagoga* on Tłomackie street, lying in a pile of ruins after the war on the southeastern edge of Muranów, was never included in the city's unprecedented historic reconstruction program. The synagogue only rarely and fleetingly made its way into popular discussions about the city's architectural history; this landmark building, destroyed as a symbol of the Nazi defeat of the ghetto uprising, ceased to exist as part of the city's past.[89] The rubble in fact was cleared away and the space remained empty until as late as the mid-1970s when the city started building a skyscraper on it. Although the construction project had been approved already in the 1950s, work on it languished for decades for reasons that are not entirely clear (probably a combination of limited funding, worker strikes, and other priorities). In 1976, the first metal shell of the building started to appear only for

[88] "W ósmą rocznicę powstania w ghetcie," *Trybuna Ludu* April 19, 1951, 3.

[89] "Architekci dawnej warszawy," *Stolica* August 8, 1948, p. 8; "Gruba kaśka i tłumackie," *Stolica* August 13, 1961.

it to rust away before work resumed in the late 1980s. Redesigned in a light blue, reflective glass, the building was finally completed in 1991 and to this day towers over the northern part of central Warsaw.

Warsaw's oldest synagogue faced a similar fate. Located in Praga on the east side of the Vistula river, which had been home to Jews since the late eighteenth century, the synagogue was constructed in 1836 by the architect Józef Lessel. Built in a highly original design that featured a two-story rotunda, the building suffered damage during the war, but remained in good enough shape that massive reconstruction was not necessary. In late 1948, BOS sent a letter to the Warsaw Office for Conservation inquiring about the status of the building as an historic monument before it proceeded with plans to tear it down.[90] The office responded initially that the building was not on any historic preservation list, but then revised its opinion several months later after the CKŻP indicated that the Jewish community planned to rebuild the structure for religious purposes.[91] The synagogue was officially placed under historic preservation for its "artistic and historical value," but this decision never led to any results.[92] Officials in the building department suggested tearing it down to make room for a parking lot.[93] Since the CKŻP did not have the funds to reconstruct the building and the city rejected its requests for financial assistance, the synagogue was destroyed and the area was ultimately used for a playground.

A few Jewish sites did, however, survive both the war and postwar urban reconstruction. The Judaic Library, designed by Edwar Eber and adjacent to the *Wielka Synagoga*, remained well intact and was restored in 1947 as the Jewish Historical Institute (*Żydowski Instytut Historyczny*, or ŻIH), which became home to a magnificent archival collection on Polish Jewry, including the

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[90] APW, WAZ, 253, Letter to Office for Conservation, October 25, 1948.

[91] APW, WAZ, 253, Letter to Office for Conservation from CKŻP, January 31, 1949; response to CKŻP, March 9, 1949.

[92] Ibid.

[93] APW, 253, Letter to Ministry of Culture from Ministry of Building, March 30, 1951.

clandestine collection of Emanuel Ringelblum that was recovered buried in the ruins of the Warsaw ghetto. In the 1950s and 1960s, ŻIH was arguably one of the leading institutes in the world publishing articles on the Holocaust, especially concerning the extermination of Polish Jewry.[94] Moreover, the city's two Jewish cemeteries and an orthodox synagogue, used after the war by the city's tiny religious community, remained intact, but all three gradually fell into severe dilapidation over decades of neglect. Since so few religious Jews lived in Warsaw, the nominal Jewish community that existed there had virtually no resources to look after and maintain its former property.

IV. Commemorating the Ghetto Space

One might be tempted by the simple argument that Polish communists had much more on their minds than the fate of Jewish sites in a city virtually of no Jews. The ambivalent handling of Jewish space was not necessarily deliberate or out of bad faith, but rather the natural outcome of an ideological and political system dominant throughout the Soviet bloc. Although the influence of communism is clearly evident, the ambivalence toward Jewish space in Warsaw reflects a distinct unease with the Holocaust. It is not just a couple of Jewish sites that is at issue here, but an entire district of central Warsaw that remained unequivocally linked to the persecution and murder of the Jews. Few other spaces in Poland symbolized so exclusively the Nazi campaign against the Jews than the area of the former ghetto. The PZPR boldly used this space for the redemptive renewal of Warsaw. And it did so not just through the physical rebuilding of the area, but also by turning the ghetto into a site of Polish martyrdom that all but denied its connection to Polish Jewry. This mnemonic erasure of Jews from the history of the ghetto was the final act in the postwar disappearance of Jewish Warsaw.

On April 19, 1948, on the day that Rapoport's monument was unveiled, the writer Maria Dąbrowska noted in her diary: "I do not have anything against the Jewish heroes. But so far

[94] Natalia Aleksiun, "Polish Historiography of the Holocaust — Between Silence and Public Debate," *German History* vol. 22 (2004): 406-432.

Warsaw does not have a monument for the insurgents and children who fought in the uprising!"[95] Dąbrowska attempts to reassure herself that she has nothing against the "Jewish heroes," but she unmistakably does: they are overshadowing Warsaw's rebellion against the Nazis. The Jewish rebellion is not her rebellion; her rebellion is *Warsaw's* rebellion. Many ordinary Poles probably resented the attention the PZPR lavished on the ghetto uprising as it ignored the city's other rebellion of 1944. The party in fact realized this and responded by transforming the ghetto uprising into a distinctly Polish event. Unable to use the Warsaw uprising led by the AK, the PZPR tailored the ghetto rebellion into a heroic moment of opposition that valorized the actions of left-wing Poles and Jews who fought against the Nazis.[96] The rhetoric employed to construct this image of the past was at times formulaic and predictable. In 1950, at the height of Stalinism, the party's leading paper, *Trybuna Ludu*, declared that the ghetto uprising was "a constituent part of the fight of the entire Polish nation to expel the occupant from the country, a constituent part of the war for liberation, carried out by the subjugated countries of Europe, of which the heroic forces of the Soviet army played the central and deciding role under the leadership of the magnificent Stalin."[97]

In 1953, the party went even further, boldly linking the uprising with the communist resistance movement during the war and the formation of the PPR: "The fight in the ghetto was an inseparable part of the struggle in the entire country led by the Polish Worker's Party. … Almost all died, sacrificing their lives for People's Poland."[98] By connecting the ghetto uprising with the larger opposition movement in Poland, the PZPR not only reduced to vague references that the uprising broke out as a rebellion against the genocidal policies of Nazi Germany, but also

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[95] Maria Dąbrowska, *Dzienniki powojenne 1945-1965* vol. 1 (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1997), 212.

[96] On the handling of the 1944 uprising, see Borodziej, *Warschauer*, 205-218; Klaus-Peter Friedrich, "Kontaminierte Erinnerung. Einfluß der Kriegspropaganda auf das Gedenken an die Warschauer Aufstände von 1943 und 1944," *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung* no. 3 (2006): 395-432.

[97] "W siódmą rocznicę powstania w getcie warszawskim," *Trybuna Ludu*, April 19, 1950, 2.

[98] "W 10 rocznicę powstania w getcie warszawskim," *Trybuna Ludu*, April 20, 1953, 2.

portrayed it as a crucial moment when Poles and Jews had fought hand-in-hand against the Nazis. The ghetto uprising epitomized the heroic actions of Poles who supported every opportunity to oppose the Nazis, even when it came to Jews whose fate they saw as inseparable from their own. In short, the party used the ghetto uprising to valorize the behavior of Poles and put forward a highly fabricated image of Polish-Jewish brotherhood. As an article published on the tenth anniversary clearly put it, "the ghetto uprising was an expression and effect of the efforts and struggles in the unified fight against the occupant. It was not an isolated act, but a precise, organized one in connection with the struggle of the entire nation; it was a heroic, grand epoch in the pages of the history of the Polish opposition movement."[99]

This interpretation of the ghetto uprising dealt uneasily with the Nazi policies against the Jews that lay at the heart of the ghetto's history. In the 1950s and 1960s, Poland was one of the leading places in the world for research on the genocide of European Jewry conducted at ŻIH, but the PZPR only marginally touched upon the isolation, ghettoization, and extermination of Warsaw's Jewish population.[100] It portrayed the ghetto as merely one part of Nazi policies against the Polish nation as a whole: "The Nazi criminals transformed the entire country into one large prison, into one large concentration camp. From the first days of the occupation, the Nazi torturers applied toward the Jewish population the most terrible racist terror and mass extermination. The terrible fate that Nazism brought upon the Jewish population was the beginning of the huge crime of destroying the entire Polish nation."[101] This unease with the Holocaust became particularly pronounced by 1960 when the Union of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy (*Związek Bojowników o Wolność i Demokrację*, or ZBoWiD) took over the task of designing, organizing, and implementing the commemoration, severely limiting the role that the

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[99] Franciszek Łęczycki, "W dziesiątą rocznicę powstania w getcie warszawskim," *Nowe Drogi* no. 4 (1953): 56.

[100] Aleksiun, "Polish Historiography."

[101] Łęczycki, "W dziesiątą," 57.

TSKŻ had played in the 1950s.[102] ZBoWiD was the most important veteran organization in postwar Poland that cultivated an interpretation of World War II around Polish resistance and victimization.[103]

In 1963, ZBoWiD transformed the twentieth anniversary of the ghetto uprising into a tragically heroic moment of Polish opposition, sacrifice, and martyrdom.[104] If before the ghetto uprising represented the progressiveness of Polish communism, now it reflected the general benevolence of Polish society as a whole. This Polonization of the ghetto rebellion reflected not only the nationalization of Polish communism in the 1960s, but also the growing anxiety among some in the PZPR and ZBoWiD about Jews. The twentieth-anniversary of the uprising was celebrated across parts of the world. Some in the party feared that its growing internationalization challenged the image of the past it wished to fashion. In an interestingly worded letter to the PZPR, ZBoWiD noted that "in West Berlin a large exhibition on the issue of Jewish martyrology is being planned. … Converting the commemorations into a demonstration against West-German neo-fascism and militarism is not the intention of the organizers in the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany. Rather they want to use the matter of celebrating the memory of the ghetto victims for their own benefit, masking the true face of the West German government."[105]

The cold war Manichean division of the world into the militaristic, fascist west and the peaceful, anti-fascist east is less notable here than is the significant, if oblique reference to the "memory of the ghetto victims." ZBoWiD feared that remembering the Jewish victims would

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[102] Michał Mirski and Hersz Smolar, "Commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising: Reminiscences," *Soviet Jewish Affairs* no. 1 (1973): 99.

[103] On ZBoWiD, see Joanna Wawrzyniak, "Związek Bojowników Wolność i Demokrację — ewolucja ideologii a więź grupowa," in Dariusz Stola and Marcin Zaremba, eds., *PRL: trwanie i zmiana* (Warsaw: Wyższa Szkoła Przedsiębiorczości i Zarządzania im. Leona Koźmińskiego, 2003).

[104] AAN, KC PZPR, Wydział Propagandy i Agitacji, 237/VIII/726, "W sprawie XX rocznicy powstania w getcie warszawskim," March 1, 1962.

[105] AAN, KC PZPR, Wydział Propagandy i Agitacji, 237/VIII/726, Letter from ZBoWiD to KC PZPR, October 27, 1962.

directly challenge its narrative about Polish martyrdom and resistance. The growing discussion about the Holocaust in the "West" became worrisome to ZBoWiD because it threatened its interpretation of the past. The only way to counteract this challenge was to erase virtually any connection between the ghetto uprising and the Jews: "The struggle and extermination of the Warsaw ghetto is one of the most tragic moments in the history of the Second World War … The German racists directed their blade of extermination against millions of people just because of their origins."[106] Jews had in fact been deleted so much from the history of the ghetto during the twentieth anniversary that Jewish leaders in and outside Poland complained to the PZPR. In a meeting with party officials, the board of the TSKŻ indicated that "certain shortcomings and errors" concerning the anniversary resulted in "inappropriate repercussions." The TZKŻ regretted the "diminishing" of the "specificity of the Jewish martyrology during the Nazi occupation and attempts to equalize it with the general Nazi politics of extermination." "We believe," the board continued, "that by clearly exposing the full truth about the total extermination of the Jews in the context of the Nazi campaign to destroy [other] nations we can show the deepest viciousness of German fascism …"[107]

The World Jewish Congress expressed similar concerns in a meeting with the PPR's Deputy Foreign Minister. "I described," the WJC official noted, "the feelings of profound disappointment and even disquiet felt by Jewish delegations from abroad … that the various ceremonies in Poland to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Revolt were being given a character and form which conveyed the impression that this was a Polish national event …" The Polish deputy foreign minister responded by citing two main considerations that had shaped the organization of the commemorative events. First, he explained that the PZPR wanted to avoid arousing "feelings of resentment and indignation" among the Polish population for emphasizing the ghetto uprising over the Warsaw Uprising of 1944.

[106] J. Ruszczyc, "Solidarność poprzez mury," *Trybuna Ludu* April 16, 1963, 4.

[107] Minutes of meeting in Archiwum Instytu Pamięci Narodowej (AIPN), BU MSW II 7251.

Second, he indicated that a "Zionist aspect" and Israeli polices became "entangled" in the decision "against giving the Commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto Revolt an exclusively Jewish character."[108] This second reason is the most important one. In the 1960s, Gomułka's regime became increasingly more nationalistic by both glorifying the Polish past and attacking Germans and Jews.[109] In the face of internal party divisions and continued social unrest, it turned sharply to national rhetoric to solidify its power. This move reached its apogee in the linguistic assault of 1968 that forced some 13,000 Jews to flee Poland.[110] As an anticipation of the verbal hate that was to come five years later, the discursive transformation of the ghetto uprising into a glorious moment of Polish martyrdom and resistance reveals how much this nationalization of Polish communism rested on a particularly exclusive notion of Polish identity. As the rebuilding of Muranów erased the particularity of the district's history, the central physical marker of the area's past — the ghetto monument — was itself Polonized.[111]

IV. Rebuilding Berlin among Divided Ruins

In 1945, Berlin also lay in a pile of ruins. 300 allied aerial bombardments and intense fighting in parts of the city left its urban landscape in shambles. Although only 19 percent of the city's buildings were not salvageable, in certain parts of the city — above all in "old Berlin" — the destruction was enormous with more than half of all buildings deemed non reparable. Berlin's rubble lined streets came to symbolize for the German population their own suffering and victimization.[112] Since Germans experienced great hardship from aerial bombardments, flight

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[108] CZA, C2/2032**,** WJC, Department of International Affairs, May 13, 1963.

[109] Zaremba, *Komunizm*.

[110] This is the central topic of the Polish section of chapter 4 of this dissertation. A concise historical background to 1968 is Michlic, *Poland's*, 230-242.

[111] A similar mnemonic appropriation happened at Auschwitz. See Huener*, Auschwitz.*

[112] Mary Nolan, "Air Wars, Memory Wars: Germans as Victims during the Second World War," *Central European History* vol. 38, no. 1 (2005): 7-40; Thomas Childers, "Facilis descensus averni est:" The Allied Bombing of Germany and the Issue of German Suffering," *Central European History* vol. 38, no. 1 (2005):

from the east, and rape by Soviet soldiers, these experiences dominated postwar interpretations of the past and elided the complicity of German society in war and genocide. In film, literature, and photography, the ruins of the war became an integral component of this emerging narrative about the past. One of its most central, iconic symbols were the *Trümmerfrauen* ("rubble women") who came out after the war and started sifting through the city's shattered stone. As civilians who endured bombing raids, widowhood, evacuation, and rape, women became ideal figures to recast and re-imagine the Nazi past as a time of innocence, anguish, and hardship. The tireless efforts of the *Trümmerfrauen* to clear away the city's rubble while trying to feed their own children became a heroic symbol of sacrifice and strength that endured in both the FRG and the GDR.[113]

But the ruins also symbolized something different for the architects who started to redesign Berlin: an unprecedented opportunity to build the city entirely anew. Looking out on the ruins of the city from the Brandenburg gate, one architect could not hold back his almost gleeful excitement about the prospect that awaited him: "I was beaming: what a possibility to plan here a new landscape, and what a possibility to remove this field of ruins and build new, modern houses."[114] But unlike in Warsaw such utopian imaginations were soon dashed by the rapidly shifting politics of occupied and divided Berlin. Urban planners not only had to deal with the immense amount of rubble, but also with the chaotic, four-power administration of the city just as cold war tensions were mounting. Berlin's reconstruction quickly took on a much more practical shape and lacked the kind of grand, redemptive vision that dominated Warsaw's "rebirth." The increasingly divided condition of Berlin made this impossible, but also Berlin was the capital of a defeated nation that had wreaked enormous havoc across the continent of Europe. Its urban

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75-105. Ina Merkel, *... und Du, Frau an der Westbank. Die DDR in den 50er Jahren* (Berlin: Elefanten, 1990), 31-47.

[113] Elizabeth Heineman, "The Hour of the Woman: Memories of Germany's "Crisis Years" and West German National Identity," *The American Historical Review* vol. 101, no. 2 (1996): 354-395.

[114] Quoted in Benedikt Goebel, ed., *Der Umbau Alt-Berlins zum modernen Stadtzentrum. Planungs-, Bau- und Besitzgeschichte des historischen Berliner Stadtkerns im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Braun, 2003), 272.

planners made no claims to rebuilding a "martyr city" and embraced a fairly decentralized, practical form of urban modernism. The Nazi past complicated Berlin's reconstruction like no other German city except Munich. Monumentality and grandeur in Hitler's former capital — even to some extent in East Berlin once the utopianism of socialist realism faded by the mid-1950s — was generally rejected for more modest designs. Finally, there was the basic problem of Berlin itself: What was the city's purpose? Although in 1949 its eastern half had become the capital of the GDR, the identity of its western part emerged largely in reaction to this development. With Bonn now the seat of political power in the FRG, West Berlin became essentially a showcase of "democracy," "capitalism," and "freedom" on the frontlines of the cold war. Engaged in constant competition with each other, both Berlins tried to out-maneuver the other with urban reconstruction being no exception.

The first designs for Berlin emerged, however, before the city's division. Already in May 1945, two groups of urban planners came together in the districts of Mitte and Zehlendorf to develop two general plans for Berlin's reconstruction. The *Kollektivplan*, designed mainly by the architect Hans Scharoun, envisioned a radical restructuring of the urban landscape that left hardly any of Berlin's historic core in place.[115] Although less utopian in spirit, the Zehlendorf plan, conceived by Walter Moest, also called for little preservation of the city's historic buildings and focused on a new layout for the city.[116] These plans never left the desks on which they were drafted, but they indicate at this early stage the general consensus that emerged about the basic shape of Berlin's reconstruction.[117] A modernist impulse to build Berlin almost entirely anew dominated rebuilding plans from the beginning, distinguishing its reconstruction from the blend of modernism, socialist realism, and historic reconstruction found in Warsaw.

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[115] Hans Scharoun, "Vortrag anlässlich der Ausstellung 'Berlin plant — erster Bericht,'" in *Hans Scharoun. Bauten, Entwürfe, Texte* (Berlin: Akademie der Künste, 1974).

[116] Walter Moest, *Der Zehlendorfer Plan. Ein Vorschlag zum Wiederaufbau Berlins* (Berlin: Druckhaus Tempelhof, 1946).

[117] Frank Werner, *Stadtplanung Berlin. Theorie und Realität* (Berlin: Kiepert, 1976).

Berlin's reconstruction did not begin in earnest until the division of the city in 1948-49. Just as cold war tensions were mounting, both cities started moving in two different, competing directions as they sought to use architecture to legitimize their respective democratic and communist systems of power. In East Berlin, Walter Ulbricht took an active role in urban planning and announced in 1950 the "sixteen principles" for making "cities destroyed by American imperialism more beautiful than ever."[118] Drawn up after a tour of Moscow by GDR architects, the principles rejected urban modernism as "cosmopolitan" and advocated for centralized, hierarchical, and monumental designs that incorporated "progressive" national traditions from the German past. "In its structure and architectural design," the guidelines stated, "the city is an expression of the political life and the national consciousness of the people … Architecture must be democratic in content and national in form."[119] In its attempt to distinguish itself from the modernist practices of the United States and the FRG, Ulbricht settled on Stalinist monumental architecture that gave preference to grand city centers and large boulevards. What the old town was for "traditionalist" rebuilding approaches, the city center was for communist urban planning.[120] The new had eclipsed the old: the socialist city center reflected the hopeful triumph of the communist future over the bourgeois, capitalist past. As urban planners in Warsaw were attempting to combine the historic with the socialist, those in East Berlin staked out a much more radical position as they located material renewal in the utopianism of socialist realism. "Away with the rubble and with erecting what's new … Down with the old remains. Stone for stone then the new … Berlin, you will be more beautiful than ever."[121] So went two refrains sung

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[118] Walter Ulbricht, *Der Fünfjahrplan und die Perspektiven der Volkswirtschaft. Referat und Schlusswort auf dem III Parteitag der SED* (Berlin: Dietz, 1950), 49.

[119] From principles 1 and 14, "Die Sechzehn Grundsätze des Städtebaus," written by architect Lothar Bolz and reprinted in his *Von deutschen Bauen: Reden und Aufsätze* (Berlin: Verlag der Nation, 1951).

[120] See Werner Durth, Jörn Düwel, and Niels Gutschow, *Ostkreuz-Aufbau. Architektur und Städtebau der DDR* vol. 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 1998).

[121] "Aufbauleid der FDJ" and "Was ist denn an der Weberwiese los," *Die Freie Deutsche Jugend stürmt Berlin. Ein FDJ-Lieder-Abend* (CD). Quoted in *Umbau Alt-Berlins*, 273-74.

by the Free German Youth in the early 1950s. This enthusiastic embrace of socialist realism intersected in obvious, if broad ways with Nazi ideas of monumental, representative architecture, but urban planners genuinely believed that urban space could reshape society. The Soviet Union was a model of progressiveness for the SED. Socialist realism appeared as a genuine way toward improving and changing German society after Nazism.

East Berlin became the most important city where the SED attempted to implement these grand ideas. In 1949, the party set out on its first major construction project with the building of a wide, east-west boulevard named in honor of Stalin on the occasion of his seventieth birthday. Just before the shift to monumental architecture in 1950, the first buildings erected on the street were simple, functional buildings designed in the modernist tradition, but shortly thereafter the SED commissioned Hermann Hanselmann, the GDR's most famous architect, to redesign the street in socialist realist form. This long, massively wide boulevard, framed on both sides with ornamental apartment buildings held together on both ends by a pair of towers, became the showpiece of East Germany's new architectural style. Celebrated in newspapers, placards, and illustrated volumes, the project was billed not only as the first step in building a socialist Berlin, but as proof of the GDR's supremacy over the FRG. Germany's future clearly lay in the hands of the SED, which was working tirelessly to rebuild a better, more progressive society after the catastrophes of war and fascism.[122]

Of course, West Berlin's political leadership could not simply sit idly by as the SED made these claims. It also had to locate an architectural tradition that could compete with socialist realism and demonstrate Germany's transformation into a parliamentary democracy. In 1949, West Berlin's mayor, Ernst Reuter, declared that "Berlin must become a showcase of freedom as well as a showcase of economic prosperity. That is the function of this city behind the Iron Curtain — to show to the residents living in an impoverished and ever more plundered zone that

[122] See, for example, Gerhard Puhlmann, *Die Stalinallee. Nationales Aufbauprogram, 1952* (Berlin: Verlag der Nation, 1953); *Die Stalinallee — die erste sozialistische Strasse der Hauptstadt Deutschlands Berlin* (Berlin: Deutsche Bauakademie, 1952).

life in freedom pays off economically."[123] The Department for Building and Housing faced the daunting task of attempting to convert Reuter's sweeping words into reality. How was one to turn Berlin into a "showcase of freedom"? Was there a "democratic" style of architecture to compete with the east's socialist realism? Rolf Schwedler, director of West Berlin's rebuilding during the 1950s, argued that the general answer lay in building a "modern" metropolis. For "no other city in Germany," he wrote, "is urban development so problematic as it is for impoverished Berlin. Nevertheless, if a modern Berlin (*neuzeitliches Berlin*), although not new, gradually emerges from the ruins of the past, then hopefully future generations will affirm that its builders made the best out of Berlin under the conditions given to them."[124] This basic notion of "modern Berlin" shaped the city's reconstruction throughout the 1950s.[125]

Urban modernism became the west's answer to socialist realism as the most suitable architectural form to reflect Germany's development into a transparent, prosperous, and new democratic society. The CIAM's Charter of Athens, the central, guiding statement on urban modernism, became the *Leitbild* of West German urban reconstruction despite the fact that Germany's famous architects of the *Bauhaus* movement never returned to the FRG (Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, and Martin Wagner). In 1947, 38 well-known architects and planners called for building modern, decentralized, functional cities following the general thrust of the CIAM charter.[126] Two of the most influential publications on urban reconstruction in 1950s West Germany, *The Structural and Decentralized City* and *Organic Urban Architecture*, perpetuated the basic tenets of modernism. These works envisioned a utopianism of bright, sun-

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[123] Quoted in Johann Friedrich Geist and Klaus Klüvers, *Das Berliner Mietshaus 1945-1989* (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1989), 354.

[124] Rolf Schwedler, "Der Wiederaufbau in West-Berlin," in *Die unzerstörbare Stadt. Die raumpolitische Lage und Bedeutung Berlins* (Koln: Carl Heymanns Verlag, 1953), 189.

[125] G. Schneevoigt, "10 Jahre Wiederaufbau in Berlin," *Berliner Bauwirtschaft* no. 1 (1960): 8-11; Dieter Hanauske, *Bauen, bauen, bauen ...! Die Wohnungspolitik in Berlin (West) 1945-1961* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1996), 366-419.

[126] "Ein Aufruf. Grundsätzliche Forderungen," *Baukunst and Werkform* no. 1 (1947): 29; "Die Charta von Athen," *Neue Bauwelt* no. 4 (1949): 573-575.

filled houses, efficient transportation, and adequate green space that would move beyond the crowded city of the past into the harmonious, idyllic, and organic *Stadtlandschaft* (urban landscape) of the future. The modern city included neighborhood units filled with different types of housing that offered a peaceful setting for residents and coexisted harmoniously with the natural surroundings. This approach to urban planning built on housing plans that emerged during the Nazi period.[127] Although Germany's most well-known modernist architects fled Nazi Germany, many stayed behind and were able to continue their work even as Nazi architecture emphasized monumental, representative styles.[128] But these continuities with Nazism seemingly did not tarnish the postwar appeal of urban modernism, although "traditionalists" in the 1950s-60s and later "postmodernists" in the 1970s-80s strongly underscored modernism's parallels with Nazism in their attack against rationality and functionality.[129]

In West Berlin, urban modernism was all the more attractive given the city's competition with East Berlin. The decentralized layout, the functional, unadorned buildings, and the use of the surrounding landscape stood in stark contrast to the ornamental, monumental buildings carried out along *Stalinallee* in East Berlin. This cold war juxtaposition was made deliberately clear in the most celebrated and debated rebuilding project of West Berlin's postwar reconstruction — the rebuilding of the *Hansaviertel* near Berlin's sprawling *Tiergarten* park.[130] Heavily destroyed

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[127] The Mietskaserne was clearly the reference point, e.g.: Hans Josef Zechlin, "Berlin im Aufbau," *Neue Bauwelt*, no. 9 (1946): 6-8; Max Taut, "Betrachtungen zum Aufbau Berlins," Der Bauhelfer no. 2 (1946): 1-9; Hans Martin Kampffmeyer, "Mietskaserne und Neuaufbau," *Die neue Stadt* (January 1948): 17-20. On continuities with the Nazi period, see Werner Dürth, "Verschwiegene Geschichte. Probleme der Kontinuität in der Stadtplanung 1940-1960," *Die alte Stadt* (1987): 28-50; Geist and Klüvers, *Berliner Mietshaus*, 118-122 and 570-77.

[128] Diefendorf, *In the Wake of War*, 172-80.

[129] Notable critiques of urban modernism include Rudolf Schwarz, *Von der Bebauung der Erde* (Heidelberg: L. Schneider, 1949); the discussion in *Mensch und Raum. Darmstädter Gespräche* (Darmstadt: Neue Darmstädter Verlagsanstalt, 1952); W.J. Siedler, *Die gemordete Stadt* (Berlin: Quadriga-Verlag, 1964); Alexander Mitscherlich, *Die Unwirtlichkeit unserer Städte* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1963). An excellent analysis of the use of the "memory of the Nazi past" among traditionalists, modernists, and postmodernists is Rosenfeld, *Munich*.

[130] Hanauske, *Bauen,* 715-45.

during the war, this traditionally middle-class neighborhood of a fairly sizeable Jewish population was completely leveled to make room for a new, modernist apartment complex. The rebuilding of the Hansaviertel hoped to move away from the cramped, stone structures of the district's past and toward a better future of functional buildings set in harmony with the nearby park. In a way not entirely different from the utopianism of socialist realism, the design explicitly aimed at improving society, which the growth of industrialization had allegedly altered for the worse. The "city of tomorrow" promised to transcend the atomization of the masses and restore above all balance to the family. Based on a heterosexual model of society and an inherent assumption about gender difference, the Hansaviertel offered an ideal place for women to raise their children and a relaxing setting for men to return to after a long day at work.[131] It removed the "added burden" placed on female wage earners by suggesting that they return to homemaking and allow children once again to grow up in a "loving and secure" environment (*Nestwärme*).[132] In short, though stylistically modern, the Hansaviertel reflected the "postfascist conservatism" of the 1950s that sought to realign sexual, gender, and familial norms in an attempt to distance the FRG from the Nazi past.[133]

Initiated by West Berlin's government in direct response to the construction of Stalinallee, the Hansaviertel was also unabashedly provocative. "Situated in a natural setting, the planned towers are located around two wide openings of the Tiergarten and this informality will stand in clear expression as an antithesis to dictatorially structured buildings."[134] The Hansaviertel aimed to showcase Germany's transition from dictatorship to democracy and the moral

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[131] For an extended gendered analysis, see Johanna Hartmann, "'Aber wenn die Frau aus ihren Grenzen tritt, ist es für sie noch viel gefährlicher:' Geschlechtermodelle für die Stadt von Morgen," in Annette Maechtel and Kathrin Peters, eds., *Die Stadt von Morgen. Beiträge zu einer archälogie des hansaviertels Berlin* (Cologne: Walther König, 2008), 200-09.

[132] *Die Stadt von Morgen. Gegenwartsprobleme für alle* (Berlin: Verlag Gebr. Mann, 1959), 32.

[133] Herzog, *Sex after Fascism*.

[134] "Erläuterungen zum Wettbewerbsbericht für die Bebauung des Hansaviertels, undated; quoted in Geist and Klüvers, *Berliner Mietshaus*, 369.

superiority of the west in guaranteeing the "freedom" of its people. As the winning architects explained, "the free person does not want to live in a camp or in houses that are lined up one after the other like workers' barracks."[135] In fear perhaps that such political symbolism would not be clear enough, West Berlin's government went even further: it launched in conjunction with the Hansaviertel the International Building Exhibition in Berlin. This project boldly envisioned the reconstruction of the entire city as if it were simply not divided. These grand plans for a unified, modern metropolis never materialized, but West Berlin made its point by staging an international competition that, in effect, ignored the existence of the east. In his opening address for the exhibition, mayor Otto Suhr (SPD) called the plans a "demonstrative documentation of freedom" that "proved the achievement of the western world."[136]

The East German leadership interpreted this move as the sheer provocation that it was, but it proved unable to respond effectively to its challenge. In fact, the SED partially brought this direct attack onto itself because of its erratic shifts in architectural design and its general ineptitude in rebuilding its part of the city, which included the historic, symbolic core of Berlin. The reconstruction of East Berlin languished behind rebuilding in the west as the Federal Republic experienced record economic growth, and the SED failed to deliver on its own incessant promises to build a "socialist center" after grandly starting with Stalinallee. In 1950, Ulbricht ordered the destruction of Berlin's famous war-damaged *Stadtschloß* to make room for a large demonstration square and a central building that was to form the center of East Berlin, but it took a long time to be started and the space left by the dynamited castle remained virtually empty for the next twenty-five years. Conflict within the party about how best to build a "socialist center"

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[135] Gerhard Jobst, "Ordnung im Städtebau," *Bauwelt* no. 3 (1953): 48.

[136] Hanauske, *Bauen*, 356.

and inconsistent ideas about the GDR's prescribed architectural style hindered any immediate consensus from emerging.[137]

In 1955, Ulbricht declared the need for building cheap, practical prefabricated apartment complexes in an apparent move away from the utopianism of socialist realism, but he still remained fixed to the idea of constructing a monumental, representative urban center. After years of different plans and contesting visions, the SED finally announced an international competition for East Berlin, which was hastily put together in response to the West Berlin competition.[138] With the stated aim of turning Berlin into a "showcase of the socialist camp," the design contest was nothing less than a debacle: a mere 124 architects expressed interest in the East Berlin competition as opposed to 392 for the West Berlin one.[139] The ideas that eventually came out of the competition were never realized, and the SED ultimately settled on a futuristic, 1,200-foot television tower (*Fernsehturm*, 1965-69) and a glossy, modernist-style "palace of the republic" (*Palast der Republik*, 1973-76) to comprise the focal point of its "socialist" city that it had been planning since the late 1940s. That it took so long for this symbolic "city center" finally to emerge reinforces the general ineptness of the East German leadership in the area of urban reconstruction.

Indeed, as the SED moved away from monumental architecture and returned to modernism by the late 1950s, the urban landscape of the two Berlins did not appear as altogether *entirely* different. The ideologically driven urban planning of the early 1950s had largely fallen to the wayside as both cities focused more on the practical demands of housing. The simple, unadorned apartment buildings that emerged throughout West Berlin differed from the East German *Plattenbauten* in craftsmanship and size, but not much in architectural style or form. The

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[137] Peter Müller, *Symbolsuche. Die Ost-Berliner Zentrumsplanung zwischen Repräsentation und Agitation* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 2005).

[138] "Wettbewerb Berliner Zentrum. Aufruf der Regierung und des Berliner Magistrats an alle Architekten der DDR," *Neues Deutschland* October 10, 1958, 1.

[139] Müller, *Symbolsuche*, 102 and 171.

reconstruction of both Berlins rested on a shared, broadly modernist impulse that saw little value in the historic. Whereas Warsaw combined the old and the new in a redemptive recasting of the "martyr" city's "rebirth," Berlin's urban planners firmly embraced the "new." Striving to overcome Berlin's torturous past as Hitler's capital, they believed in the promise of modernism to shape Germany's transition to a better, more peaceful "democratic" and "communist" future. As the wrecking ball moved across both parts of the city, Berlin lost large parts of its historic landscape.

VII. Shattered Jewish Spaces in Divided Berlin

The destruction of war-damaged buildings was commonplace, but the demolition of Jewish sites stood out in particular as symbols of the city's traumatic past. Destroyed before the war during *Kristallnacht*, Jewish sites were exceptional places of violence and persecution that inevitably conjured up the shattered relationship between Germans and Jews. Unlike in Warsaw, Jews lived in all parts of Berlin before the war. The district with the highest percent of Jews, Wilmersdorf, did not come even close to Muranów (13 versus 90 percent).[140] Mitte, Schöneberg, and Charlottenburg also had a significant Jewish population, but still the central physical markers of "Jewish Berlin" were its many synagogues and cemeteries rather than one single, "Jewish" district. Although these Jewish sites were heavily damaged after the war, there were many more of them than in the completely destroyed district of Muranów. Jewish leaders strongly contested the appropriation of these Jewish spaces, but municipal authorities in both East and West Berlin rarely listened to their pleas.

This conflict over Jewish space began immediately after the war. Amid the rubble left behind by Nazi Germany awaited a question of unprecedented proportion in the city of Berlin — the handling of vast amounts of property belonging to the city's Jewish community. Once the largest and most vibrant in Germany with a membership of 160,564 in 1933, the newly reconstituted Berlin Jewish community (*Jüdische Gemeinde zu Berlin*, or Berlin *Gemeinde*)

[140] Reinhard Rürup, ed., *Jüdische Geschichte Berlin* (Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1995), 279.

confronted the nearly impossible task of piecing together some semblance of life after the Holocaust. The Jewish community had shrunk dramatically in size to about 7,000 in 1945, but appeared resilient. In May 1945, Rabbi Martin Riesenburger held the first religious service and only several months later six different buildings throughout the city had become houses of Jewish worship.[141] Still, the challenges of rebuilding Jewish life were daunting. With its bank accounts confiscated and its physical possessions sold, burned, destroyed, or bombed, the Berlin *Gemeinde* had lost nearly everything and had to rely on the assistance of city and occupying authorities for the most basic of needs, even requesting in 1946 "a box of small candles" for Chanukah.[142] Securing such aid from authorities in occupied Berlin was complicated to say the least. Unlike any other Jewish community in postwar Germany, the Berlin *Gemeinde* had to deal with four occupying powers rather than just one. Although Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and the United States agreed in principle to cooperate through the Allied Command for Berlin, in practice they conflicted on almost every policy and Jewish property was no exception.

There were, however, some limited signs of hope. As the first occupying power to arrive in the city, the Soviets installed Berlin's initial postwar government made up largely of German Communists that recognized early on the needs of the *Gemeinde*. Just two weeks after the war, it established the Liaison for Jewish Affairs (*Referent für Jüdische Angelegenheiten)* designed to handle Jewish issues and directed by the Christian Democrat Siegmund Weltlinger. An active member of Berlin's Jewish community during the 1930s, Weltlinger survived the Holocaust and set out after the war to restore Jewish life in the city. He strongly advocated providing financial aid to the Jewish community and argued for combating antisemitism. "An enduring presence of Jewish life can only be built," he wrote in 1946, "when the ideology of racism in Germany is

[141] CJA, 5 A 1, Nr. 001, VJGB to Soviet Central Command, December 12, 1945.

[142] LAB, B Rep. 002, Nr. 4860, Letter of 28 November 1946.

overcome and when the Jews are fully compensated for their injustices."[143] As the strongest advocate for the Jews in the city government, Weltlinger worked fervently to assist the Berlin *Gemeinde*.

But his efforts were made all the more difficult by the continued presence of antisemitism in Berlin and throughout occupied Germany. The United States occupying force concluded in numerous memos that the German population continued to harbor negative views toward Jews, and a government report written in the Soviet zone singled out antisemitism as the most pressing concern among Jews.[144] The Jewish communities "request a vigorous campaign," the memo explained, "to fight back an already resurgent antisemitism. Just recently tombstones at the Jewish cemetery in Berlin-*Weißensee* were damaged and knocked over without any prosecution of the perpetrators."[145] In that same year, the Berlin *Gemeinde* reported destruction at another Jewish cemetery in the small town of Oranienburg just outside the city. Notifying the Soviet Military Administration (SMA) about the incident, the *Gemeinde* ended its letter ominously: "We believe that such acts of destruction are the beginning of a new wave of antisemitism."[146]

It was thus behind the backdrop of this broader political world — defined by limited hope and concern — that the *Gemeinde* attempted to negotiate with city and occupying officials for assistance regarding its property. In 1945, the SMA established as the community's headquarters the synagogue on *Oranienburgerstraße*, and the western powers allowed the *Gemeinde* to use synagogues in their sectors, but the vast majority of its religious sites remained in a state of severe

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[143] LAB, E Rep. 200-22, Nr. 100, Siegmund Weltlinger, "Die Jüdische Gemeinde zu Berlin—ihre Lage und ihre Wünsche," 20 March 1946.

[144] See, for example, AJDC-New York, 45/54, no. 303, OMGUS, "The Survival of Anti-Semitism," May 16, 1947, and "Prejudice and Antisemitism," May 22, 1948.

[145] BA-Berlin (SAMPO), DY 30/IV/2.027, Nr. 20, Report written by Merker's assistant, Kurt Netball, 28 February 1947.

[146] CJA, 5 A 1, Nr. 0126, Letter from VJGB to SMA, 4 November 1947.

destruction.[147] Since the *Gemeinde* simply did not have the funds to rebuild and renovate them, it had to rely on the assistance of municipal and occupying forces who were hardly eager to help. The U.S. Office of Military Government flatly denied requests to fund small repairs on the synagogue on Münchenerstraße in Schöneberg, and the Berlin government refused to assist the rebuilding of the synagogue on Pestalozzistraße in Charlottenburg.[148] Whatever assistance the *Gemeinde* was able to secure from officials came only after months of repeated requests. In 1947, Jewish community leaders Julius Meyer and Hans-Erich Fabian requested money to restore three of the city's main Jewish cemeteries.[149] Berlin's mayor, Ferdinand Friedensburg, voiced his support and promised "to do everything in order to bring about a new trust between the Jewish people and the wider populace, and to this end to restitute as much as possible the spiritual, physical, and material injustices of the Jews."[150] But months passed until the city returned to the issue again. In July 1947, the city began discussing covering the costs for repairs on select Jewish sites, but it took another eight months for the money finally to be approved and more months passed before the funds ever reached the Jewish community.[151] After one final push from Weltlinger and the Jewish community, the city council, at the suggestion of the SED, agreed to draft a measure that allotted 100,000 marks for general repairs and the erection of a monument in memory of the Jews at the cemetery in *Weißensee* located in East Berlin.[152] Although consisting only of a small plaque, the memorial later became the central site of remembrance for the *Gemeinde* throughout the history of the GDR.

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[147] CJA, 5 B 1, Nr. 0126, Letter from VJGB to Magistrat with list of destroyed property, July 23, 1946.

[148] CJA, 5 B 1, Nr. 0126, Decision of OMGUS, July 26, 1946; LAB, B Rep. 002, Nr. 4866, Bd. II, VJGB to Weltlinger, May 4, 1948.

[149] LAB, C Rep. 101-04, Nr. 64, Letter from VJGB to Magistrat, 21 January 1947.

[150] LAB, C Rep. 101-04, Nr. 64, Mayor's conversation with the VJGB, 31 January 1947.

[151] LAB, C. Rep. 101-04, Nr. 64, City council decision,16 February 1948.

[152] The newly formed East Berlin *Magistrat* approved the measure three months later. LAB, C Rep. 110, Nr. 1078, Decision of the Magistrat, 11 August 1949.

Such haggling for even the smallest amount of financial support became even more difficult with the political division of Berlin. The Jewish community under the leadership of Heinz Galinski continued pressing its case as a unified organization until January 1953 when the *Gemeinde* split into two separate institutions during the height of the SED's campaign against "cosmopolitanism." A small community of virtually no financial resources formed in East Berlin (*Jüdische Gemeinde von Groß-Berlin*) and depended on the goodwill of the state for its survival. Weltlinger worked for the GDR until 1950 when his position as Liaison for Jewish Affairs was terminated.[153] He subsequently held a post in the West Berlin government as an advisor on Jewish matters throughout the 1950s. The absence of an office for Jewish affairs in East Berlin, combined with the growing hostility of the SED toward Jews, did not bode well for Jewish leaders.

But in early 1953 the situation changed slightly for the better after the Berlin Jewish community officially split into two separate organizations. The East Berlin government agreed to give the now newly formed East Berlin *Gemeinde* 300,000 marks for the rebuilding of its synagogue on Rykestraße, constructed in classical and local styles inspired by the nearby brick churches of the Mark Brandenburg.[154] The city decided to assist the *Gemeinde* not for any architectural or preservationist reasons — because the synagogue represented a monument of the German past worthy of protection — but for largely practical and political concerns. In January 1953, the *Gemeinde* had between 45,000 and 52,000 marks in its account.[155] Well aware of the organization's scarce financial resources, the city justified its decision in strictly practical terms. Since *Rykestraße* was the only functioning synagogue in East Berlin, the city agreed to supply

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[153] Proposal of the Magistrat, 21 March 1950, LAB, C Rep. 100-05, Nr. 848; letter from Ebert to Nuschke, 21 August 1950, LAB, C Rep. 101-04, Nr. 1.

[154] CJA, 5 B 1, Nr. 505, Request of the Jewish community for the funds, 15 June 1952; LAB, C Rep. 100-05, Nr. 872, Decision of the Magistrat, 5 November 1952.

[155]Two letters from the Jewish community report slightly conflicting amounts, one says 45,000 marks, while the other 52,000. CJA, 5 B 1, Nr. 496,VJGvGB to Magistrat, 15 June 1953; BA-Berlin (SAMPO), DY 30/ IV 2/14, Nr. 249,VJGvGB to Berlin Regional Director of the SED, 21 October 1953.

money for a project that was necessary for the community's survival.[156] Throughout the 1950s, it continued this approach, granting the community about 700,000 marks from 1952 to 1958.[157] The community typically used these funds for general repairs on the *Weißensee* cemetery and to maintain its retirement home in *Niederschönhausen*.

Cold war politics largely motivated the SED. The East German leadership knew that having no Jewish community in the capital of the "antifascist" Germany would be paradoxical to say the least. It realized that it could effectively use the community to portray West Germany as "fascist" and "antisemitic." Renamed the "Temple of Peace," the *Rykestraße* synagogue became home to a *Gemeinde* loyal to the party. Its religious leader, Martin Riesenburger, served the interests of the SED well by often publicly chastising West Germany for its "antisemitism" and clarifying the GDR's critical stance toward Israel.[158] Riesenburger was a classic example of the handful of German Jews who became attracted to the egalitarian message of communism despite the anti-Semitic position of the SED. Leading Jewish Marxist politicians, writers, artists, and academics returned to East Germany and reached high positions in the party. Seeing themselves less as Jews and more as communists, they worked to build an antifascist, communist state in Germany and generally had little interest in the *Gemeinde*, but Riesenburger was exceptional in the sense that he did. His support for the SED proved crucial to the community's survival. When it came to allocating money, the party noted his fight against the "antisemitic leadership in West Germany."[159]

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[156]CJA, 5 B 1, Nr. 505, Request of the Jewish community for the funds, 15 June 1952; LAB, C Rep. 100-05, Nr. 872, Decision of the Magistrat, 5 November 1952.

[157] LAB, C Rep. 104, Nr. 63, "Politische und wirtschaftliche Lage der Jüdischen Gemeinde von Groß-Berlin," Magistrat, Office of Church Affairs, 13 March 1959.

[158] Mertens, *Davidstern unter Hammer und Zirkel,* 160-64.

[159] BA-Berlin (SAMPO), DY 30/IV 2/14, Nr. 249, Minutes of the conversation between the VJGvGB with Office of Church Affairs, 12 December 1955; BA-Berlin (SAMPO), DY 30/IV 2/14, Nr. 249, Memo of Berlin Regional Director's Office of the SED, 6 July 1956.

But this pragmatic policy had serious drawbacks. The money was not nearly enough to preserve or even keep standing the many synagogues and Jewish cemeteries scattered throughout East Berlin. In 1956, a SED memo noted that numerous Jewish sites severely damaged during *Kristallnacht* and World War II had yet to be repaired. The list included some of most prominent relics of Berlin's once flourishing Jewish community: the Moorish styled, three-domed synagogue on *Oranienburgerstraße*, the city's oldest Jewish cemetery on *Große Hamburgerstraße*, and Europe's largest Jewish cemetery in *Weißensee*.[160] In a clear signal of the city's neglect of these Jewish sites, a Protestant minister called on the youth of Berlin, including those living in West Berlin, to meet at the Jewish cemetery in Weißensee to perform small repairs on its dilapidated grounds. "The once flourishing Jewish community," he wrote, "that gave our city so many loyal citizens, artists, benefactors, and scientists, was exterminated almost entirely. A cemetery of 113,500 tombstones remains behind and is not being preserved because its members died, were murdered, or have emigrated."[161] Sensing an opportune political moment, the East German leadership welcomed the call as a way to show that the "same bandits who started such crimes against humanity" are back running the government of West Berlin.[162] But this potential political use of Jewish space ultimately yielded no results. Additional reports on Berlin's three Jewish cemeteries indicated a continued state of decay. Two memos on the *Schönhauser Allee* Jewish cemetery noted that not only had "hundreds" of tombstones fallen over, but that piles of trash had been thrown over the wall and collected on the cemetery's grounds.[163] In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the city even wanted to build a sport's complex on the grounds of

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[160] BA-Berlin (SAMPO), DY 30/IV 2/14, Nr. 249, Memo of Berlin Regional Director's Office of the SED, 6 July 1956.

[161] Aufruf Propst Dr. Heinrich Grüber an die Berliner Jugend, October 12, 1956, EZA, 103/27.

[162] BA-Berlin (SAMPO), DY 30/IV 2/14, Nr. 249, FDJ to SED General Secretary, October 16, 1956.

[163] LAB, C Rep. 104, Nr. 382, Report by Director of VP-Inspection, Prenzlauer Berg, 19 February 1975; LAB, C Rep. 104, Nr. 382, Remarks on the Jewish cemetery on Schönhauser Allee,11 March 1975.

Berlin's oldest Jewish cemetery on *Große Hamburger Straße* in Berlin-Mitte, but resistance from Riesenburger precluded this from happening.[164]

The Jewish community's war-damaged synagogues suffered an even severer fate: a number of them were torn down in the 1960s. Built largely in the mid-nineteenth century and clustered mostly in the north central part of Mitte, they included synagogues large and small, simple and ornate: *Heidereutergasse* 4, *Johannisstraße* 16, *Kaiserstraße* 29, *Artilleriestraße* 40, and *Gerlachstraße* 19. As the oldest synagogue in Berlin and the site where thirty-five Jews were hanged in the sixteenth century, the last synagogue—the one on *Gerlachstraße*—elicited an intriguing exchange between the Jewish community and city officials. In the mid-1950s, the Jewish community convinced the city to place the synagogue under historic preservation, but by a decade later it had changed its position.[165] To make room for the rebuilding of East Berlin's city center, city officials decided to tear down the synagogue. Lacking power to halt the decision, the Jewish community agreed with the city's plans, only asking that the plaque attached to the synagogue remembering the death of the thirty-five Jews be saved.[166]

It might seem hardly surprising that East Berlin's city government showed little sensitivity toward the protection of Jewish sites. With images of East Germany's infamous *Plattenbauten* in mind, one might assume that the GDR rarely, if ever, paid attention to preserving historic buildings in the first place. Although historic preservation in the GDR was certainly weaker than in the PPR, it was not as anemic as one might assume.[167] In 1953, East

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[164] LAB, C Rep. 131-12, Nr. 27, Notes on meetings of June 22, 1959 and April 13, 1964.

[165] Request by the Jewish community summarized in a memo by the Institute for Historic Preservation, 17 December 1955, LAB, C Rep. 104, Nr. 290; For the decision to preserve it, see letter from Institute for Historic Preservation to VJGvGB, 31 October 1957, LAB, C Rep. 104, Nr. 290.

[166] LAB, C Rep. 104, Nr. 290, Minutes of the meeting between VJGvGB and Office of Church Affairs, 13 January 1965.

[167] Historians have noted the SED's shift in the 1970s toward German "heritage and tradition," but have largely overlooked the relatively extensive historic preservation program that developed at an early stage and lasted until about the 1960s when cultural policies still remained somewhat open in the GDR. On "heritage and tradition" in the 1970s, see Alan Nothnagle, "From Buchenwald to Bismarck: Historical

Germany established the Institute for Historic Preservation (*Institut für Denkmalpflege*, or IfDP) to preserve "the cultural heritage of the German people."[168] Historic preservation was a part of a larger effort by the party to foster the study of *Heimat* culture in the GDR.[169] In 1955, the SED boldly concluded that "the struggle for the development and victory of a Marxist-Leninist historiography in the German Democratic Republic must also be waged in the area of the history of *Heimat*."[170]

The SED continued a largely traditional understanding of historic preservation that inherently, although not necessarily explicitly, excluded Jewish sites. East Germany's historic preservationists formed part of what one historian has called the "relics of the *Bildungsbürgertum* in the GDR."[171] In the 1950s, East Germany's historic preservationists were largely carried over from earlier years. Historic preservation in Germany had long been a local or regional affair headed by state, city, and provincial (in Prussia) conservators.[172] Just as in the PPR, East German preservationists adhered to a fairly classical understanding of protecting "national" cultural heritage. Aside from a new emphasis on "technical monuments" that represented the "activities of

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Myth-Building in the German Democratic Republic, 1945-1989," *Central European History* 26, no. 1 (1993): 91-113; Helmut Meier and Walter Schmidt, eds., *Erbe und Tradition in der DDR. Die Diskussion der Historiker* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1988).

[168] BA-Berlin (SAMPO), DR 1/8026, Gründung des Instituts für Denkmalpflege. See also "Verordnung zur Erhaltung und Pflege der nationalen Kulturdenkmale (Denkmalschutz) vom 26. Juni 1952," Gesetzblatt Nr. 94, 2 July 1952, *Gesetzblatt der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* (Berlin: Staatsverlag der DDR, 1952).

[169] Brian William Campbell, "Resurrecting the Ruins, Turning to the Past: Historic Preservation in the SBZ/GDR 1945-1990," (Ph.D diss., University of Rochester, 2005).

[170] "Beschluß des ZK der SED über die Verbesserung der Forschung und Lehre in der Geschichtswissenschaft der DDR," excerpts reprinted in Hubert Mohr und Erik Hühns, eds., *Einführung in den Heimatgeschichte* (Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlage der Wissenschaften, 1959), 1 and 361.

[171] Koshar, *Germany's*, 257. Koshar is applying here a concept developed by Christoph Kleßmann, "Relikte des Bildungsbürgertum in der DDR," in *Sozialgeschichte der DDR*, eds., Hartmut Kaelbe, Jürgen Kocka, and Hartmut Zwahr (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1994), 254-270.

[172] For an intriguing discussion of regional and local identities in the GDR, see Jan Palmowski, "Building an East German Nation: Construction of a Socialist *Heimat*, 1945-1961," *Central European History* 37, no. 3 (2004): 365-399.

work," the canon of historic sites in the GDR rarely deviated from the traditional examples of town halls, *Bürger* houses, and churches.[173] As one former conservator succinctly put it, "a cultural revolution did not take place in the GDR."[174] Despite the strong anti-religious policy of the SED, the IfDP continued the long-standing tradition among German historic preservationists that considered churches important monuments of the German nation.[175] From 1950-1955, the state supplied over six million marks for the reconstruction of 336 "culturally important churches."[176]

Moreover, the IfDP typically emphasized the protection of buildings constructed in baroque, gothic, and classical styles. At first glance, this should not have been a problem for German synagogues. By the 1850s, Jews in Germany and western Europe had brought the synagogue out of exclusion both literally and symbolically—moving it into the city center and building it in neo-baroque, neo-gothic, and neo-classical styles. But synagogues still reflected a different tradition; a number of them combined traditional architectural designs with appropriations from Middle Eastern, Islamic, and Moorish styles.[177] Thus when GDR historic preservationists dealt with Jewish sites, they confronted an architectural tradition that did not fit neatly into their canon of historic monuments. Reflecting largely "exotic" styles, synagogues appeared different and remained on the margins of East German culture. Perhaps no other Jewish site in the GDR illustrates this point more clearly than the *Neue Synagoge* in East Berlin. Built in

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[173] Quotations from E. Neuß, "Technische Denkmale," in *Einführung in die Heimatgeschichte*, eds., Hubert Mohr and Erik Hühns (Berlin, 1959), 80-84.

[174] Heinrich Magirius, "Denkmalpflege in der DDR," *Die Denkmalpflege* 59, no. 2 (2001), 127.

[175] Winfried Speitkamp, *Die Verwaltung der Geschichte: Denkmalpflege und Staat in Deutschland, 1871-1933* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996).

[176]BA-Berlin (SAMPO), DO 4, Nr. 883, Memo on the preservation of historically important churches in the GDR, 1955.

[177] Herselle Krinsky, *Synagogues of Europe: Architecture, History, Meaning* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985); Ivan Davidson Kalmar, "Moorish Style: Orientalism, the Jews, and Synagogue Architecture," *Jewish Social Studies* 7, no. 3 (2001): 69-100; L. Scott Lerner, "The Narrating Architecture of Emancipation," *Jewish Social Studies* 6, no. 3 (2000): 1-30.

1866 in lavish, oriental style and arguably one of the gems of Berlin architecture, it featured a red-striped yellow brick façade with a large golden dome that towered above the city's skyline. Although the synagogue survived *Kristallnacht* with only minor damage (a Berlin precinct police chief forced the Nazis out of the building), it sustained severe destruction during the war. In 1958, the SED ordered the destruction of the large, bombed-out sanctuary, but left the damaged façade standing at the request of the East Berlin Jewish community. It remained in damaged form for the next four decades as the rest of the city was slowly rebuilt.

The area around the synagogue that contained most of East Berlin's neglected, slowly dilapidating Jewish sites — the *Scheuenviertel* or *Spandauer Vorstadt* — was located not far from the massive effort to build a "socialist" center in the capital of the antifascist Germany. As the SED planned for East Berlin's city center to symbolize the triumph of communism over the capitalist, bourgeois past, it became clear that Jewish space had as little place in the GDR's "future" as it did in its "past." Socialist realism promised to overcome the social, economic, and ethnic tensions of modern society that were produced by capitalism. As Jews became associated with American imperialism, capitalism, and cosmopolitanism in the GDR, Jewish culture reflected the ills of modernity itself — the very past that the new, antifascist Germany hoped to transcend.[178] In its 1951-52 purge of cosmopolitanism, the SED deliberately excluded the wartime fate of the Jews that the shattered spaces of Jewish life reflected and symbolized. In short, Jewish sites fit neither into the GDR's culturally inscribed boundaries of the "historic" nor into its interpretation of the Nazi past that was consolidated at the height of antifascist antisemitism. The "Jewishness" of these sites mattered indeed in terms of their postwar appropriation.

But despite the GDR's intense attack on "cosmopolitanism" in the early 1950s, its handling of Jewish sites in Berlin reflected a broader unease with Jewish space that was hardly limited to the east. Although the Jewish community's most monumental and historic Jewish sites

[178] Haury, *Antisemitismus von links*.

were found in East Berlin, a large number were also located in the west where nearly all of them disappeared from the urban landscape. Since the *Gemeinde* was not the legal successor to its property, it had little power to influence the handling of Jewish sites except for those few that it was using. The official owner of the property was the JRSO, but it was not designed to deal with preservation issues. It was established to handle the legal issue of confiscated Jewish property. Thus, just as in East Berlin, the physical fate of Jewish sites in the western part of the city hinged largely on municipal officials who determined the extent of damage and required course of action. As West Berlin officials prolonged negotiations with the JRSO over the global reparations settlement, the physical condition of Jewish sites deteriorated with each passing year that the city dragged its feet as the rest of the city was rebuilt. By the mid-1950s, Jewish sites had become among the few buildings along otherwise reconstructed streets that remained virtually in the same damaged condition that they were in since 1938.

District officials saw Jewish sites as a nuisance that they did not want to deal with, often demanding that the JRSO take care of them instead. This led to often bitter conflict between JRSO and city officials. The synagogue on Fasanenstraße in Charlottenburg, one of Berlin's most majestic houses of Jewish worship, provides one intriguing example of such an exchange. Designed by Ehrenfried Hessel in 1910-12, the synagogue featured three large cupolas and vaulted tunnel passageways that drew on early Christian Byzantine architecture. The massive stone structure survived the war intact, but the Nazis heavily destroyed its interior and roof when they set the building on fire in November 1938. After the war, the building suffered from complete neglect as district authorities showed no interest in providing even the most basic forms of protection for the structure, which was often being misused and vandalized. By the early 1950s, the synagogue had become such a run-down and derelict place that the police expressed concern about it posing a threat to public heath and safety. "The site of the ruins," one police report noted, "is being frequented by asocial elements and prostitutes and thus is to be regarded as

a danger to public safety."[179] Another report described in more detail: "[the site of the ruins] is very strongly contaminated. An abundant amount of human feces, litter, and underwear were found there among other things. … Since residents of the surrounding houses are always complaining of rat infestation … not just a quick sanitation of the ruins must take place because they are probably the source of the rats but also the property needs to be fenced in to preclude further defilement."[180]

City officials followed this report's advice, but demanded that the JRSO pay for the cost of constructing the fence. The JRSO was hardly amused by this request. In a lengthy letter, it stated simply that it was not the responsibility of a Jewish organization to repair and provide security for sites that had been deliberately and heinously destroyed by the Nazis. The JRSO pointed to the participation of the local police during *Kristallnacht* and implied that their actions were not far removed from those of the current force. The tone of the JRSO's letter, a sardonic blend of contempt and frustration, probably does not surface as clearly in the English translation, but it permeates the German original:

> The property in question was previously a synagogue, which during *Kristallnacht* was destroyed by unknown persons, but, as you ought to know, this was induced by the Reich government at the time and carried out under the acquiescence of the appropriate security forces. The fact that the building is currently in such a condition that it provides safe heaven for asocial elements and prostitutes is not because of wartime destruction but because of *Kristallnacht*. So, from now on, the Jewish Trust Organization is supposed to cover the costs because the security forces cannot protect this once holy site, which was desecrated in such a terrible manner, from further desecration. Money set aside for charitable purposes is supposed to be spent to remove a danger to public safety that arose because the security forces at the time were not able to prevent this danger from happening. We assume that your letter to us was processed just routinely without taking into consideration the peculiarity of this case.[181]

If the FRG was any break from the Nazi past, the JRSO certainly did not think so: the current defilement of the synagogue was simply a continuation of what had occurred in 1938. Perhaps not surprisingly city officials did not see it this way. Failing completely to understand the JRSO's

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[179] LAB, B Rep. 207, Nr. 143, Report of Charlottenburg police, April 17, 1953.

[180] LAB, B Rep. 207, Nr. 143, Letter from Gesundheitsamt to Baupolizeiamt, January 14, 1954.

[181] LAB, B Rep. 207, Nr. 143, JRSO to Baupolizeiamt, January 5, 1954.

perspective, the district building department noted dryly that "the costs accrued for property owners of damaged or destroyed buildings … are part of the losses of the war."[182] Although the district eventually agreed to cover temporarily the costs and the synagogue was fenced in, it remained intent on getting reimbursed for the paltry 522 marks that it spent for the barrier.[183] In an internal memo, the Charlottenburg district mayor noted that the city's continued demand for funds from the JRSO was "legally in order — politically unjustifiable!"[184] Still, district officials continued to press their case and even turned to the restitution office for funds, which concluded that the JRSO was responsible for reimbursing the money in light of the global agreement that it had just signed with the state of Berlin.[185] It is not clear if the city ever received its money, but the global agreement of 1955 proved to be the key turning point in the postwar fate of the synagogue. With the city now taking ownership of the property, the department for urban planning proposed to tear down the building and use the space for a parking lot given the surrounding area's "pressing parking problems."[186]

But no sooner had this suggestion been made than a radically different proposal surfaced. Aware of both the symbolic importance of the synagogue and its pitiful postwar treatment, West Berlin's top political leadership intervened and halted plans to use the space for a parking lot. It decided instead to build a cultural center for the Jewish community to be placed on the grounds of the synagogue after it was torn down. The idea for a cultural center had been circulating since the immediate postwar years, but crystallized after a series of high-level meetings between West Berlin Jewish community leader Heinz Galinski, mayor Otto Suhr (SPD, 1955-57), mayor Willy

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[182] LAB, B Rep. 207, Nr. 143, Baupolizei to Bezirksbuergermeister, April 15, 1954.

[183] The fence did not, however, change much as the synagogue continued to be defiled and misused. See LAB, B Rep. 207, Nr. 143, Gesundheitsamt to Baupolizei, August 04, 1954; police report, January 2, 1955.

[184] LAB, B Rep. 002, Nr. 9789, Baupolizeiamt to Grundstücksamt, February 10, 1955.

[185] LAB, B Rep. 207, Nr. 143, Entschädigungsamt to Senator für Bau- und Wohnungswesen, February 22, 1956.

[186] LAB, B Rep. 002, Nr. 9789, Stadtplanung to Grundstücksamt, May 15, 1954.

Brandt (SPD, 1957-66), and federal president Theodor Heuss (SPD, 1949-59). In 1956, West Berlin's parliament officially approved of the "erection of a cultural center for the Jewish community." Couched subtly in historical terms, the measure conceived of the project as a form of restitution: "The Jewish community of Berlin had until 1933 numerous cultural institutions, which all fell victim during the Nazi period and especially during *Kristallnacht*. Since the restitution law does not earmark funds for the reconstruction of such cultural institutions, the parliament sees it as Berlin's honorable duty to make available at the very least the necessary funds from its budget for such a cultural establishment."[187]

On November 10, 1957, the ceremonial groundbreaking of the community center took place as hundreds of Berliners, Jewish leaders from across the world, and leading city and federal officials gathered in front of the damaged synagogue.[188] With the Israeli, Berlin, and German flags flying in front of the building, Willy Brandt and Heinz Galinski led the festive occasion that was as much about the past as it was about the future. Held just a day after the anniversary of *Kristallnacht* in front of the still monumental, yet deeply scarred synagogue, the ceremony carried different meanings for Jews and Germans gathered there. For the *Gemeinde*, it was above all about remembering the catastrophe of the Holocaust, while at the same time showcasing its commitment to rebuilding a permanent Jewish community in postwar Germany. The charred ruins of the *Fasanenstraße* synagogue captured in one single image the collective destruction of Germany's Jewish community that strongly shaped the conflicted identity of the postwar community. What did it mean to be a Jew in Germany after the Holocaust? Should one even remain in the "land of the perpetrators"?

Many Jews who miraculously survived living in Hitler's capital preferred to leave and saw life in Germany as a merely a temporary waiting station or "community in liquidation" on

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[187] LAB, B Rep. 002, Nr. 8643, Drucksachen des Abgeordnetenhauses von Berlin, June 30, 1956.

[188] "Fest der Vorsöhnung – Tag des Neubeginns!" *Allgemeine Wochenzeitung der Juden in Deutschland* November 15, 1957, pg. 3.

their way to North America, Latin America, or the Middle East. As Rabbi Leo Baeck starkly put it in 1945, "the history of Jews in Germany has found its end."[189] In 1946, a survey of Jews in Berlin indicated that only 2,611 of 6,303 respondents wanted to remain.[190] But as strong as the desire to leave Germany was, some Jews decided to stay and a number of Jewish leaders, such as Heinz Galinski, Siegmund Weltlinger, Hendryk George van Dam and Karl Marx, became committed to rebuilding Jewish life in postwar Germany. In a way not entirely different from Riesenburger's attraction to the liberating power of communism, they believed in reviving Jewish life as a crucial component of democratization and as proof that Nazism had not made Germany *Judenrein*.[191] "I have always held the view," Galinski observed in the early 1990s after serving for over forty years as West Berlin's community leader, "that the Wannsee Conference cannot be the last word in the life of the Jewish community in Germany."[192] This firm resiliency marked by a clear, attentive awareness of the Holocaust shaped the basic contours of Jewish identity for the generation of Holocaust survivors who decided to stay in Germany after 1945.

The community center erected on top of the former site of the *Fasanenstraße* synagogue clearly captured this dual blend of the past and the future. The Jewish community requested that the winning architects of the design competition integrate into the new building the portal of the old synagogue. The winning design envisioned a simple, functional building that included the surviving portal and three glass convex windows on the roof that mimicked the three towering cupolas of the old synagogue. While the overarching modernist design of the building reflected the new beginning of Jewish life, the architectural incorporation of the old made clear that any future had to come with an earnest reflection on the past. The building was at once a functional

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[189] Begegnung mit Leo Baeck', *Aufbau*, 13 July 1945, 1.

[190] LAB, E Rep. 200-22, Nr. 105.

[191] Geller, *Jews*; Kauder, *Democratization*; Geis, *Übrig*.

[192] Interview by Michael Brenner, *Nach dem Holocaust: Juden in Deutschland, 1945-50* (Munich: Beck, 1995), 148

space for communal activity and a monument to the *Gemeinde's* destruction. "A piece of the façade of the old synagogue will be incorporated into the new building as a way to remember both the great times of Jewish life and culture in Berlin as well as the terrible times lived through during the Hitler regime."[193]

If the erection of the community center reflected the *Gemeinde's* internal negotiation between remembering catastrophe and rebuilding communal life, its meaning for West Berlin's political elite, dominated by the Social Democrats whose support of the project was crucial, was refracted through a qualitatively different set of concerns. In contrast to Adenauer's generally cautious approach toward dealing with German-Jewish relations, the SPD was the most important political supporter of restitution and some of its politicians believed that reflecting upon the catastrophe of the past was essential for Germany's democratic redemption. Remembrance had cathartic effect; it promised to transcend Nazism by producing a less racist and anti-Semitic citizenry through "enlightened knowledge."[194] In West Berlin, the Social Democrats controlled a majority in parliament for nearly thirty years, and the city's two dominant political leaders of the 1950s — Ernst Reuter and Willy Brandt — followed the lead of Theodor Heuss and Kurt Schumacher in reflecting more openly upon Germany's catastrophic past than members of the other mainstream parties did at the time.[195] In 1951, Reuter described *Kristallnacht* as a "day of disgrace for Germany" when "thousands of our fellow citizens and fellow human beings" had their "property destroyed" and their "freedom and life deprived."[196] Reuter's statement remained vague and the word Jew never appeared once in his remarks, but two years later on the tenth

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[193] Text for the groundbreaking reprinted in *Geschichte der Juden in Berlin und des Gebäudes Fasanenstraße 79/80. Festschrift anläßlich der Einweihung des Jüdischen Gemeindehauses* (Berlin: Jüdische Gemeinde zu Berlin, 1959), 126.

[194] Moses, *German Intellectuals*. "Enlightened knowledge" from Michael Geyer, "The Politics of Memory in Contemporary Germany," in Joan Copjec, ed., *Radical Evil* (New York: Verso, 1996): 170.

[195] Herf, *Divided Memory*, chaps. 7 and 8; Geller, *Jews*, chap. 4.

[196] Ernst Reuter, "RIAS-Ansprache zum 13. Jahrestag der 'Reichskristallnacht' am 9. November 1951," in Reuter, *Schriften, Reden*, vol. 4 (Berlin: Propyläen, 1972), 474.

anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising he spoke poignantly about the Holocaust: "the terrible attack on the ghetto was only a small link in a large chain in a terrible campaign of destruction against the Jews in Germany and against the Jews in all of occupied Europe that the National Socialist regime undertook and pursued with a scientific-technical precision to the bitter end."[197]

During his time as mayor, Willy Brandt advanced reconciliation between Germans and Jews in the name of democratic renewal. His powerful genuflection in 1970 as chancellor in front of the Warsaw Ghetto Monument is well known, but already in 1939 while in exile he wrote about the persecution of the Jews and just before the end of the war he argued that restitution was an important component of rebuilding Germany.[198] At the groundbreaking for the new community center, Brandt emphasized the need for not forgetting Germany's past and stressed the important contribution that Jews made to Berlin's history. He noted that "the enormous sacrilege and bloody shame of our recent past" could only be overcome "when we do not forget, but courageously deal with" the Nazi past.[199] These words were probably spoken genuinely by a staunch resister to Nazism, but they no doubt also stemmed from clear political motivations. The erection of the community center reinforced the "progressiveness" of the democratic west. Support for the Jewish community carried as much political meaning in West Germany as it did in the GDR. The return of Jews to Berlin produced a redemptive script of German renewal through the liberal, democratic celebration of "cosmopolitan Berlin:" the community's visible presence signaled West Berlin's cathartic departure from Hitler's capital.[200] In this sense, the

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[197] Reuter, "Ansprache auf der Gedenkfeier des Bezirksamtes Neukölln zum 10. Jahrestag der Vernichtung des Warschauer Ghettos am 19. April 1953," in Reuter, *Schriften*, vol. 4, 714-15.

[198] Willy Brandt, "Die Judenverfolgungen in Deutschland," January 1, 1938 in *Berliner Ausgabe*, vol. 1 (Bonn: Dietz, 2000), 392-97; Brandt, "Zur Nachkriegspolitik der deutschen Sozialisten," *Berliner Ausgabe*, vol. 2 (Bonn: Dietz, 2000), esp. 188-89.

[199] *Berlin. Chronik der Jahre 1957-58. Schriftenreihe zur Berliner Zeitgeschichte*, vol. 8 (Berlin: Heinz Spitzig, 1974), 323-24.

[200] Ibid., 323.

building of the community center was largely a project of West Berlin's political elite that probably did not reflect the main concerns of the wider population. When the construction of the center was first proposed, Weltlinger expressed concern that carrying out such an "extravagant project for the Jewish community" could create "bad blood" among a "general public" that was still recovering from the economic hardships of the war.[201] Newspaper coverage about the center was limited in the local press and the few articles that did appear only obliquely touched on its significance.[202]

Indeed, the building of the community center proved to be the exception in how Jewish space was dealt with in West Berlin during the 1950s. The clearing away of damaged Jewish sites to make room for housing, green space, office buildings, and playgrounds was much more common. Since damaged Jewish property could not be removed until the legal question of ownership was clarified in the mid-1950s, city officials increasingly expressed concern that Jewish sites were becoming eyesores in their otherwise reconstructed neighborhoods. In Kreuzberg for example, the district mayor complained about the ruined state of the synagogue on Fraenkelufer street. Built in 1913-1916 to serve the Jewish community's growing population, this large, neo-classical synagogue remained standing in highly damaged form for over twenty years. After the war, the Jewish community used a small part of the building for religious services, but repairs were badly needed and the district mayor disdained the building's overall appearance so much that he refused to walk foreign visitors by it.[203] In one of its requests for repairs, the *Gemeinde* reminded the mayor that the synagogue had been "completely destroyed" to which

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[201] LAB B Rep. 002, Nr. 8643, Weltlinger, Plan zur Errichtung eines jüdischen Kulturhauses.

[202] "Grundstein für jüdisches Gemeindehaus," *Der Tagesspiegel* November 11, 1957, 10.

[203] LAB, B Rep. 002, Nr. 9792, JGB to Amrehn, July 4, 1958.

either he or one of his assistants scribbled in the margins "during the war or in 1938?"[204] In 1959, the synagogue was torn down.

But the most concentrated erasure of Jewish sites in West Berlin took place in *Tiergarten* where four destroyed synagogues were cleared away to make room for urban renewal: *Lessingstraße* 19/*Flensburgerstraße* 14, *Lützowstraße* 16, *Levetzowstraße* 7-8, and *Siegmundshof* 11. As the largest and most monumental of the four buildings, the synagogue on *Levetzowstraße* provoked the most attention. Located in the *Hansaviertel*, the synagogue was the district's main house of Jewish worship and was built in neo-classical style with four large pillars defining its façade. The building was damaged during both *Kristallnacht* and the war, but its imposing structure remained largely intact after 1945. Ten years later, city officials wrote to the JRSO complaining about the poor condition of the building, pointing out that pieces of it were falling off. The JRSO was hardly pleased with the city's accompanying demand that it cover the costs of repairs. "We would like to point out," it wrote, "that the synagogue was not damaged during the war but was willfully destroyed in November 1938." Citing two paragraphs of the Nazi order that Jewish organizations must pay for the damages of *Kristallnacht*, the JRSO then continued: "Now, in 1955, the building regulation department is going so far as to demand that the owner of a destroyed synagogue pay for clearing away damage caused in 1938. Difficile est saturam non scribere ["it is difficult not to write satire (about that), from the Roman satirist Juvenal]."[205] The building was torn down several months later and the area was turned into a playground.

As part of the old Hansaviertel that was now being transformed into a modernist utopia of green spaces and functional buildings, this synagogue captures well the ambivalent position of historic structures in general and Jewish spaces in particular in West Berlin's postwar reconstruction. In building the "new" Berlin, urban planners were reacting precisely against the compactly built, ornately designed historicist tenement houses that made up the Hansaviertel.

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[204] LAB, B Rep. 002, Nr. 9792, JGB to Amrehn, May 15, 1958.

[205] LAB, B Rep. 202, Nr. 1330, JRSO to Baupolizei Tiergarten, February 22, 1955.

This modernist, universalistic aesthetic built over the particularity of the district's previous form and identity. Urban space was used and consumed to showcase West Berlin's transition into a transparent, democratic, and free city. Historic buildings simply played little role in this recasting of Berlin's identity. As Jeffrey Diefendorf has usefully summarized the general lack of interest in historic preservation at the time, "traditionalist and modernist architects, planners, and citizens agreed that a major historic monument — which usually meant a religious or government building predating the 1830s — should be preserved if undamaged and restored if only moderately damaged."[206]

And yet the question remains: Was not the ambivalent position of Jewish space within West Berlin's urban reconstruction particularly striking? Did it not matter that Jewish sites represented a minority culture that fell outside the culturally and aesthetically inscribed boundaries of the "historic" and reflected a traumatic past? In the late 1940s, Weltlinger pleaded to Berlin's mayor about one of the city's oldest synagogues on *Auguststraße* 10 that had been transformed into a barn. Asking that this "holy site" not be "debased any longer," he continued: "I am convinced that you will show full understanding for the feelings of the Jewish community; one would probably hardly even think of putting a barn in a Protestant or Catholic church."[207] Desperation, shock, and frustration shape the tone of this and the many others letters written about the city's Jewish sites by Jewish leaders. Whether serving as barn or as a hideout for prostitutes, Berlin's empty Jewish spaces, destroyed during *Kristallnacht* with the participation and awareness of the general population, had become abandoned in the truest sense of the word. Urban planners had no use for them as they focused on building the city anew, and historic preservationists remained silent about their destruction.[208] Indeed, what is not said or done is

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[206] Diefendorf, *In the Wake of War*, 69.

[207] LAB C Rep. 101-04, Nr. 28, letter undated, but probably in 1949.

[208] To my knowledge, the only example during the 1950s when historic preservationists expressed limited concern about a Jewish site was during the reconstruction of the medieval synagogue in Worms. Hartwig

often as illuminating as what is: the fact that the former area of the *Fasanenstraße* synagogue became the only attempt to articulate and reflect upon the loss of Berlin's Jewish material culture speaks silently, yet powerfully about just how much the material traces of Jewish life remained suspended from German perceptions of the past in rebuilding West Berlin.

It is thus hardly coincidental that West Berlin's most central and famous war-damaged historic building to be saved after the war was none other than a church. Built in 1895 in neo-romantic style and damaged in November 1943, the Kaiser Wilhelm Church was supposed to be torn down, but then a storm of protest from Berliners in the late 1950s, led by *Der Tagesspiegel's* "Save the Tower" campaign, saved the building from destruction. The church stands awkwardly in an area dominated by shops, tourists, cars, and businesses. The *Kurfürstendamm* district (or *Ku'damm* for short) was West Berlin's closest thing to a city center, and was intended to be a paragon of capitalism with chic stores and a towering glass building complete with a circulating Mercedes sign on its roof. Just off the bustling avenue of shoppers on a fairly quiet street sits the Jewish community center on *Fasanenstraße* and further down the *Ku'damm* another synagogue once stood on *Passauer* street. The synagogue was leveled in 1950-51 to make room for a parking garage for West Berlin's *KaDeWe* department store (*Kaufhaus des Westens*, or Department Store of the West).[209] But the central focus of the *Ku'damm* is the towering church. Situated in the surrounding movement of cars, tourists, and shoppers, it seems at once out of place and naturally situated, its stillness and permanency giving both particularity and weight to a light, modern built environment.

VII. Conclusion

In the ruined landscapes of Berlin and Warsaw, urban planners, historic preservationists, municipal officials, and Jewish leaders encountered the shattered spaces of Jewish life after 1945.

Beseler, Niels Gutschow and Frauke Kretschmer, *Kriegsschicksale Deutscher Architektur*. *Verluste, Schäden, Wiederaufbau* vol. 2 (Neumünster : K. Wachholtz, 1988), 1018-29.

[209] Correspondence on the synagogue in LAB, B Rep. 211, Nr. 1865.

Warsaw dramatized perhaps like few other cities the catastrophic effects of the Nazi campaign against European Jewry. The city had on the eve of the Nazi invasion 370,000 Jews. By the early 1950s, its Jewish community totaled less than two hundred. Although there were certainly more Jews living in the capital than those who were registered with the community, Jewish life in the city had all but ended as the postwar rebuilding of the tiny Polish Jewish community shifted westward to Lower Silesia. Warsaw ceased to be the cultural capital of Polish Jewry in a matter of a few years. Almost all that was left were the charred ruins of Muranów, the piles upon piles of shattered glass and broken concrete. Writing from New York in July 1944, Singer simply could not grasp what this meant: "I know that the Jews have disappeared from Warsaw, but I cannot truly imagine it. … I cannot present Warsaw *judenrein* nor Jewish streets as heaps of rubble."[210] Anyone looking across the ruined landscape of Berlin would have been equally unable to imagine the destruction that the Nazis brought upon its Jewish population. The Berlin of 160,000 Jews in 1933 had by the early 1950s no more than 7,000. Berlin, too, had become a landscape of Jewish ruins. There was, however, a difference. Many more Jewish sites survived the war in Berlin than in Warsaw, and the city had a much larger postwar Jewish community that contested the appropriation of these spaces.

Yet in the end the shattered, broken spaces of Jewish life vanished from the urban landscapes of Warsaw and divided Berlin roughly around the same time in the 1950s or in a few cases in the early 1960s. Jewish leaders ultimately had generally little power over the treatment of most Jewish sites. In the GDR and PPR, this was obviously a direct effect of the postwar confiscation of Jewish property by the communist state. But local Jewish leaders in West Germany did not own most of their property either since the vast majority of it legally went to the JRSO. The context of lost property rights in the west could not have been more different than those in the east, but the effect was essentially the same: the fate of damaged Jewish sites rested mainly in the hands of municipal officials who were more interested in rebuilding their war-

[210] Jagielski, *Jewish Sites*, 7.

damaged cities than protecting them. This disinterest might not be altogether that surprising. Jewish spaces were cleared away in other contexts and in other periods. The late nineteenth century demolition of the Prague ghetto is one of the most well known examples of city officials clearing away the blight of the old in the euphoric embrace of the new.[211] As in this case and others, urban modernism — with its urge to form unified, functional, and organized cities through managing urban space — remains dialectically engaged in the past and future. The "destructive creativity" of modernism involves paving over the particular, historic form of the urban landscape as it makes room for functional urban planning and universal styles.[212]

In certain ways, the destruction of shattered Jewish sites in divided Berlin and Warsaw reflects this destructive creativity in its modernist and socialist realist guises. The rebuilding of Berlin and Warsaw, capital cities destroyed heavily during the war by two starkly different military campaigns, both diverged and intersected in several key ways. Destroyed by the Nazis in the last throes of the war, Warsaw became a metonym for the occupation, suffering, and persecution of Poland between 1939 and 1945. Warsaw was Poland's "martyr city." The PZPR used its reconstruction as a tool to gain political legitimacy and support. In an exceptional blend of the old and new, Warsaw planners combined urban modernism, socialist realism, and historic reconstruction into one grand project that attempted to preserve the cultural remnants of the nation and secure a better, more prosperous socialist future. A similarly monumental planning scheme largely did not shape the reconstruction of divided Berlin. With the exception of the energy put into Stalinallee and the Hansaviertel, Berlin was built up over the years (West Berlin much more quickly) to meet such practical needs as housing and major, representative architectural projects proved to be the exception. With the historic center located in East Berlin,

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[211] Cathleen M. Giustino, *Tearing Down Prague's Jewish Town: Ghetto Clearance and the Legacy of Middle-Class Ethnic Politics* (Boulder, CO: East European Monograph Series, 2003); Snyder, "Jewish Question."

[212] "Destructive creativity" from Rosenfeld, *Munich*, 147. He is taking it mainly from Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1962).

the SED had many grand plans for building a "socialist city," but they never materialized and the concrete slabs of the Berlin Wall remained its most notable mark on the built environment until 1989.

Nevertheless, a shared, teleological sense of time underpinned by a basic, reformist belief in progress shaped the rebuilding of all three cities. Urban planners embarked on a project of urban renewal that embraced a more progressive future by moving beyond the perceived limits of late nineteenth century industrial city. The building of a new metropolis could improve and change society itself. Muranów, Stalinallee, and the Hansaviertel — three housing projects constructed in the 1950s — reflected a common appropriation of urban space for the building of new socialist and democratic societies that stood in contrast to the tenement houses of the past. This reformist impulse that emphasized the "new" over the "old" stemmed largely from the modernist movement of the interwar period, even though in architectural style, form, and size Warsaw and East Berlin departed from the major tenets of urban modernism in the early 1950s at the height of socialist realism. Jewish sites fit uneasily into this vision of urban reconstruction; they remained bracketed from the temporal conceptions of both past and future in Warsaw and divided Berlin.

Indeed, as the cornerstone of a socialist Warsaw, the rebuilding of Muranów promised to eclipse the social, economic, and ethnic tensions of the past. The socialist realist redesign of Lachert's modernist housing project promised to transcend the "heritage of bourgeois cosmopolitanism."[213] Jews had played a prominent role in Poland's economic modernization since the very beginning of Jewish settlement in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Criticisms of "capitalism" became entangled, if not always directly articulated, in the complicated history of Polish-Jewish relations. The rebuilding of Muranów represented in part the clearing away of this past in search of a normative, socialist future free of ethnic strife in the now homogenous Poland. In the early 1950s, the East German attack against "cosmopolitanism"

[213] Bierut, *Six Year Plan*, 329.

directly linked Jews with American "imperialism," "capitalism," and "bourgeois culture." The cultural and aesthetic boundaries of the "historic" excluded Jewish sites not just because of their age value or architectural style, but also because they were unmistakably "Jewish." They were cultural markers of an ethnic minority that the SED had expelled in 1951-52. In West Berlin, the appropriation of Jewish sites was both similar and different to the GDR and PPR. The critique of the late nineteenth century industrial city of the *Mietskaserne* that implicitly shaped the Hansaviertel's effort to restore sexual, familial, and gender mores effaced the historic particularity of the area as a middle-class neighborhood with a sizeable Jewish population, including the destruction of its nearby synagogues.[214] At the same time, the philosemitic demand of the early cold war became expressed in the built environment with the building of the West Berlin community center.[215] The rebuilding of Jewish life carried redemptive meanings as the "*jüdischer Mitbürger*" (Jewish co-citizen) became reintegrated into the urban landscape and cultural life of "cosmopolitan" Berlin. It provided a symbolic, cathartic cleansing of German sins from Nazism as the city welcomed Jews back after their violent expulsion. It signaled Germany's democratic, redemptive renewal. In this new liberal, democratic order, this embrace of cosmopolitanism through the celebrated presence of Jews also provided a stark, intended contrast to the communist east.

Finally, the catastrophe of the Holocaust obviously shaped the postwar appropriation of Jewish sites in all three cities. This postwar history simply cannot be read only in terms of the much longer history of modernity's destructive creativity.[216] In Poland, World War II represented an immense caesura when for the fourth time foreign powers had partitioned, occupied, and destroyed its state. Poles interpreted this wartime experience as a redemptive moment of

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[214] "Post-fascist conservatism" from Herzog, *Sex after Fascism*.

[215] Geller, *Jews*; Kauders, *Democratization*; Frank Stern, *The Whitewashing of the Yellow Badge: Antisemitism and Philosemitism in Postwar Germany* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1992).

[216] This is the central thrust of Snyder, "Jewish Question."

destruction, heroism, and resistance.[217] Research on this topic is still lacking, but what seems clear is that Polish interpretations of the war became defined strictly along ethnic lines to a striking degree.[218] One of the most unequivocal spaces where *exclusively* the persecution and destruction of the Jews unfolded — the Warsaw Ghetto — became a site to celebrate Polish martyrdom and resistance after 1948-49. Part of this Polonization of the Holocaust stemmed from the machinations of the communist party; competing interpretations of the ghetto space existed only very quietly among (mainly) Jewish individuals such as those connected with the Socio-Cultural Association of Jews whose voice the vast majority of Poles simply never had the chance to hear.

The absence of pluralistic democracy — where at least the potential exists for a freer flow of ideas — does indeed matter, but one cannot simply discard this interpretation of the ghetto space fashioned by the PZPR as merely the product of a defunct political system that never represented the wishes of the Polish population in the first place.[219] Indeed, as the historian Marcin Zaremba has shown in his pioneering book, the anti-Jewish and anti-German policies of the PZPR reflected a broad consensus between state and society.[220] Muranów not only epitomized decades of ethnic tension as Jewish emancipation failed and an exclusive idea of the Polish

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[217] Barbara Engelking-Boni, *Holocaust and Memory: The Experience of the Holocaust and its Consequences,* trans. Emma Harris (New York : Leicester University Press, 2001).

[218] Recent work has dealt with the position of the Holocaust in Polish memory, but what remains lacking are studies that analyze what is actually being discussed and remembered in Poland. Huener, *Auschwitz*; Steinlauf, *Bondage*; Zubrzycki, *Crosses*.

[219] This hagiographic vision of an eternally resistant "society" up against the all-powerful "party," which strongly shapes the historiography of the PPR, overlooks the key moments when the party represented the views of society (not to mention those Poles who became attracted to communism). Prominent examples that imply a natural social resistance against communism include Paczkowski, *The Spring Will Be Ours*, and Friszke, *Polska*. On Polish and Jewish intellectuals who became attracted to communism, see Shore, *Caviar*; Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, trans. Jane Zielonko (New York: Vintage, 1990); Maria Hirszowicz, *Pułapki zaangażowania. Intelektualiści w służbie komunizmu* (Warsaw: Scholar, 2001). In addition, more nuanced works about the relationship between state and society have emerged: Zaremba, *Komunizm*; Dariusz Jarosz, *Polacy a stalinizm, 1948-1956* (Warsaw: PAN, 2000). For a recent historiographical discussion, see Padraic Kenney, "After the Blank Spots Are Filled: Recent Perspectives on Modern Poland," *Journal of Modern History* 79 (March 2007), esp. 151-161.

[220] Zaremba, *Komunizm*.

"nation" became dominant by 1900, but it also reflected the sheer breakdown of "Polishness" in the face of human suffering between 1939 and 1945.[221] Nazi and Soviet imperial designs never allowed a Polish Quisling to emerge, but the one area that Poles usually did not resist the Nazis was the persecution of the Jews.[222] Why then, after the war, would one want to insert this traumatic past into a sacred time of catastrophe, sacrifice, heroism, and communal strength? Why would one want to reflect upon the fragility to empathize with human suffering? Why would one want to recall the very collapse of one's identity as a nation — the "Christ among the Nations," the "For our Freedom and Yours," the Romantic mythos of the brotherhood of victims — that fractured just before reaching the ghetto walls?

Jewish sites reflected an equally traumatic past for German society, if refracted even more sharply given the country's unequivocal responsibility for the Holocaust. Research on German attempts to deal with the past is highly developed and the careful, nuanced studies that recently have come out have shown that Germans did not so much suppress the Nazi past as they interpreted it to conform to their perceived suffering and victimization.[223] In the Federal Republic, a victimization narrative took hold that emphasized the bombing of German cities, the expulsion of the Germans from eastern Europe, the rape of women by Soviet soldiers, and the harshness of Allied denazification policies, while in the GDR the communist party fashioned an anti-fascist

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[221] On the failure of emancipation and Polish ethnic nationalism, see Porter, *Nationalism* and Theodore R. Weeks, *From Assimilation to Anti-Semitism: The "Jewish Question" in Poland, 1850-1914* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006). Recent, probing essays on the Nazi period include, Andrzej Żbikowski, "Antysemityzm, szmalcownictwo, współpraca z Niemcami a stosunki polsko-żydowskie pod okupacją niemiecką;" Marcin Urynowicz, "Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w Warszawie w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej," both in Żbikowski, *Polacy*, 429-690.

[222] Gross, "A Tangled Web;" Klaus-Peter Friedrich, "Collaboration in a 'Land without a Quisling:' Patterns of Cooperation with the Nazi German Occupation Regime in Poland during World War II;" John Connelly, "Why the Poles Collaborated So Little — And Why That Is No Reason for Nationalist Hubris," both in *Slavic Review* 64 (winter 2005): 711-746 and 771-781.

[223] Harold Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau: The Uses and Abuses of a Concentration Camp, 1933-2001* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Robert G. Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Wulf Kansteiner, *In Pursuit of German Memory: History, Television, and Politics after Auschwitz* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006).

account of communist resistance and victimization. Of course, West Germany's political elite proved much more willing to accept responsibility for the Holocaust than the SED ever did not least because they wanted to portray West Germany as the opposite of the antifascist Germany, which had refused to implement a restitution program. Competition between the two Germanys played a crucial role in shaping the handling of the Nazi past on the level of high politics, but when one looks below the sharp differences begin to fade.[224] The overall appropriation of Jewish space did not differ that starkly in the two Berlins. Germans became drawn into the Nazi attack against the social, cultural, economic, and physical existence of Jews, and attempting to interpret this complicity afterwards was hardly easy. They faced after the war their own active involvement and support for a criminal regime. Other interpretations of the past that suggested German victimization, reflected on other parts of Third Reich than its criminality, emphasized German resistance against the Nazis, or elided the generally widespread support for the regime proved much more common and enduring. All the more so once the material markers of a traumatic past were gone from the built environment.

[224] Annette Weinke, *Die Verfolgung von NS-Tätern im geteilten Deutschland. Vergangenheitsbewältigungen 1949- 1969 oder: Eine deutsch-deutsche Beziehungsgeschichte im Kalten Krieg* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2002).

CHAPTER THREE

JEWISH SITES AND THE AESTHETICS OF THE HISTORIC

Poles and Germans confronted after 1945 their war-damaged historic buildings and old towns in strikingly different ways that one initially might assume would lead to different appropriations of Jewish sites on the local level. In 2007, the German weekly *Die Zeit* published an essay on the destruction of Germany's "architectural monuments." In a country on its way toward "demolition," it noted with alarm that in just the last few years one hundred thousand historic buildings had been torn down and the "destruction continues." "Since 1945, many more architectural monuments have fallen than in the aerial war. Just after the first wave of destruction from the air ended, the second began in the Federal Republic. It was called reconstruction," it concluded with ironic play on the word "*Wiederaufbau*."[1] This glance at the postwar period only includes West Germany, but the other Germany also certainly added to the destruction. Although historic preservation was not nearly as anemic in the GDR as one might assume, the SED built many more *Plattenbauten* than it restored *Baudenkmäler*.[2] But not far to the east almost the exact opposite was the case in communist Poland. Historic reconstruction became the dominant architectural style of the postwar period.[3] To be sure, modernist and socialist realist buildings replaced numerous historic sites, and in the mid-1950s historic preservationists grew alarmed that

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[1] Hanno Rauterberg, "Ein Land auf Abriss," *Die Zeit* January 11, 2007.

[2] Fortunately, two nuanced studies of historic preservation in East Germany have appeared: Sigrid Brandt, *Geschichte der Denkmalpflege in der SBZ/DDR. Dargestellt an Beispielen aus dem sächsischen Raum, 1945-1961* (Berlin: Lukas Verlag, 2003); Brian William Campbell, "Resurrected from the Ruins, Turning to the Past: Historic Preservation in the SBZ/GDR, 1945-1990," (Ph.D., diss., University of Rochester, 2005).

[3] Tadeusz Kowalski, *Rekonstrukcja zabytków architektury. Teoria a praktyka* (Warsaw: PKZ, 1985).

the state was not doing even more to protect Poland's built environment, but still the old towns of Warsaw, Wrocław, Gdańsk, Poznań, Lublin, and others were carefully and extensively rebuilt on a scale unmatched in Europe.[4] Indeed, the "existent problem" of historic reconstruction led one Polish architectural critic to conclude that Poland had a peculiar "obsession" with protecting its past.[5]

Germans and Poles approached historic buildings in different ways mainly for political and historical reasons. The two Germanys had strong historic preservation movements to draw on after the war, but building modernist and socialist cities was generally more attractive after 1945. Both states used reconstruction to legitimize their vying claims to being the better Germany. Urban modernism and socialist realism sought to provide new, normative beginnings after Nazism, promising a clean break from the destructiveness of the recent past and a prosperous, progressive tomorrow. Important exceptions in West Germany such as Freiburg, Munich, and Rothenburg embraced historic reconstruction, but in the main the future underpinned the temporal framing of divided Germany's urban planning.[6] In Poland, the cataclysm of the Nazi occupation strongly shaped its concept of reconstruction (*odbudowa*). Although the PZPR also promised a better, more prosperous future through socialism, it strongly emphasized the preservation of the past. The restoration of the country's historically important buildings — its *zabytki* — became both an actual and symbolic act of preserving the cultural expressions of the Polish nation that the Nazis had destroyed (the Soviets, too, although that was rarely mentioned). This desire to reconstruct Poland's savagely destroyed cities was not necessarily born out of a restorationist or nostalgic impulse. It came from a deeply felt nationalistic need to save from destruction Poland's

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[4] "W sprawie ochrony zabytków," *Ochrona Zabytków* no. 1 (1957): 6-17; Andrzej Gruszecki, "Ratujemy Zabytki," *Ochrona Zabytków* no. 1 (1957): 1-5.

[5] Józef E. Dutkiewicz, "Sentymentalizm, Autentyzm, Automatyzm," *Ochrona Zabytków* no. 1-2 (1961): 5.

[6] Rosenfeld, *Munich*; Joshua Hagen, *Preservation, Tourism and Nationalism: The Jewel of the German Past* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006). For the broader context of historic preservation in West German reconstruction, see Diefendorf, *Wake*, and Burkhard Körner, *Zwischen Bewahren und Gestalten. Denkmalpflege nach 1945* (Imhof: Petersberg, 2000).

architectural heritage. In this sense, the concepts of *odbudowa* and *Wiederaufbau* could not have diverged more sharply. If the year 1945 in Germany signaled a mythic hope for a new beginning from the destruction its war of aggression had caused, in Poland it meant restoring and strengthening the cultural basis of Polishness that had survived the war and occupation.

This chapter seeks to explore what impact, if any, these basic differences had on the interpretation and handling of Jewish spaces on the local level. Whereas the previous chapter on Berlin and Warsaw explored the position of Jewish space within urban modernism and socialist realism, this one looks more closely at whether or not Jewish sites fell within the culturally inscribed boundaries of the historic in societies with different interests in preservation. This issue has received surprisingly little attention from historians despite the rich literature that exists on historic preservation in Poland and Germany. Most historians have written institutional histories that rarely probe the cultural boundaries of the historic.[7] Historic preservation is less about protecting a building with definable, abstract qualities such as age value and architectural style. It is imbedded in socio-cultural interpretations and assumptions about the past; historic buildings are cultural goods with meanings that are negotiated, appropriated, and contested. Some recent studies have started to move in this direction. Rudy Koshar, Susan Crane, and Joshua Hagen have analyzed German identity and memory through historic preservation, while Gregor Thum, Zbigniew Mazur, and Marek Zybura have examined the preservation of "German" historic buildings in western and northern Poland.[8] But few scholars have analyzed systematically the

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[7] Frycz, *Restauracja*; Rymaszewski, *Klucze*; Andrzej Tomaszewski, *Ochrona i konserwacja dóbr kultury w Polsce, 1944-1989* (Warsaw: Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki, 1996); Klaus von Beyme, *Der Wiederaufbau. Architektur und Städtebaupolitik in beiden deutschen Staaten* (Munich: Piper, 1987); Diefendorf, *Wake*; Winfried Speitkamp, *Die Verwaltung der Geschichte. Denkmalpflege und Staat in Deutschland, 1871-1933* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996).

[8] Koshar, *Transient*; Hagen, *Preservation*; Susan Crane, *Collecting and Historical Consciousness in Early Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000); Thum, *Die fremde Stadt*; Zbigniew Mazur, *Wokół niemieckiego dziedzictwa kulturowego na Ziemiach Zachodnich i Północnych. Praca zbiorowa* (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1997); Mazur, *O adaptacji niemieckiego dziedzictwa kulturowego na Ziemiach Zachodnich i Północnych* (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 2001); Marek Zybura, *Pomniki niemieckiej przeszłości. Dziedzictwo kultury niemieckiej na Ziemiach Zachodnich i Północnych Polski* (Warsaw: Fundacja CSM, 1999).

position of minority cultures in historic preservation and even fewer have examined historic preservation from a transnational perspective, which is especially odd given its cross national history.

Since its inception as a profession in the nineteenth century, historic preservation has long been shaped by transnational discussions about the theory and practice of protecting historic buildings. Debate often centered on the central problem of whether a building should be conserved in its current form or restored to its original architectural style. By the late nineteenth century, conservation emerged as the preferred approach of most preservationists in Europe, but the destructiveness of the two world wars soon shattered this consensus. After 1945, most preservationists rejected the idea of conserving a building in its war-damaged state and advocated restoring it to its prewar condition or to an earlier, seemingly more "authentic" period. This basic approach underpinned the reconstruction of old towns throughout Europe, although critics of this "creative historic preservation" opposed what they believed was an imaginary and fictitious restaging of the past. These transnational discussions and especially the actual practice of historic preservation were not linked as exclusively to the nation as Koshar and Hagen have argued. Although protecting historic buildings has been entangled with broader efforts to preserve "national" cultures, it has also underpinned broader regional identities and has been supported by local governments to attract national, regional, and global tourism.

But above all historic preservation often unfolds on the local level in a particular urban landscape where the nation remains an important reference point but not always the central one. Indeed, discussions about historic buildings in the three cities that form the focus of this chapter – – Essen, Wrocław, and Potsdam — were connected to each city's new, postwar identity. All three cities hoped to move away from their most recent, Prussian past and develop new local identities that were connected to the nation to various degrees of intensity. Essen's identity had long been tied to the Krupp firm and to Germany's industrial barons who became complicit in Hitler's rise to power and war of aggression. As the allies dismantled the Krupp factory and Essen shed its

Nazi slogan as the "Armorer of the Reich," the city embraced the consumerism of West Germany's economic miracle and styled itself as the "shopping city." Wrocław, a city with a shifting history under Piast, Bohemian, Austrian, Prussian, and German rule, became part of Poland in 1945 with the 200-mile westward shift of the country's border. Portrayed after the war as having deep "Polish" roots from the medieval period onwards, Wrocław expunged its most recent status as Breslau and became a "Polish" city complete with the expulsions of Germans and the forced resettlement of Poles. Potsdam, a Prussian garrison city, had long military traditions that Hitler celebrated in his infamous "Day of Potsdam" in 1933. The SED hoped to overcome these legacies by building a socialist, antifascist Potsdam among war-damaged Prussian ruins.

This chapter analyzes the position of historic preservation in the reshaping of these three local, urban identities. Heavily destroyed during the war, each city confronted the shared problem of what to do with its bombed-out historic core. In Essen and Potsdam, many historic buildings were torn down, while in Wrocław preservationists carried out an extensive, if selective program of historic reconstruction. In all three cities, municipal officials and historic preservationists also faced the material traces of Jewish life scattered among their scarred urban landscapes. What did they do with these physical traces? How did the handing of Jewish sites compare with the treatment of other historic buildings? Did Jewish sites ever fit into the new postwar identities of Essen, Potsdam, and Wrocław? In what ways, if any, did the different position of historic preservation in the reconstruction of these cities lead to different approaches toward Jewish spaces?

I. "Essen, The Shopping City"

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Essen was a small, agrarian town of 3,500 residents, but a mere one hundred years later it had become an industrial city of coal and steel, a *Großstadt* of 118,000 people that contributed in no small part to Imperial Germany's rapid economic expansion. Essen benefited from the coalmines of the Ruhr area, the technological advances of the steam engine, and the entrepreneurial ingenuity of its most famous family — the

Krupps. In 1811, Friedrich Krupp established a steel foundry that eventually became one of the economic powerhouses of the German economy and employed 16,000 people from the city of Essen in 1890 (20.2 percent of the population). The Krupp steel factory, which produced railroad products and armaments, single-handedly transformed Essen into a major city.[9] Essen's rising prominence became expressed in an array of splendid buildings constructed in the historist style favored by the burgeoning middle class at the time. A neo-gothic town hall towered over Essen's center by 1887; several years later the industrialist Friedrich Grillo built a neo-classical theater, and in 1913 the architect Edmund Körner unveiled his monumental, domed synagogue located in the heart of the old town on *Steelerstraße* just 200 meters away from the market square and the historic *Burgplatz*.

Essen had arrived indeed and so too had its Jewish population. In the 1870s, only 832 Jews lived in Essen, but by 1912 the population had expanded to 2,839. Benefiting from the city's economic boom, the Jewish population became integrated into Essen's middle class and sought to express its new stature through the building of a new synagogue. The Jewish community and municipal officials selected a design from the local architect Edmund Körner who used simplified elements of Romanesque and Byzantine to create a compact structure of stone. While an imposing, monumental structure, the building fit into its surroundings rather than dominating them. The extension of a courtyard enclosed by turrets and a metal gate helped to achieve this symmetry by gently bringing the synagogue into the street in front of it. The choice of this architectural style reflected the changing self-definition of Jews in Essen by the turn of the century. In 1870, the Jewish community built a much different synagogue for its then much smaller population. Following the general trend of synagogue architecture at the time, it was built

[9] Lothar Gall, *Krupp. Der Aufstieg eines Industrieimperiums* (Berlin: Siedler, 2000); Gall, ed., *Krupp im 20. Jahrhundert. Die Geschichte des Unternehmens vom ersten Weltkrieg bis zur Gründung der Stiftung* (Berlin: Siedler, 2002).

in Moorish style with two onion domes towering in the sky complete with Stars of David.[10] Forty years later, the Jewish community expressed its "Jewishness" more subtly by choosing a building that was at once distinct and native to the surrounding landscape.[11] The Essen synagogue was as much "Jewish" as it was "German." On the day of the unveiling, the Jewish community member Max Abel noted that the synagogue rested on the "ground" of both Essen and "our German fatherland." The building expressed the "faithful quest" of Jews to achieve what the emancipation process had allowed — "being citizens of our state."[12] He spoke as a bust of Kaiser Wilhelm II dominated the hall of the synagogue and as Essen's mayor gave a toast to the Hohenzollerns. The Essen synagogue captured, as historian Paul Mendes-Flohr has so aptly put it, the "bifurcated soul of the German Jew."[13]

This dual combination of Germanness and Jewishness received enthusiastic praise in the local and national press. "I am convinced," exclaimed one local in the *Essener Volkszeitung*, "that the entirety of Essen is proud of this noble building, just as Essen's citizenry is with the same right proud of the unprecedented development of our hometown, which now has experienced through this wonderful building such a splendid enhancement that so magnificently fits into the image of our city."[14] The sheer monumentality of the building captured the interest of most observers, while others emphasized the synagogue's innovative, modern style.[15] "The building's forms are no longer oriental and are also not copies of some older style, but are the 'beginning of

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[10] Elfi Pracht-Jörns, *Jüdisches Kulturerbe in Nordrhein-Westfalen* (Cologne: J.P. Bachem Verlag, 2000), 109, 124.

[11] Salomon Samuel, "Von der Ausstellung jüdischer Bauten und Kultusgegenstände zu Düsseldorf," *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*, July 31, 1908, 370.

[12] *Essener Volkszeitung*, September 27, 1913.

[13] Paul Mendes-Flohr, *German Jews: A Dual Identity* (New Have: Yale University Press, 1999), 1.

[14] *Essener Volkszeitung*, September 27, 1913.

[15] Timo Saalmann, "Die Einweihung der Synagoge am Steeler Tor 1913. Bürgerliche Festkultur und Lebensführung der Essener Juden," *Essener Beiträge. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Stadt und Stift Essen* (2006): 486-491.

the twentieth-century.'"[16] The synagogue received warm praise precisely because its building's "orientalism" was modestly articulated, its Jewishness ever present, yet subtly expressed. One of the leading architectural critics in the Rhineland praised Körner's design for not being too "Jewish."[17] "The purely stylistic appropriation of oriental forms," he wrote, "in most locations [is] a foreign object, which annoyingly stands out and has no connection to the surrounding landscape. The preservation of the native, local landscape is also the main precondition for a synagogue, for a 'mosaic Mosque' will always make itself out to be an intrusive trouble maker under German skies, in the environs of north German brick buildings or south German half-timbered structures and stucco buildings."[18] In *fin-de-siècle* Germany, Körner's "*Monumentalbau*" had become an integrated part of Essen's urban landscape.

The building's monumentality was also the main reason why it survived into the postwar period. Just after midnight on November 9, 1938, local SA, SS, and other Nazi activists broke into the synagogue and then rolled in barrels of gasoline. "I saw black clouds of smoke rising out from the synagogue," a local firefighter reported, "I determined that two industrial barrels holding about 200 liters of gasoline were lying on the street before the synagogue."[19] The next morning Esseners gathered in front of the synagogue with smoke still billowing out from its windows. Although the Nazis tried to force the Jewish community to pay for its demolition and then later contemplated funding it themselves, the cost and the risk to nearby houses was simply too high for it ever to be carried out.[20]

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[16] "Edmund Körners Synagoge in Essen (Ruhr)," *Die Kirche* no. 12 (1915), 109.

[17] Richard Klapheck, *Die neue Synagoge in Essen a. d. Ruhr, erbaut von Professor Edmund Körner* (Berlin: Ernst Wasmuth, 1914), 10.

[18] Ibid., 5-6.

[19] Quoted in Michael Zimmermann, "Die 'Kristallnacht' 1938 in Essen," in *Entrechtung und Selbsthilfe. Zur Geschichte der Juden in Essen under dem Nationalsozialismus* (Essen: Klartext, 1994), 69.

[20] Ibid., 78-80.

The synagogue also survived the massive destruction of Essen's old town. Essen endured thirteen aerial attacks over two years from 1943 to 1945 because the Krupp firm was a central producer of armaments.[21] The Nazis had after all dubbed Essen the "Armorer of the Reich." In 1945, Essen's old town lay in a pile of ruins. The city's oldest churches, its town hall, its city theater, and nearly 90 percent of its stores were completely destroyed. Pictures taken just after the war show a field of ruins with virtually no central point of orientation with one exception — the synagogue on *Steelerstraße*. The Nazis had blown out its windows, damaged its cupola, and burned its interior, but the building remained standing. As one local resident recalled returning to Essen just after the war:

> When in the summer of 1945 I was released from a short stint as a prisoner of war, I had trouble getting my bearings in my hometown. The synagogue was a point of orientation. In the middle of a vast field of rubble, the unique domed building towered above, damaged, but spared by the war. It reminded me of the day when before our eyes the smoke billowed out. It was in the year before the start of the war. On the way from the "castle," as we called our school, to swimming lessons in the pool on *Steelerstraße* we saw what could not be ignored on the morning of November 10, 1938.[22]

The synagogue had become indeed a central point of reference in Essen, but one that conjured up memories of violence and persecution. It was conspicuous partially because it survived the war and partially because it symbolized the fractured history of German-Jewish relations. It was precisely this symbolism that local residents and urban planners struggled to make sense of throughout the 1950s as they discussed how to rebuild Essen and what place, if any, historic structures such as the synagogue should have in the reconstruction effort. How would a building, once celebrated for its grandness but now sitting empty and damaged in a city of almost no Jews, fit into the postwar urge for "reconstruction" and "normalcy"?

The rebuilding of Essen became closely tied to the restructuring of its economy after 1945. The Krupp firm had turned Essen into a major city, but it no longer could serve as the

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[21] On the bombing of Essen, see Klaus Wisotzky, "Die Jahre der Gewalt — Essen 1914 bis 1945," in Ulrich Borsdorf, ed., *Essen. Geschichte einer Stadt* (Bottrop/Essen: Pomp, 2002), 461-65.

[22] Wilhelm Godde, "Wahrnehmung eines Monuments im Herzen der Stadt," in *Ein Haus, das bleibt. Aus Anlass 20 Jahre Alte Synagoge Essen* (Essen: Klartext, 2000), 33.

linchpin of its economic vitality and urban identity. Essen's status as the "Armorer of the Reich" made it a target like few other cities of allied measures to dismantle the German wartime economy. The British destroyed seventy-two buildings of the Krupp plant and transformed an additional one hundred into shops that could produce materials for strictly peaceful purposes.[23] Since Krupp had been the largest employer in Essen, many people were now left without a job and city leaders were forced to diversify the economy. Essen still relied heavily on mining as an important source of employment, but also attracted new industries in areas such as electronics, automobile, resale, service, banking, and insurance. In the 1950s, retail in particular became one of its main sectors as hundreds of shops filled the streets of the old town. This economic strategy was not entirely new. In the 1920s, several large department stores had been built in the old town and a number of smaller shops started to fill its streets. As the world economic crisis reached its height in 1929-30, Essen increasingly became known not just as the "*Kruppstadt*" but also as the *Einkaufsstadt* (the shopping city).[24] This identity became solidified after 1945 as Essen became one of West Germany's central places to shop during the "economic miracle." It was also one that the city warmly embraced. In 1950, the city began marketing itself as "*Essen, die Einkaufsstadt*" with a large placard that greeted arriving visitors from the train station that remains to this day.

This diversification of Essen's economy shaped the rebuilding of its heavily damaged old town, which urban planners decided to turn into a shopping district. In 1949, Essen's urban planning office put forward its general plan for the reconstruction of the city.[25] It drew heavily on the basic ideas of city building manager Strum Kegel who set out to build a modern city of wide

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[23] Marion Heistermann, *Demontage und Wiederaufbau. Industriepolitische Entwicklungen in der "Kruppstadt." Essen nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg, 1945-1956* (Essen: Klartext, 2004).

[24] Wisotzky, "Jahre der Gewalt," in Borsdorf, ed., *Essen*, 405-408.

[25] ESA, Neuordnungsplan von 1949.

streets, spacious city squares, and pedestrian streets for shopping.[26] The plan divided the city center into two parts. North of the train station was to become the shopping district, while the south would serve as the central business district for Essen's emerging service, banking, and insurance industries. A traffic ring was to encircle the old town allowing easy access for shoppers and two large squares were to be built in order to make the city center less congested and compact. This plan, which was implemented throughout the 1950s, preserved the medieval, kidney-shaped lay out of the old town, but left hardly any room for the reconstruction of Essen's damaged historic buildings.[27] Of the three cities discussed here, Essen was by far the most radical in embracing the modernist urge for the new. The drive to free up space for wide squares, greenery, parking, and wide traffic streets altered the urban landscape in notable ways. In the 1950s, urban planners constructed a 14,000-meter square that became the new central organizing point of the old town, "the commercial center, the heart of the shopping city."[28] Called *Gildenplatz* until it was changed to *Kennedyplatz* in 1963, it reflected the planning department's impulse for a less congested, tightly packed city and became defined by an array of modernist buildings (Amerika-Haus/Kennedy-Haus, 1951, Allbauhaus, 1954-56, Hochhaus am Gildenplatz, 1955, and Heroldhaus, 1954-55).[29]

The construction of *Kennedyplatz* stood in sharp juxtaposition to the historic *Burgplatz* that had long been Essen's main square. Located about 200 meters away from *Kennedyplatz*, this square was intended to "remain" a "tranquil island" anchored by the meticulous reconstruction of

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[26] Sturm Kegel, "Das Zukunftsbild des Stadtkernes Essen: Erläuterung zum Entwurfsplan vom 1. Februar 1941," located in Stadtbibliothek Essen.

[27] J.W. Hollatz, "Der Wiederaufbau Essens und seine wirtschaftliche und kulturelle Zielsetzung," *Bau und die Bauindustrie* no. 9 (1954): 208-215.

[28] *Essen. Aus Trümmern und Schutt wächst eine neue Stadt. 10 Jahre Planung und Aufbau der Metropole an der Ruhr* (Essen: Die Stadt Essen, 1956), 29.

[29] Andreas Benedict, "Das Amerika-Haus in Essen: Architektur der 50er Jahre zwischen Tradition und Moderne," *Essener Beiträge* (1993): 102-209.

Essen's most important historic monument — the *Münsterkirche*.[30] This church, dating back to the ninth century, had long been the focal point of Essen's old town, tying the nineteenth-century industrial city to its medieval past.[31] A local, grassroots effort to reconstruct the heavily damaged church began immediately after the war. Lasting from 1947 to 1958, the reconstruction involved rebuilding most of the structure completely.[32] The *Münsterkirche* was one of the few historical buildings of Essen's old town to be reconstructed after the war.[33] Its presence, however, fit awkwardly into the rest of Essen's postwar reconstruction. In the early 1950s, city officials finalized plans for the old town by proposing to build another sprawling square and a new town hall. Two large squares, *Kennedyplatz* and *Porscheplatz*, were linked together by two north-south, east-west retail streets. By the mid-1950s, most of these plans had been carried out except for the town hall, and city leaders proudly looked back upon the speed of Essen's reconstruction. In 1956, they published, *Essen: From Ruins and Ashes a New City Emerges*, that triumphantly declared the reconstruction a success. In pictures of the destroyed urban landscape, the book noted that "never before have communities in their history been assigned tasks of such greatness and difficulty as after the collapse of 1945."[34] The rest of the volume concluded that the city had accomplished these grand tasks masterfully: "All in all it follows that eleven years after the enormous caesura of the war Essen is on the best path to pursuing a modern urban planning that fundamentally turns away from the flaws of the nineteenth century city."[35]

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[30] *Essen. Trümmern*, 36.

[31] Erwin Stein, *Monographien deutscher Städte. Essen* (Berlin: Deutscher Kommunal Verlag, 1923), 196-99.

[32] Wilhelm Lücke, "Die Zerstörung des Münsters am Hellweg," *Das Münster am Hellweg: Mitteilungsblatt des Vereins für die Erhaltung des Essener Münsters* (1951): 44-46; Emil Junge, "Berichte über die Wiederaufbauarbeiten am Essener Münster," *Das Münster am Hellweg* (1951): 187-190, (1952): 61-62, (1954): 72-74, (1955): 168-169, (1959), 146-147.

[33]Walther Zimmermann, *Das Münster zu Essen* (Essen: Fredebeul and Koenen, 1956), 5.

[34] *Essen. Aus Trümmern und Schutt*, 20.

[35] Ibid., 78.

But as much as urban planners looked to Essen's future as a new, modern city they could not escape the past altogether. For still lying right in the center of the old town was the synagogue. One of the striking elements of the basic plan that guided Essen's rebuilding was how much the synagogue became spatially separated from the emerging center of the *Einkaufsstadt*. When Essen city officials and the Jewish community built the synagogue on *Steelerstraße*, they made a deliberate statement about its importance in the urban landscape: it faced the medieval market square and was located east of the *Münsterkirche* by less than 200 meters. It had become, both visually and spatially, an integral part of the built environment. The exact opposite occurred after the war. As the city meticulously rebuilt the *Münsterkirche*, preserved *Burgplatz* as a "tranquil island," and constructed *Porscheplatz*, no attempt to integrate the synagogue into any of these nearby projects ever emerged. Indeed, as the center of the downtown moved slightly north to the retail area between *Kennedyplatz* and *Porscheplatz*, the market square became over the years less and less important and with it the synagogue.

The *Burgplatz* with the reconstructed *Münsterkirche* remained a focal point, but the construction of a wide street just east of it eclipsed its centrality. In Essen, four main streets were built to encircle the downtown and the one on the east skirted the synagogue. This wide, five-lane highway, the *Schützenbahn*, effectively divided the downtown into two parts: the major retail center to the west and the synagogue in the east. For thirty-five years, the synagogue sat isolated in this area of the downtown until 1979 when the town hall was finally unveiled. The town hall had been planned since the early 1950s and was always intended to be located in this area, but as a 28-floor glass skyscraper it hardly went together with the synagogue. Urban planners could have designed a way to integrate the synagogue with the town hall but they did not and the effect today is all too clear. Looking east from *Burgplatz*, *Porscheplatz*, or *Kettwigerstraße* (one of Essen's main retail streets), the cupola of Körner's structure peaks just slightly above the tops of department stores, but its monumental stone remains hidden. One has to walk down to the *Schützenbahn* to see it. The postwar surroundings of the synagogue ultimately eclipse its still

imposing architecture: the huge parking garage behind it, the busy intersection of the five-lane highway, the bus terminal underneath the enormous, cavernous passageway to the shopping mall on *Porscheplatz*, and the dominating, 28-story skyscraper town hall. Standing there among the buzz of cars and the nearby chatter of shoppers one realizes just how little urban planners thought about the presence of the synagogue in rebuilding the city; one even wonders: Why did they not simply make that parking garage even larger on the empty space of the dynamited synagogue? The wrecking ball was after all moving at a furious pace along the streets of Essen's old town. The short, simple answer is that city officials did not want to pay the high costs of demolition and probably wanted to avoid the pretence of carrying out what the Nazis had planned to do in 1938, but there is also a much longer, more interesting answer that lies in the shifting appropriation, use, and handling of the building after 1945.

In 1948, a local newspaper asked simply: "What was to become of the synagogue?" It did not supply an answer, but pointed out that its "fate" was "still not clear" given that a mere 145 Jews were now living in a city that once had 4,500.[36] The postwar Jewish community from the beginning had made it clear that it did not want to use the synagogue for both practical and psychological reasons. It had become a "defiled house of worship" and was simply too large.[37] In 1959, the Jewish community dedicated a new, much smaller synagogue on *Ruhrallee* designed by the same architects who built the West Berlin Jewish community center on *Fasanenstraße*.[38] But the synagogue remained fully intact and something had to be done with the building. One of the first moves city officials made was to tear down its heavily damaged courtyard so that "traffic can operate more easily."[39] In place of it, the city erected a large stone sarcophagus that was covered with large metal plates topped with a small fixture of the Star of David. A short plaque was

[36] "Was wird aus der Synagoge?" *Rheinische Post,* May 19, 1948 in ESA, B4 (Zeitungsausschnitte).

[37] Ibid.

[38] On the synagogue, see Krinsky, *Synagogues*, 289-90.

[39] "Was wird aus der Synagoge?" *Rheinische Post,* May 19, 1948 in ESA, B4 (Zeitungsausschnitte).

placed on the sarcophagus that read: "More than 2,500 Jews had to lose their lives in 1933-1945." This "Jewish monument," as the local newspaper described it, seemed offensive to some Esseners.[40] Soon after it was erected the Star of David was pulled down in April 1949 and then in the following year on several other occasions.[41]

After the destruction of the courtyard and the erection of this small monument, the city simply abandoned the synagogue as the rest of the city was rebuilt. Local journalists were quick to point out the disparity. "What the bombs were not capable of doing," one newspaper article ironically put it, "the ravages of time now threatens."[42] Another asked directly if the synagogue "will be built up" and endorsed an apparent plan to use it as "a temple of humanity, which will remember the victims of brutality."[43] Still another asked: "Is the Essen Synagogue being left to ruin?" Its answer was damaging.

> The rebuilding of Essen has taken place rapidly. Even on *Steelerstraße* there are new buildings on the *Schützenbahn*: the labor union building, the *Porscheplatz*, the complete rearrangement of *Burgplatz*. Only the synagogue seems to have been forgotten. The burned-out walls do not bother anyone. Those who now go by this architectural work probably wonder why one has not let it ruin even more. Grass and even trees are growing out of the rounded cupola and through the holes in the windows. The interior offers an image of desolation. The columns have collapsed and pieces of the ceiling fall down with every vibration from the congested street. Three months ago, the building inspection department prohibited entry into the synagogue. Danger of collapse![44]

The synagogue had indeed fallen into such a dilapidated state that plans for it to be cleared away often surfaced. With rain pouring in from its damaged roof and pieces of stone falling off onto the nearby street, the city was forced to put up a protective fence to enclose the building as the

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[40] *Neue Ruhr Zeitung*, January 17, 1949.

[41] "Beschädigung des Ehrenmals vor der Synagoge," *Stenografischer Bericht über die Sitzung des Rates der Stadt Essen*, April 29, 1949.

[42] "Vor 17 Jahren brannte die Synagoge," *Ruhr-Nachrichten*, November 9, 1956.

[43] "Wird Synagoge aufgebaut?," *Essener Tageblatt*, May 3, 1953 in ESA, B4 (Zeitungsausschnitte).

[44] "Ist die Essener Synagoge dem Verfall preisgegeben? Schild sagt: 'Einsturzgefahr!' — Jüdische Gemeinde macht Vorschläge," *Neue Ruhrzeitung*, June 18, 1955 in ESA, B4 (Zeitungsausschnitte).

possibility of tearing it down appeared more likely by the mid-1950s.[45] A city report concluded that in a few years it would no longer be salvageable and urged city officials to decide whether the synagogue should be preserved or torn down.[46]

As much as the idea of destroying the synagogue might have seemed like the easiest solution, the likelihood of it actually happening anytime soon was low for several reasons. The synagogue symbolized the absence of Jewish life by its sheer emptiness, but it also represented another, seemingly less destructive past that some Esseners did not want to be cleared away. In the numerous articles about the synagogue published in the 1950s, its architectural greatness continued to be celebrated as an important landmark of Essen's *Stadtbild*. Local journalists, citizens, and municipal officials expressed interest in preserving this "valuable structure," "this most beautiful and impressive Jewish building in Germany," "this proud building," and "this magnificent creation of Professor Körner."[47] Körner's monumental design had yet again helped to save the building. It is striking, however, how much interest in the synagogue became focused exclusively on its architecture. The Nazi destruction of the building and the city's Jewish population is hardly ever mentioned; why the synagogue is actually abandoned and shattered receives virtually no reflection. An article published on November 9, 1956 of all dates is a telling example. Although its headline notes that the "synagogue was set on fire seventeen years ago," it immediately turns away from *Kristallnacht*. "That was seventeen years ago. Today not much has changed with the lifeless architectural work. It is really too bad about a building … whose design … has long been the object of many visitors throughout the world. … One thing is certain: The current condition has to be rectified. The new design of the city alone demands that." The only slightest, indirect mention of the Nazi period appears when the article notes that the Jewish

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[45] "Ein Zaun soll Fußgänger schützen," *Neue Ruhrzeitung*, May 24, 1957.

[46] ESA, 143, Nr. 10798, Betr. Synagoge, August 3, 1956.

[47] Ibid; "Ist die Essener Synagoge dem Verfall preisgegeben?" *Neue Ruhrzeitung*, June 18, 1955; "Problem Synagoge wird immer dringler," *Westdeutsche Allgemeinezeitung*, August 23, 1956; "Was wird aus der Synagoge," *Rheinische Post*, May 19, 1948.

community has been so "melted down" that it cannot possibly use or maintain the building.[48] Otherwise interest in the building remained limited to its architectural legacy and implicitly to the historical moment when German-Jewish relations were seemingly harmonious.

But the main reason why the city could not tear it down in the 1950s was rather simple. It had not yet owned the building. In 1953, Essen's district court formally handed the property over to the Jewish Trust Corporation (JTC).[49] Fully aware that the small, local Jewish community in Essen had no interest in using the building anymore, the JTC offered to sell it to the city.[50] Municipal authorities were reluctant to purchase it because they had no concrete plans for using the building and did not want to be responsible for its maintenance.[51] But the city had few alternatives and the JTC was anxious to sell it.[52] The synagogue was becoming a serious physical danger to pedestrians and the JTC refused to pay for repairs on it.[53] In 1959, the city spent 300,000 marks to secure the building as it reluctantly became more involved in its upkeep. In April 1960, it decided simply to purchase it and now faced "the synagogue problem" of what to do with the building.[54] There was no shortage of ideas. The local Jewish community had long

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[48] The diction employed is revealing: "Die Jüdische Gemeinde ist inzwischen derart zusammengeschmolzen, dass sie einen derart großen Bau gar nicht unterhalten und ausnutzen könnte." "Vor 17 Jahren brannte die Synagoge," *Ruhr-Nachrichten*, November 9, 1956.

[49] Court decision of July 10, 1953 in ESA, 144, Nr. 1571.

[50] ZAJD, B, 1/7, Nr. 56, Memo on communal property in Essen, January 25, 1956. ZAJD, B. 1/7, Nr. 484, community membership statistics, October 1, 1959.

[51] ESA, 144, Nr. 5543, memo of November 18, 1957.

[52] The JTC was particularly anxious to sell the synagogue because it was one of its last items to divest before it could liquidate its office in Germany. See ESA, 144, nr. 5543, summary of meeting with JTC, June 22, 1959.

[53] In 1955, one piece of the synagogue fell off with such force that it broke part of the sidewalk (ZAJD, B. 1/7, nr. 484 letter of December 12, 1955). See also ESA, 143, nr. 10798, JTC to Essen, June 14, 1956.

[54] "Synagogue problem" comes from "Problem Synagoge wird immer dringlicher," *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, August 23, 1956.

proposed turning the building into a memorial for "all the victims of National Socialism," while another suggestion was to use the building to house a regional museum.[55]

But municipal officials had another idea in mind. Just before agreeing to purchase the synagogue, they decided to solve two problems with one solution. The "*Haus Industrieform*," a local association that sponsored an exhibit on designer industrial products, needed a new location after its lease was suddenly cancelled at the Krupp's historic villa Hügel. City officials offered a number of different locations in Essen's downtown, but none satisfied the association's leadership and it began to look for better offers from the nearby cities of Köln and Dusseldorf. City officials were desperate not to lose this "Essen institution."[56] In early November 1959, about a week after the city agreed to purchase the synagogue, it suggested putting the exhibit in the building to the association's director, Carl Hundhausen, who immediately took to the idea. Hundhausen believed that the architecture of this "monumental structure" was the perfect setting for displaying "modern objects."[57] Several months later, the city approved the plan with little debate. When one city council member asked if the local Jewish community "had upon the sale of the synagogue reserved the right to have its say" in its future use, the chief municipal director "unequivocally answered in the negative."[58] No one suggested that the Jewish community should be contacted in advance out of plain decency, even if it had not secured a formal "*Mitspracherecht*." The local Jewish community was incensed when it heard of the news. "We are astonished to learn about the fate of the synagogue from newspaper clippings," it wrote, "especially since at the time we were assured that the Jewish community would be consulted in

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[55] "Vor 17 Jahren brannte die Synagoge," *Ruhr-Nachrichten*, November 9, 1956; "Synagoge könnte Museum werden," *Neue Ruhr Zeitung*, September 17, 1959; "Was macht die Stadt mit der angekauften Synagoge?," *Ruhr-Nachrichten*, September 15, 1959.

[56] ESA, 1001, nr. 249, memo of chief municipal director, February 3, 1960.

[57] ESA, 144, nr. 5543, memo, November 6, 1959; ESA, 1001, nr. 249, letter from Hundhausen to association members, February 16, 1960.

[58] *Niederschrift über die Sitzung des Ältestenrates*, 13 February 1960.

deciding the use of the building. The synagogue in Essen is regarded as the most beautiful and dignified in Europe. It bears witness to the yearnings for closeness with God that lie in the hearts of men … And now this building is to house an exhibition of the German *Wirtschaftswunder*?"[59]

Essen's Jewish community was not the only one disturbed by the city's decision. Essen's local clergy and its branch of the Association for Christian-Jewish Cooperation expressed strong opposition to the plans in private letters, newspaper articles, and even in an appeal to Chancellor Konrad Adenauer.[60] Essen's Bishop noted that there were "substantial reasons against a commercial use of the old synagogue."[61] The city dismissively responded that "the current plans for the old synagogue represent a dignified use of the building."[62] Most of the protest was against the "profane" use of a religious building. Almost none reflected on the symbolism of the synagogue as a site of Nazi persecution against the Jews except for the rare passing mention that it could be a monument to the "victims of the 1,000 year Reich."[63] Several citizens wrote in to the local newspapers wondering if such a similarly "absurd" idea would be proposed for "Essen's Münsterkirche or Cologne's Dom," while others cautioned against taking the communist "East as an example" by turning houses of worships into museums.[64]

This criticism, although it probably never threatened the city's proposal, was taken seriously. Hundhausen enlisted the support of West Germany's leading Jewish leaders to help end the discussion. He first received support, if tepid, from Julius Dreifuss, president of the State Association of the Jewish Communities in North Rhine-Westphalia, who wrote in a private letter

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[59] ESA, 1001, nr. 249, Jewish community to city, March 10, 1960.

[60] Letters to the city located in ESA, 1001, nr. 249; BAK, B 136, nr. 5864, interior ministry to Arbeitskreis Essen der Gesellschaft für christlich-jüdische Zussamenarbeit, May 19, 1960; Karl Johannes Heyer, "Die minimale Lösung," *Ruhrwort*, December 9, 1961.

[61] ESA, 101, nr. 249, Bishop to Mayor, March 31, 1960.

[62] ESA, 101, nr. 249, city to Bishop, April 11, 1960.

[63] Gerhard Krupp, "Richtet ein Zeichen auf! Keine Profanierung des alten Gotteshauses," *Ruhr-Nachrichten*, February 26, 1960.

[64] Various letters to the editor in *Ruhr-Nachrichten*, Feburary 26, 1960.

that the planned exhibition would not "provoke any offense."[65] As criticism of the project continued in the local press, he then turned to Karl Marx, editor of Germany's most powerful Jewish newspaper, to write an article in favor of the project. "I am convinced," Hundhausen wrote, "that a public approval will be given in this article."[66] In March 1961, Marx delivered as anticipated, expressing his thanks to the city of Essen for turning the synagogue into a "living cultural center of our century."[67] Such support from Jewish leaders seems surprising, but the synagogue had fallen into such disrepair after fifteen years of neglect that they were probably relieved for at least something to be done with the building. It is also possible that either Hundhausen knew Marx personally or that higher state officials called upon him for a favor. Whatever the possible reason, Marx's intervention had the intended effect of ending public debate about the project.

On November 24, 1961, the *Haus Industrieform* opened its doors to the newly renovated synagogue, which cost the city two million marks. "Anyone who saw the interior of the old synagogue before will hardly recognize it now," one local newspaper observed.[68] The interior had been altered completely for the exhibition, and the grand opening capped the building's transformation with an odd negotiation between past and present. The state cultural minister of North Rhine-Westphalia, Werner Schütz, cautioned Hundhausen in advance that the ceremony had to be "carried out in the right manner" and must be an "hour of reconciliation with our Jewish co-citizens."[69] In his own speech, Schütz touched on the controversy about the building's use. He noted that "perhaps it would have been a good solution" to turn the synagogue into a "powerful

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[65] ESA 1001, nr. 249, letter from Landesverband to Haus Industrieform, November 7, 1960.

[66] ESA 1001, nr. 249, memo, December 22, 1960.

[67] Karl Marx, "Synagoge wird Ausstellungszentrum. Eine würdige Lösung für die ehemaloge Große Essener Synagoge," *Allgemeine Wochenzeitung der Juden in Deutschland*, March 4, 1961.

[68] "Die ist verschwunden," *Ruhr-Nachrichten*, July 20, 1961, ESA, B4, Zeitungsausschnitte.

[69] ESA, 1001, nr. 249, Schütz to Hundhausen, August 9, 1961.

monument … of the terrible things in the past," but then promptly suggested that the current exhibition was intended in part to nurture such remembrance. He said that visitors would after all pass by the sarcophagus before entering the building and would be reminded of past "events."[70] This was a rather imaginative assumption. How could an exhibition of dishwashers, stoves, and irons possibly represent even the vaguest notion of the past? Press coverage of the exhibition overlooked the building's historical symbolism altogether, while visitors warmly praised the exhibition. Criticism of the project had now faded almost completely. "The synagogue has been used very well," one visitor exclaimed, "the city of Essen could not have done any better out of it."[71] The synagogue's past had, indeed, fallen almost entirely to the way side as the *Haus Industrieform* became a showcase for Essen's economic revitalization. Neglected for nearly fifteen years, the synagogue had now finally, if peculiarly been integrated into the city's identity as the *Einkaufsstadt*.

II. Returning Wrocław to "Our Fatherland"

As in Essen, Breslau became a major city in the German empire by the end of the nineteenth century. It benefited from the industrial output of Upper Silesia and became the most important center east of Berlin for manufacturing, banking, and commerce. But it was still a rather provincial city that was not nearly as economically dynamic as Essen; it had seen more glorious days in the sixteenth century when it was one of Europe's most important trading towns. To be sure, its university, music clubs, artistic societies, and old town offered a vibrant cultural, educational, and social life, but Breslau was not Berlin, Vienna, Prague, or Warsaw, no matter how much some historians today might wish it to have been. There has been a recent surge of attraction to this city with at least fifty recorded names — Vratislavia, Wrotizla, Vretslav, Presslaw, Breslau, Wrocław to name just the most common ones — that reflects the multinational

[70] ESA, 143, nr. 10798, speech by Schütz, November 24, 1961.

[71] "Bessere Lösung gab es nicht. Fast alle Besucherstimmen loben das neue Haus Industrieform," *Neue Ruhr Zeitung*, August 21, 1963.

richness of the naively innocuous concept of "Central Europe." Fritz Stern has waxed about Breslau being the "true entrance to German life" for Jews; Till van Rahden has argued that Breslau was a "multicultural" city of harmonious relations among Catholics, Protestants, and Jews; and Norman Davies and Roger Moorhouse claim it to be the quintessentially "Central European City."[72] Such ruminations stem from the allure of a "past" that seems so different from the harsh reality of the twentieth-century when the city's Jewish population was murdered, its former German residents expelled, and its current inhabitants forcibly resettled there from central and eastern Poland. The city's shifting existence under Piast, Bohemian, Habsburg, Prussian, German, and Polish rule must be clearly emphasized because it does indeed reflect the diverse history of a region that for too long has been nationalized by historians, but moving too far in the other direction is equally problematic. It frames the past in national terms for historical periods when "ethnicity" and "nation" simply did not exist. In my view, it makes sense to contextualize the city's past in a given period rather than attempting to insert into larger national or multinational metanarratives.

In the early twentieth century, the city was indeed neither multinational nor multicultural with a mere 8,927 Polish speakers, but it was diverse in terms of its religious composition. The Protestant faith had dominated the city since the Reformation, but Catholics became an increasingly large minority over the nineteenth century, while the Jewish community became the third largest in Germany with 23,000 members in 1920 (about 4 percent of the total population).[73] Relations between Jews and Germans were relatively free of strife thanks to the fairly tolerant policies of city officials. Breslau's municipal government, a left-liberal coalition that depended on Jewish support in local elections, relaxed the exclusionary practices of social clubs, bestowed the

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[72] Fritz Stern, *Einstein's German World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 70; Till van Rahden, *Juden und andere Breslauer. Die Beziehungen zwischen Juden, Protestanten und Katholiken in einer deutschen Grossstadt von 1860 bis 1925* (Göttingen : Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000); Norman Davies and Roger Moorhouse, *Microcosm: Portrait of a Central European City* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2002).

[73] Rahden, *Juden*, 271.

city's highest civic award to Jews, and increased access to higher education. Jews in Breslau were involved mostly in commerce and trade, but they rarely earned enough money to maintain a middle-class lifestyle. Still, Breslau's Jewish community had firmly become acculturated into German society by the turn-of-the-century and built a strong tradition of Jewish life in the city with institutions such as the Jewish Theological Seminary.[74]

As in Essen and Berlin, Breslau's Jewish community expressed its integration into German society through architecture. The Storch Synagogue located on *Wallstraße* in the old town was the first architecturally notable synagogue to mark Breslau's urban landscape. Designed by Carl F. Langhans, son of the architect of Berlin's Brandenburg Gate, the synagogue was constructed in neo-classical style with five rounded windows and four pilasters held together by a triangular pediment. A circular lantern topped the plastered brick building, which from the outside barely resembled a religious building. The design reflected the importance of the Enlightenment for Breslau's Jewish population and the growing acculturation among those even of the orthodox tradition who used the synagogue.[75] Built in 1827-29, the Storch Synagogue was eclipsed forty-years later by the monumental New Synagogue located not far from it on *Schweidnitzerstraße*. Beginning in 1838, the reform Rabbi Abraham Geiger, who had a tense relationship with the orthodox community, set out to establish Breslau as a center of reform Judaism through the founding of the Jewish Theological Seminary and the construction of a new synagogue. Although he later left for Frankfurt am Main in 1863 before the synagogue was actually erected, he had a strong influence on the general design of the building.

The Jewish community accepted plans by the well-known Jewish architect Edwin Oppler who designed a massive, cathedral-looking synagogue just near the center of the city's old town.

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[74] The above conclusions come from van Rahden's excellent and exhaustive study; there is no match at the moment for any other German, or for that matter European, city in order to test his conclusions, especially his arguments about the general tolerance of the city's administration and the lower class earning structure of Breslau's Jewish community. Rahden, *Juden*.

[75] On the synagogue, see Krinsky, *Synagogues*, 325-26; Jerzy Krzysztof Kos, *Pod Białym Bocianem* (Wrocław: Urząd Miejski Wrocławia, 2002).

Oppler decided to design the building in Romanesque, a style that, in his words, "certainly can be considered purely German."[76] Responding to the oriental, Moorish style of the New Synagogue in Berlin that was completed in 1866, he wanted to place Judaism on equal footing with the other confessions in Germany by adopting a "German" architectural style. Just as Körner had intended in Essen, Oppler wanted his building at once to dominate the surrounding landscape and naturally fit into it. But whereas Körner succeeded in creating such a building, Oppler failed in the eyes of his contemporaries. The enormous, Romanesque synagogue stood out among the gothic and baroque styles of Breslau's old town. As one critic put it, the synagogue appeared "exotic in the local character of Breslau."[77] Nevertheless, the towering presence of the synagogue testified to both the acculturation of the Jewish population and the generally benevolent policy of municipal authorities toward the Jewish minority.

But such tolerance did not penetrate deep enough into the social fabric of the city for it to survive the instability of the interwar years.[78] As Breslau's liberal, middle-class governing coalition collapsed in the 1920s, Breslau became one of the strongest bastions of Nazi support. On November 9, 1938, the Nazis set the New Synagogue on fire and a pile of smoldering ruins was all that was left of it several days later. "The SS precluded the fire fighters in Breslau from saving the synagogue," a Jewish observer wrote in his diary, "Only the nearby buildings and trees were doused. … The synagogue itself was burned down with firebombs."[79] The city's other main synagogue on *Wallstraße* survived *Kristallnacht* given that it was too close to nearby buildings, making it the central Jewish building to last into the postwar period. But the vast majority of

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[76] Erläuterungsbericht Opplers, September 28, 1865, quoted in Hammer-Schenk, *Synagogen*, 215.

[77] *Wochenblatt des Architektenvereins Berlin*, no. 1 (1867): 28-29.

[78] Till van Rahden does not deal with the Weimar period probably because doing so would have required an altogether different analytical framework. My sense is that the "pluralistic, multicultural" society that he believes existed in Imperial Germany was in fact rather fragile in the first place and remained limited to the city's political elite of middle-class Catholics, Protestants, and Jews. As liberal, middle-class politics collapsed over the 1920s throughout Germany, such a coalition was no longer viable.

[79] Walter Tausk, *Breslauer Tagebuch. 1933-1940* (Leipzig: Reclaim Verlag, 1995), 165 and 172.

Breslau Jews, deported to Sobibor, Bełżec, and Auschwitz in 1942-43, did not survive. By 1945, the Jewish population of Breslau had a mere thirty survivors.[80]

This number would, however, soon change dramatically in the shifting context of the immediate postwar years. Lower Silesia, now part of Poland, became home to the largest population of Jews in the region outside the DP camps in occupied Germany. In 1945, the great powers reduced Poland's size by 20 percent mainly because Stalin wanted to keep his wartime gains in the east. In return, Poland gained a 300-mile long Baltic coastline and land up to the Oder-Neisse line, which was generally more economically developed than the territory lost to the USSR. With a few strokes of the pen at Tehran and Potsdam, Poland lost the important cultural centers of Lwów and Wilno, while gaining the now Polish cities of Wrocław and Gdańsk. The Great Powers also agreed to the "transfer" of about 3.5 million Germans from Silesia, Pomerania, and eastern Prussia followed by the "resettlement" of about 3.5 million Poles from central and eastern Poland.[81] Seeking political legitimacy in a country where communism had historically been weak, the Polish communist provisional government carried out the expulsions and supported the general idea of an ethnically homogenous nation-state.[82] The state also embarked on a massive propaganda campaign to Polonize the western territories, drawing heavily on the historical legacy of tenth-century Piast Poland whose political boundaries roughly followed those of the postwar state. The communist party urged Poles to return "home" to the "Recovered Territories" (*ziemie odzyskane*) of the west where they would find material riches left behind by

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[80] Leszek Ziątkowski, *Dzieje Żydów we Wrocławiu* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 2000), 113.

[81] The literature on the expulsions of the Germans is large. See the useful set of essays in Ther and Siljak, *Redrawing Nations*. For historiographical overviews, see Włodzimierz Borodziej, "Historiographia polska o 'wypędzeniu' Niemców," *Polska Studia i materiały* vol. 2 (1997): 249-269; Josef Henke, "Flucht und Vertreibung der Deutschen aus dem Osten. Zur Quellenlage und Historiographie," *Deutsche Studien* vol. 32 (1995): 137-149. On the expulsions of Poles from eastern and central Poland, see Stanisław Ciesielksi, ed., *Przesiedlenie ludności polskiej z Kresów Wschodnich do Polski, 1944-1947* (Warsaw: PAN, 1999); Tomasz Szarota, *Osadnictwo miejskie na Dolnym Śląsku w latach 1945-1948* (Warsaw: PWN, 1969).

[82] See the extensive documentary collection from Polish archives: *Niemcy w Polsce, 1945-1950*, vols. 1-4 (Warsaw: Neriton, 2000). These volumes have been translated into German, *"Unsere Heimat ist uns ein fremdes Land geworden ..." Die Deutschen östlich von Oder und Neiße 1945 – 1950. Dokumente aus polnischen Archiven* (Marburg: Herder Institut, 2000).

the expelled German population. As one propaganda poster grandly promised: "Historical justice has been done. The power of the Third Reich lies in ruins. The lands, once robbed by Crusades, Bismark, and Hitler, has returned to the motherland. In panic, the invader has fled across the Oder, leaving behind villages and towns, manor houses, sown fields, developed ponds and gardens."[83]

The communist leadership encouraged Jews to resettle in Silesia in order to assist in the rebuilding effort, even though it remained acutely ambivalent about the long-term presence of the Jewish minority in Poland.[84] Some Jews eagerly responded to such calls and absorbed the nationalist propaganda of the state. Jakub Egit, chair of the Lower Silesian Jewish Committee, suggested that the choice of this area was simple. "Thanks to the liberation of this land by the Red Army … seven thousand Polish Jews were saved here who expressed their will to rebuild their new life precisely on this land. In this way, they wanted to satisfy their lust for revenge and at the same time to receive at least partial compensation for incurred losses."[85] Jewish communists and Bundists also presented the "recovered territories" as a viable option to the Zionist alternative of leaving Poland.[86] But the vast majority of Jews who settled in Lower Silesia were motivated not by politics, nationalism, or revenge; they were looking above all for a relatively safe place where they could work and live. Most Jewish settlers had survived the Holocaust in the USSR and returned to Poland to find their families obliterated and their homes stolen. Lower Silesia seemed like the best alternative for them not least because it remained largely free of the strife that erupted in central and eastern Poland in 1945-46. Western Poland was in such a state of flux with Germans moving out and Poles moving in that the return of Jews did not provoke nearly the

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[83] Flyer of the Central Committee for Resettlement, May 1945, reprinted in Szarota, *Osadnictwo*, 81.

[84] On the ambivalence of the PZPR, see Gross, *Fear*; Michlic, *Poland's*, chaps. 6 and 7; chap. 1 of this dissertation.

[85] Jakub Egit, "Rok życia żydowskiego na Dolnym Śląsku," *Nowe Życie*, July 15, 1946.

[86] Szaynok, *Ludność*, 19-25.

amount of tension that it did in other parts of Poland. At its height, the Jewish population in Lower Silesia reached 82,305 in July 1946 and the possibility of Jewish life reemerging in Poland seemed possible.[87]

But the postwar anti-Semitic violence, even though it never reached western Poland, was too bloody not to persuade Jews to leave. By 1950, a mere 30,000 Jews had decided to stay in Lower Silesia and that number only continued to decrease with each passing year. In 1960, only 7-8 thousand Jews were living in the region.[88] The Jewish community in Wrocław mirrored these broader trends. It became the largest city of Jews in Lower Silesia with about 16,057 in 1946, but that number dropped to 12,240 just two years later and then continued to decline over the 1950s. In 1963, only two thousand Jews were living in the city and after 1968 only a handful remained.[89] In many ways, Wrocław reflects the postwar trajectory of Jewish life in Poland with an initial surge of energy and even cautious hope only to be dashed by the physical and linguistic violence of 1946 and 1968.

In the immediate postwar years, Wrocław was hardly an easy place to rebuild one's life no matter if one was Jewish or not. The three-month battle for the city massively destroyed the urban landscape. As fighting turned into urban warfare with soldiers battling from street to street, the city lay in a pile of ruins by 1945. About 68 percent of Wrocław had been destroyed with 21,600 buildings damaged. Wrocław's old town was heavily destroyed and many of its most prominent cultural markers, especially its many churches, were severely damaged.[90] Just three days after the fighting ended, authorities from the Polish communist provisional government moved into the city. The forced removal of Germans, which had begun with the Nazi evacuation

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[87] The major book on this topic is Szaynok, *Ludność*. In English, see Jacob Egit's memoir, *Grand Illusion* (Toronto: Lugus, 1991).

[88] Waszkiewicz, *Kongregacja*, 32 and 37. See also statistical tables in Szaynok, *Ludność*.

[89] Ibid., 141; Szaynok, *Ludność*, 51 and 194.

[90] For a full list of the main churches destroyed, see Edmund Małachowicz, *Stare miasto we Wrocławiu. Rozwój urbanistyczno-architektoniczny zniszczenia wojenne i odbudowa* (Warsaw: PWN, 1985), 109-111, fn. 8.

of the city in January 1945, continued in the months before the legally sanctioned "transfer" of the population at the Potsdam conference in August 1945. By 1948-49, the demographic revolution of the city had largely come to an end. The German population had been expelled and Poles had been forced to replace them. The new Polish communist government now faced not only the difficulty of integrating the so-called "repatriates" into the economic fabric of western Poland, but also making the cities of Silesia "Polish."[91] In a broad propaganda campaign led by the West Institute in Poznań (*Instytut Zachodni*), the PZPR portrayed the "recovered territories" as an area that had always been Polish.[92] As one author wrote, "Silesia … was not only the seed and bastion of the Polish economy and Polish culture, but at the same time ranks as the area where a national Polish consciousness developed perhaps the earliest and the fullest."[93] Historians, writers, art historians, and archaeologists focused special attention on the medieval period when the dukes and princes of a distinct political entity known at the time as "Poland" ruled Silesia from 1138 to 1335. The following six hundred years of history under Bohemian, Habsburg, Prussian, and German rule received much less attention and when they did even the minutest trace of "Polishness" was emphasized.[94]

Recasting the past in such nationalistic ways was obviously easy to accomplish in print, but making the urban landscape of Wrocław "Polish" was substantially more difficult. Municipal officials quickly replaced German street names and monuments with Polish ones, but these important, albeit minor changes were not that difficult to make, even though they naturally led to

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[91] On the integration of Polish expellees, see Philipp Ther, *Deutsche und polnische Vertriebene : Gesellschaft und Vertriebenenpolitik in SBZ/DDR und in Polen 1945-1956* (Göttingen : Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998).

[92] Włodzimierz Borodziej, " 'Ostforschung' aus der Sicht der polnischen Geschichtsschreibung," *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropaforschung* no. 3 (1997): 405-426; Jörg Hackmann, "Strukturen und Institutionen der polnischen Westforschung, 1918-1960," *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropaforschung* no. 2 (2001): 230-255.

[93] Ewa Maleczyńska, "Klejnot w koronie (historia)," in *Dolny Śląsk*, vol. 2, 74.

[94] E.g.: Kirył Sosnowski and Mieczysław Suchocki, *Dolny Śląsk*, 2 vols. (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1948). One prominent exception is the history of Wrocław, although it tellingly ends in 1807 and overlooks the entrire industrial transformation of the city under the Prussian monarchy. Wacław Długoborski, Józef Gierowski, and Karol Maleczyński, *Dzieje Wrocławia do roku 1807* (Warsaw: PWN, 1958).

disputes among local, regional, and national authorities.[95] The handling of historic buildings was much more problematic since hardly any physical trace of Piast Poland remained in the city. What was to be done with a city constructed during the Bohemian, Habsburg, and Prussian periods? Should the city's historic buildings be reconstructed or simply cleared away for the building of an entirely new, distinctly "Polish" city? At a surprisingly early stage, urban planners and historic preservationists argued for the reconstruction of the city's historic buildings, especially those built in gothic style during the Middle Ages that they believed reflected Piast Poland. Of course, these buildings could hardly be considered "Polish" just as those built in neo-classical style in the nineteenth century could hardly be considered "German." If there is one form of material culture that is transnational, it is architecture with its blend of different regional and historical styles.

Yet societies appropriate buildings in distinct ways that fit into their own interpretations of the past. Polish urban planners and historic preservationists argued that by peeling away the veneer of the most recent "Germaness" of Breslau's built environment the older, medieval, Catholic, and deeply Polish Wrocław would emerge. The ruined landscape offered the unprecedented chance to recover the Polish origins of the city that had been destroyed by the German enemy over the years. "In 1945, we came into Lower Silesia with the false belief that we were entering into the old Polish country where the German oppression had wiped out every trace of Polishness," wrote Stanisław Kulczyński, an academic instrumental in rebuilding university life in the city. "The malicious enemy returned this land to us having earlier destroyed almost all of its civilized achievements. Inadvertently, it dug out from the ruins the old, eternally Polish layers that exude beautiful and noble culture."[96] The task now for urban planners and historic preservationists was to reconstruct the city's historic monuments that they interpreted to be

[95] Thum, *Die fremde Stadt*, 338-392.

[96] Quoted in Marcin Bukowski, *Wrocław z lat 1945-1952. Zniszczenia i dzieło odbudowy* (Warsw: PWN, 1985), 5.

Polish. The stakes of the challenge were clear: "We feel with full awareness the weight of the task that history has put into our hands, the hands of Polish urban planners; it is a task that aims to return to our fatherland this city that once was perhaps more Polish than Cracow."[97]

This vision of rebuilding Wrocław's historic core was largely carried out, although it occurred more slowly than in other cities especially in comparison to Warsaw. Wrocław was a significant city in the politically important region of the "recovered territories," but it still was a medium-sized, outer lying city in a country of scarce resources where funds for reconstruction went first to the capital. Nevertheless, the meticulous reconstruction of Wrocław's old town was no less than remarkable, if not for its "authenticity" then for its sheer extensiveness. The emphasis on historic reconstruction dominated the rebuilding effort to a striking degree, even more so than in Warsaw.[98] It became the architectural style for Wrocław's postwar transformation into a Polish city. Municipal authorities focused on selectively reconstructing a medieval past that involved rebuilding the city's many gothic churches, its market square, and its gothic town hall. Gothic architecture, especially of churches, was singled out for its "very serious value for propaganda, urban, and architectural reasons."[99] Although most of these buildings were actually constructed during the Bohemian and Habsburg periods, historic preservationists argued that they must "reemerge again" since they were "documents from the historical foundations of the Piast period and above all reveal unique, native Silesian-Polish architectural forms."[100] The focus on gothic architecture temporally brought the city back to its history under the rule of the Piast Dukes of Silesia, while the reconstruction of churches made an unequivocal statement about the

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[97] Emil Kaliski, "Wrocław wrócił do Polski," *Skarpa Warszawska*, March 3, 1946.

[98] On rebuilding the old town, see Małachowicz, *Stare miasto*; Małachowicz, *Wrocław na wyspach. Rozwój urbanistyczny i architektoniczny* (Wrocław: Ossolinieum, 1992); Bukowski, *Wrocław*; Małgorzata Olechnowicz, "Architektura na obszarze wrocławskiego starego miasto po 1945 roku, jej uzależnienie od planów zagospodarowania przestrzennego i przemian budownictwa," (Ph.D diss., University of Wrocław, 1997).

[99] APW, WDO, Nr. 239, report on the activity of the WDO, 1945-1948.

[100] Gwido Chmarzyński, "W aureoli gotyckich kościołów," in Sosnowski and Suchowski, *Dolny Śląsk*, vol. 2, 67.

city's Polish identity. In the age of the partitions (1795-1918), Catholicism became a salient feature of what it meant to be Polish. Roman Catholicism had long been a defining aspect of Polish society, but it became nationalized throughout the nineteenth century. Roman Dmowski's formulation of the "*Polak-katolik*" captured succinctly the entangled association of religion and ethnicity in Polish conceptions of the nation.[101] In the postwar period, the PZPR attempted to curtail the power of the Church, but it also skillfully used national symbols that were connected to Catholicism for its own purposes.

In Wrocław, local preservationists focused particular attention on rebuilding the churches located on the north side of the Oder where the city's history as a bishopric in 1,000 CE began. This area, known as the Cathedral Island, was also the site of both the first Piast castle and the city's cathedral. It was here that urban planners and historic preservationists believed that the traces of Wrocław's Polish past could most fully be recovered. Archaeologists searched for even the minutest remaining trace of the Piasts, while historic preservationists rebuilt the island's many churches into the 1980s.[102] The most celebrated project was the rebuilding of the heavily damaged cathedral.[103] In 1946, Marcin Bukowski, one of the leading figures in Wrocław's reconstruction, led the first stage of the building's restoration completed in 1951. One of his students continued work on the building in 1968 and enhanced the gothic features of the cathedral by adding two towers that had not existed earlier. The carefully restored cathedral, towering above Wrocław's skyline, epitomized the city's recovered Polish past on the grandest scale. In

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[101] Richard Blanke, *Prussian Poland in the German Empire, 1871-1900* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981); Peter Brock, "Polish Nationalism," in Peter F. Sugar and J. Lederer, eds., *Nationalism in Eastern Europe* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1994), 310-72; Porter, *Nationalism*; Andrzej Walicki, "Intellectual Elites and the Vicissitudes of 'Imagined Nation' in Poland," in Richard Grigor Suny and Michael D. Kennedy, eds., *Intellectuals and the Articulation of the Nation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 259-87.

[102] Małachowicz, *Wrocław na wyspach*; Edmund Małachowicz, *Wrocławski zamek książęcy i kolegiata św. Krzyża na Ostrowie* (Wrocław: Oficyna Wydawnicza Politechniki Wrocławskiej, 1994).

[103] See, for instance, the tourist guidebooks and publications about the city's rebuilding: Gwidon Król, *Przewodnik po zabytkach Wrocławia* (Wrocław: PTTK, 1957); Janina Mierzecka, *Wrocław stary i nowy* (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1967); Karol Maleczyński, Marian Morelowski, and Anna Ptaszycka, *Wrocław. Rozwój urbanistyczny* (Warsaw: Budownictwo i Architektura, 1956).

1965, on the occasion of the twentieth-anniversary of the Polish Church in western Poland, Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński assuredly proclaimed that the Wrocław Cathedral had always been "Polish:"

> The church is a preeminent conservator of the past. … We decode, beloved ones in the Lord, these stone relicts. In this Cathedral from the year 1000 we know our markers. These stone relicts, wonderful markers of the past, say: We were here! Yes! We were here! And were are back here! We have returned to this patriotic house. We recognized the markers that have remained. We understand them. We understand this language. This is our language! The stones speak to us from the walls. … When we see these churches of the Piasts, when we listen to their speech, then we know: this is certainly not German land! Those are our traces, traces of the Piasts! They speak to the Polish people without commentary. We do not need any explanations; we understand their language well.[104]

The Polish Catholic Church and the PZPR often collided, but both were involved in an uneasy dance that included at times warm embraces and coordinated moves. The image of the Church as an eternal bastion of resistance, while a convenient post-1989 memory, elides the important areas where the Church supported the PZPR when it came to issues such as reinforcing Polish claims to the "recovered territories" or maintaining traditional gender norms.[105] Indeed, Wyszyński's speech absorbed and reified the nationalist framing of Wrocław's reconstruction crafted by the PZPR. The communist language about building a "socialist city" — more present in Warsaw and certainly in East Berlin and Potsdam — was almost entirely absent in Wrocław as the PZPR faced the more pressing need to legitimize its claim to the city (and region). This political need partly explains the reconstruction of Wrocław's old town at a time when both capitalist and communist Europe generally embraced the modern over the old.

But it does so only in part. Wrocław's old town was hardly the only one rebuilt in Poland. Historic reconstruction was one of the most dominant architectural styles in Poland during the 1950s long in advance of the postmodern discovery of the "old" in the 1970s and 1980s.[106] This was the case largely because of the importance of the past for Polish national identity. In a society

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[104] Speech of August 31, 1965 reprinted in Oskar Golombek, ed., *Die katholische Kirche und die Völker-Vertreibung* (Cologne: Wienand, 1966), 244.

[105] Natali Stegmann, "Die Aufwertung der Familie in der Volksrepublik Polen der siebziger Jahre," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* no. 4 (2005): 523-544.

[106] Kowalski, *Rekonstrukcja*.

without a state for over hundred years, "Polishness" became expressed not just through the romantic lines of Adam Mickiewicz, but also through the growing desire to preserve the cultural monuments of the past. Historic preservation became entangled with the sustenance of the Polish nation. The destruction of the Great War only strengthened this connection in the interwar years, while World War II provided *the* cataclysmic moment for historic preservationists who saw Nazi attacks against Poland's architectural heritage as central to Hitler's aim to destroy Poland. An almost sacred reverence for *zabytki* emerged in Polish society after 1945. "The cataclysm of the Second World War," wrote Jan Zachwatowicz in 1946, "made the entire situation all the more acute. Entire pages of our history, written in the stones of architecture, were deliberately ripped out. We cannot stand for that. The sense of responsibility for future generations demands the rebuilding of that which was destroyed."[107] Zachwatowicz became the strongest advocate for carefully restoring the pages of Poland's national narrative through the meticulous reconstruction of historic buildings. His most important achievement was the rebuilding of Warsaw's old town, but his ideas were highly influential throughout the country and shaped the reconstruction of Wrocław. One of his critics at the time astutely observed that this "obsession" with the past stemmed from a distinctly Polish "inferiority complex" after decades of statelessness, occupation, and war.[108]

Indeed, the postwar emphasis on historic reconstruction was uniquely Polish, and it raises in a uniquely acute way the central issue of whether or not the material culture of the Jewish minority ever fit into Polish conceptions of the past. In the 1950s and 1960s, Wrocław's history as an important center of Jewish life had vanished entirely from written accounts of the city's history. Most scholarly and popular works focused on the Middle Ages in an attempt to pay

[107] Zachwatowicz, "Program," 5.

[108] Dutkiewicz, "Sentymentalizm, " 5-6.

"particular attention to the role of Polish elements in the historical processes of the city."[109] This narrow, nationalistic focus, which rarely dealt with the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, overlooked the period of the Jewish population's expansion and destruction. The few accounts that cover the modern period make no mention of the city's Jewish community at all; no description is given either of its economic, demographic, and cultural growth in the nineteenth century or of its persecution during the Nazi period.[110] The Jewish population simply did not exist in these accounts.

This erasure of the city's Jewish presence became articulated in urban space. As the historic buildings of the old town were meticulously rebuilt, the city's Jewish sites fell into a state of neglect, dilapidation, and destruction. Wrocław's Jewish district, located between the streets of Krupnicza (Graupenstraße), św. Antoniego (Antonienstraße), Włodkowica (Wallstraße), Złote Koło (Goldeneradegasse), and Podwale (Schweidnitzerstraße) was never included in the city's historic reconstruction program. Historic preservationists and architectural historians simply paid little attention to this part of the old town as they focused their energy on reconstructing the city's churches, town hall, and cathedral.[111] The historic core of the Jewish district, *Karlsplatz* and *Goldenstraße*, lying just southwest of the city's market square, was eventually cleared away in the early 1970s with the construction of a four-lane highway (Kazimierza Wielkiego). Once made up of numerous shops and tenement houses, it lay damaged and neglected for thirty years until construction of the highway began in 1974. *Karlsplatz* had now disappeared entirely and only

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[109] Długoborski, Gierowski, and Maleczyński, *Dzieje Wrocławia*, 10.

[110] See, for example: Ewa Malecyńska, "Sedes regni principalis — projektowaną siedzibą rządu narodowego (historia)," in Sosnowski and Suchocki, eds., *Dolny Śląsk*, 20-43; Karol Maleczyński and Anna Ptaszycka, "Miasto w XIX i XX w. pod panowaniem pruskim," in *Wrocław. Rozwój urbanistyczny*, 119-186.

[111] I know of only one exception when the White Storch synagogue made the city's general list of architectural monuments, although it was not placed on the list of buildings for preservation work. APW, ZMW, Nr. 274.

five apartment buildings of *Goldenstraße* were maintained.[112] The only main trace of the Jewish district today is a surviving strip of *Karlsplatz*, renamed the Ghetto Heroes' Square, that contains a monument erected in 1963 on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The spatial effect of this destruction is clear today. This area of the old town remains distinct and separate from the carefully rebuilt historic buildings of the nearby salt and market squares, which form the cultural life of the city.

Not far from the Jewish district lay the city's most visible Jewish site — the once towering, Romanesque New Synagogue. In 1945, little was left of the burned-down building. As historic preservationists rushed to begin work on the Cathedral, the ruins of the synagogue were simply cleared away to make room for a parking lot for the nearby police compound. In the 1950s, the area surrounding the former synagogue became home to Wrocław's most expansive socialist realist housing project. Local architect Roman Tunikowski transformed the former *Tauentzienplatz* into a grand central square surrounded by five-story apartment buildings. The housing project of the newly named Tadeusz Kościuszko Square provided a new, socialist entry into the city center. Urban planners in Wrocław also attempted to combine the old with the new, although in a much less visible way than in Warsaw. A modernist housing project was also erected on the New Market Square, but such projects were largely the exception in a city dominated by historic reconstruction.

Still, what is striking is that urban planners in both Warsaw and Wrocław decided to build large thoroughfares and expansive housing projects precisely in those areas of the city where it did not matter if the old was cleared away for the new.[113] Direct evidence for any

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[112] Jan Harasimowicz, *Atlas architektury Wrocławia*, vol. 2 (Wrocław: Wywanictwo Dolnośląskie, 1997), 53.

[113] To take another example: In Lublin, municipal authorities cleared away the town's historic Jewish district for the construction of socialist realist houses around a central square. This example, next to the rebuilding of Warsaw's Jewish district, is one of the most obvious cases of clearing away an area of the old town that is not perceived to be of historical value. No work that I know of has been done on the postwar appropriation of Jewish space in Lublin, but see the collection of memoirs and short essays on the Jewish

concrete intentionality behind this juxtaposition between "Jewish" and "Polish" space does not exist, and of course urban planners tore down many other historic buildings in both cities that were not connected to the Jewish minority. But the absence of Jewish space in historic reconstruction projects is telling.[114] Jewish sites and districts remained bracketed from the architectural history of the city. Published works that celebrated Worcław's architectural legacy never mentioned any Jewish sites. Part of this absence stems from long-standing traditions and perceptions among historic preservationists throughout Europe, which typically focused on castles, homes, and churches. Coming mainly from the ranks of the Christian gentry, intelligentsia, and later middle class, historic preservationists developed an understanding of the historic that naturally reflected their own interests, desires, tastes, and prejudices. As Jews moved out from the ghetto throughout the nineteenth century, their former districts, synagogues, and cemeteries became abandoned and some were destroyed to make room for modernist urban renewal projects. Few historic preservationists voiced concern and members of the Jewish community seemed equally disinterested in preserving these relicts of the past.

These broader, European continuities are important, but at the same time the post-1945 and Polish context remains crucial. Poland was now an ethnically homogenous nation-state with a small Jewish community, and the reason why so many Jewish homes, synagogues, and cemeteries were desolate was because of mass murder rather than cultural integration. The emptiness of these Jewish spaces was refracted through the new and unprecedented prism of genocide. Moreover, historic preservation since the nineteenth century had become tied to national identity and this link became only stronger after the war. The rebuilding of Wrocław was a national project in a way that the reconstruction of Essen and Potsdam simply was not. By 1945, the

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district in Jerzy Bojarski, ed., *Ścieżki pamięci. Żydowskie miasto w Lublinie — Losy, Miejsca, Historia* (Lublin: Rishon LeZion, 2002).

[114] See Maleczyński and Anna Ptaszycka, "Miasto," in *Wrocław*; Kulczyński, *Udział*, 85-98; Krystyna Pilch and Józef Pilch, *Zabytki Dolnego Śląska* (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1962), 172-191; Gwidon Król, Przewodnik po zabytkach Wrocławia (Wrocław: PTTK, 1957); Krzysztof Kwaśniewski, *Wrocław jakiego nie znamy* (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1972).

exclusivist, ethnic vision of the Polish nation that National Democracy propagated had in the main become dominant. The communist regime presented the postwar state as the truly legitimate Polish nation since its borders included the western lands that had long ago been taken away from Poland but now had heroically been recovered by the communists. By expelling the Germans and later the remaining Jews from Poland, the communist regime carried through with this vision and completed the formation of the ethnically homogenous nation that Dmowski had long dreamed would some day emerge. In this highly politicized environment, the culturally inscribed boundaries of the historic tended more often than not to exclude the cultural heritage of minority groups and perhaps even more acutely so in the "recovered territories."

The role of local officials was, however, at times even more direct. Wrocław had several Jewish sites that still remained standing after the war and all eventually fell into a state of severe dilapidation despite pleas from local Jewish leaders to restore them. In the late 1940s and 1950s, Jewish life in Wrocław centered mainly on Włodkowica street where the White Storch Synagogue was located. Both the Religious Congregation of the Jewish Faith in Wrocław (KWMW) and the local, secular branch of the Socio-Cultural Association of Jews used the assortment of buildings around the synagogue. A vibrant religious and cultural life reemerged in the city right after the war, although now it was made up almost exclusively of Polish speaking Jews (the few German Jews were forced to flee in the expulsions). But over the 1950s, as more and more Jews left Poland, the Jewish community in Wrocław steadily decreased in size with a total of 2,000 in 1963. The Jewish community also faced the constant problem of securing even the slightest amount of money to maintain its religious existence. Wrocław city officials paid virtually no attention to the KWMW and it had to rely on meager funds supplied to it from the Religious Association of the Jewish Faith in Warsaw (ZRWM).[115]

[115] On the financial difficulties of the Jewish community, see Waszkiewicz, *Kongregacja*, 80-91 and 104-119.

This lack of financial support meant that the Jewish congregation had little money to maintain its property. By the early 1960s, the White Storch Synagogue had fallen into disrepair as a result of both vandalism and neglect: "The synagogue is found to be in such a state that the building is in danger of complete destruction and its current state and appearance creates a very unpleasant impression for people attending services. The ceiling is falling apart, the majority of the windowpanes are knocked out, and the plaster is coming off the walls. The building is decaying completely."[116] Indeed, the condition of the building had become so poor that local city officials ordered it to be vacated in 1966 for the "sake of public safety."[117] Wrocław's Jewish community was now forced to use a small, fifty-person prayer room in an adjacent building. One might assume that both local and national officials would now recognize the urgent need for repairs since such a small place for worship was clearly not sufficient for a community of around 2,000. But they flatly refused to offer any financial assistance and insisted that the congregation pay for the costs on their own.[118]

At one point, the Department of Religious Affairs in Warsaw did support the idea of repairing the building, but for rather curious reasons. It noted that the building was in "too good of condition to tear down," and since it was "not visible from the street its possible repair would not stand out." It also suggested that maintaining the synagogue could be politically useful abroad as "proof of the freedom of religion in the PRL."[119] The last reason given is neither that surprising nor that interesting, but the second is striking. Tucked in a courtyard just off a back street, the synagogue would hardly draw the attention of passerby, but that such obscurity would be reason for maintaining it seems odd. Why would repairing a synagogue possibly "stand out?" And to whom? Perhaps it would seem conspicuous to a population that the party believed held anti-

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[116] KWMW to ZRWM, July 5, 1963, quoted in Waszkiewicz, *Kongregacja*, 141.

[117] ANN, UdsW, 131/513, memo on the Wrocław synagogue.

[118] AAN, UdsW, 131/513, Wrocław Prezydium to KWMW, January 13, 1968.

[119] AAN, UdsW, 131/513, memo on the Wrocław synagogue.

Jewish biases or in an urban landscape now deemed "Polish," but these are speculations when what is most salient about this phrase is that it was written down in the first place in an official memo produced by a central government agency in Warsaw.

In other words, what is remarkable is the sheer politicization of an issue involving a mere dilapidated building in need of repair. The rebuilding of Wrocław was an intensely political effort for obvious and conceivable reasons. One can understand the reasoning of a political regime that legitimizes its rule through such grandiose projects as the meticulous rebuilding of a cathedral, even if it seems peculiar in a political system where religion was supposed to disappear altogether. But less understandable is why something as simple as repairing a synagogue would become political. The issue at hand did not involve technical, historical, or architectural issues. Historic preservationists and urban planners were tellingly not even involved in discussions about the synagogue, but rather officials of the Department of Religious Affairs, who along with those of the Interior Ministry, closely observed the religious communities of the PPR. One could reasonably claim that in communist societies virtually everything had become acutely political, but different issues were more political at different moments. In the mid-to-late 1960s, Polish communism underwent a significant transformation as it gradually embraced the nationalistic language, symbolism, and ideas that had long been the hallmark of National Democracy.[120] The reasoning behind this shift involves a mix of factors that will be analyzed in the next chapter, but important here is that anti-Semitism became one of the guiding ideological elements of this change. It would be too simplistic to conclude that the politicization of Jewish space in Wrocław (and Warsaw) stems from anti-Semitism alone, but at the very least it reflects how much the growing anxiety about Jews in the mid-to-late 1960s had permeated discussions about Jewish matters, even ones as seemingly banal as restoring a decaying synagogue.

Indeed, it is hard to imagine another explanation for the obstinance of local and national leaders to the continued pleas of Jewish leaders for assistance to renovate the building. In ever

[120] Stola, *Kampania*; Zaremba, *Komunizm*.

more frustrated tones, the ZRWM in Warsaw "urgently appealed" to the Ministry for Religious Affairs to intervene, while the local Jewish congregation wrote to the Wrocław president:

> The Congregation of Jewish Faith in Wrocław is the largest in Poland and the residents of Wrocław are practically deprived of participating in services because the large and historic synagogue on Włodkowica 9 — the only one even in the country — has been closed as of August 30, 1966 … The small synagogue on Włodkowica 9 can only house fifty people and thus Polish citizens of the Jewish faith living in Wrocław do not have the possibility of attending Saturday services … The state of things is causing an understandable feeling of dejection among the Jewish residents of Wrocław … In this state of affairs, every reason from a moral, social, and political standpoint exists to justify renovating the only large, historic synagogue with the support and financial assistance of local authorities.[121]

Such appeals fell on deaf ears, and just a year later the verbal assault of 1968 decimated the Jewish community of Wrocław. A handful of religious Jews remained in the city, but many joined the some 13,000 Jews who left Poland in the late 1960s. In 1974, the entire province of Wrocław had just 331 Jews registered with the Jewish congregation.[122] There were doubtlessly more people of Jewish origin than those officially associated with the Jewish community, but needless to say Jewish life in Lower Silesia had all but ended. The synagogue continued to fall into further disrepair and the city officially confiscated it from the Jewish congregation in 1974; what would happen to the building over the next thirty years is the subject in part of the next two chapters.

Wrocław's two Jewish cemeteries suffered from a similar form of neglect and destruction. The oldest one, located on Ślężna street dating back to the 1850s, became the site of intense fighting during the last days of World War II and remained closed after 1945. It fell into a state of severe dilapidation, and in the 1970s city officials tore down the small synagogue chapel located on its grounds. The Jewish Congregation managed the city's other Jewish cemetery, located on Lotnicza street, but it too gradually suffered from neglect and destruction. In 1954, the

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[121] AAN, UdsW, 131/513, KWMW to Wrocław president, March 28, 1967; ZRWM to UdsW, December 5, 1967.

[122] ANN, UdsW 131/514, ZRWM to UdsW, February 18, 1974.

TSKŻ noted that the cemetery was "in a condition of complete neglect."[123] Additional reports on the cemetery pointed out disturbing forms of vandalism: "it was found that countless graves had been dug up with scattered human remains. The graves have been systematically dug up in search of gold teeth and valuables."[124] Warsaw officials responded coolly that the local religious congregation was responsible for the cemetery's upkeep and security.[125] The synagogue chapel located at this cemetery was also torn down, which Wrocław's building department approved and carried out in 1965. The local Jewish congregation simply did not have the financial ability to preserve this building or to maintain its cemetery.

It had no support because an explicit policy of neglect and destruction of Jewish cemeteries had taken hold in Poland after 1945. Local, municipal authorities could have played a more active role in the preservation of Jewish cemeteries, but no policy urging them to do so ever emerged from Warsaw despite the efforts of Jewish leaders to craft one. In 1946-49, the CKŻP and Jewish religious organizations appealed to officials in Warsaw to develop a systematic, regulated approach for the maintenance of Jewish cemeteries. Government agencies in Warsaw discussed drafting a unified policy, but none was ever developed and throughout the 1950s Jewish cemeteries no longer in use fell into the hands of the state as "abandoned" property. In 1964, the Minister of Public Works issued an official memo that sanctioned the closing, liquidation, and redevelopment of these cemeteries, which had been occurring on the local level for the past twenty years. It decreed that all Jewish cemeteries not used by the Jewish community — at least 400 — were to be closed with the possibility of destroying them to make way for local

[123] AAN, UdsW, 22/431, TSKŻ to Ministry of Culture and Art, July 15. 1954.

[124] ANN, UdsW, 22/431.

[125] ANN, UdsW, 22/431.

redevelopment projects.[126] This measure understandably incensed Poland's Jewish leaders, especially the outspoken Rabbi Wawa Morejno. In dozens of letters to the highest authorities of the PPR, he forcefully opposed the legal confiscation of Jewish communal property and the defilement of Jewish cemeteries that he implicitly suggested continued Nazi practices of destroying Jewish property.[127]

Needless to say, state officials were hardly pleased with his "aggressive tone," but did for a brief moment appear willing to shift their policy in light of his concerns and those expressed by other Jewish leaders in Poland and abroad.[128] In the spring of 1965, the Ministry for Public Works drafted a circular that called for the protection of Jewish cemeteries. It recognized that "Hitler's policies of exterminating the Jewish people" had left hundreds of Jewish cemeteries in Poland unprotected. It was now the task of the state to "assure the orderliness of Jewish cemeteries and to keep them in an appropriate condition."[129] This rather stunning document was the first time that Warsaw officials fully recognized the scope of the problem and accepted responsibility for the care of Jewish cemeteries. But the circular never left the desk on which it was written. Its paper trail suddenly and inexplicably ends after being sent to the Department of Religious Affairs. Perhaps financial and logistical concerns intervened, or others in the government, possibly in Moczar's increasingly anti-Semitic Interior Ministry, simply ended the idea before it even had the chance to be implemented. The reason is not apparent, but the Polish government's policy of

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[126] *Dziennik Urzędowy Ministra Gospodarki Komunalnej*, Okólnik Nr. 11, August 3, 1964. In 1966, the Jewish religious congregations had 51 cemeteries and the state 400; IPN, MSW II 7150, memo of MGK, January 17, 1966.

[127] Numerous letters by Morejno are located in AAN, 131/505, and see in particular his fourteen-page letter of August 16, 1965. This letter and others are also reprinted in Kazimierz Urban, *Cmentarze żydowskie, synagogi i domy modlitwy w Polsce w latach 1944-1966* (Cracow: Nomos, 2006), 667-712.

[128] IPN, MSW II 7443, Memo on conversation with Morejno, November 22, 1965. An MGK letter to the UdsW mentions the interventions of "Jewish and Polish representatives living in this country and abroad." AAN, UdsW, 75/32, MGK to UdsW, March 26, 1965.

[129] AAN, UdsW, 75/32, draft of MGK circular.

neglect, destruction, and liquidation continued throughout the 1960s and 1970s in cities such as Wrocław.

III. Building an Antifascist Potsdam

In comparison to Essen and Wrocław, Potsdam had a much smaller Jewish community before the war. In 1925, the community totaled around 600 members. Jewish life centered around the newly built synagogue in the center of Potsdam's old town on *Wilhelmplatz*. Designed in neo-baroque style by J. Otto Kerwien, the synagogue fit almost seamlessly into its surroundings. It was a small and modestly constructed building, but distinctive for its central location on one of Potsdam's main squares. With Berlin so nearby with the largest Jewish community in Germany, Potsdam's community was dwarfed in comparison both in size and in prominence in a city that after World War I had lost its main reason for existing with the collapse of the monarchy. Since the mid seventeenth century, Potsdam's identity had been linked with the Hohenzollerns who chose the city as their second seat of residence next to Berlin. Potsdam city grew substantially over the eighteenth century as it became an important place for the quartering of soldiers. It became not only a *Residenzstadt*, but a *Garnisonstadt*. Potsdam's urban landscape reflected its monarchial and military ties with majestic castles, towering churches, homes, and administrative buildings constructed by some of Prussia's most famous architects such as Knobesldorff and Schinkel.[130]

In April 1945, allied bombs destroyed substantial parts of this architectural past. Of 1,656 buildings in the downtown, 509 were destroyed, 103 partially damaged, 989 unlivable, and just 55 fully intact. The city's main ensemble of its castle, town hall, and church was heavily damaged, while the nearby *Wilhelmplatz* suffered no better: the post office was the only building left untouched. The synagogue, only lightly damaged by the Nazis in *Kristallnacht* given its close proximity to nearby buildings, remained standing, but its roof and interior had been heavily

[130] A historical overview that integrates architecture is Peter-Michael Hahn, *Geschichte Potsdams von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich: Beck, 2003).

bombed. Soviet troops occupied the city and the reconstruction process soon fell into the hands of local SED leaders who struggled to reach a consensus about rebuilding the city. Unlike in Wrocław, urban planners and historic preservationists rarely agreed on the role historic buildings should play in the reconstruction effort. The SED, especially in Potsdam, pushed for a radical transformation of the urban landscape into a "socialist" city, while preservationists in Berlin advocated saving Potsdam's architectural monuments.[131] In the 1950s and 1960s, local SED leaders won the most crucial battles and their approach toward historic preservation sharply diverged from that of the PZPR given the different historical conditions of both countries. While the PZPR portrayed itself as the guardian of the Polish national past, the SED had a more ambivalent approach toward German history as it looked to create a new, antifascist society out of the ashes of Nazism.

The SED faced the obvious dilemma of establishing communism in a country most recently known for Nazism. In contrast to the Soviet Union, the GDR was not the product of a communist revolution, but rather the collapse of a fascist regime and foreign occupation. The absence of a "real" communist revolution meant that the SED had to reach back into German history and find a socialist past that it could use to justify the existence of its state.[132] The SED stressed the earlier traditions of the Communist Party of Germany, idolized German communists like Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, and emphasized the proletarian and antifascist origins of German socialism. But while the SED espoused the "progressive" legacies of German history, it claimed that the formation of the communist state had eliminated the darker sides of the

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[131] A meticulous, year-by-year description of the various plans from 1945-1989 is located in Christina Emmerich-Focke, *Stadtplanung in Potsdam, 1945-1990* (Potsdam: Stadt Werk, 1999). On conflicts between the local SED leadership and historic preservationists, see Campbell, "Resurrected," 49-60 and 203-223.

[132] Eric D. Weitz, *Creating German Communism, 1890-1990: From Popular Protests to Socialist State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeto University Press, 1997), 357-86.

German past such as fascism, war, capitalism, and antisemitism.[133] In order to propagate this dual view of German history, the SED developed a broad cultural program that involved film, literature, monuments, and historiography.[134] Historic preservation and urban reconstruction also formed an important part of this effort, but their use for ideological purposes was complicated. The SED often confronted buildings that reflected some "bourgeois," "militaristic," "fascist," or "capitalist" style. It had to deal with historical buildings that did not easily fit into the image of the German past that it wished to fashion.

In few other East German cities did this dilemma emerge more acutely than in Potsdam. The city's grandiose buildings of Prussian glory and its symbolic ties with the Nazi movement hardly represented a socialist city of workers or an ideal model of antifascism. In 1933, Potsdam's Prussian heritage attracted Hitler to Potsdam when he used the city's famous Prussian church, the *Garnisonkirche*, to celebrate the Nazi rise to power during a grand ceremony dubbed the "Day of Potsdam." Although this use of Potsdam by Hitler was more superficial than historians have often suggested, some communist officials interpreted it as a central legacy that had to be overcome.[135] A new, socialist Potsdam had to emerge from the ruins of the Prussian *Garnisonstadt*, which meant tearing down historic buildings and replacing them with new ones. As the local party newspaper noted, Potsdam's reconstruction was not simply about rebuilding streets, but about transforming the image of the city. Plans for the city's rebuilding aimed to

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[133] See Alan Nothnagle, *Building the East German Myth: Historical Mythology and Youth Propaganda in the German Democratic Republic* (Ann Arbor: University of Michicagn, 1999); Sigrid Meuschel, *Legitimation und Parteiherrschaft: Zum Paradox von Stabilität und Revolution in der DDR, 1945-1989* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992); Martin Sabrow, ed., *Verwaltete Vergangenheit: Geschichtskultur und Herrschaftslegimitation in der DDR* (Leipzig: Akademische Verlagsanstalt,1997).

[134] On literature, art, film, and historiography see Sabrow. For a discussion of monuments, see Brian Ladd, *Ghosts of Berlin*: *Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1997).

[135] On the myth of the Day of Potsdam, see Martin Sabrow, "Der 'Tag von Potsdam.' Zur Karriere eines politischen Symbols," Public Lecture, Potsdam, March 21, 2003. Unpublished manuscript located at http://www.politische-bildung-brandenburg.de/programm/veranstaltungen/2003/mythospotsdamvortrag (last accessed November 1, 2007).

document the victory of Communism over the spirit of "reactionary Prussian-German militarism" and "the brutality of fascism and war."[136]

Although the demand for building a new city was apparent, the actual process of carrying it out languished. Just as in East Berlin, extended discussion about how best to build a "Potsdam more beautiful than ever" delayed the actual implementation of the numerous and often shifting plans that emerged for the city.[137] Part of the problem was that Potsdam was an outerlying city that received less attention than the capital, but numerous conflicts among local SED leaders, cultural ministry officials in Berlin, and architectural experts also stalled reconstruction. Despite a number of architectural competitions drafted over the 1950s, it was not until 1960 that the basic shape for the city's rebuilding finally reached some level of consensus and even then its implementation remained contested into the 1980s.[138] The plan involved widening streets for traffic, adding housing complexes, and a creating a central square that involved both protecting and tearing down a number of war-damaged historic buildings in Potsdam's old town.[139] In the 1950s and 1960s, destruction tended to prevail over meticulous historic reconstruction, but by the 1980s a stronger, albeit still limited concern for Potsdam's historic buildings had taken hold.[140] This chapter discusses mainly the earlier period when Potsdam's synagogue was destroyed along with a number of other historic buildings as local SED officials searched for a way to build an antifascist, socialist Potsdam among Prussian ruins.

One of the central elements in this effort was the need to build a "socialist" city center. In East German urban planning, the *Zentrum* defined above all by a large demonstration square,

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[136] "Großzügiger Aufbau Potsdam," *Märkische Volksstimme*, 14 November 1959, 6.

[137] "Potsdam more beautiful than ever" became the slogan for the reconstruction. "Potsdam wird schooner denn je," *Märkische Volkstimme*, January 5, 1960.

[138] Emmerich-Focke, *Stadtplanung*.

[139] On overview is in Hans-Jürgen Kluge, "Planung des Zentrums von Potsdam," *Deutsche Architektur* no. 9 (1960): 542-47.

[140] Campbell, "Resurrected," 335-40.

named usually in honor of a communist hero, served as the city's central point both architecturally and ideologically: it stood in the heart of the city and was used to stage huge political demonstrations.[141] In Potsdam, SED officials poured much of their energy into plans for a grand *Zentrum* and searched for a local communist leader to honor. But while Potsdam's history had an abundance of Prussian kings to offer, it had little in the area of communist heroes with one minor exception. In 1912, the city elected Karl Liebknecht to the *Reichstag* where he emerged as an outspoken opponent to World War I. Five decades later, Liebknecht's connections to Potsdam became key to the city's reconstruction as SED officials decided to build a *Platz* in his honor located in the heart of the city center.[142] As the local paper explained, "the old Potsdam was once bound with the ideas of reactionary Prussian-German militarism and the brutalities of fascism and war. . . . [But] today we carry on for ourselves the precious legacy of the antimilitarist Karl Liebknecht. . . . The city council has therefore proposed to design Potsdam's city center in the spirit of Karl Liebknecht's legacy."[143]

Although discovering Liebknecht's "local" ties signaled a triumph for the SED's project to build a socialist, antifascist Potsdam, it took years for the city center actually to be built.[144] The party had to figure out first what to do with the city's many historic buildings that, while damaged, still remained prominent markers of the urban landscape. This was not nearly as easy as one might assume in a country that, on the surface, had little regard for historic preservation, but intense conflicts over Potsdam's architectural heritage precluded a simple policy of complete destruction from emerging. Still, by the late 1950s, local party leaders concluded that constructing a socialist Potsdam inherently conflicted with historic preservation. As the city council put it in

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[141] Werner Durth, Jörn Düwel, and Niels Gutschow, *Architektur und Städtebau der DDR* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1999), 58-60 and 72-75.

[142] BLHA, Meeting of November 24, 1958, Rep. 530/1264.

[143] "Großzügiger Aufbau Potsdam," *Märkishe Volksstime*, November 14, 1959, 6.

[144] See the numerous plans in Emmerich-Focke, *Stadtplanung*.

1958, "those buildings that were turned into ruins by the terror attack of Anglo-American bombers in April 1945 will be restored only when they are of extraordinary cultural-historical significance, when they do not interfere with all of the demands associated with developing a modern urban traffic system, and when their reconstruction is economically sound."[145] Key here is the phrase of "extraordinary cultural-historical significance." The SED did not provide a clear definition of the term, but rather assigned "cultural value" to buildings that either complimented, or at least did not hinder, the practical and ideological demands of building the socialist city.

In January 1949, Peter Scheib, the local chairman of the SED in Potsdam, published in the local newspaper an open letter to the mayor, opposing recent plans to rebuild the war-damaged *Stadtschloss,* a majestic eighteenth-century Prussian castle that stood in the heart of Potsdam and was designed by the renowned architect Georg Wenzeslaus von Knobelsdorff. He argued that its reconstruction would be too expensive and would obstruct current plans to widen a street. But Scheib's chief complaint rested on less practical concerns, opposing the reconstruction of the *Stadtschloss* because it symbolized the militaristic and exploitative tendencies of the Prussian past:

> If today there are still people who know their history, then they ought not to forget that this castle of the Hohenzollerns was built with the sweat and blood of the people of Brandenburg and destroyed through the politics of Prussian militarism. If someone still believes today that our manpower is here to rebuild this broken magnificence of the Hohenzollerns then he is mistaken. If someone wants to say that we show no sensitivity to historical buildings, then we only need to remember that no one is demanding that the well-preserved Schloß Sanssouci be destroyed. But the actions of the Hohenzollerns toward our people were not worthy enough to warrant the rebuilding of a destroyed castle. It was not coincidental that Hitler's henchmen implemented their criminal activities in line with the methods of Frederick II. Even today one can still see where the politics of the Hohenzollerns led. Thus we are of the view that in light of these actions there is no reason to rebuild these ruins, but rather it is our duty to clear away this rubble of history.[146]

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[145] PSA, 382, Decision, February 4, 1958.

[146] Peter Scheib, "Offener Brief an den Herrn Oberbürgermeister," *Märkische Volksstimme*, 11 January 1949, 3.

By connecting the *Stadtschloss* to Prussian militarism and fascism, Scheib rejected the notion that the castle could possibly represent a monument of "cultural-historical significance." But not everyone agreed with Scheib's assessment. In the winter of 1949, a flurry of letters from citizens, politicians, and architectural historians strongly criticized his position.[147] Several days later, Potsdam's city council agreed and declared that the "the ruins of the *Stadtschloss* will be preserved" and used for "a museum and picture gallery or for some other cultural purpose."[148] It appeared as if historic preservation had triumphed over Scheib's call to "clear away this rubble of history." And for nearly a decade it had: all of Potsdam's plans included the reconstruction of the *Stadtschloss* until 1956 when top local SED leaders opposed its preservation for the first time. Reflecting Walter Ulbricht's order to construct cheap, prefabricated apartment complexes, they argued that its reconstruction would cost too much money and take away resources from the building of affordable housing.[149]

A year later, the destruction of the *Stadtschloss* appeared increasingly certain. Party officials continued their argument about cost and the need for apartment buildings, but they now employed a more overtly political approach, arguing that the historical symbolism of the *Stadtschloss* prevented it from fitting into the "socialist" city.[150] In the same meeting at which the SED decided to build a "socialist" Potsdam centered on the figure of Karl Liebknecht, it decided that it would be impossible for such a monument of Prussian militarism to remain and suggested that the space created by its destruction be used to build the Liebknecht *Platz*.[151] "The proposal to tear down the ruins of the former *Stadtschloss* was approved in order not to hinder the building of

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[147] A number of the letters are located in BLHA, Rep. 332. Some are also reprinted in Emmerich-Focke, 15-17.

[148] PSA, 480, City council protocol, January 31, 1949.

[149] BLHA, Rep. 530/1271, Notes on the meeting about the *Stadtschloss*, April 23, 1956.

[150] BLHA, Rep. 530/1264, Meeting, November 21, 1958.

[151] Ibid.

a socialist center."[152] When the SED announced its decision to tear down the castle, it received intense criticism from citizens, academics, and politicians who argued for rebuilding the war-torn *Stadtschloss*.[153] East Germany's Institute for Historic Preservation even prepared an extensive report on the castle, concluding that it must be preserved "as the best example of baroque architecture in the German Democratic Republic," but the SED ignored its advice and tore it down in 1960.[154]

In the same year that the SED dynamited the *Stadtschloss*, it moved to destroy Potsdam's *Garnisonkirche*. In 1933, Hitler used this towering, baroque church to open the newly elected *Reichstag* of 1933. With some 100,000 spectators lining the streets of Potsdam, Hitler and Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg paraded through the city before giving speeches at the church, where they both spoke of the "eternal connection" between National Socialism, Imperial Germany, and Prussia.[155] Despite these clear connections to the Nazi past, the *Garnisonkirche* at first did not appear problematic for the SED. In the early 1950s, the SED even assured its religious community that the church would remain intact, and in 1956 the Institute for Historic Preservation officially placed the building under historic preservation.[156] But by 1960 the future of the *Garnisonkirche* increasingly appeared less certain. In a design competition announced that year, the SED for the first time omitted the church's reconstruction from its plans.[157] Throughout

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[152] BLHA, Rep. 530/1264, Decision, November 24, 1958.

[153] See the letters published in Emmerich-Focke, 24-25.

[154] BLHA, Rep. 530/1269, "Argumentation des Instituts für Denkmalpflege zur Wiederherstellung des Stadtschlosses in Potsdam."

[155] Quoted in Werner Schwipps, *Garnisonkirche Potsdam* (Berlin: be.bra-Verlag, 2001), 90. On the "Day of Potsdam," see Manfred Schlenke, "Nationalsozialismus und Preußen. Eine historische Bilanz aus Anlaß der 60. Wiederkehr des 'Tages von Potsdam,'" in Peter-Michael Hahn, Kristina Hübner, and Julius H. Schoeps, eds., *Potsdam: Märkische Kleinstadt, Europäische Residenz*, (Berlin, 1995), 307-26.

[156] PSA, 388, "Objektliste der künstlerischen und historischen Baudenkmale (Einzelobjekte)," Institut für Denkmalpflege, 1956.

[157] "Ideenwettbewerb zur sozialistischen Umgestaltung des Zentrums der Bezirkhauptstadt Potsdam 1960," *Deutsche Architektur* (1960): 534-41.

the early 1960s, it appeared as if the *Garnisonkirche* would eventually be destroyed, but nearly seven years elapsed before the SED finally decided to tear it down. The order came most likely directly from Ulbricht who visited Potsdam that year and indicated to city officials that the church should be removed.[158] Potsdam city's council agreed and cited plans for a new street and the political symbolism of the church as reasons for its decision: "in our opinion, destruction is necessary in order to erase this symbol of Prussian militarism from the memory of local citizens. . . . The former *Garnisonkirche* was designed to be a museum for the military rather than a place of worship. The Day of Potsdam, the alliance between Hitler and Hindenburg, is likewise associated with the former *Garnisonkirche*."[159]

The destruction of these historic buildings signaled the SED's urge to build a new Potsdam, but what is striking is how late they were actually torn down. Although in the 1950s the SED did not put much energy or resources into restoring either one, it did include them in plans for the reconstruction of the city. The party knew it wanted to build a new Potsdam of wide streets, housing complexes, and demonstration squares, but it still could not decide on the exact role the city's Prussian past should play in this transformation. In the end, it went with a rather odd blend of the old and the new. Since 1960, the SED envisioned constructing the "Karl Liebknecht Forum," with its planned ensemble of a new theater, hotel, demonstration square, and monument to the slain communist.[160] This former area of the *Stadtschloß* was to link the garrison city with the nearby, working class district of Babelsberg, but next to it were three historic buildings that were meticulously rebuilt over the 1960s and 1970s: Potsdam's nineteenth-century *Nikolaikirche*, its eighteenth-century *Rathaus*, and the *Marstall*, an elaborate late eighteenth-

[158] Emmerich-Focke, 160.

[159] PSA, 264, Letter to GDR Cultural Ministry, December 27, 1966.

[160] Kluge, "Planung."

century building used originally as a royal stable.[161] This plan took over two decades to materialize. The monument to Liebknecht, which was supposed to form the center of the new Potsdam, was not erected until 1983.[162] In comparison to both Essen and Wrocław, Potsdam's reconstruction was thus nothing less than haphazard. The result was that in piecemeal form Potsdam's urban landscape underwent dramatic changes after 1945. One of the first areas where extensive construction actually did take place was *Wilhelmplatz* where the synagogue was located. In 1958, it became home to one of the city's first housing complexes.

Unlike either the *Stadtschloß* or *Garnisonkirche*, the postwar fate of Potsdam's synagogue was complicated by legal matters. Before the SED could consider what to do with the building, it first had to confront the complex problem of returning property that had been confiscated by the Nazis to its original owner in a city where an official Jewish community (*Gemeinde*) no longer existed. Once an organization of 600 members, Potsdam's Jewish community totaled a mere two after the war.[163] The absence of an official *Gemeinde* did not, however, mean that returning the synagogue was legally impossible. On April 29, 1948, the Soviet Military Administration issued decree Nr. 82 that ordered the "return of property confiscated by the Nazi state to democratic organizations." Although intended mainly for communist organizations, the decree allowed the return of property to "church or humanitarian" institutions.[164] In theory, Jewish communities in the Soviet zone had a legal basis to reclaim their confiscated property, but doing so was hardly easy not least because Soviet authorities demanded that all organizations submit their claims within a mere two months. Since most Jewish communities lacked the organizational resources to file the paperwork themselves, the newly

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[161] These were included in plans for the city since 1961. See, e.g., BLHA, Rep. 406/627, City council plan for city center, August 14, 1961.

[162] "Liebknecht-Denkmal eingeweiht," *Brandenburgische neuste Nachrichten* December 21, 1983.

[163] BLHA, Rep. 204A/2631, Letter from Landesverband to Brandenburg Ministry of Finance, December 27, 1948.

[164] BLHA, Rep. 203/1830, SMA Order Nr. 82, April 29, 1949.

formed State Association of Jewish Communities of the Soviet Occupied Zone (*Landesverband der Jüdischen Gemeinden in der Sowjetischen Besatzungszone*) was forced to do much of the legal work itself. Established in 1947 and directed by the Holocaust survivor Julius Meyer, the *Landesverband* sought the return of as much property as possible, but its own scarce resources severely limited its efforts. Without any Jewish community to assist in gathering the necessary paper work, the *Landesverband* had to submit an incomplete list for the state of Brandenburg and ultimately recovered a mere four properties in the entire region.[165] In 1949, the *Landesverband* was able to secure the return of additional property in Brandenburg, but Potsdam's synagogue and Jewish cemetery were not among those given back.[166]

Thus the city of Potsdam remained after the war the official owner and caretaker of both Jewish sites. At first, city and party officials decided to rebuild the synagogue, which had been damaged during the war and *Kristallnacht*. In an issue commemorating the sixth-year anniversary of Potsdam's destruction, the *Märkische Volksstimme* reported that the reconstruction of the synagogue's façade had begun. The three-sentence caption underneath a picture of the synagogue enclosed with scaffolding read: "The façade of the synagogue on *Platz der Einheit* is being restored. It went up in flames during *Kristallnacht* of 1938. The work of fascist cultural barbarism was only continued by British and American air force squadrons on April 14, 1945."[167] As this short report suggests, the synagogue was seen as part of the larger destruction of Potsdam. It suffered from the "cultural barbarism" of fascism and war just like any other building in the city. Restoring the synagogue would not fulfill any religious purpose (city officials clearly knew that the Jewish community no longer existed); rather its reconstruction would reinforce the antifascist

[165] They were a piece of unknown property in Rathenow, a Jewish community home in Wolzig, the Jewish cemetery in Prenzlau, and a Jewish children's center in Miersdorf.

[166] CJA, 5B1, Nr. 107.

[167] *Märkische Volksstimme*, April 14, 1951, 6.

message of the GDR: the East German state was restoring what the fascists and western allies had destroyed.

The fact that city officials initially supported the reconstruction of the synagogue should be of little surprise. Including the persecution of the Jews in the communist, antifascist project of the SBZ/GDR proved common in the immediate postwar years even if it was not a major priority for SED leaders. Just a month after the war ended, in their now famous "Appeal" (*Aufruf*) to the German people of June 1945, German Communist leaders confronted openly the need for accepting responsibility for the "consequences" of the Third Reich: "awareness and shame must burn in every German person, for the German people carry a significant part of the shared guilt and shared responsibility for the war and its consequences."[168] Commemorations of *Kristallnacht*, scholarly investigations into the origins of German antisemitism, and a dialogue about financial restitution for the Jews built upon the political message of the "Appeal."[169] But such solidarity with Jews did not last long. By early 1952, the situation for East German Jews turned highly repressive as the SED carried out its campaign against "cosmopolitanism." Employing an overtly nationalist tone about the "enslavement and destruction of the German *Volk*," the SED purged a number of Jews from the government and charged them with harboring an international conspiracy against the state.[170] Although the purge ended ten months later during the period of de-Stalinization, it had a lasting impact on the interpretation of the Nazi past that the SED fashioned in East Germany. The attention once given to the Nazi persecution of the Jews in the SBZ vanished after 1952. East Germany's antifascist ideology, with its understanding of fascism as a dictatorial and imperialist form of finance capital, now left little room for the remembrance

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[168] "Aufruf des SK der KPD vom 11. Juni 1945," reprinted in *Dokumente und Materialien zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung* 3, no. 1 (Berlin, 1959), 15.

[169] Herf, *Divided Memory*, 69-105.

[170] Thomas Haury, "'Finanzkapital oder Nation:' Zur ideologischen Genese des Antizionismus der SED," *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* (1996): 149-69; Haury, *Antisemitismus von Links. Antisemitismus von Links. Kommunistische Ideologie, Nationalismus und Antizionismus in der frühen DDR* (Hamburg, 2002).

of the Jews; rather the German Communists—those who fought against Hitler's regime—were commemorated and celebrated. They were the victims of "fascism."[171]

In the wake of the 1951-52 purge, it became increasingly impossible to include the reconstruction of Potsdam's synagogue in the GDR's antifascist interpretation of the past. After 1951 no other mention of the synagogue's rebuilding can be found, and by 1956 Potsdam's city council moved to tear the building down. City officials began discussions with the Institute for Historic Preservation (*Institut für Denkmalpflege*, or IfDP) to destroy three structures on the eastside of *Platz der Einheit* — two eighteenth-century buildings and the synagogue. Citing Ulbricht's demand to increase the number of apartment buildings, the council proposed to use the space to erect a housing complex.[172] The IfDP protested the proposal since it had just put the two buildings next to the synagogue under historic preservation, but it left out any plans for the synagogue. In a letter to the IfDP, Potsdam's chief architect referred specifically to the synagogue to support his argument against restoring all three buildings, suggesting that reconstructing the two eighteenth-century buildings "would also mean that the synagogue . . . would have to be restored as well." Since the synagogue was "in general of no architectural value," he asked the institute to "clarify" its position.[173] The institute responded by proposing to tear down the synagogue, while restoring the two other buildings.[174] City officials rejected this proposal and two years later decided that all three buildings should be torn down. As Potsdam's local party newspaper reported, the decision signaled a clear triumph for the city: "Buildings protected under historic preservation often stand in the way of Potsdam's current building projects. One only has to think of the façade next to the post office, which from the beginning was to remain absolutely preserved . . . [now] this motto will be followed: What's valuable will be preserved! What's of no

[171] Herf, *Divided Memory*, chapters 5 and 6.

[172] PSA, 381, City Council Draft, June 25, 1956.

[173] PSA, 381, Letter to Institute for Historic Preservation, June 27, 1956.

[174] PSA, 381, Letter Potsdam Interior Ministry, May 29, 1957.

value will be cleared away! "[175] What this article referred to as the "façade next to the post office" was Potsdam's synagogue.

How should the destruction of the synagogue be understood? The city's decision must first be seen within the wider context of Potsdam's reconstruction. Similar to the *Stadtschloss* and the *Garnisonkirche*, the city's definition of "cultural-historical buildings" did not include the synagogue. Restoring it would have precluded the city from its aim of building a socialist Potsdam. By the mid-1950s, constructing apartment complexes had become an important ideological element of East German urban reconstruction: it showed the party's commitment to economic equality by providing affordable housing for all citizens. In Potsdam, one of the central areas targeted for an apartment complex was *Platz der Einheit* itself.[176] As the building of a new, socialist Potsdam languished among conflicting ideas, local SED leaders held an internal design competition to increase the number of houses in the city center by 800. The architects Hans-Jürgen Kluge and Hellmut Schulz submitted a design for transforming *Platz der Einheit* into a housing complex with five-story apartment buildings along the eastern side where the synagogue was located.[177] "As throughout the GDR," the local newspaper proudly wrote, "we are also starting here in Potsdam to clear away the ruins and to erect in the spaces of the destruction new, beautiful apartments, stores, and social buildings."[178] Not all, however, greeted the plan with such warm enthusiasm. The project received sharp criticism from experts in East Germany's leading journal on architecture. In a four-page critique, Willi Nitschke pointed out that the design did not fit into any clear concept for building Potsdam's city center and suggested that the area be turned into a park instead. He concluded bluntly that the project "perhaps complies with capitalist

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[175] "Der Wohnungsbau steht weiter im Vordergrund," *Brandenburgische neuste Nachrichten* February 2, 1958, 2.

[176] PSA, 381, Decision of the Potsdam District (Bezirk), February 14, 1958.

[177] PSA, 382, "Erläuterungsbericht zum Bebauungsvorschlag für das Wohngebiet "Zentrum Potsdam" am Platz der Einheit," April 1, 1958.

[178] "Potsdam wird schöner denn je," *Märkische Volksstimme*, May 1, 1960.

building practices, but has nothing in common with the socialist urban architecture and even stands in gross contradiction to it."[179] But he tellingly did not criticize the basic transformation of the space itself into something new that would involve destroying its historic buildings, including the synagogue.

Indeed, the silence surrounding the synagogue's destruction is what is most striking. Extensive archival searches found no attempts by citizens, politicians, architectural historians—not one single person—to save the synagogue. Even the Institute for Historic Preservation, which at the time was arguing vigorously for the protection of Potsdam's historic buildings (including the *Stadtschloß* and *Garnisonkirche*), made no effort to preserve the synagogue, but rather suggested its destruction. In all likelihood, the institute simply did not perceive it to be a site worthy of preservation. In the early postwar years, most conservationists understood historic preservation largely in terms of "age value" and emphasized the protection of buildings usually predating the mid-nineteenth century. Although designed in neo-baroque architecture, the synagogue was built in 1900 and was not placed on the city's list of historic monuments published in 1956.[180] If the synagogue stood any chance of being preserved, it would have to be considered a major *Baudenkmal* (architectural monument). As the city stated directly in discussing plans for *Platz der Einheit*, "those buildings that were turned into ruins … will be restored only when they are of extraordinary cultural-historical significance."[181]

There was, however, another, more subtle reason for the silence. City officials, party leaders, and historic preservationists did not argue on behalf of the synagogue partly because of what it represented—a site of Jewish culture. In 1952, the East German state established the IfDP

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[179] Willi Nitschke, "Einige Bemerkungen zum Teilbebauungsplan für das Stadtzentrum von Potsdam," *Deutsche Architektur* no. 5 (1960): 264. See also Fritz Rothstein, "Wo bleibt der Wille zur stadtbaukünstlerischen Gestaltung?" *Deutsche Architektur* no. 11 (1959): 666.

[180] PSA, 388, "Objektliste der künstlerischen Baudenkmale (Einzelobjekte)," 1956. All the buildings on the list were constructed in the 1600s and 1700s with a few exceptions. The youngest structure was built in 1838.

[181] PSA, 382, City council draft decision, February 4, 1958.

in order to preserve the "cultural heritage of the German people."[182] In an earlier law, the SED defined clearly what it meant by "cultural heritage." It called for the development of "a progressive, democratic culture" that stood in direct opposition to cultural developments in West Germany:

> The provisional government of the German Democratic Republic wishes to point out to the entire German people the development of a new, progressive German culture that demands a resolute and ruthless fight against all manifestations of neo-fascist, reactionary culture and decadence, against the penetration of the cultural barbarism of American imperialism in West Germany. The struggle for this culture requires a determined resistance against all cosmopolitan tendencies …[183]

By 1952-1953, the very cultural heritage that became the epitome of "cosmopolitanism" and "western decadence" was of course Jewish. As the tensions of the cold war increased, the GDR presented itself as the true bearer of German culture and its only defender from the "penetration" of foreign elements. In this sense, historic preservation became a key way for the GDR to emphasize the distinctly "German" aspects of its regime. As the director of the IfDP put it clearly in 1956, "after Germany's collapse and subsequent national catastrophe in 1945, the GDR created the conditions necessary for a powerful development of national consciousness. [Historic preservation] seeks to bring the worker closer to our national tradition by preserving those monuments of our national heritage and thereby arousing love for the homeland (*Heimat*)."[184] Potsdam's synagogue did not fit into this idea of *Heimat*. It fell outside the culturally constructed boundaries of East German historic preservation.

IV. Conclusion

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[182] BA-Berlin (SAMPO), DR 1/8026, Gründung des Instituts für Denkmalpflege. See also "Verordnung zur Erhaltung und Pflege der nationalen Kulturdenkmale (Denkmalschutz) vom 26. Juni 1952," Gesetzblatt Nr. 94, 2 July 1952, *Gesetzblatt der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* (Berlin, 1952).

[183] "Verordnung zur Entwicklung einer fortschrittlichen demokratischen Kultur des deutschen Volkes und zur weiteren Verbesserung der Arbeits—und Lebensbedingungen der Intelligenz vom 16. März 1950," Gesetzblatt Nr. 28, March 23, 1950, *Gesetzblatt der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* (Berlin, 1950).

[184] PSA, 3553, Minutes of the Meeting of the Institute for Historic Preservation conference in Potsdam, October 25, 1956.

In a slim, recently published book, Omer Bartov travels through Ukraine's "vanished" Jewish past, moving from the local to the national as he photographs the pernicious effects of Ukrainian nationalism: destroyed Jewish tombstones and crumbling synagogue walls. It is a fascinating and beautifully photographed book, but it assumes that Jewish space and the "suppressed memory" of the Holocaust can be linked to the broader, analytical concept of the nation. The further one travels east, he concludes, the more exclusive this nationalism appears and the less inclusive national "memories" are of the Holocaust with Germany the most open and Poland somewhere in the middle.[185] In a differently styled book, Jeffrey Herf approaches the similarly framed question of how much or how little the Holocaust fit into German political discussions about the Nazi past in the 1950s and 1960s. He develops a careful and nuanced analysis, but argues that the memory of the Nazi past went in different directions depending on which side of the Berlin Wall one stood. What nationalism is for Bartov, the cold war is for Herf.[186]

This chapter on the immediate postwar decades, along with the two previous ones on the same time period, has attempted to stake out a more nuanced analytical position. Given that the importance of historic preservation in postwar urban reconstruction diverged along the lines of the Oder Neisse border, one might assume that the appropriation of Jewish sites parted sharply along national lines. But just as the earlier two chapters contextualized the role of the cold war, this one has pointed to the interplay of the local and the national in shaping the postwar handling of Jewish space. A broader argument from the different, yet shared histories of Jewish sites in these five urban landscapes lies not only in exclusive nationalism or divergent political cold war cultures, although both remain important and have been emphasized here, but also in the

[185] Omer Bartov, *Erased: Vanishing Traces of Jewish Galicia in Present-Day Ukraine* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

[186] Herf, *Divided Memory*.

ambivalent position of Jewish space in the temporal framing of urban reconstruction and historic preservation in the local built environment.

In the immediate postwar decades, historic buildings played a marginal role in modernist and socialist realist visions of the future city, as the urge to build a new urban landscape paved over traces of the old with important exceptions in the Polish case. Given how quickly the wrecking ball was moving down the streets of most Polish and German cities, the destruction of a synagogue or the neglect of a Jewish district does not seem altogether that exceptional at first glance. But a closer look yields a different conclusion. As Germans and Poles rebuilt their cities, some historic buildings attracted attention from urban planners, historic preservationists, and ordinary citizens for understandable reasons. It makes sense that Potsdam's majestic *Stadtschloss*, Wrocław's towering Cathedral, and Essen's *Münsterkirche* received numerous pleas to save and protect them. They were obvious cultural monuments of architectural importance central to each city's past. In a certain sense, the comparison of Jewish sites with them is admittedly asymmetrical but nonetheless reveals how the remnants of Jewish life did not fit into the postwar transformation of each city's urban identity.

Essen's synagogue, once deeply integrated into the city's urban landscape and identity, became excluded from both after the war. It fell into near complete destruction as the rest of the old town was reconstructed to underpin Essen's economic diversification. Separated spatially from the emerging shopping district by a highway and excluded from the nearby, historically reconstructed *Burgplatz*, the synagogue remained abandoned for fifteen years until city leaders found a way to tie it into the city's identity of postwar consumerism and industrial ingenuity. In Wrocław, the postwar Jewish community was by far the largest of the three cities, but Jewish leaders struggled in vain to find even the slightest amount of support from local and national leaders for the preservation of its synagogue and Jewish cemetery. As historic preservationists and urban planners rushed to preserve "Polish" historic buildings throughout the city, they neglected or destroyed sites connected to ethnic minorities. A number of buildings constructed in

the Prussian period were torn down, but Jewish sites stood out even more than those perceived to be "German." Historic preservationists initiated a discussion about what to do with "German" architecture and some buildings were adapted to fit into the "Polish" urban landscape. The same was simply not the case for the city's Jewish sites, which received virtually no attention from local preservationists and municipal authorities. In Potsdam, no Jewish community ever emerged immediately after the war and the synagogue remained in damaged form for thirteen years until it was torn down in 1958. As local party leaders sought to build a new, socialist Potsdam, the urge for housing complexes, wide streets, and central squares took precedence over protecting historic buildings, but historic preservationists in the GDR, who vigorously opposed the destruction of the city's urban landscape, remained ambivalent about its synagogue.

Put simply, Jewish sites remained outside the temporal perceptions of each city's reconstruction largely because they were Jewish. In both the GDR and PPR, the communist parties embraced an anti-capitalist, anti-cosmopolitan, and anti-Zionist stance that at times was overtly prejudicial against Jews. Although tearing down a synagogue or neglecting a Jewish cemetery certainly cannot be interpreted through the broad lens of anti-Semitism, the obstinance of local and national officials to numerous requests from Jewish leaders at the very least reflects the ambivalence of both communist parties toward sustaining Jewish life in the GDR and PPR. Such an overtly anti-Jewish posture rarely surfaced in the officially philosemitic FRG. A cold war difference is apparent in this sense, but its importance on the local level is debatable. The transformation of Essen's synagogue into an exhibition to house industrial products might not reflect prejudice against Jews, but it certainly uncovers the deep ambivalence of one local community to the absence of Jewish life in a country made *judenrein* by a political party embraced by a not insignificant majority just fifteen years earlier. Jay Howard Geller has uncovered the important history of German-Jewish cooperation at the highest levels of the West German government just after 1945, but this rather dramatic shift did not penetrate deep into

society and politics on the local level during the 1950s.[187] The protests that did emerge in Essen tellingly never broached *the* issue that remained eerily absent throughout the entire time the synagogue remained in damaged form, trees and grass growing out from its charred cupola, pieces of stone falling off its wall onto the nearby street — why no one was around in the first place to take care of the building.

Poles and Germans appropriated and interpreted empty Jewish sites in ways that rarely fell neatly along the lines of the Iron Curtain or the Oder Neisse border. As they sought to rebuild their lives from tattered ruins, the markers of persecution, violence, and hate were gradually paved over, expunged, and neglected not necessarily out of malice but out of a deep sense of discomfort with the fragility of human empathy that these shattered symbols reflected. To say this will provoke ire from some, especially in the Polish case, who will be deeply unsettled by my comparison of the "perpetrators" with the "victims." Although historians must carefully maintain the central role of Berlin in designing the "Final Solution," lest they produce simply bad history, they have in recent years rightly moved beyond such simplistic demarcations as they grapple with the geographic breadth of the Holocaust that made it like no other genocide before or after it. Even in places where Nazi colonialism was extraordinarily brutal — in Poland, the Ukraine, and Belorussia — the local population at the very least displayed little concern about the mass murder of their Jewish neighbors and at the most worked with the German occupiers to kill them.[188] It is precisely this breakdown of Jewish-gentile relations during the war that helps explain the neglect, destruction, and abandonment of Jewish sites in the immediate postwar decades.

As this past became refracted through different present and future concerns starting in the late 1970s, Poles and Germans began to recover the few Jewish sites still left remaining in the

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[187] Geller, *Jews*. See Meng, "Rebuilding."

[188] Berkhoff, *Harvest*; Martin Dean, *Collaboration in the Holocaust: Crimes of the Local Police in Belorussia and Ukraine, 1941-44* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000); Andrew Ezergailis, *The Holocaust in Latvia: The Missing Center* (Riga: Historical Institute of Latvia, 1996); Gross, *Neighbors*; Radu Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania: The Destruction of Jews and Gypsies under the Antonescu Regime, 1940-1944* (Chicago: Ivan Dee, 2000); Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building*; Michlic, *Poland's*.

midst of wider discussions about Jewish-gentile relations during the war. This conversation became at times most intense as one moved, not always west *à la* Bartov, but also east: it was in the PPR of the 1980s that discussion about the Jewish past became particularly intense, more so certainly than in the GDR and to a certain extent even than in the FRG. It is to understanding this striking, indeed rather puzzling shift that is the focus of the next two chapters; puzzling because the desire to preserve those few Jewish ruins left standing, to interpret the physical markers of trauma, is perhaps more of an analytical conundrum than is the urge to erase the shattered symbols of the past. Nowhere else in Europe have (mostly) non-Jews interpreted — with timidity, conflict, circumlocution, intensity — the absence of Jewish life in the wake of genocide as palpably as Germans and Poles have since the early 1980s. And nowhere else in Europe have they reacted to this absence with as obsessive an embrace of "Jewishness" than in Poland and Germany.[189]

[189] Of course, interest in the Holocaust and Jewishness is pan-European, but it is especially strong in Germany and Poland. I hope to illuminate the interplay of the transnational, national and local in the next two chapters.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PRESENCE OF ABSENCE: REDISCOVERING JEWISH SITES

In 2002, the journalist and travel writer Ruth Ellen Gruber published a book about the recent surge of interest in almost anything "Jewish" over the past twenty years in Europe.[1] Involved in the so-called Jewish Flying University in Warsaw in the 1980s and in efforts to bring attention to dilapidated Jewish sites throughout Eastern Europe, she charts the creation of "virtually Jewish worlds" from the dual perspective of observer and protagonist.[2] As she travels across the continent attending Klezmer concerts performed by non-Jews and dining in "Jewish restaurants" in cities without Jews, she uncovers a fascinating and richly textured narrative about the recreation of Jewish culture. She describes one of the most interesting developments of postwar Europe: the paradoxical urge by societies that violently expunged Jews only forty years earlier to now invite them back in through virtual reconstructions of Jewish life. But Gruber largely misses the opportunity to analyze the salient, historical question of *why* this "rediscovery" is taking place in the first place. If she does explain it, she repeats the now traditional argument that 1968ers, with disdain for their parent's supposed silence about the Nazi past, initiated this recovery.[3] She turns to West Germany to support this broad claim and implies that the urge to

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[1] Ruth Ellen Gruber, *Virtually Jewish: Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

[2] Ruth Ellen Gruber, *Jewish Heritage Travel: A Guide to Central and Eastern Europe* (New York: Wiley, 1992).

[3] This generational argument is common, especially in the German historiography and popular perceptions. Jürgen Habermas has described the student protests of 1968 as an attempt to counteract "the collective avoidance of German responsibility for National Socialism and its horrors," while the political scientist Claus Leggewie argues that 1968 signaled no less than the "antifascist reestablishment of the Federal Republic of Germany," (quoted in Gassert and Steinweis, *Coping*, 176) In an extended survey of German debates about Nazism, Atina Grossmann writes that Germany's "memory culture" emerged in the 1960s

"deal" with the Nazi past spread from the German center to the eastern peripheries after the collapse of communism. While writing about Europe, including much on Poland, she makes the Federal Republic out to be the part that explains the whole in a way similar to how Omer Bartov sees the memory of the Holocaust fading ever more away as he moves from Berlin to his final destination of Kiev.[4]

This generational and geographic argument certainly holds some degree of truth, but it has been assumed more than it has been shown to be of compelling analytical value. Indeed, the most recent research on West Germany casts significant doubt on the importance of 1968 for engendering a stronger awareness of the Holocaust. 1968 is seen less now as West Germany's cathartic, redemptive moment when the Federal Republic finally became a "western, liberal country." The generation of 1968 is appearing less often in the staring role as Germany's "savior from its National Socialist past."[5] Dagmar Herzog has convincingly untangled the layered

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propelled in part "by the '68 student movement, whose forceful challenge to the comforts and conventions of West German society was heavily dependent on an accusatory confrontation with the older generations' Nazi pasts," (Eley, ed., *Goldhagen*, 99). Similar views appear in whiggish surveys that take 1968 as a cathartic moment of democratic transformation: Manfred Görtemaker, *Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Von der Gründung bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich: Beck, 2000), and Heinrich August Winkler, *Der lange Weg nach Westen*, 2 vols. (Munich: Beck, 2000). More specialist studies on German memory, although often more nuanced, have placed similar emphasis on generational conflict and 1968 in particular. For example, see Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau*, and Kansteiner, *German Memory*. Recently, two studies have been published that strongly challenge this view. The political scientist David Art has argued that West Germany's "culture of contrition" consolidated in the 1980s in the midst of intense public debate that shaped elite and public opinion, *The Politics of the Nazi Past in Germany and Austria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). A. Dirk Moses has suggested that it was the generation of the 1945ers who have been at the forefront of shaping West Germany's contentious and unstable interpretation of the Nazi past over the past sixty years. This is not, however, simply another generational argument with just different generational actors. The book is really about the contested position of the Nazi past in conflicting intellectual understandings of West German democratization. It shows in rich detail the constant, interrupted, and circumlocutory presence of the Nazi past in German conceptions of republicanism. There is no cathartic moment in this narrative, only a rather docile "political consensus" about Germany's democratic institutions by the late 1980s and early 1990s (Moses, *German Intellectuals*). See also the essays in Philipp Gassert and Alan E. Steinweis, *Coping with the Nazi Past: West German Debates on Nazism and Generational Conflict, 1955-1975* (New York: Berghahn, 2006).

[4] Bartov, *Erased*.

[5] Both quotes from Heinz Bude, "The German *Kriegskinder*: Origins and Impact of the Generation of 1968," in Mark Roseman, ed., *Generations in Conflict: Youth Revolt and Generation Formation in Germany, 1770-1968* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 293.

memories behind the New Left that combined a rejection of the alleged "fascism" of their parents with strong, at times violent anti-Jewish sentiments.[6] Even as 1968ers vigorously critiqued the sexual, political, and ethical positions of the 1950s by subsuming them into the larger, amorphous category of "fascism," they remained acutely ambivalent about their attitudes towards Jews, especially once the "older" generation expressed elation with Israel's victory in the Six Days War. A careful working through the fractured nature of German-Jewish relations simply did not fit into their antifascist politics. The 1968ers raised the issue of the "Nazi past," but what they understood as "fascist" only ambivalently and tangentially related to Hitler's racial campaign of empire building in Eastern Europe that involved the mass murder of European Jewry, Soviet POWs, Poles, Ukrainians, and the Sinti and Roma. Herzog has done an excellent job of challenging the myth of 1968, but now West Germany itself needs to be contextualized. Such an analytical move is necessary because, as Gruber rightly notes, interest in the Jewish past and the Holocaust has become transnational and to some extent pan-European, even if it is most concentrated in Poland and Germany.

This chapter hopes to take up this challenge. Working through the five local contexts of Warsaw, divided Berlin, Potsdam, Essen, and Wrocław, it takes seriously the transnational and cross-political dynamics of this interest in the Jewish past. In a region of almost no Jews, a veritable renaissance of Jewish culture started to take place in the 1980s in the GDR, PPR and FRG. Concern about Jewish space became one of the main modes of expressing this interest. Beginning in the late 1970s, all three countries witnessed a gradual increase in attention to the material traces of Jewish life that intensified over the 1980s and 1990s. This interest in Jewish sites was significant both in terms of its intensity and breadth as well as in its striking departure from the early postwar decades when they were cleared away with virtually no concern. As Germans and Poles started to reflect upon the fact that Jews no longer lived among them, they

[6] Herzog, *Sex*. See also Wolfgang Kraushaar, *Die Bombe im Jüdischen Gemeindehaus* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2005).

became concerned about preserving, protecting, and cataloging Jewish sites. The absence of Jews became present to them as they rediscovered the ruins of Jewish life.

In 1997, a young, non-Jewish Pole, Marcin Kacprzak, living in the small town of Płock not far from Warsaw, wrote a letter to the Polish-Jewish magazine *Midrasz* about his attraction to this absence. "For a long time now," he writes, "I have felt an indescribable connection to the Jews who existed and who are no more. … Each time I passed the old Jewish cemetery or the old Jewish district I felt something … I am not sure what to call it exactly — nostalgia, curiosity, fascination?"[7] He goes on further to explore his allure, saying perhaps it is just "curiosity in a different culture, so mysterious." The absence of Jewish life became present to him as he walked by his town's empty Jewish spaces. It is this growing awareness and interpretation of the emptiness created by the Holocaust — the realization that Jewish life was now gone — that stands at the center of this chapter. I call this interpretation of the Holocaust the "presence of absence." I do not mean here a stable, celebratory endpoint of successful remembrance, but rather the move to mark the absence of Jewish life in the built environment.

Indeed, I am interested in different variations on the central theme of Jewish absence, the contradictory and problematic impulses that inform Polish and German interpretations of the Holocaust and Jewishness. I hope to show that as interpretations of the past slowly shifted to include more openly the fractured nature of Jewish-gentile relations the appropriation of Jewish spaces changed as well. Although there were particular reasons for these shifts in all three cases, I argue that several broader transnational and cross-political factors were at play: local, civic efforts to reappropriate Jewish sites that often stood in uneasy relation to the state; political disputes about the meaning and interpretation of the Holocaust; and international and local pressure from Jewish leaders about the condition of Jewish sites. What is perhaps most striking is that the appropriation of Jewish space unfolded in rather different, conflicting ways in each individual city, indicating that interpretations of the past involve a more complicated dynamic between the

[7] Marcin Kacprzak, *Midrasz* nos. 7-8 (1997), 4.

local, national, and transnational than the current historiographical emphasis on generation and geography shows. More broadly, I suggest that arguably the most penetrating, searing discussion of Jewish-gentile relations during World War II in the 1980s occurred not in West Germany but in communist Poland where the "Jewish problem" became a pressing concern for both the ruling political elite and segments of the opposition in the 1980s. The reason for this difference stemmed from the unusual response of the PZPR to the student protests of March 1968. In perhaps the least expected case, the rediscovery of the Jewish past cannot possibly be explained without Poland's peculiar 1968.

I. Poland's Peculiar 1968

1968 unfolded in Poland in an unusual, even odd way. While student protests in the United States and western Europe fought against imperialism, authoritarianism, and inequality, those in Poland (and Czechoslovakia) aimed at reforming, changing, and possibly ending the communist system. The results of 1968 in capitalist societies, although hardly unified and contested politically afterwards, produced notable socio-cultural changes, even if they were clearly hindered by continued struggles for racial, gender, and sexual equality.[8] In Poland, the results of 1968 were starkly different. Although the brutal repression of the student protests convinced the intelligentsia that communism could never have a human face, the Polish 1968 did not usher in a long-standing challenge to gender, sexual, and racial norms. Instead it engendered the most virulent anti-Semitic campaign of postwar Europe. In a verbal assault with also real, physical effects in terms of forced migration and lose of jobs, the state-controlled media showered Poland with thousands of verbal attacks against Jews in the spring of 1968. Some 13,000 Jews left the country. 1968 marked the last major wave of postwar Jewish emigration from Poland and the virtual end of Jewish life until the collapse of communism two decades later. The PZPR expunged Jews from the Polish nation under the euphemistic banner of "anti-

[8] On the German case, see Herzog, *Sex*. On the American case, see Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *Journal of American History* no. 4 (2005): 1233-63; Kenji Yoshino, *Covering: The Hidden Assault on our Civil Rights* (New York: Random House, 2007).

Zionism."[9] Similar to the dual move made by the SED in 1952-53, the PZPR claimed the antifascist mantle of opposing anti-Semitism just as it embraced anti-Jewish hatred.[10]

The outbreak of the "anti-Zionist" campaign has long been explained by Polish historians as the result of factional divisions within the PZPR precisely at the moment when anti-Zionism in the Soviet bloc reached a feverish pitch in the wake of the Six Days War. Since the end of Stalinization with the return of the once ousted Gomułka in 1956, the PZPR split into two rival factions that disagreed about the pace and extent of reforming communism. The Natolin group, named after the part of Warsaw where it met, opposed sweeping change and was made up mainly of ethnic Poles. Its main opposition, the Puławska group named also after a Warsaw district, tended to be more diverse with both Polish and Jewish communist members and more reform-minded in outlook. By the early 1960s, another, increasingly powerful faction emerged on the scene under the guidance of the communist war veteran General Mieczysław Moczar. Appointed Interior Minister in 1964, Moczar developed a strong base of supporters, known as "Partisans" for their wartime participation in the communist underground, in both the Interior Ministry and in Union of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy (*Związek Bojowników o Wolność i Demokrację*, or ZBoWiD). ZBoWiD became the most powerful veteran organization in postwar Poland with some quarter of a million members, and it strongly advocated for preserving a deeply "Polish" interpretation of the wartime years. Moczar's partisans embraced the ethnically homogenous idea of the Polish nation. In 1968, they were the main attackers of Jews in the press and urged that they be removed from the government. The "anti-Zionist" campaign would not have occurred as

[9] On the central, linguistic element of the campaign, see Michał Głowiński, *Marcowe gadanie: Komentarze do słów, 1966-1971* (Warsaw: Wydawn. Pomost, 1991).

[10] A sophisticated analysis of the continuities and discontinuities between 1968 and earlier forms of right-wing anti-Jewish hatred in Poland is found in Michlic, *Poland's*, chap. 7. See also Mikołaj Kunicki, "Bołesław Piasecki, The Polish Communists, and the Anti-Zionist Campaign, 1967-68," *East European Politics and Societies* no. 2 (2005): 185-225.

intensely and as virulently as it did without the crucial role of Moczar and his allies who remained hostile to even the smallest presence of Jews in postwar Poland.[11]

But factional divisions alone did not instigate Poland's peculiar 1968; a series of international and local events also touched off the fury of hate. Israel's crushing, rapid victory in the Six Days War initiated a flurry of anti-Zionist propaganda throughout the Soviet bloc but none as intense as in Poland. The Polish public reacted positively to the Israeli victory against the Soviet-supported Arab states. Gomułka and Moczar were incensed. The Interior Ministry claimed that Polish Jews were behind the response, and Gomułka suggested that those not loyal to Poland should leave the country.[12] On June 19, 1967, he made his fateful speech that compared those supporting Israel to a "fifth column." "Israeli aggression against the Arab countries has met with applause in Zionist circles of Jews — Polish citizens," he thundered, "we believe that every Polish citizen should only have one fatherland — People's Poland. … We do not want a fifth column to arise in our country."[13] Although some Politburo members listening to the speech were unsettled by its strident tone and successfully demanded that the fifth column reference be removed from published versions of it, Gomułka's words sent a clear signal to Moczar's Interior Ministry that now was the time for its long-awaited expulsion of "Zionists."

A purge of Jews from the state apparatus soon followed, but a full-scale attack did not emerge until a year later in the midst of internal opposition to the regime.[14] In March 1968, students at Warsaw University protested the party's decision to ban a performance of Adam Mickiewicz's famous play *Dziady*. The PZPR responded by brutally attacking a student rally on March 8 in the hope that the protests might end. The effort backfired. The protests spread to other

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[11] Michlic, *Poland's*, chap. 7; Stola, *Kampania*.

[12] Dariusz Stola, "Anti-Zionism as a Multipurpose Policy Instrument: The Anti-Zionist Campaign in Poland, 1967-1968," *The Journal of Israeli History* no. 1 (2006): 182.

[13] Fragments of Gomułka's speech are located in Stola, *Kampania*, 274.

[14] Stola, *Kampania*, chap. 2.

parts of Poland and continued for the next two weeks. The party leadership now searched in desperation for a way to quell them, fearing that this largely student dissent might expand to include workers. The PZPR leadership turned to the growing power base of Moczar and his allies such as Bolesław Piasecki, a wartime fascist turned postwar communist who founded the right-wing, Catholic organization PAX, to unleash a verbal attack against the "Zionist" initiators of the protests. A mere three days after the first riots, PAX's newspaper published an article that explained the outburst of the student unrest as the result of a "Zionist" conspiracy that had corrupted the Polish youth and the intelligentsia, making them turn away from their "patriotic responsibility for the People's Republic."[15] This attack sparked a wave of anti-Jewish articles that turned on Jews from almost every conceivable direction.[16] One of the central lines of assault alleged that international Jewish organizations were carrying out a broad "anti-Polish" campaign by focusing on the breakdown of Polish-Jewish relations during the Holocaust. Based on prejudices against Jews as cosmopolitan, international, conspiratorial, and intrinsically anti-Polish, this attack claimed that "international Zionism" intended to smear "Poland's good name" by imputing upon the Polish nation responsibility for the Holocaust (*zagłada Żydów*). West German and Israeli agents were "slinging responsibility for the murder of six million Jews onto the Polish nation."[17] The "anti-Polish smear campaign of world Zionism" focuses on "the alleged 'crazed' antisemitism in our country and the cooperation of Poles in the extermination of Jews during World War II."[18]

Allies of Moczar from the Interior Ministry and ZBoWiD targeted what they perceived as one of the central components of this "anti-Polish" campaign: Jewish attempts to undermine

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[15] "Do studentów Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego," *Słowo Powszechne*, March 11, 1968.

[16] A collection of some of the most important articles has been compiled by Piotr Osęka, *Syjoniści, inspiratorzy, wichrzyciele. Obraz wroga w propagandzie marca 1968* (Warsaw: ŻIH, 1999).

[17] "Do studentów."

[18] "Wspólnicy antypolskiej histerii," *Sztandar Młodych*, April 4, 1968, 5.

Polish victimization during the war by stressing the singularity of the Holocaust. They responded no less than by challenging and even denying the particularity of the Nazi genocide of European Jewry. Beginning in the summer of 1967, the MSZ and ZBoWiD attacked the alleged "revisionist" work of an article on the "Nazi concentration camps" that had recently appeared in the official, state-published encyclopedia. The article differentiated between "concentration" and "death" camps, acknowledging that Jews were killed systematically in the death camps, but the MSZ and ZBoWiD interpreted this distinction as an attempt to mitigate the persecution of the Polish nation. Orchestrated by "West German revisionists and Zionists," this deliberate effort to exclude Polish suffering from an official interpretation of the past was not merely some technical mistake, but part of a larger Jewish conspiracy against Poland.[19]

This point of attack emerged most forcefully during the PZPR's celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, which awkwardly coincided with the anti-Zionist campaign. The party interpreted commemorations that occurred outside Poland as merely one more weapon in a broad, Zionist arsenal of anti-Polonism. Although some reports published in international newspapers stressed the absence of Polish support for the uprising, they tend to be cautiously worded and focused mostly on the plight of the Jews.[20] Commemorations of the uprising reflected the growing discussion of the genocide of European Jewry in the United States, Israel, and Western Europe.[21] It was, in fact, this emerging consciousness about the

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[19] Piotr Osęka, "Encyklopedyści," *Gazeta Wyborcza* March 6, 1998, 30.

[20] In 1968, the *New York Times* wrote with remarkable calm: "All during the agony of the Warsaw ghetto, the people of the city that encircled it lived more or less normally; there was no general uprising or other major effort to aid those so desperately fighting the Nazis, virtually with bare hands. Not all Poles were passive, of course, nor were all Jews heroes. There were numbers of non-Jewish Poles who lost their lives or risked them to help the doomed thousands in the ghetto. There were even a few Jews who betrayed their own people. But these were the exceptions — on both sides." "Warsaw, 25 Years After," *New York Times* April 19, 1968.

[21] Although the early 1960s witnessed a general surge of interest in the Holocaust, it should be emphasized that throughout the 1950s discussion about the Holocaust — even if that specific term was not used — took place at times, especially in the United States, Israel, and West Germany. See Lawrence Baron, "The Holocaust and American Public Memory, 1945-1960," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* vol. 17, 1 (2003): 62-88; Lawrence Baron and Peter Novick, "Letters to the Editor," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* vol. 18,

singular fate of European Jewry — what was becoming known as the "Holocaust" — that the PZPR found threatening in the midst of its anti-Jewish campaign.[22] The concept of the Holocaust became twisted to conform to the party's self-imagined fears, and now the PZPR challenged more than ever the notion that Jews were the supreme racial enemy in Nazi thinking. In the leading speech of the twenty-fifth anniversary, Kazimierz Rusinek, general secretary of ZBoWiD and major critic of the encyclopedia entry, thundered: "A mistake is being made by those who think and write today that Nazi ideology called for the extermination only of the Jews. Nazism sought the total extermination of Poles, Russians, Jews, and Greeks, the total destruction of France, Italy, and Czechoslovakia, and the total subjugation of the Scandinavians and the English."[23] In this narrative, the party portrayed ethnic Poles as equal victims of the Nazi regime who heroically rescued Jews.[24] A key selection from an article published in *Trybuna Ludu* can perhaps stand for the many that appeared in 1968:

> A common strand in the fight against a common threat gave rise to the ghetto uprising: while perpetrating the horrendous crime of murdering millions of Jews, Nazi Germany intended the same fate for the Polish nation and advanced far in realizing this plan. Only the solidarity established across the wall enabled the undertaking of the ghetto fight; only Polish society and its underground organizations hastened effective aid in the uprising to the ghetto prisoners; only thanks to the heroism of Poles, ready to endanger their own lives, were tens of thousands of people of Jewish descent rescued from death … [25]

Although this passage continues the "Polonization" of the ghetto uprising that had been the hallmark of earlier anniversaries, it departs from previous commemorations in significant ways. If before the ghetto uprising represented the progressiveness of Polish communism, now it reflected

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2 (2004): 358-375; Dalia Ofer, "The Strength of Remembrance: Commemorating the Holocaust during the First Decade of Israel," *Jewish Social Studies* vol. 6, 2 (2000): 24-55; Marcuse, *Legacies*, pp. 199-220.

[22] On the emergence of the term Holocaust, see Zev Garber and Bruce Zuckerman, "Why Do We Call the Holocaust "The Holocaust"? An Inquiry into the Psychology of Labels," *Modern Judaism* vol. 9, 2 (1989): 197-211; Dalia Ofer, "Linguistic Conceptualization of the Holocaust in Palestine and Israel, 1942-1953," *Journal of Contemporary History* vol. 31, 3 (1996): 567-89.

[23] "Zbrojny czyn warszawskiego getta — integralną częścią ogólnopolskiej walki z okupantem," *Trybuna Ludu*, 19 April 1968.

[24] "Gdy Polacy przelewali krew pod gettem …" *Sztandar Młodych* April 3, 1968, 3.

[25] "W 25 rocznicę. Getto walczące," *Trybuna Ludu* April 19, 1968, 3.

the general benevolence of Polish society as a whole, which had bravely sacrificed for the good of others in the face of its own extermination. The image of Poles as equal victims and as heroic resisters against Nazi anti-Jewish policies became the leitmotif of the twenty-fifth anniversary commemorative events.

This attack against the western, Jewish "Holocaust" might seem like a predictable effect of the 1968 campaign, as merely one more additional consequence of an antisemitic propaganda machine that went after anything associated with Jews. It might not be surprising, but this assault on the Holocaust reflected a much deeper anxiety about memory than explaining it as Orwellian politics allows.[26] The 1968 anti-Zionist campaign was a linguistic assault that turned precisely on the kind of discursive and symbolic politics that shaped the interpretation of the past. The perceived challenge that the "Holocaust" posed to Polish martyrdom and resistance mattered greatly to the leadership of ZBoWiD and the Interior Ministry. It was not some trivial issue; it was more than merely a "policy instrument."[27] The "Holocaust" had to be taken seriously and confronted vigorously because the stakes appeared high — no less than Poland's honor and reputation. Moczar's "partisans," who had actively opposed the Nazis during the war, were privy to plenty of information about the everyday ways that ordinary Poles became entangled in the persecution of the Jews. Some were surely involved themselves. They deeply feared this past because it revealed the fragility of their own empathy. They feared this past because the Holocaust challenged precisely the heroic interpretation of the war that they had been fashioning and celebrating for the past two decades. They were afraid. They were anxious. They were paranoid. They responded by expelling the physical and mnemonic traces of Poland's Jews in a verbally violent attack that pushed some 13,000 Jews out of the country.

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[26] Although I find Stola's work insightful, he tends to over emphasize the importance of the communist, Orwellian bureaucratic monolith in explaining the eruption of hate. Stola, *Kampania*; Stola, "Anti-Zionism."

[27] Stola, "Anti-Zionism." He does not focus specifically on this attack against the Holocaust, but sees the anti-Zionist campaign broadly speaking as a "policy instrument."

II. Rediscovering Poland's Jewish Past

But their actions had deep consequences for the PPR. 1968 proved to be one of the major turning points in postwar Poland much more so than in either the GDR or FRG. It convinced most of the country's intellectuals that communism was no longer the future and many now turned toward opposing the regime in the 1970s. They sought to create alternative spaces of power and to deal with weighty issues that they believed had to be discussed in order to build a better, more humane, post-1968 Poland. Polish-Jewish relations were one of the most important of these issues. The anti-Zionist campaign awakened among Poland's intelligentsia the "Jewish problem" and stimulated an intense debate about Polish-Jewish relations that helped to destabilize the regime. This interest in the Jewish past started first among a particular group of lay, Catholic intellectuals without whose efforts the debates about Polish-Jewish relations in the 1980s would not have taken place as intensely as they did.

The lay Catholic intelligentsia formed a distinct milieu in postwar Poland. Writing in three main lay Catholic publications, *Tygodnik Powszechny* (Universal Weekly), *Znak* (Sign), and *Więź* (Link), intellectuals such as Jerzy Turowicz, Stanisław Stomma, Antoni Głobieu, Zbigniew Herbert, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Bohdan Cywiński, and Jerzy Zawieyski emphasized the shared values of openness, dialogue, and tolerance.[28] With only a few women among their ranks, they continued the prewar tradition of the salon as a male-dominated space of intellectual exchange and debate. Centered mainly in Cracow and Warsaw, they became known as the Znak group after both the publication and the small parliamentary faction that was allowed to enter the Sejm after the reforms of 1956 during de-Stalinization.[29] This group did not have much political power and accepted the permanent reality of the communist state, forming a peculiar form of semi-

[28] Christina Mannetti, "Sign of the times: The Znak circle and Catholic intellectual Engagement in Communist Poland, 1945-1976," (Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 1998).

[29] I will call them either the Znak group or lay, open Catholic intellectuals. The second formulation is probably the most accurate: they were intellectuals outside the official Church hierarchy who usually approached issues with the aim of stimulating dialogue.

opposition that worked within the system and at times absorbed its ideological commitments.[30] One might be tempted to call this group "liberal" or "progressive." On some issues, such as what constitutes "Polishness," they were to a large extent. Most tended to argue for a more open sense of Polish national identity, while also accepting the political importance of the post-1945, ethnically homogenous Polish nation.[31] But on other issues, like gender and sexual equality, they were much more traditional. They were liberal in John Stuart Mill's sense of the word, coalescing around the ideas of openness, dialogue, and the free exchange of ideas.

They also came together as a relatively cohesive group because of the similar social background that a number of them shared. Intellectuals of Znak usually came from the upper echelons of prewar Polish society. They represented the surviving remnants of Poland's nobility, or *szlachta*, that had long dominated the ranks of the intelligentsia, but now was fading in importance after the war and the efforts of the communist regime to build a new intellectual elite from the working class and peasantry. An important core of the group — Turowicz, Stomma, Gołubiew, and Herbert — came from the *kresy*, the eastern borderlands that Poland lost to the Soviet Union after 1945.[32] This area, made up of a panoply of ethnic, religious, and political groups, was more diverse than the rest of Poland but its "pluralism" became mythologized after the war.[33] Gołubiew claimed that those who lived in the *kresy* were more likely to identify with the seemingly innocuous "state" than with the pernicious "nation," while Herbert mournfully looked back on the absence of Poland's multiethnic borderlands: "Poland without Jews, without

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[30] On this "neo-positivist" acceptance of the communist state, see Mannetti, "Sign of the Times," 168-182. Neo-positivism built upon the positivist tradition of Polish patriotism that developed after 1863 in opposition to the romantic demand for resistance. Positivists emphasized the need for "organic work" to strengthen the nation from within in the face of the failed 1863 rebellion against Russian rule.

[31] This duality emerges perhaps most clearly in the group's relationship toward Germany as Annika Frieberg has shown in "The Project of Reconciliation: Journalists and Religious Activists in Polish-German Relations, 1956-1972," (Ph.D diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2008).

[32] Manetti, "Sign," 45.

[33] Poles were, in fact, a minority in the *kresy* making up only one third of the population.

Ukrainians, without Armenians, as it was in Lwów ... stopped being Poland."[34] Few mentioned that the *kresy* witnessed some of the bloodiest attacks against Jews and Ukrainians. They seemed to have forgotten that past altogether perhaps now because in a post-1945 Poland they could. With Poland's minority "problem" gone after the Nazi genocide of the Jews and the removal of Germans, Lemkos, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, and Belorussians, one could think of "pluralism" without it actually causing any serious challenges to the sustenance and integrity of the Polish nation.

Still, these nostalgic imaginations of a cosmopolitanism that never existed reveal the general importance of a more pluralistic national identity for this group that contested the most exclusivist tendencies of Roman Dmowski's anti-Semitic, ethnic nationalism.[35] In 1945, Jerzy Turowicz, editor of *Tygodnik Powszechny*, forcefully rejected past attempts to "reconcile Catholicism with ideological positions such as totalitarianism, extreme nationalism, and racial anti-Semitism."[36] In another essay, he underscored that "it would be a mistake to claim that the [Church's] role was always positive, that in this picture there are no shadows." He criticized the nationalization of Catholicism, suggesting that the notion of the "*Polak-katolik*" included "potentially or actually a certain element of intolerance or discrimination."[37] Turowicz was attacking here the exclusivist ideas of Dmowski who believed that any attempt to "dissociate Catholicism from Polishness and to separate the nation from its religion and the Church, is to destroy the very essence of the nation."[38] At the same time, other leading Znak intellectuals, such

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[34] Antoni Gołubiew, "Tutejsi," *Znak* no. 10 (1970): 1313; Jacek Trznadel, *Hańba domowa. Rozmowy z pisarzami* (Paris: Instytut Literacki, 1986), 191.

[35] On Dmowski's conception of the nation, see Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate*.

[36] Jerzy Turowicz, "Sprawa katolicyzmu," *Tygodnik Powszechny*, no. 11 June 1945.

[37] Jerzy Turowicz, "1000," *Tygodnik Powszechny*, April 10-17, 1966; reprinted in Turowicz, *Kościół nie jest łodzią podwodną* (Cracow: Znak, 1990), 232 and 242.

[38] Roman Dmowski, "Kościoł, naród, i państwo," reprinted in *Roman Dmowski. Wybór Pism*, vol. 4 (New York: Instytut Romana Dmowskiego, 1988), 99.

as Stanisław Stomma and Stefan Kisielewski, absorbed the reality that Poland had become a homogenous nation-state after war, genocide, and expulsions. These intellectuals were, in short, by no means imagining a post-nationalism of supra allegiances.[39]

But they were still clearly a different voice in postwar Poland. Most members of Znak — although by no means all — generally opposed most of the positions advocated by PAX, a rival Catholic organization that forged closer ties with the communist state and strongly embraced the anti-Semitism of Dmowski. In 1947, PAX came into existence thanks to the energy and persistence of Bołesław Piasecki, an eclectic figure who began his political career before the war as the leader of a small fascist group called the National-Radical Movement and ended it in support of the communist regime. Captured after the war for battling the Soviets in eastern Poland, he convinced his captors that he could garner support for the regime from Catholics and members of the radical right. He established PAX to bridge Marxism and Catholicism, to unify believers and non-believers under the banner of God, nation, and socialism. If there were two ideas that remained consistent in Piasecki's political biography, it was his strong belief in the *Polak-katolik* and anti-Semitism. He embraced with fervor Dmowski's idea that Poland should be a country made up only of Poles and his hatred of Jews was infamous in postwar Poland.[40]

The conflicting worldviews of PAX and Znak collided most sharply in 1968. Piasecki became one of the "drum majors" of the "anti-Zionist" campaign with articles in his newspaper *Słowo Powszechne* (The Universal Word), which launched the opening salvo of the linguistic assault.[41] Meanwhile, the Znak group, represented in parliament by six members, moved at times in a different direction, if cautiously and tepidly. In June 1967, the group reacted to the PPR's

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[39] As Frieberg has noted, this led at least some Znak intellectuals, Stomma especially, to embrace Dmowski's understanding of European geopolitics as made up of single nation-states rather than multinational empires or kingdoms. Frieberg, "Project of Reconcialition," 67.

[40] Kunicki, "The Red and the Brown;" Kunicki, "The Polish Crusader: The Life and Politics of Bolesław Piasecki, 1915-1979," (Ph.D diss., Stanford University, 2004).

[41] Ibid., 212-22. See also chap. 6 of his dissertation. "Do studentów."

critical response to the Six Days War by drafting a parliamentary interpellation that criticized the government for siding with the Arab states without recognizing the right of Israel to exist as a state. The draft implied that Israel deserved special consideration, especially from Poland "where Jews lived together with us under the same roof for centuries and where in 1939-1945 together we suffered persecution."[42] But these courageous words never left the table on which they were drafted. Just before the interpellation was to be sent to the PPR's foreign minister, the Znak group pulled it. Such criticism was probably too politically risky with news coming from Moscow that the Soviet bloc had officially condemned Israel and would soon end diplomatic relations with it.

The Znak group did not, however, buckle under pressure a year later when it came to the PZPR's brutal suppression of the student protests in March 1968. It drafted another interpellation and submitted it this time. The measure put forward two direct, frank questions for the state to answer: "What does the government intend to do to quell the brutal actions of the police and the ORMO against the student youth and to find out who is responsible for this brutal treatment of the youth? What does the government intend to do to offer a substantial answer to the burning questions of the youth, which are also nagging questions for a broad section of public opinion, concerning the democratic rights of citizens and the cultural politics of the government?"[43] In the highly politicized environment of 1968, these were bold and even risky words spoken from a group that had much to lose and almost nothing to gain by expressing them. The students protesting on the streets were hardly part of the lay Catholic intellectual milieu. Most of them identified themselves with the secular Left that at this point wanted little to do with the Church. Znak bravely stood up for them at a dire moment, but its intervention throughout the spring of 1968 was limited in one crucial respect. The parliamentary group remained completely silent about the anti-Zionist campaign. Its silence was understandable at first. The Znak interpellation

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[42] Interpellation, June 8, 1967 (not sent), reprinted in Andrzej Friszke, *Koło posłów "Znak" w Sejmie PRL 1957-1976* (Warsaw: Wydaw. Sejmowe, 2002), 475-77.

[43] Interpellation, March 11, 1968, reprinted in Friszke, *Koło*, 488.

came out on the exact same day that Piasecki's newspaper published the opening attack of the verbal hate that showered Poland in the days to come. Although the anti-Jewish position of Moczar and his allies would have been clear to anyone, no one could possibly have imagined the virulence of hate that was to come. But Znak's silence is much less understandable a month later during a parliamentary debate that took place about its interpellation. The parliamentary session was organized to allow the government to respond formally to its questions and allow Znak to elaborate further on its views. By now the anti-Zionist campaign was at its peak and even Znak was being attacked for its "Zionist" leanings. "Today the [Znak] group departs even further from the interests of Poland," thundered politburo member Zenon Kliszko, "it stands on the side of the Zionist and revisionist elements who have inspired and organized this entire provocation."[44]

But the Znak group remained entirely silent about these absurd charges and the hundreds of Jews now fleeing from Poland. Znak debated long about the official response it was to deliver in the Sejm. Three days before the parliamentary session, it met in the apartment of Jerzy Zawiejski, a prominent writer and Znak member who was to deliver the response. Zawiejski read his remarks with great tension and energy. At the end, he even collapsed and started sobbing.[45] Although he focused mainly on defending the writers under attack by the regime, he briefly touched upon the anti-Zionist campaign. Everyone approved of his speech with the exception of Janusz Zabłocki who suggested removing those parts concerning the party's attacks against Jews. Zabłocki had earlier signed the Znak interpellation, but now had second thoughts as he grew closer to the Moczar camp and envisioned creating a new, separate lay Catholic group that would foster closer church-state ties.[46] He soon left the Znak group, but his opposition had the effect he

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[44] *Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z 19 posiedzenia Sejmu PRL*, April 9, 1968, 115.

[45] Andrzej Friszke, "Trudny egzamin. Koło Posłów Znak w okresie Marca 68," in Marcin Kula, Piotr Osęka, and Marcin Zaremba, eds., *Marzec 1968. Trzydzieści lat później* (Warsaw: PWN, 1998), 192.

[46] Zabłocki approached the Moczar camp already on February 10, 1968. In 1968, he and his allies started a new journal, *Christian in the World*, that was connected to the Center for Documentation and Social

wanted. The part about the anti-Zionist campaign never made it into Zawiejski's speech delivered in the Sejm on April 10. Perhaps Zawiejski hoped to ameliorate the rift that had now emerged in Znak, or perhaps he did not want to offend Gomułka whom he clearly admired, even going so far to praise him in his speech: "I see him as a dramatic figure with a sense of responsibility not only for the Party, but for the Polish nation."[47] As a member of the State Council from 1957 to 1968, Zawiejski still wanted to believe, naively and tragically in April 1968, that the PZPR was interested in reforming communism.[48] He could not have been more wrong. He left the Sejm utterly defeated. None other than Piasecki replaced him on the State Council on April 11, one day after his speech, in part as reward for being such a loyal spokesman against "Zionism." Zawiejski committed suicide in 1969.

The other members of Znak also made no mention of the anti-Zionist campaign with two exceptions. At the end of the parliamentary session, Konstanty Łubieński, who soon allied with Zabłocki and left Znak as well, stood up and remarked: "Like all Poles, we condemn the campaign carried out abroad accusing Poles of participation in the extermination of the Jews, but I remind you, honorable Ladies and Gentlemen, that the only book containing documentation about Poles offering help to Jews during the occupation came out precisely in our publishing house 'Znak.'"[49] Znak was being portrayed as a patriotic defender of Poland's good name, bravely fighting against Jewish anti-Polonism that the PZPR largely invented. The other voice came from the now defected Zabłocki. In May 1968, he submitted an article to be published in *Więź* that the editorial staff rejected because it embraced elements of the party's anti-Jewish

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Research, a catholic organization founded by Zabłocki that opposed Znak and its growing ties with the opposition.

[47] *Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z 19 posiedzenia Sejmu PRL*, April 9, 1968, 167.

[48] On Znak's position toward communism, see Mannetti, "Sign," esp. chap. 2.

[49] *Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z 19 posiedzenia Sejmu PRL*, April 11, 1968, 275. He is referring to Władysław Bartoszewski and Zofia Lewinówna, *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej. Polacy z pomoca Z ydom, 1939-1945* (Cracow: Znak, 1966).

rhetoric. Zabłocki seemingly approved of Znak's silence about the anti-Zionist campaign when he asked rhetorically: "Did someone not care enough about it to include it in our interpellation, putting us in the role of fighting against "anti-Zionism," a battle that we would be waging ourselves about an issue that is not our issue?"[50] He then went on to say that the state should not be led by "people who feel no connection with any fatherland or whose solidarity with another fatherland puts them above solidarity with Poland."[51] In the end, the Znak group not only did not officially speak out against the anti-Zionist campaign but two of its members actually absorbed and propagated elements of it.

These remarks and the general silence of Znak during the most virulent outbreak of anti-Jewish hatred in postwar Poland are striking. Znak conceived of itself at least as offering an alternative intellectual tradition to PAX that involved at times directly engaging with the problem of anti-Semitism. In 1957, Jerzy Turowicz published an article that explored the connections between Christianity and anti-Semitism, while three years later Tadeusz Mazowiecki wrote a lengthy, penetrating analysis of anti-Jewish sentiments in postwar Poland where he argued that the "struggle against a climate that is conducive to anti-Semitism is a struggle for human dignity."[52] And yet this universal message simply fell apart at the very moment when anti-Semitism in Poland reached its height, precisely when the dignity of the 13,000 Jews who left Poland needed to be defended the most. A few Znak members obviously did not share Mazowiecki's universalism as they absorbed the anti-Semitism around them — the anti-Zionist campaign was not their "issue" — but he and others like him probably did. Perhaps they were simply surprised by the virulent outbreak of anti-Semitism, or were distracted by the brutality of

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[50] Quoted in Friszke, "Trudny," 199-200.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Tadeusz Mazowiecki, "Antysemityzm ludzi łagodnych i dobrych," *Więź* no. 5 (1960); reprinted in *Pod wspólnym niebem. Tematy polsko-żydowskie*, *Więź* special issue (1998), 32. An English translation of this issue also exists, *Under One Heaven*. Jerzy Turowicz's essay is reprinted in his *Chrześcijanin*, 91-99.

the state against the student protesters. Or perhaps they acted out of pure political calculation. As political players who accepted the permanent reality of the communist state in exchange for their voice being heard, they probably knew that opposing the anti-Zionist campaign would surely end their careers or at the very least hamper them.

Whatever the possible reason, Znak's conflicted involvement in 1968 proved pivotal for the growing interest in Polish-Jewish relations in the 1970s and 1980s. Although few Znak members have ever reflected on their failure to react to the anti-Zionist campaign, I would argue that the surge of interest in the Jewish past that began just a few years after 1968 among the lay, Catholic intelligentsia stems in part from a sense of shame that Znak remained silent about an issue so salient to its own imagination of a better Poland. When it counted most, its noble words were nothing more than words. A desire to discuss the "Jewish problem" was a deeply internal matter that involved not just the Church's long history of anti-Jewish bias, but also its most recent failings.[53] The entanglement of Znak in 1968 also had another, broader effect. It pushed Poland's religious and secular, left-leaning intellectuals into dialogue with each other. Although both intellectual groups crossed paths in publications such as *Tygodnik Powszechny* and *Znak* in the 1950s and 1960s, they still kept to their own intellectual circles until after 1968 when they came to realize that they had been targeted by the regime for the common values that they shared.[54]

Two towering intellectuals, the Catholic writer Bohdan Cywiński and the leftist, secular dissident Adam Michnik, were central to advancing this alliance. In 1971, Cywiński published his landmark book, *Genealogies of the Indomitable*, that urged the lay Catholic intelligentsia to join

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[53] The Church hierarchy, although expressing deep concern about the response of the state to the student protests, also remained publically silent about the "anti-Zionist" campaign. Jerzy Eisler, *Polski rok 1968* (Warsaw: IPN, 2006), 633-710.

[54] In saying "groups," I do not want to imply a false sense of stable cohesiveness. As seen with Znak's own internal divisions in 1968, the progressive, lay Catholic intelligentsia was hardly united. Secular, leftist-leaning intellectuals were perhaps slightly less internally divided, but their relationship to Solidarity was complicated given the heterogeneity of the movement itself. Many of them were members and central architects of it, but they do not necessarily represent the "opposition" or "Solidarity" as a whole. Indeed, just after the collapse of communism, the political divisions of Solidarity became greatly apparent. See David Ost, *The Defeat of Solidarity: Anger and Politics in Postcommunist Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

with the secular Left in fighting for the common values of dialogue, tolerance, and pluralism. Four years later, Adam Michnik came from the other side and attempted to convince the secular Left to embrace progressive Catholics such as Cywiński, Turowicz, and Mazowiecki. In *The Church and the Left*, he argued strongly that when it counted most the intellectuals of the Znak group were the only ones who had the courage to defend the secular Left in 1968. Michnik's book stands as one of the single most important intellectual texts of the Polish opposition, even if it is written with an air of naïve exuberance as he shows the most progressive sides of the Church for his suspicious, secular audience (he completely overlooks Znak's silence on the anti-Zionist campaign). Michnik shaped the intellectual core of Poland's version of the "anti-politics" that the Hungarian György Konrád first formulated.[55] In dialogue with fellow opposition intellectuals Leszek Kołakowski and Jacek Kuroń, he advocated for creating a strong, engaged civil society that would stand outside and against the politics of the state.[56] This alternative politics, like the New Left on the other side of the Iron Curtain, located power in civil society rather than the state. It wanted to create an empowered, engaged, and independent citizenry involved in an open, democratic dialogue that aimed for a pluralistic and tolerant polity, even if it did not always achieve that goal (there were few feminists among the male-dominated opposition leadership).

A component of this alternative politics involved thinking about what kind of society should exist in Poland, about, in a phrase, the very meaning of what it meant to be Polish. This working through the different shades of identity brought the religious and secular intelligentsia into an extended discussion about Poland's relationship with its minorities, including its entangled and fraught history with Jews, Germans, and Ukrainians. In *The Church and the Left*, Michnik advocated for learning about Poland's "not always glorious past," while embracing its

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[55] David Ost, *Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics: Opposition and Reform in Poland Since 1968* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990).

[56] Adam Michnik, "A New Evolutionism," in *Letters from Prison and Other Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 135-148.

"pluralism, its variety."[57] In 1981, Jan Józef Lipski, founder of KOR and a prominent intellectual, published a penetrating essay about Polish nationalism with the searing title of "Two Fatherlands – Two Patriotisms: Remarks on the National Megalomania and Xenophobia of Poles."[58] Widely circulated in the clandestine press, the article called for a patriotism that followed the humanistic values of Christianity with its basic creed to "love our fellow man." Lipski strongly criticized Poland's hatred toward Germans, Russians, Czechs, and Ukrainians, but his prose became particularly impassioned when it came to anti-Semitism. Moving broadly from the Middle Ages to 1968, he analyzed the presence of anti-Jewish hatred in Poland and the general weakness of opposition to it with deep regret.

Such critical sentiments were all the more powerful after the hate of 1968. "For me and my generation — people born after the end of the war — the Jewish problem did not exist," wrote the essayist and Warsaw University professor Marcin Król. "Today, I do not know if it was good or bad, but until 1967 I was not aware that Jews or so-called "people of Jewish desent" are among my professors, colleagues, and good friends. The Jewish problem, the problem of Polish-Jewish relations, was forced upon us and it was because of March 1968 that I decided to participate in the work on the Jewish cemetery in Warsaw a few years after the March events."[59] Król points to a generation born after the war that had no lived experience of Jews and were young during the period of Stalinization. He is right to stress that this generation became interested in the Jewish past more eagerly than their parents, but young people were hardly the only ones. Some of the leading figures in rediscovering the Jewish past were born in the interwar years such as Jerzy

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[57] Adam Michnik, *The Church and the Left*, trans. David Ost (Chicago: University of Chicago Pres, 1993), 151 and 153.

[58] Jan Józef Lipski, *Dwie ojczyzny--dwa patriotyzmy: uwagi o megalomanii narodowej i ksenofobii polaków* (Warsaw: Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1981).

[59] Marcin Król, "Czy istnieje pokolenie marcowe?" *Więź* no. 3 (1988): 7.

Turowicz, Jerzy Woronczak, Jerzy Tomaszewski, and Jan Jagielski.[60] What seems more salient is that 1968 shattered the social acceptance of the fact that Jewish life in Poland no longer existed. The absence of Poland's large Jewish community had become assimilated into everyday life after the war; it had become so normal, so banal that it rarely received much thought, reflection, or discussion. That is hardly to say that Jews were not discussed or that there was no "Jewish problem" in the early postwar decades, but that the banality of the absence of Polish Jewry eventually became less banal only after 1968. The absence of Polish Jewry gradually became present as Poles sought out alternative interpretations of Jews other than the singular conception offered by the regime: Jews as non-Polish Zionists who after heroically being saved during the war by Poles became traitors by first imposing a brutal, Stalinist dictatorship on them and then by slandering Poland's good name with accusations of anti-Semitism. Working through the linguistic hate of 1968 became part of the anti-politics of the opposition.

The process of working through it started out in rather small ways immediately after 1968. Already in 1971, members of the Club of the Catholic Intelligentsia (KIK) in Warsaw organized the first annual "Week of Jewish Culture." The event hoped to provide a better "understanding of a rich and yet poorly known culture" that "lived among us for centuries," but whose "gigantic tragedy in the last war we witnessed."[61] It offered lectures on a host of different topics such as Jewish religious practices, National Democracy, the Kielce pogrom, and Christian-Jewish relations. By paying attention to "forgotten or distorted issues," the event sought to contribute its own part to building a "new, rich, and diverse society." It hoped to "defend" a

[60] In this sense, Paweł Śpiewak's contemporary observation about the centrality of the "new generation" in the rediscovery of the Jewish past is only partially convincing. Śpiewak, "Dlaczego Żydzi?" *Res Publica* no. 2 (1987).

[61] AAN, KIK, 212, undated description of "Week of Jewish Culture."

cultural heritage from being "cut off from our own history" and from being excluded by a "homogenous and bland conception of the nation."[62]

As these small efforts to rethink the Polish-Jewish past were emerging, a number of Poles who now increasingly identified themselves as Jewish also became interested in joining the dialogue with their co-religionist (most of these "new" Jews articulated their Jewishness through religion).[63] These Jews, who knew as little about Judaism as their Catholic friends, rarely thought about their Jewishness until 1968. "In the first dozen or so years of my life," Stanisław Krajewski explained, "I knew absolutely nothing about my Jewish background." A leading voice of self-described "Poles trying to be Jewish," Krajewski pointed to 1968 as the "turning point:" "That made me aware that I am of Jewish origin, that it counts, and that I can be beat up for it."[64] He and others like him became intensely interested in learning more about Judaism. In 1979, they started what became known as the Jewish Flying University (*Żydowski Uniwersytet Latający*, or ŻUL) in the spirit of the partition-era underground "Flying University" that KOR revived two years earlier.[65] ŻUL was the first independent Jewish grouping in the PPR and had strong connections to the opposition. Held usually in private apartments and involving as many as one hundred people, ŻUL sponsored lectures about Jewish history, culture, and religion in an attempt to discuss issues either little known by its participants or ones that were believed to have been falsified by the academic establishment.

A sense of loss shaped much of this growing rediscovery of the Jewish past among both Jewish and non-Jewish Poles. As Krajewski observed, "I would like to say that the absence of Jews leaves me, for one, with a sense of irreplaceable loss. I voice here not just a sentiment in

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[62] AAN, KIK, 212, "Dlaczego Tydzień Kultury Żydowskiego?" 1976.

[63] For a contemporary account of this rediscovered Jewishness, see Irwin-Zarecka, *Neutralizing Memory*.

[64] Małgorzata Niezabitowska, "Polak, który próbuje być Żydem," *Tygodnik Powszechny* April 24, 1983. The full, uncensored interview under the same title was later published in the underground journal *Karta* no. 4 (1987). The censor cut out the parts about 1968. The version cited above is from *Karta*.

[65] On KOR's "Flying University" founded in 1977, see Lipski, *KOR*, 208-12.

which is enshrined an idealized memory of old Poland, but rather an awareness of a real, manifest impoverishment of Polish culture."[66] This urge rested on a deep realization that this past could no longer be retrieved in the present.[67] The various impulses of this melancholic nostalgia were captured perhaps best of all in a volume published in 1986 by the journalist and dissident Małgorzata Niezabitowska. On the editorial staff of the *Solidarity Weekly* during its abbreviated existence and contributor to *Tygodnik Powszechny*, Niezabitowska became intensely interested in the absence of Jewish life. She spent five years traveling throughout Poland with her husband, a photographer, to experience the "remnants" of Jewish life: abandoned Jewish cemeteries, desolate prayer houses, and the country's "last Jews" who occasionally fill them.

Although published in the United States in English translation, the book consists of conversations between the non-Jewish Niezabitowska and her Jewish interviewees that are as probing as they are intimate. They are themselves Polish-Jewish dialogues about the rupture and displacement of a deeply entangled relationship. The conversations constantly return to — indeed cannot stay away from — the common theme of absence. Speaking with the esteemed historian Szymon Datner, Niezabitowska confesses at one point that, despite years of talking with people, reading books, and looking at old photographs, she still cannot "imagine the world of the Polish Jews that existed on this land such a short time ago. It seems as distant as the ancient Etruscans do from the present-day inhabitants of Rome." Datner responds by describing at length the "world" of Polish Jewry, but his narrative tellingly remains in the past tense: "the world of the Polish Jews was extraordinarily varied, rich, and colorful."[68] They seem to agree with what the

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[66] Ewa Berberyusz, "Czarna dziura," *Tygodnik Powszechny* April 5, 1987; reprinted and translated in Polonsky, *My Brother's Keeper*, 108.

[67] My thoughts here on nostalgia and historical temporality stem, in part, from my reading of Peter Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present: Modern Time and the Melancholy of History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004). I am particularly indebted to his insight about nostalgia as a melancholic interpretation of the past that laments irreversible losses.

[68] Małgorzata Niezabitowska, *Remnants: The Last Jews of Poland* (New York: Friendly Press, 1986), 241-42. Two chapters of the book were later published in the underground journal *Karta*, no. 4 (1987).

poet Antoni Słonimski expressed over thirty years earlier in his "Elegy for the Little Jewish Towns," a poem often reprinted in the 1980s underground press:

> No more, no more Jewish townships in Poland.
> In Hrubieszów, Karczew, Brody, Falencia
> Vainly would you look for lighted candles in windows,
> And listen for chanting from a wooden synagogue.[69]

At times, this sense of absence became expressed through essentialized imaginations of the "exotic" Jew who stands out as different, unique, and separate, yet seemingly authentic, wholesome, and beautiful.[70] As Niezabitowska probes her subjects, the "last Jews of Poland," her husband follows behind her, snapping photographs of them and of their dilapidated, desolate surroundings. Jews become a reified subject to be displayed, catalogued, and preserved. They become objects of curiosity and study, intriguing artifacts of the past that could be put into a museum. The contents of Niezabitowska's book were first showcased in an exhibition in Warsaw and excerpts of it appeared in the premier depository of exotica and discovery — the *National Geographic*.[71] Thus a sense of inquiry into the unknown and unfamiliar motivated much of this interest in the Polish-Jewish past. In 1983, both *Więź* and *Znak* published issues devoted entirely to Polish-Jewish relations on the occasion of the fortieth-anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The sheer existence of these extensive volumes, the *Znak* volume had four hundred pages, speak powerfully to how much the "Jews" had become an intellectual concern for Poland's secular, Catholic, and Jewish intelligentsia.[72] But both volumes avoided a critical, probing look into the dynamics of Polish-Jewish relations, providing instead a series of interesting and thoughtful, yet fairly basic essays that deal with topics such as Catholic-Jewish relations, Jewish

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[69] Antoni Słonimski, "Elegia miasteczek żydowskich," 1950; translated by Isaac Komen in Helda Schiff, ed., *Holocaust Poetry* (New York: St. Martins, 1995), 26.

[70] Niezabitowska refers to Jews as "exotic." *Remnants*, 12.

[71] "Remnants of the Last Jews of Poland," *National Geographic*, September 1986.

[72] The introduction to the *Znak* volume spoke of the "Jewish problem," 171.

religious practices, and Jewish literature. These were essays that introduced the unknown and lost "world" of Polish Jewry, captured in the words, photographs, and artifacts of the past.

There were, however, some, albeit guarded attempts to engage more critically with what was often called the "Jewish problem." In November 1980, an underground bulletin published in Wrocław devoted an entire issue to "Jews and Poles" and confessed in its introduction that Jews are a "problem for us." There is the "problem of our conscience, burdened by the excesses of anti-Semitism before the war, the ghetto benches in universities. There is the problem of the indifference of parts of society to the extermination [of the Jews]."[73] The underground journals *Krytyka*, *Aneks*, and *Arka* continued this critical, reflective look into the "conscience" of the past, probing topics such as the exclusivity of Polish nationalism, the history of anti-Semitism, and the issue of "Jewish-Communism."[74] These discussions continued in a series of international conferences about Polish-Jewish relations throughout the 1980s held in the US, the UK, and Israel. Closer to home, Jan Józef Lipski gave a long and powerful speech on the "Jewish question" at a conference on 1968 held at the University of Warsaw and attended by several thousand people.[75]

It was, however, a confused speech, one that reflected the ambivalence, discomfort, and anxiety that often emerged when discussing the "Jewish problem" beyond superficial issues. Lipski remained unable to probe deeply the central issue of anti-Semitism in Polish society. He spoke with equivalence, hesitancy, and even defensiveness, especially about World War II when he pointed to unfair accusations from the West spread by Jews. "What is written about the Polish nation in the West is sometimes really unjust … I am hurt when I sometimes read about a 'nation

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[73] "Żydzi i Polacy," *Biuletyn Dolnośląski* no. 11 (November 1980).

[74] *Arka*, no. 10 (1985); *Aneks*, no. 41-42 (1986); *Krytyka* no. 15 (1983).

[75] Jan Józef Lipski, "Kwestia żydowska," in "Marzec 1968. Sesja na Uniwersytecie Warszawskim," *Zeszyty Edukacji Narodowej*, no. 1 (1981): 35-48.

of blackmailers.'"[76] Taking his own family's assistance to Jews as reflective of the national whole, he asked: "What are we being hit in the face for today?" "Anti-Polonism is not any morally better than anti-Semitism or anti-Ukrainianism," he concluded in another speech.[77] Such defensive posturing precluded Lipski from thinking about Poland's relationship to the Holocaust except in the most equivocating of terms: "Did we all do as much as was possible, or too little, or nothing at a time when dying people and our own moral norms called for more than the possible?"[78] What is more, Lipski actually reinforced the regime's position in 1968 that any notion that Poles actively participated in the Holocaust was subversive, suspicious, and harmful to the nation. Even as he distanced himself from the "propaganda" of the party, he claimed that "Jewish circles" in the West have made "irresponsible accusations" about Poland's "complicity" in the Holocaust.[79]

Lipski was hardly alone in this regard. In 1985, when the PZPR finally decided to air selections of Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*, an eruption of criticism against this "western" intervention into Polish-Jewish relations exploded onto the pages of Poland's official, Catholic, and underground press. Lanzmann's landmark film is not directly about Poland. Interviews with survivors form its cinematic core, but some of the film's most stunning scenes come from an intentionally portrayed dark, drab, poor, and anti-Semitic Poland.[80] In the PPR, the film provoked defensive and hysterical comments about its "anti-Polish" agenda from broad segments of society. Few defended it; many condemned it. The state television station received 149 letters that

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[76] Lipski, "Kwestia," 46.

[77] Lipski, "Polscy Żydzi," April 16, 1983; reprinted in *Kultura* no. 6 (1988): 5.

[78] Ibid., 5.

[79] Jan Józef Lipski, *Dwie ojczyzny i inne szkice* (Warsaw: Mysl, 1985), 35 and 37.

[80] See Timoth Garton Ash, "The Life of Death," *New York Review of Books* December19, 1985.

were overwhelmingly critical of it.[81] Most intellectuals responded in kind. Jerzy Turowicz, perhaps most telling of all, could barely hold back his anger, calling the film "definitely partial and tendentious." "It is quite a reflection," he thundered, "of the common, simplistic, and unfair stereotype in the West about the issue of Poles and Jews; it is in a word — anti-Polish."[82] Turowicz received strong criticism outside Poland for these words. Timothy Garton Ash wanted him, as a Catholic intellectual of "distinction, integrity, and longstanding opposition to anti-Semitism," to think more critically about the role that the Church played in disseminating anti-Jewish prejudices.[83] In a similar way, Lipski was criticized for his hesitancy to think more boldly about Polish-Jewish relations during the war. In 1987, Jan Gross, writing in the American magazine *Dissent*, urged Lipski to recognize that Poles provided little assistance to Jews because they accepted the Nazi anti-Jewish policies of ghettoization.[84] Both critics wanted their colleagues

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[81] Anna Sawisz, "Obraz Żydów i stosunków polsko-żydowskich w listach telewizów po emisji filmu 'Shoah,'" in Grażyna Gęsicka, ed., *Bliscy i Dalecy*, vol. 2 (Warsaw: Uniwersytet Warszawski Instytut Socjologi, 1992), 137-165.

[82] Jerzy Turowicz, " 'Shoah' w polskich oczach," *Tygodnik Powszechny* November 10, 1985, 1.

[83] Timothy Garton Ash, letter in response to Turowicz, *New York Review of Books* May 8, 1986. Turowicz's reply showed once again his inability to think of Poles as having played any kind of *active* role in the Holocaust: "The conception and the execution of the 'Final Solution' was exclusively the doing of the Nazis, and I do not see why anybody else should be burdened with co-responsibility for it. It was in this sense that I said, indeed, that the Polish anti-Semitism has nothing to do with the Holocaust," (*New York Review of Books*, May 8, 1986).

[84] Jan T. Gross, "Polish-Jewish Relations during the War: An Interpretation," *Dissent* (Winter 1987): 73-81. This article itself represents a shift in Jan Gross's own working through Polish-Jewish relations during the Holocaust. In *Polish Society Under German Occupation* (1979), Gross showed the communal strength of Polish society during the war. The book overlooked almost entirely the fate of Polish Jews. By the writing of this article, Gross appears to begin to think more critically about the validity of his earlier arguments as he deals more directly with the issue of Polish-Jewish relations. In 1987, he is, however, only willing to go so far: he sees Poles as accepting not genocide but isolation and ghettoization: "It is not that the Poles approved the murder of Jews. But they did, as the Government Delegate noted, approve the Jews' isolation, their confinement in the ghettoes," (p. 79). In choosing verbs such as "approve," he suggests a more active role of Poles in the Nazi persecution of the Jews but it is still a somewhat passive one and it is clearly not involved in mass murder (i.e the Nazis are still clearly the dominant force and are the only perpetrators of genocide). Of course, by a decade later, Gross had moved even further and strongly argued that Poles were directly involved in mass murder (*Neighbors*). In short, he made a 360-degree shift over two decades of thinking and research. Gross's own intellectual journey from "standing squarely in the tradition of Polish patriotism" to moving ever more out of it is a particularly rich example of the strong, patriotic pull that shapes discussions about Polish-Jewish relations. Although not aware of this earlier 1987 shift, see John

to think about the direct causes that explain the *active* ways that Poles became involved in the Holocaust. They wanted them to conceive of Poles as agents whose chosen behavior had an impact on the lives of their Jewish neighbors. Poles were not just passive observers who could and should have done more.

In the end, these two interventions from across the Atlantic had little effect and provoked little discussion in Poland. Gross's time would come thirteen years later. Instead, for now, it was an "inside" voice that started to move in the direction that Lipski, Turowicz — and indeed most Poles — so strongly resisted. In 1987, the literary critic Jan Błoński published in *Tygodnik Powszechny* his now famous essay, "The Poor Poles look at the Ghetto." Czesław Miłosz's poem, "A Poor Christian Looks at the Ghetto," served as his starting point. Writing in 1943 with smoke still billowing out from Muranów, Miłosz imagines himself buried alive among the charred ruins and dead bodies of the Warsaw ghetto as an apparently Jewish "guardian mole" bores through the rubble, making his way ever closer to the suffocated, fearful poet. The world has now come to an end and Miłosz asks:

> What will I tell him, I, a Jew of the New Testament,
> Waiting two thousand years for the second coming of Jesus?
> My broken body will deliver me to his sight
> And he will count me among the helpers of death:
> The uncircumcised.[85]

Błoński takes the fear that permeates Miłosz's poem to interpret the inability of Poles to address the Holocaust. The fear that paralyzes the poet has paralyzed Polish society. Imagining a conversation between a traveling Pole and a "westerner," Błoński works through the deep anxiety and pain that he himself has felt when the question of "Why are Poles anti-Semites?" is inevitably asked. Defensive responses follow ever more frustrated tones that only seek to deny this harmful "accusation." The Polish-Jewish past comes up only as a problem that has to be refuted, batted away no matter how hysterically because, Błoński boldly concludes, Poles are deeply afraid of

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Connelly from which the quote about patriotic tradition comes, "Poles and Jews in the Second World War: The Revisions of Jan T. Gross," *Contemporary European History* no. 4 (2002): 641-658, quote on 642.

[85] Czesław Miłosz, "A Poor Christian Looks at the Ghetto," in Schiff, *Holocaust Poetry*, 88.

their own guilt. The Jewish mole has never stopped burrowing the Polish "subconscious." The only way to work through this fear is to accept openly Miłosz's claim that "yes, we are guilty." Błoński defines this guilt passively as sharing responsibility for a crime without actually taking part in it: "participation and shared responsibility are not the same thing. … Our responsibility is for holding back, for insufficient effort to resist." He, too, cannot characterize Poles as agents, even when pressed by "voices claiming just that" from Jews in the west. Instead he concludes that only if Poles had been more "humane" to Jews before the Holocaust then perhaps genocide "would not have met with the indifference and moral turpitude of the society in whose full view it took place."[86]

Błoński's bold, yet at times cautious intervention was simply too much for the vast majority of Poles. Some two hundred people published critical responses to his essay.[87] Although some of the Polish intelligentsia defended his position, a wide range of people from state authorities to Solidarity members to ordinary citizens firmly denounced his piece as unpatriotic and false. Władysław Siła-Nowicki, an important Solidarity lawyer, could have easily have been mistaken for a PZPR spokesman. He framed the problem exactly as the party had since the mid-1960s, claiming that Błoński's article reflected the "quintessence" of a "virulent anti-Polish propaganda campaign conducted endlessly for dozens of years by the enemies of … the Polish nation."[88] Kazimierz Kąkol, a state official who played a major role in the "anti-Zionist" campaign, placed Błoński's essay firmly within broader, western attempts to defame the Polish nation, including Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*.[89] The journalist Witold Rymanowski went even

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[86] Jan Błoński, "Biedni Polacy patrzą na getto," *Tygodnik Powszechny* January 11, 1987; reprinted in Polonsky, *My Brother's Keeper*, 34-48.

[87] Polonsky and Michlic, *Neighbors Respond*, 15-16.

[88] Władysław Siła-Nowicki, "A Reply to Jan Błoński," reprinted and translated in Polonsky, *My Brother's Keeper*, 59.

[89] Kazimierz Kąkol, "The Eighty-First Blow," reprinted and translated in Polonsky, *My Brother's Keeper*, 144-49.

further in an essay published in *Życie literackie*, one of the main outlets of the linguistic attack of 1968, when he challenged the notion of Jews as historical victims. He argued that Jews had always been a "privileged group" over the "commercially inept and disunited" Polish peasantry who could never "dream of competing effectively against such a superb, indeed, masterly and world-class adversary."[90] Just as in 1968, so twenty years later: the Jewish mole caused such deep fear and anxiety that the only response seemed to be defensive, hysterical refutation.

III. The "Jewish Problem" in Post-1968 Poland

Just as these debates about Polish-Jewish relations were raging in the underground and official press, the PZPR became interested in the Jewish past as well. Part of this interest was simply because the state did not want to lose control over a sensitive topic to a growing opposition. Part of it also came from the change in leadership with the rise of Edward Gierek. Taking over the party in 1971, he hoped that softening the PZPR's approach toward the now miniscule Jewish minority might help improve Poland's image abroad at time when it desperately needed foreign loans to modernize its economy. He adopted a more pragmatic approach to politics than the hysterical, ideologically driven one of Gomułka and Moczar. Moreover, the PZPR was effectively forced to shift its policy toward the Jewish minority. Its "Jewish problem" did not suddenly fade away with the departure of 13,000 Jews. In a paradox that doubtlessly no one in Moczar's Interior Ministry could have foreseen, it only intensified after 1968, transforming from an imagined "problem" in the Manichean minds of communist leaders to a real issue with actual consequences for the Polish state. As international Jewish leaders from the United States and Israel became more interested in Poland because of 1968, they increasingly expressed to Polish officials their deep concern about the state of Jewish life in the country. The poor, dilapidated condition of Poland's numerous Jewish sites became a primary issue. In the span of just three years from 1976 to 1979, Jewish leaders and Polish state officials met for a total of nine

[90] Witold Rymanowski, "The Disseminator of Anti-Semitism? A Rejoinder to Jan Błoński," reprinted and translated in Polonsky, *My Brother's Keeper*, 157.

times in discussions that often lasted several days about the preservation of Jewish sites and the return of confiscated Jewish property.[91] Meetings with top-level Polish officials involved prominent Jewish leaders such as Elie Wiesel, Nahum Goldmann, and Yitzhak Arad, as well as representatives from the World Jewish Congress, the American Federation of Polish Jews, the Federation of Polish Jews in Israel, and groups of American and Israeli rabbis.[92] Many of these Jewish leaders had either survived the Holocaust in Poland or were born there, making their interest in preserving the material traces of Jewish life and ensuring the memory of the Holocaust highly personal.

The PZPR interpreted this interest from Jewish leaders through the ideational frames of 1968. Although Gierek's regime approached politics more practically than Gomułka, a number of his top officials, including himself, had strongly supported the anti-Zionist campaign.[93] Kazimierz Kąkol, Gierek's point man for Jewish issues as head of the Office of Religious Affairs, was one of the main mouthpieces of 1968 and still believed as late as 1998 that the student protests were part of a Zionist conspiracy.[94] In the 1970s, he and the party leadership interpreted the interest of Jews in Poland as a "Jewish problem" (*problem żydowski* or *sprawa żydowska*), a euphemistic phrase stamped on hundreds of pages coming from the Central Committee, the Foreign Ministry, and the Ministry of the Interior.[95] These documents described the surge of interest in Poland as coming from "national-Zionist circles" in the west that controlled "the powerful mass media." This supposedly coordinated attack used every "pretext" to carry out an "anti-Polish campaign" by making "slanderous claims about 'traditional Polish antisemitism'" and "to burden our nation

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[91] AAN, UdsW, 132/260, "Notatka dotycząca problematyki żydowskiej," undated but most likely 1979.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Marcin Zaremba, "Zorganizowane zapominanie o Holokauście w dekadzie Gierka: trwanie i zmiana," *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* (2004), 216-224.

[94] Kazimierz Kąkol, *Marzec 68 — inaczej* (Warsaw: 69, 1998).

[95] AAN, UdsW, 132/269, "Notatka dotycząca problematyki żydowskiej," October 30, 1979.

with the guilt and joint responsibility for the Nazi extermination of the Jews and the destruction of Jewish culture."[96] The PZPR admitted that this interest in Poland had increased "especially since 1968," but resisted probing any connections of the past with the present.[97] It missed the chance to rethink seriously its past policy toward the Jewish minority, reinforcing instead the stereotypes and prejudices of 1968. Caught in a web of suspicion spun by themselves, party leaders such as Kąkol and others involved in the "Jewish problem" could not escape the anxiety of 1968: "Since Jewish organizations have such an enormous influence in the areas of politics, the economy, and the government in western countries, particularly in the United States, the anti-Polish propaganda campaign is having a negative effect on the political and economic interests of our country because it creates an adverse climate in the international arena."[98]

But this anxiety became expressed in a qualitatively new way than it did in 1968. By the late 1970s, the PZPR realized that it had to act boldly and resolutely to deflect growing demands from Jewish leaders. If in the spring of 1968 it settled on a solution to its Jewish problem by forcing Jews to leave Poland, it now decided that the best way to handle its new, post-1968 Jewish problem was to bring the Jews back in. It decided to support a virtual reconstruction of Jewish life, centered around the preservation of Jewish sites in select cities and a stronger emphasis on the specificity of the Holocaust at death camps such as Auschwitz.[99] In notes on a meeting concerning "the matter of counteracting attacks against Poland by international Jewish circles," it was suggested that the party "create appearances of a Jewish authenticity" in Poland.[100] When this meeting took place in 1976, the official Jewish community totaled a mere

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[96] AAN, UdsW, 132/260, "Notatka dotycząca problematyki żydowskiej," undated but most likely 1979.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Ibid.

[99] On the PZPR shifting appropriation of Auschwitz, see Huener, *Auschwitz*, esp. chaps. 4 and 5.

[100] "Notatka z przebiegu narady w sprawie przeciwdziałań w związku z atakami zagranicznych środowisk żydowskich przeciwko Polsce," 15 March 1976, AAN, KC PUWP, Wydział Administracjny, 37.

1,319 members.[101] The reconstruction of Jewish life in Poland could therefore be nothing more than virtual. It had to involve renovating synagogues, maintaining Jewish cemeteries, and commemorations of the Holocaust because that was the only visible way that the PZPR could possibly create some semblance of "Jewish authenticity." But while the PZPR found a solution to the problem fairly quickly, it took a rather long time to implement it.

Warsaw, Poland's most visible city and the one most often visited by international Jewish leaders next to Auschwitz, gradually became the centerpiece of this new strategy but only after much hesitation and reluctance. Although many of the physical remnants of what was left of Jewish Warsaw after the Nazi occupation had vanished over the 1950s, several prominent Jewish sites were still left standing in the capital. Warsaw had two Jewish cemeteries, a synagogue, a Jewish historical institute, and a state-run Jewish theater. These Jewish spaces, especially the synagogue and the cemeteries, were in pitiful shape after years of neglect and destruction. In a city of a mere ninety Jewish community members, they dramatically reflected the collapse of Jewish life in Poland after the Holocaust and 1968.[102] By the early 1970s, these sites started to become a problem for the PZPR as they attracted attention from international Jewish leaders and journalists. In 1973, James Feron, a *New York Times* foreign correspondent, published a 5,600-word article on contemporary Jewish life in Warsaw for the Sunday paper. He declared that "Poland is perhaps witnessing a final chapter of the thousand-year-old history of Polish Jewry."

Warsaw's abandoned Jewish spaces provided the most arresting evidence for his conclusion. "We were circling the Nożyk Synagogue … looking for an open door. The century-old building is the last synagogue still standing in Warsaw, and it looks ready for the wrecker's hammer. All the windows are bricked and boarded shut." Feron then described the wanton destruction of the building, implying that Jews were not wanted in Poland: "The walls were

[101] Ibid.

[102] AAN, UdsW, 131/514, ZRWM to UdsW, February 18, 1974. The number of Jews in the capital was obviously higher than those who registered with the official community.

chipped, and along the lower portions, occasionally defaced with what the scrawler apparently felt was an epithet itself — *Żyd* (Jew)." Feron later moved on to Warsaw's main Jewish cemetery on Okopowa — the "largest and possibly busiest surviving Jewish site for Warsaw Jews." That a resting place of the dead is described as more lively than a synagogue is an obvious ironic play with words, but Feron leaves it at that and returns to his theme of purposeful destruction: "The cemetery today bears evidence of age and abuse. … One whole section in the most remote corner has been systematically looted, evidently some years ago. A rumor persists that Polish authorities will build a road through the cemetery, or turn it into a park."[103] Feron's piece absorbs stereotypical images of Poland as grey, drab, cold, lifeless, and anti-Semitic that probably surprised few American readers and only confirmed their assumptions of the Jewish graveyard of communist Eastern Europe.[104]

Yet Feron's reporting, while based clearly on cold war and anti-Polish prejudices of the anti-Semitic, dictatorial "east," observed the results of the PZPR's policy of neglect and deliberate destruction, revealing that any attempt by the party to create a "Jewish authenticity" in the capital would be difficult to say the least. Plans to build a road through the cemetery were not rumors. In 1956, Warsaw's building department drew up plans to build a thoroughfare and streetcar line through the southern-most point of the cemetery. At a meeting when the idea was first discussed, the TSKŻ opposed the plans from the outset since it would involve exhuming around 5,400 graves. The city's chief engineer discounted these concerns and urged the TSKŻ to think of its "civic approach" to the "needs" of Warsaw residents.[105] In 1957, the Department of Religious Affairs noted further that the position of the TSKŻ was "unjustified" since the city had planned to use only 1/17 of the cemetery for its planned road, a small parcel that will not

[103] James Feron, "At the Wall in Warsaw. 30 Years Later," *New York Times* April 15, 1973.

[104] James Feron, "Signs of the Jewish Past Fading in East Europe," *New York Times* September 7, 1971.

[105] AAN, UdsW, 24/549, protocol, February 12, 1956; also reprinted in Urban, *Cmentarze*, 499-501.

"infringe upon the current needs of the Jewish population."[106] As years passed, the city continued to press Jewish leaders on the issue, but they refused to relent, arguing that the "cemetery is a symbol of the great tragedy of Polish Jewry" and destroying any part of it would "provoke outrage among Jews in Poland and throughout the entire world."[107] The city persisted. When the Jewish community suggested doing repairs on the cemetery in 1968, it said the idea was "pointless" since plans for the road were now "entering the phase of implementation."[108] Such certainty proved, however, unfounded; the road was never built. In the 1970s, international Jewish leaders voiced their opposition to it and the PZPR gradually realized that building a road through a Jewish cemetery in its capital city was politically unwise.[109]

The Nożyk Synagogue suffered a similar fate from years of indecision on the part of the PZPR's highest authorities. The building had virtually been closed down since 1968 and symbolized the ravages of the party's approach toward the Jewish minority. Kazimierz Kąkol realized the symbolic potency of this ruined Jewish space and advocated strongly its reconstruction as he became more aware of Poland's "Jewish problem" by the mid-1970s. In meetings with international Jewish leaders, he seemed to understand earlier than any other official in the Polish government the need for developing a new approach toward Jewish sites. In 1978, he wrote to Central Committee member Jerzy Łukasiewicz that the "complex of Jewish matters" carried "great weight" and could be either of "great harm or of a good deal of benefit" to the party. "It cannot be taken care of in the old style, temporarily without a broader political

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[106] AAN, UdsW, KC PZPR, 237/XIV/149, UdsW to Warsaw Presidium of the National Council (WPNC), March 16, 1957.

[107] AAN, UdsW, 45/464, ZRWM to WPNC, Public Utilities Division, January 15, 1962; ANN, KC PZPR, 237/XIV/149, TSKŻ to Secretary of PZPR, March 22, 1957.

[108] AAN, 131/513, WPNC, Religious Affairs Division to UdsW, February 27, 1969.

[109] On opposition to the plan by Isaac Lewin, an American rabbi who made a number of trips to Poland to meet with state officials, see AAN, UdsW, 131/516, "Notatka na temat cmentarzy żydowskich w Polsce," September 18, 1974.

perspective," he concluded.[110] Kąkol led the way for finding a "new style." After meeting with a group of American rabbis in 1976, he sent a memo to every municipal government in Poland indicating that the state "maintains in principle" that "all existing Jewish cemeteries shall be preserved." Doubtless aware that the state was not going to put any money behind this bold gesture, he added that "in practice" this means ending the long-standing policy of liquidating cemeteries and putting them to other uses.[111]

Kąkol soon realized, however, that a more proactive response was necessary. He argued that the state could display its concern for Jewish sites by renovating Warsaw's synagogue. A visible site often visited by tourists, journalists, and Jewish leaders, he pointed out that the state could receive maximum benefit at a relatively low cost. He and other state authorities made promises to visiting Jewish leaders that the synagogue would be quickly rebuilt, but for over eight years reconstruction work languished as the state equivocated. In 1979, premier Piotr Jaroszewicz responded to Kąkol's request for eight million złoty for the synagogue by suggesting that "rich Jewish organizations in the west" could pay for the expenses. Kąkol replied that this was hardly a large sum compared to the financial claims that "international Jewish circles" appeared to be making for confiscated Jewish communal property.[112] As few seemed persuaded, Kąkol grew ever more worried about the repercussions of the synagogue's dilapidated condition and appealed directly to Gierek for intervention:

> For many years, the Office for Religious Affairs has pointed out that the rebuilding of the Warsaw synagogue would be an important showpiece politically for Poland. … It was expected that it would be rebuilt as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, the reconstruction work is being carried out very sluggishly. Intervention from this office over the past years has led to no visible results. … Meanwhile, each day that its rebuilding is delayed causes negative political consequences. Tourists from the west, and among them a large number of aggressive representatives from Jewish

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[110] AAN, UdsW, 132/269, Kąkol to Łukasiewicz, March 13, 1978.

[111] AAN, UdsW, 132/268, Kąkol to UdsW, November 11, 1976. See also AAN, UdsW, 131/511, Memo, The Rabbinical Committee for the Preservation of Jewish Cemeteries in Poland, 1980, which pointed out five years later the little impact Kąkol's order had on the local level.

[112] AAN, UdsW, 131/321, Kąkol to Jaroszewicz, August 20, 1979.

> circles, visit the synagogue as a general rule. Its pitiful appearance is causing undesirable commentaries and political repercussions for our country.[113]

Kąkol's plea was to little avail. It took another three years for the highest officials of the PZPR to approve the renovation of the synagogue. In 1982, Kąkol's successor, Jerzy Kuberski, urged that the synagogue be rebuilt in time for the upcoming fortieth anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising when numerous guests from abroad would be in the capital.[114] This last intervention finally had an effect. In June 1982, General Wojciech Jaruzelski, the new First Secretary who had declared martial law seven months earlier, ordered the reconstruction of the synagogue given that its "devastated condition" was souring "relations with influential Jewish circles in the world."[115] He instructed that the reconstruction be completed in a short ten months just before the fortieth-anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. After the suppression of Solidarity with martial law, the Jaruzelski government desperately needed to improve its blemished image abroad and believed that supporting Jewish issues would help ease tense relations with the United States.[116] The opening of the synagogue on April 18, 1983 was widely celebrated. The director of the Department of Religious Affairs, Adam Łopatka, presented the state's reconstruction of the destroyed building as a form of rescuing "Jewish monuments" from "Nazi barbarism."[117]

The party hoped that such a bold, public gesture would mollify Jewish concerns and provide some stability after months of internal unrest. But Jewish interest from abroad only increased. In 1983, Sigmund Nissenbaum, a Warsaw Jew who survived the Holocaust and settled in Konstanz on the German-Swiss border, returned to his hometown for the fortieth-anniversary celebration of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising to find his city's remaining Jewish sites in shambles.

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[113] AAN, UdsW, 132/321, May 29, 1979.

[114] AAN, UdsW, 132/321, Kuberski to vice-premier, April 1, 1982.

[115] AAN, UdsW, 132/321, Decision Nr. 17/82, June 17, 1982.

[116] AAN, KC PZPR, Division for Foreign Relations, 1112, WJC meeting with Jaruzelski, December 12, 1985.

[117] "40 rocznica powstania w Getcie Warszawskim. Uroczystość przekazania wiernym synagogi w Warszawie," *Życie Warszawy* April 19, 1983.

The decrepit condition of the Jewish cemetery in his childhood district of Praga where many of his relatives were buried struck him in particular.[118] The Nazis had destroyed many of the cemetery's gravestones and after the war about 5,000 had been piled together by a tractor. Parts of the cemetery were even used for pasture in the 1950s.[119] Nissenbaum set out to establish a foundation to take care of the cemetery and other Jewish sites in Poland. Officially recognized by the state in 1985, the Nissebaum Family Foundation was instrumental in restoring some of the cemetery's tombstones and erecting a new gate for it. The PZPR welcomed its work not least because of the money it brought into the country, but it also worried that the foundation might gain too much influence over a sensitive topic.[120]

But the greatest threat to the state's ability to maintain control over Jewish space ultimately came from within Poland. As discussion about Polish-Jewish relations emerged among Catholic and opposition intellectuals, interest in Jewish sites increased greatly. As the last physical remnants of Poland's Jewish community, they became one of the central modes of expressing interest in Jewish life. Monika Krajewska's *Czas kamieni* (*The Time of Stones*), a photographic book of Poland's Jewish cemeteries, became a bestseller in the 1980s, while *Znak* and *Więź* included articles that aimed toward a "reconstructed memory" of Jewish space (*odbudowa pamięci*).[121] One of the main features of KIK's annual "Week of Jewish Culture" involved restoration work on Warsaw's largest Jewish cemetery on Okopowa street. The group used the space to reflect upon the loss of Jewish culture in Poland: "There will never be in Poland

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[118] Maria Sikorska, "Działalność Fundacji Rodziny Nissenbaumów w zakresie odbudowy i porządkowania cmentarzy żydowskich w Polsce," in *Cmentarze żydowskie* (Wrocław: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Polonistyki Wrocławskiej, 1995), 237-41.

[119] AAN, PZPR, 237/XVIII/22, TSKŻ to KC PZPR, Cultural Division, June 9, 1951; reprinted in Urban, *Cmentarze*, 286-87.

[120] AAN, UdsW, 132/263, Nissenbaum to Łopatka, September 26, 1986 and state memo on the Nissenbaum Family Foundation, February 21, 1989.

[121] Monika Krajewska, *Czas kamieni* (Warsaw: Interpress, 1982); Jan Jagielski and Monika Krajewska, "Polskie bożnice: odbudowa pamięci," *Znak* no. 2-3 (1983): 412-422; Krzysztof Śliwiński, "Nasz cmentarz żydowski," *Więź* no. 4 (1983): 58-61.

again the rich and authentic culture of the Jews ... the traces of the thousand-year Jewish culture were destroyed during the war."[122] At the same time, such words and actions were laden with political symbolism in the highly politicized environment of post-1968 Poland. The reason why the Jewish cemetery needed such care in the first place was obviously because the state had neglected it for the past twenty-five years.

Indeed, the party and segments of the opposition engaged in intense competition over Warsaw's Jewish sites, especially in 1983 and 1988 when the PZPR staged two massive celebrations at the ghetto space. The 1983 commemoration of the ghetto uprising reflected perhaps like no other the schizophrenia of the PZPR's approach toward the "Jewish problem." In the months before the event, the party lodged anti-Semitic attacks against Solidarity in the hope of weakening its appeal.[123] It then appointed none other than Moczar as vice-chair of the event's organizing committee.[124] In 1981, he had sensed the shifting direction of the party and suddenly realized that "it is impossible not to mention also that of the six million murdered Poles there were about three million Polish citizens of Jewish descent who lived among us on Polish soil and created together with us our history and made a great contribution to our culture and science."[125] Just as awkwardly as Moczar pivoted, so too did the PZPR. In a carefully orchestrated event, the state used the anniversary to pay homage to the Jewish victims of the war and to emphasize the "harmonious coexistence of Poles and Jews."[126]

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[122] AAN, KIK, 212, "Dlaczego Tydzien Kultury Żydowskiego?" 1976.

[123] "The Current Polish Crisis and the 1968 Antisemitic Campaign," *Research Report. Institute of Jewish Affairs* no. 3 (1980): 3-15; "Jewish Themes in Polish Crisis," *Research Report. Institute of Jewish Affairs* nos. 10 and 11 (1981): 1-19; "Poland's Jewish Policies Under Martial Law," *Research Report. Institute of Jewish Affairs* no. 3 (1982): 1-16; "Antisemitism in Today's Poland," *Soviet Jewish Affairs* no. 1, vol. 12 (1982): 55-65.

[124] AIPN, BU 0236/264, t. 1, Projekt składu osobowego Komitetu Obchodów 40-tej rocznicy powstania w Getcie Warszawskim, 1983.

[125] "Przekazać młodemu pokoleniu życiową mądrość ojców," *Trybuna Ludu* November 4, 1980.

[126] AIPN, BU 0236/264, t. 1, "Notatka dotycząca programu uroczystości związanych z obchodami 40-tej rocznicy powstania w Getcie Warszawskim."

The awkwardness of this shift was not lost on parts of the opposition. In years past, participants of KIK and the Jewish Flying University had organized small, unofficial commemorations at the Warsaw ghetto memorial. 1983 was to be no different with the exception that this time it would involve one thousand people. It attracted such large attention in no small part because Marek Edelman, the only surviving leader of the ghetto uprising living in Poland, rejected the state's invitation to attend its ceremony in a highly public letter that circulated throughout the opposition. Edelman explained that he could not participate in a ceremony when "words and gestures are completely falsified."[127] His boycott empowered the opposition to organize a large ceremony of its own, which took place on April 17 at the *Umschlagplatz* and the ghetto memorial. The secret police had been tracking plans for the ceremony since March and worried about its potential effects given that the "majority of Polish society" viewed the state-sponsored ceremony "with little interest as an event for foreign Jews."[128] The police precluded Marek Edelman from leaving his hometown of Łódź and stopped Lech Wałęsa on his way to Warsaw, while dozens of police cars lined the streets of Muranów on the day of the unofficial ceremony. Flowers were placed at the base of Rapoport's monument and several speeches were given, including a letter from Edelman that was read aloud. "It was my burning desire and duty to be with you today," he wrote, "but unfortunately the security forces made that impossible."[129] The event lasted about an hour before the police dispersed the crowd. The foreign press focused more on the unofficial ceremony than on the regime's shift in approach toward the Jewish minority. "To many of the demonstrators, the jackbooted policemen, with their long gray-blue belted overcoats, caps, and submachine guns, recalled the stark photographs of similarly dressed Nazi

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[127] "List otwarty Marka Edelmana," reprinted in Władysław Bartoszewski and Marek Edelman, *Los Żydów Warszawy, 1939-1943* (Lublin: TN KUL, 1993), 178.

[128] AIPN, BU MSW II 2400, Informacja Nr. 12 dot. podsumowanie imprez związanych z 40 rocznicą powstania w Getcie Warszawskim.

[129] John Kifners, "Polish Police Bar March on Uprising," *New York Times* April 18, 1983.

soldiers here 40 years ago," the *New York Times* sardonically quipped. The PZPR probably could not have imagined a more damaging indictment. And opposition leaders probably could not have imagined a better write-up: they too were obviously acting for international attention, using the ghetto uprising for their own political gain to challenge the authority of the regime.

The state and opposition engaged in this competition again five years later. The PZRP held another elaborate ceremony to celebrate the forty-fifth anniversary of the ghetto uprising. The crowning moment came with the unveiling of a new Memorial Route of Jewish Martyrdom and Struggle, which took visitors along a tour through the streets of Muranów from the ghetto memorial to a newly erected monument at the *Umschlagplatz* designed by architects connected to the opposition. The idea of the route came from dissidents who founded the Civic Committee for the Preservation of Jewish Monuments. It demanded a new kind of memorialization that marked the individual lives of exemplary ghetto figures such as Emmanuel Ringelblum, Janusz Korczak, and Rabbi Yitzhak Nyssenbaum. The committee also wanted a monument to be erected at the former site of the *Umschlagplatz*. After the war this space had been turned into a trucking depot with a gas station built right next to it. Sensing a key opportunity to retake control over an important, international issue, the PZPR approved of the committee's ideas and sponsored the construction of the memorial route complete with a new monument at the *Umschlagplatz*. It also approved of removing the adjacent gas station, although plans surfaced to return it just a month after the commemorative events had ended and the foreign guests had left. *Polityka*, a weekly, state-controlled magazine that had long included penetrating pieces on Polish-Jewish relations, published a scathing letter to the editor by five local activists who chastised the government for caring about nothing more than making a "good impression" on foreign guests.[130]

The intentions of the PZPR might in fact have been clearly cynical, but the creation of this memorial route signaled a major departure from the decades-long appropriation of the ghetto

[130] "CPN przy Umschlagplatzu," *Polityka* May 21, 1988.

space. Rapoport's monument had long been the only major sign of the Nazi campaign against Warsaw Jewry. The building of a new, socialist Warsaw had paved over the ruins of the ghetto space. In 1988, the history of the ghetto had partially been reinserted into the urban landscape thanks to the efforts of opposition leaders in Warsaw. Segments of the opposition expressed a genuine interest in rediscovering the Jewish past as part of its own imagination of a better Poland, but their intentions could also be just as fiercely political as those of the PZPR. The *ad hoc* protests at the site of the *Umschlagplatz* that started the movement to erect a monument there, the annual meetings at the Jewish cemetery, or the thousands who marched with banners through Muranów in 1988 in spite of government orders not to do so were all small acts of a much larger drama unfolding throughout Poland in the 1980s. Acting rebelliously was part of the carnival of revolution.[131] Photos of the 1988 unofficial ghetto celebration, with banners of "Freedom and Independence" held up by a large crowd, could easily be mistaken as having been taken from a political protest. With western news organizations snapping pictures of these rallies, the opposition was also clearly using the ghetto uprising for their own political purposes. Just as the PZPR was attempting to gain support from western political leaders, so too were opposition leaders displaying their "cosmopolitan" embrace of the Jewish past for transnational consumption.

And yet participation in the anniversary at least for some also stemmed from a deeply humane interest. One of the main initiators of the 1988 unofficial ceremony was Jacek Kuroń. Born in 1934 in Lwów (now Lviv) into a family with strong ties to the Polish Socialist Party, he followed the trajectory of a not insignificant number of European intellectuals who gradually moved away from their initially fervent embrace of communism. He joined the Polish communist youth organization at age fifteen, but in 1953 and then most famously in 1965 strongly criticized

[131] Kenney, *Carnival of Revolution*.

the regime for straying from the principles of Marxism.[132] He severed all ties with communism after 1968. In the 1970s, his critical writings and activism made him one of the most important figures of the opposition.[133] Kuroń also cared deeply about Poland's relationship with its minorities, working tirelessly toward reconciliation with Jews and Ukrainians in particular. As an eight-year old boy, he witnessed the suicide of a 14-year old Jewish girl for whom his father provided shelter and false identity papers. Her death made a deep impression on him, as did his trips through the Lwów ghetto on the streetcar en route to the swimming pool where he saw "people lying in the street dying of thirst" while he later chewed on "large, juicy cherries."[134]

In April 1988, Kuroń handed over to western journalists an appeal that a number of opposition members and intellectuals had signed regarding the upcoming anniversary of the ghetto uprising. It expressed a sense of loss: Jews "were our brothers. For eight centuries the Polish land was a shared land. The fate of Polish Jews is part of Poland's fate, and their faith, language, culture, and tradition were an essential component of its social landscape." It continued with "deep regret" that Poles did not always "notice this truth." "We express with deep sadness that everything we could and were able to do to save our brothers was too little for what was needed." The appeal called on Polish society to pay "remembrance to Polish Jews" by coming together on April 17 for an unofficial celebration of the ghetto uprising.[135] Kuroń predicted that the event would express "the voice of an independent society" and by the sheer numbers of those who participated it did.[136] It started at the ghetto memorial with about 2,000 in attendance and grew as the crowd moved through the streets toward the *Umschlagplatz* to at least 4,000 and

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[132] Jacek Kuroń and Karol Modzelewski, *List otwarty do partii* (Paris: Instytut Literacki, 1966).

[133] Joanna B. Michlic, "Jacek Kuroń. 'The Last Romantic Politician Committed to the Struggle for the Rights of Minorities,' 1934-2004," *Polin* vol. 19 (2007): 621-28.

[134] Jacek Kuroń, "My First Encounters with Jews and Ukrainians," *Polin* (2001): 241-2. These are translated excerpts from his memoir, *Wiara i wina. Do i od komunizmu* (London: Aneks, 1989).

[135] AIPN BU 0236/346, t. 2, "Załącznik do informacji dziennej z dnia 1988-04-06."

[136] AIPN, BU 0236/346, t. 2, "Załącznik do informacji dziennej z dnia 1988-04-06."

perhaps as many as 10,000.[137] In a letter addressed to Marek Edelman read aloud to the crowd, Lech Wałęsa asked that the "painful and shameful manifestations of anti-Semitism be forgiven."[138] Kuroń could not have been more pleased with how the event unfolded. Gathered with friends in his apartment that evening, he triumphantly declared that the "voice of society" had been heard today. "The government in Poland never speaks in the name of society."[139]

Perhaps. But the precise voice Polish "society" expressed about the Polish-Jewish past was not at all clear. No sooner than the following evening, the difficulty of talking about Polish-Jewish relations beyond a few noble sentences became yet again strikingly apparent when a small church in the Solec district of Warsaw hosted a panel discussion on the topic. Three academics spoke about the Bund, the poetry of the Warsaw ghetto, and the anti-Semitism of the wartime underground press. Hundreds of people packed into the church on a warm, spring evening for well over two hours. When the floor opened for questions, the defensive posturing began as "fifty years of unresolved anger and guilt flooded the room." That description, coming from an American Jewish observer, probably is an exaggeration that speaks to its own kind of unresolved trauma, but still one can easily imagine that the discussion was intense and emotive as it had been during the Błoński and *Shoah* controversies. Three audience members apparently stood up in defiance. "'People always say the Poles didn't do enough for the Jews; it's not fair! We hear so much about Poles who betrayed Jews; why not talk about the Poles who risked their lives to help Jews?'"[140] Once the crowds dispersed and the banners were put away, the problem of Polish-Jewish relations remained as polemical, raw, sensitive, and difficult as ever. The Polish-Jewish past provoked a deeply felt "fear" about the fragility of human empathy, and it was on this level

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[137] AIPN BU 0236/346, t. 2, "Informacja sytuacyjna, 1988-04-17." John Tagliabue, "Polish March Lauds Heroes of '43 Ghetto," *New York Times* April 18, 1988.

[138] "Letter from Lech Wałęsa to Marek Edelman, April 17, 1988," reprinted in *Tikkun* no. 5 (1988): 27.

[139] AIPN BU 0236/346, t. 2, "Załącznik do informacji dziennej z dnia 1988-04-18."

[140] Mark Erlich, "Solidarity and the Warsaw Ghetto," *Tikkun* no. 5 (1988): 26.

that Kuroń was only half correct that the state did not speak for society. Since 1968, the PZPR's shifting, contradictory policy toward the "Jewish problem" partly reflected deeper, societal fears about the Holocaust and its inherent challenge to Polish identity as a martyr nation.

The state did have, however, more to fear because its policies since 1945 had made the problem only worse. The fortieth-fifth anniversary of the ghetto uprising fell rather untimely on the twentieth-anniversary of March 1968. In a long article published in *Trybuna Ludu*, the party attempted to satisfy growing demands that it apologize and take responsibility for the anti-Semitic campaign. Although the piece officially acknowledged for the first time that the campaign pushed 13,000 Jews out of Poland, it downplayed its significance and argued that the vast majority of party officials played no role in propagating anti-Semitism.[141] In private meetings with international Jewish leaders, Jaruzelski resisted going any further than this official declaration, emphasizing that the March events "did not just fall down from the sky but was a consequence of a larger, historical process" that did not have "only a Jewish element."[142] Such evasiveness only reminded Jewish leaders that they were dealing with a government that for decades had pursued a number of anti-Jewish policies that even now it could not admit were wrong. Indeed, one of the central reasons why the "Jewish problem" emerged in the first place was because of the state's long policy of confiscating, neglecting, and destroying Jewish property. This problem was not simply going to subside after hosting a few state-sponsored celebrations and renovating a few synagogues. For once one traveled outside the capital the condition of Jewish sites quickly deteriorated. By the early 1980s, Warsaw had become an exceptional case in terms of the attention paid to its Jewish sites by both state and society. No other city in Poland experienced such focused, intense, and contested attention from party, opposition, and Catholic leaders.

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[141] "Marzec 1968," *Trybuna Ludu* March 2, 1988.

[142] AAN, KC PZPR, Foreign Relations Division, 235, "Pilna notatka dot. obchodów 45-lecia Powstania w Getcie Warszawskim."

This was the case not just for the small towns, the vanished *shtetls*, but also for larger cities such as Wrocław. By the 1970s, Wrocław's Jewish community had declined greatly after its postwar high of 16,057 in 1946. In 1963, two thousand Jews were living in the city but after 1968 only a handful remained.[143] A 1974 estimate put the number of religiously affiliated Jews at 331 for the entire province of Wrocław with most living in the city.[144] Almost all that was left of Jewish life in the city were its crumbling, shattered Jewish spaces. By the early 1960s, the White Storch Synagogue had fallen into disrepair as a result of both vandalism and neglect. The condition of the building had become so poor that local officials ordered it to be vacated in 1966 for the "sake of public safety."[145] Wrocław's Jewish community was now forced to use a small, fifty-person prayer room in an adjacent building for religious purposes. After most of Wrocław's Jewish community fled the country in 1968, the building became virtually abandoned, but some members still appeared to be using it. In 1972, city officials wrote to the Jewish community demanding that it "vacate and leave the illegally occupied establishment" within seven days before it would be forced to do so. The Jewish community responded tersely that what it called an "establishment" (*lokal*) was the "only synagogue in the city of Wrocław." It then requested that the property be returned to it based on a recent law that allowed religious organizations in the "recovered territories" to obtain the rights to property that they were using.[146] Meanwhile, the city's conservator for architectural monuments had already approved that the building could be used for other purposes given "difficulties" in getting the Jewish community to renovate it. This reasoning was particularly ironic given that the Jewish community received 10,000 dollars in 1968 from the American Joint Distribution Committee for repairs on the building and all it

[143] Waszkiewicz, *Kongregacja*, 141; Szaynok, *Ludność*, 51 and 194.

[144] AAN, UdsW, 131/514, ZRWM to UdsW, February 18, 1974.

[145] ANN, UdsW, 131/513, memo on the Wrocław synagogue.

[146] AAN, UdsW, 132/323, Wrocław national council, old town district to Wrocław Jewish Congregation, July 26, 1972; Wrocław Jewish congregation to Ministry of Public Utilities, July 31, 1972.

needed was a construction firm to carry out the work.[147] The city never provided one and then insisted that the Jewish community renovate the building. In 1974, the city legally confiscated the synagogue from the Jewish community.[148]

Since the city government now owned and managed the property, it faced for almost twenty years what the city of Essen had confronted two decades earlier — a synagogue problem. The political context could not have been more different. Wrocław officials had legally confiscated property from a small extant Jewish community that still wanted to use the building. Essen officials acted boldly, but not that boldly. Moreover, the "synagogue problem" in Wrocław did not attract as much attention in the local press as it did in Essen until after the fall of communism. In the 1970s and 1980s, the issue remained confined mainly to the bureaucratic offices of the city administration. But the question remained effectively the same: What now should be done with this abandoned building? In 1970, the city placed the synagogue on its official list of historic monuments as an example of "classical" architecture.[149] This decision had mixed results. It ensured at least that the building would not be destroyed, but it meant little in terms of the building's actual treatment and appropriation. The building for the next twenty years remained virtually desolate and completely neglected. Indeed, it received more attention from "young groups" who "disturbed the peace of local residents" by making it their hangout than from city officials interested in preserving it.[150]

Nevertheless, city officials gradually realized that they needed to find some kind of solution to their synagogue problem. A number of plans surfaced throughout the 1970s and 1980s to use the building for other purposes. They first suggested using the synagogue as a storage

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[147] AMKZW, Synagogue File, Wrocław Jewish congregation to Conservator for Architectural Monuments, December 10, 1968.

[148] AMKZW, Synagogue File, Conservator for Architectural Monuments to PRNmW, October 13, 1971; AAN, UdsW, 131/512, "Wykaz nieruchomości po Żydowskich Gminach Wyznaniowych."

[149] AMKZW, Synagogue File, Decision of December 30, 1970.

[150] AMKZW, Synagogue File, District Office, Old Town to Wrocław Regional Government, April 9, 1985.

house, but then proposed turning it into a library reading room for the nearby Wrocław University. In 1978 and 1983, the city drew up extensive architectural plans for the complete redesign of the building's interior with space created for book storage, a reading room, and a cafe.[151] The plans were never implemented for lack of funds, and in 1984 the city then turned the building over to a local cultural center to be used as a space for artists. But it, too, had no ability to fund its renovation.[152] The city and regional governments were now growing ever more anxious to find an "urgent decision" to the problem, especially since Warsaw's Department of Religious Affairs started to make inquires about it in the 1980s as part of its effort to urge local governments to preserve Jewish sites.[153] The city now suggested turning it into a theater and in 1989 transferred the property to Wrocław's Musical Academy, which planned to use it as a concert hall. This final decision before the collapse of communism led to no tangible results; the building only fell deeper into destruction.

This shifting appropriation of the synagogue in itself is perhaps not altogether that surprising, but what is puzzling is the complete lack of attention toward the building by historic preservationists staffed in the city government's conservation department and the local branch of Poland's renowned Workshops for the Conservation of Architectural Monuments (PKZ). In a city that took pride in its extensive historic reconstruction program, it is startling that none of its historic preservationists argued for preserving the building. The archives of both the city's conservation department and the PKZ do not hold any attempts to contest either the city's neglect of the building or its many plans to alter its interior. By 1989, the synagogue remained the only religious site in the entire old town that had not received extensive reconstruction, underscoring

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[151] All plans located in AMKZW, Synagogue File.

[152] AMKZW, Synagogue File, District Office, Old Town to Wrocław Regional Government, November 7, 1986.

[153] AMKZW, Synagogue File, Wrocław Regional Government to City Director for Renovation, March 25, 1987; Wrocław Regional Government to Center for Culture and Art, July 31, 1986.

how strongly cultural perceptions of the "historic" shaped the postwar appropriation of Jewish space. As the city continued to reconstruct its numerous churches into the 1980s, its one, sole synagogue still did not fit into Wrocław's identity as a "Polish" city.

And yet, at the same time, there were a few historic preservationists in Wrocław who started to push beyond this exclusivist conception of the historic. Just as the synagogue remained neglected, interest in the condition of the city's oldest Jewish cemetery started to grow. In the early 1970s, the city planned to level the entire area of the still damaged cemetery, but protest from local architectural historians ultimately prevented it from taking place. The city agreed to place the cemetery on its list of historic monuments in 1975. It was, however, mainly thanks to the efforts of one local architectural historian, Maciej Łagiewski, that the Jewish cemetery was gradually restored. Łagiewski carried out painstaking restoration work on the cemetery starting in 1978 with a basic cleaning of the grounds and then in 1983-84 with more detailed restoration work on select tombstones.[154] Although associated with the Wrocław Museum of Architecture, Łagiewski worked with a small staff of conservationists and with limited financial support from the state.[155] A genuine interest in the city's past and the architectural richness of the cemetery seemed to motivate him. "I am searching for the history of the city," he explained.[156] His efforts had a significant impact in bringing attention to the history of Jewish life in Wrocław. A number of articles on the Jewish cemetery appeared in the local press, while Łagiewski himself organized an exhibition entitled "Wrocław Jews, 1850-1945" in the town hall in 1989.[157]

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[154] Maciej Łagiewski, *Stary cmentarz żydowski we Wrocławiu* (Wrocław: Muzeum Architektury, 1986), 14.

[155] Although Łagiewski was the main one who became interested in the Jewish cemetery, the Wrocław branch of the Workshop for the Conservation of Architectural Monuments also started to pay attention to it in the 1980s.

[156] "Szukam historii miasta," *Sztandar Młodych* December 6, 1989.

[157] "O starym cmentarzu żydowskim," *Wieczór Wrocławia* January 20, 1987; "Dzieje wrocławskiego cmentarza żydowskiego," *Wieczor Wrocławia* April 13, 1983; "Cmentarz żydowski," *Wieczór Wrocławia* October 31, 1986; "Wrocławscy żydzi," *Wieczór Wrocławia* March 24-27, 1989; "Żydzi Wrocławscy 1850-1945," *Nowe Życie* April 4, 1989.

This interest in Wrocław's Jewish past attracted press coverage in the United States, Israel, and Great Britain but above all in West Germany.[158] The Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung provided funds for the restoration of the tombstone of the Jewish labor leader Ferdinand Lassalle, which Willy Brandt as SPD party leader personally advocated in a letter to General Jaruzelski. In 1989, Johannes Rau, deputy-chairman of the SPD, led a delegation to Lassalle's grave on the 125th anniversary of his death where they were met by members of Solidarity who joined in the celebration. German newspapers applauded this interest to save from further destruction one of the "last traces of German culture in the Silesian capital," turning the Jewish cemetery into a "German" space in order to comment on the postwar defilement of "German" culture after the expulsions. Reporting on a visit to "Breslau," one journalist spoke of his struggle to find any sign of the "German past" until he came upon the Jewish cemetery and "suddenly" he stood before "tombstones with German inscription." He immediately entered into a seemingly familiar, German world when Breslau had the "second largest Jewish community."[159] Another article spoke of the many years that the cemetery had been left to ruin with "weeds meters high" and "shattered gravestones," implying that the neglect of this place with "many figures of Germany's economic, academic, and political life" amounted to malevolent destruction of German culture.[160] The Jewish cemetery became no less than a spatial metaphor for German suffering. "With a few exceptions," another article wrote, "the Polish victors bulldozed all German cemeteries as they seized the Oder-Neisse territory after 1945. It did not happen any differently in Breslau — the German-Jewish cemetery is a true exception. This European cultural monument of an invaluable

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[158] "Tribute to a Great Jewish Labour Leader of the 19th Century," *The Jerusalem Post* September 6, 1989; "Die Jüdische Friedhöfe in Wrocław (Breslau)," *Aufbau* October 25, 1985; "The Jewish Cemetery in Breslau," *AJR Information* January 1988.

[159] Hugo Peer, "Wenn Steine reden. Der jüdische Friedhof in Breslau — einer der letzten Zeugen deutscher Kultur in Schlesiens Hauptstadt," *Der Staatsbürger. Beilage der Bayerischen Staatszeitung* January 1988.

[160] Klaus Reiff, "Ferdinand Lassalles Ruhestätte wird mit Akribe und Detail-Treue erneuert. Über viele Jahre hinweg schien sein Grab im heutigen Wrocław vergessen," *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* July 10, 1984.

status survived."[161] This appropriation of the Jewish cemetery is stunning. It reflects a cultural domination of Germanness over both Polishness and Jewishness. In a kind of cultural colonization, Wrocław becomes Breslau and the Jewish cemetery becomes German.

What then is one to make of this interest in Wrocław's Jewish cemetery as the synagogue remained completely neglected? Even in one single city the appropriation of Jewish sites could vary. The cemetery, perhaps partially because small, practical work on it could be done (the synagogue required massive reconstruction), became a localized effort to reappropriate the Jewish past. The Jewish cemetery also carried different cultural meanings, becoming at once a local and transnational space. While German interest looked past the Jewishness of the cemetery, the local Polish population seemed attracted to it at least in part because of its Jewishness. The cemetery came to be seen as an important historical "source of the urban culture of nineteenth-century Wrocław."[162] A noticeable, if limited shift in perceptions about the historical and cultural value of the cemetery started to take hold. Yet what exactly this shift meant was less clear. In a perceptive article on the Wrocław cemetery, the journalist Ewa Berberyusz described a scene in front of its gates as a large, diverse crowd of people of "various professions and ages" waited to enter into the grounds. "Why are they going?" The cemetery had after all been sitting here the entire time and "no one was interested in this place" until now. She concluded with a mix of skepticism and befuddlement about the crowd's motivations: "A herd instinct, a transformed consciousness, a new relationship toward Jews? Perhaps someone knows the answer. Because I do not."[163] In the end, a number of Poles became involved in rediscovering Jewish sites and contesting the PZPR's political use of Jewish space, but this interest did not amount to a "transformed consciousness" in Polish-Jewish relations. It was, in many ways, a superficial interest in the strictest sense of the word: an interest that only rarely cut below the surface to probe deeper, uncomfortable questions

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[161] Jürgen Wahl, "Breslaus überwachsene Davidsterne," *Rheinischer Merkur*, November 4, 1988.

[162] ROBiDZ, "Wstępnie wnioski konserwatorskie do rewaloryzacji cmentarza żydowskiego Wrocławiu," 5.

[163] Ewa Berberyusz, "Dlaczego idą?" *Gazeta* October 30, 1989.

about the fractured history of Polish-Jewish relations without quickly falling into the 1968-trap of defensive posturing.

IV. East Germany's Jewish Problem

The re-appropriation of Jewish space in the GDR became entangled in a similar set of social, political, and cultural changes over the 1970s and 1980s. Just as in Gierek's Poland, East Germany underwent significant changes with the appointment of Erich Honecker as First Secretary in 1971. Although Honecker's Germany initially experienced solid economic growth thanks to free trade agreements with the FRG, its economy slowed as foreign imports of fuel and raw materials became more expensive. In an effort to modernize the economy, Honecker's regime sought to establish better relations with the United States and looked for ways to improve its image abroad. One of the strategies the SED employed, like the PZPR, was to shift its approach toward the Jewish minority.[164] By the early 1980s, the antifascist antisemitism of the early GDR had given way to a rhetorical embrace of Jewish culture, however uneven, contradictory, and problematic it often was. Emerging first from "below" among local residents and religious leaders, a stronger sensitivity toward Jewish sites began to appear in East German society and politics. Just as the PZPR gradually lost total control over the handling of Jewish space, so too did the SED.

The re-appropriation of the Jewish past emerged first on the local level with grassroots, Christian-based organizations interested in discussing Christian-Jewish relations and the Holocaust. Two organizations, *Aktion Sühnezeichen* and *Begegnung mit dem Judentum*, were

[164] This change in SED policy was significant, but has oddly not received substantial attention from historians. The most influential book on the subject—Jeffrey Herf's *Divided Memory*—only mentions in passing the period from 1970-1989 (pp. 199-200). Scholars who have written about it tend to see it as simply desperate moves by a political system on the verge of collapse. The broader, analytical thrust of this argumentation is obvious: the SED's sudden embrace of Jewish culture only reinforces the Machiavellian nature of the East German state. Although this argument holds some truth, it does not adequately capture the paradoxes, tensions, and fluidity of politics and society in East Germany. Lothar Mertens, *Davidstern unter Hammer und Zirkel: Die Jüdischen Gemeinden in der SBZ/DDR und ihre Behandlungen durch Partei und Staat, 1945-1990* (New York, 1997); Ulrike Offenberg, *"Seid vorsichtig gegen die Machthaber:" Die Jüdischen Gemeinden in der SBZ und der DDR, 1945-1990* (Berlin, 1998); Jutta Illichmann, *Die DDR und die Juden: Die deutschlandpolitische Instrumentalisierung von Juden und Judentum durch die Partei- und Staatsführung der SBZ/DDR von 1945 bis 1990* (Frankfurt am Main, 1997).

especially important in creating a dialogue with East Germany's small Jewish community. Supported by the Evangelical Church with some help from Catholic leaders, they organized local projects to repair Jewish cemeteries and sponsored lectures on Jewish religion, history, and culture.[165] These groups formed part of a broader effort among church leaders to confront the church's role during the Holocaust.[166] In 1978, on the fortieth-anniversary of *Kristallnacht*, churches throughout the GDR hosted discussions about the Nazi persecution of the Jews for the first time. In a statement urging them to do so, the Conference for Evangelical Leadership noted: "We call to the attention of the churches the fortieth anniversary of *Kristallnacht* and remember it with shame. An enormous guilt lies on our people. … In light of the failure and guilt of Christianity revealed by [*Kristallnacht*], today everything must be done to spread knowledge about historic and contemporary Jewry."[167]

This growing interest in the Holocaust was not, however, limited to the churches. Contrary to what has normally been assumed, the Nazi persecution of the Jews did not remain entirely taboo in East Germany. To be sure, the GDR never experienced the kind of intense, searing debate about Jewish-gentile relations that erupted in the PPR. Nevertheless, by the 1960s and 1970s, topics such as the Nazi persecution of the Jews received fairly broad discussion with the Adolf Eichmann trial that was reported on by Friedrich Karl Kaul. Although Kaul's *The Case of Eichmann* used the trial to criticize the "fascist" West Germany, it did draw significant attention to the mass murder of the Jews.[168] A series of DEFA films about the Third Reich such as

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[165] For recollections by contemporaries involved in these movements, see Siegfried Theodor Arndt and Elisabeth Heid, eds., *Juden in der DDR. Geschichte, Probleme, Perspective* (Sachsenheim, 1988); Helmut Eschwege, "The Churches and the Jews in the German Democratic Republic," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* (1992): 497-513.

[166] Irena Ostmeyer, *Zwischen Schuld und Sühne: Evangelische Kirche und Juden in SBZ und DDR, 1945-1990* (Berlin, 2002).

[167] Statement of the Conference for Evangelical Leadership, 24 September 1978, reprinted in Rolf Rendtorff and Hans Hermann Henrix, eds., *Die Kirchen und das Judentum. Dokumente von 1945 bis 1985*, (Munich, 1988), 589-90.

[168] Hartewig, *Zurückgekehrt*, 486-504.

Jakob der Lügner, which received international acclaim and East Germany's only Oscar nomination, also brought public attention to the Holocaust. Finally, historians like Helmut Eschwege, Walter Mohrmann, Kurt Pätzold, and Konrad Kwiet published studies that explored the dynamics of Nazi policies against Jews.[169]

Most of these works appeared in the 1970s and 1980s when the party gradually started to revise its interpretation of German history with a policy of "heritage and tradition" (*Erbe und Tradition*) that moved away from a strict Marxist-Leninist presentation of the past. It revived figures like Frederick the Great and Martin Luther in order to reinforce the distinctly German elements of communist rule.[170] The SED had long attempted to ground the East German state in German history, but the "heritage and tradition" campaign conceived of the German past more broadly. Benefiting from this new approach, the Jewish communities in Berlin, Leipzig, and Dresden received support from the state to develop an array of cultural programs from lectures on Jewish literature to concerts featuring synagogue music.[171] A popular biography of Moses Mendelssohn appeared in 1979, and a year earlier the state supported the first exhibition on Jewish history during the fortieth anniversary of *Kristallnacht*.[172] The SED supported these activities because they fit into its understanding of "heritage and tradition," but also because the party wished to project a more positive image of the GDR abroad. This became especially important in the 1980s when Honecker wished to secure "most favored nation" status with the United States (he hoped that American Jewry would argue on behalf of the GDR through

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[169] Ibid., 517-23.

[170] Nothnagle, "Buchenwald to Bismarck."

[171] Illichmann, *DDR und die Juden*, 239-50.

[172] Heinz Knobloch, *Herr Moses in Berlin: Auf den Spuren eines Menschenfreundes* (Berlin, 1979); see the catalogue on the exhibition, *Gedenke! Vergiß nie! 40. Jahrestag des faschistischen Kristallnacht-Pogroms* (Berlin, 1979).

congressional lobbying).[173] As the GDR faced continued economic hardships and an increasingly restive population, Honecker eventually came to believe that developing relations with the West was the best option for the GDR. Since East German leaders had long linked the Jews to the West, a policy of supporting Jewish culture made sense. In the midst of shifting cold war realities, philosemitism increasingly replaced the antifascist antisemitism of the past, but one of the most important anti-Semitic stereotypes had remained operative — Jews dominate and control life in the capitalist West.

These broader shifts in SED policy had rather mixed and contradictory results on the local level. The appropriation of Jewish space in Potsdam and East Berlin could not have differed more starkly. In Potsdam, local SED officials appeared particularly resistant to demands from local residents to preserve its Jewish sites, never seeming to grasp fully the increasingly philosemitic approach coming from East Berlin. The city's last major Jewish site — its cemetery — only fell deeper into disrepair. After agreeing to maintain it in 1949, the city paid no attention to the cemetery for the next three decades; the first mention of its preservation does not appear until 1970. In a letter to city officials, the State Association of Jews in the GDR solicited funds for the preservation of the cemetery and the erection of a small monument in remembrance of the Nazi persecution of the Jews. An official in the mayor's office rejected the request, explaining: "In its perspective plan for the period of 1971-80, the city of Potsdam has a number of tasks that it must take care of, above all the building of the city center. At the heart of the city center will be the Karl Liebknecht Forum with a monument dedicated to all the victims of the Nazi regime."[174]

By the late 1970s, this continued neglect of the cemetery caught the attention of local residents. In 1978, Theodor Goldstein, a Jewish resident of Potsdam who survived the Holocaust,

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[173] Mertens, *Davidstern*, 275-88.

[174] PSA, 4508, Letter to Association of Jewish Communities of 31 August 1970.

sent a letter to the city noting the cemetery's "unsatisfactory" condition and asking city officials to restore it.[175] Ten months later, Potsdam's interior department agreed to supply a limited amount of funds for "small repairs" at the cemetery.[176] Although this decision represented a step toward its preservation, the extent of the city's commitment remained unclear. In 1983, Potsdam's city council received two letters from concerned citizens that clearly put the intentions of city officials in doubt. Heidi Merkel, a local resident, explained that when she went to visit the Jewish cemetery, a woman who lived next door said that Potsdam's city council had issued an order prohibiting citizens from visiting the cemetery given its "disorderly condition." Merkel bluntly let city officials know how much hearing this surprised her:

> The reasoning behind such a prohibition is not at all satisfactory since everyone knows that today there are no Jewish citizens who can see to the regular upkeep of this cemetery because of the Nazis' complete annihilation of the Jewish people. But still this place should be left open to the people as a place of remembrance for this brutal genocide (*grausamer Völkermord*). The fact that state institutions have prohibited visitations to it can easily be associated with antisemitic tendencies.[177]

An official at the city's interior ministry flatly denied the accusations, writing to Merkel: "the woman . . . certainly received the wrong information. The cemetery is not in a condition in which it cannot be seen."[178] That is not how another letter, written during the same month as Merkel's, assessed the situation. On a recent trip to the cemetery with his youth group, a local Christian pastor reported that the cemetery was in poor condition with a number of its tombstones suffering from neglect and vandalism.[179] City officials ultimately agreed with both accounts, privately acknowledging that the cemetery was in fact in a condition that visitors should not see. In a letter

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[175] PSA, 4508, Letter from Potsdam Interior Ministry to GDR Cultural Ministry, 31 May 1978.

[176] Ibid., Letter to Goldstein,19 December 1978.

[177] Ibid., Letter to Potsdam Interior Ministry, 31 May 1983.

[178] Ibid., Letter to Merkel,7 June 1983.

[179] Ibid., Letter to Potsdam Interior Ministry, 8 May 1983.

to the publisher of *A City Guide to Potsdam*, officials requested that future editions of the guidebook not include a passage about the Jewish cemetery in light of its "current condition."[180]

It was, in fact, not until 1988 that any major restoration work on the cemetery began. As part of the GDR's elaborate, state-sponsored commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of *Kristallnacht*, Potsdam city officials allowed members of the East German youth group, the Free German Youth (FDJ), to perform minor repairs at the cemetery.[181] But once the events of 1988 ended, the FDJ concluded its work and the cemetery once again would have suffered from neglect had it not been for Theo Goldstein. After having requested the city's assistance a decade ago, Goldstein now found himself having to ensure its preservation. In the words of one local citizen, the fact that Goldstein was the only one concerned about the cemetery revealed the true intentions of the city: "It is a disgrace for the city of Potsdam that the only living Jew in Potsdam, who is seventy-eight years old, must see to the maintenance of the cemetery. There are overturned tombstones. . . . Rain comes through the roof of the mortuary. As a citizen of the GDR, it is shameful that the state has not given more support to the cemetery."[182]

Some local residents were also disturbed by how city officials dealt with the city's other, now absent Jewish space — the former site of the synagogue. In a small ceremony on November 9, 1978, city officials gathered in front of where the synagogue once was—now an apartment building—and dedicated a plaque in remembrance of *Kristallnacht* that read: "Here stood the synagogue of Potsdam's Jewish Community. During the nights of November 9 and 10, 1938, this synagogue was plundered and destroyed by the fascists." The citizens assembled there that afternoon probably were unaware that the "fascists" were not the only ones who had torn it down, that in fact the war and ultimately a wrecking ball in 1958 had also caused its destruction. Potsdam officials overlooked that part of the story. Moreover, they seemed oddly reluctant to use

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[180] Ibid., Letter to VEB Verlag of 14 June 1984.

[181] "Humanistisches Erbe gepflegt," *Märkische Volksstimme* 22 October 1988, 8.

[182] Letter to the editor by Herbert Lange, *Märkische Volksstimme*, 1 November 1989.

the plaque for commemorative purposes. Until 1988, Potsdam's local newspaper reported no official ceremonies at the site of the plaque during successive anniversaries of *Kristallnacht*. When one did occur, organized by a group of citizens in 1982, city officials responded with a bizarre set of actions. In a three-page letter to Potsdam's mayor, a local citizen described how authorities prevented residents from placing flowers in front of the plaque. Three separate bouquets of flowers were removed, and when pressed to explain who might be doing this a police officer explained that "probably was not citizens, but most likely was done by order." The officer then added that "it was not allowed" to place flowers underneath the plaque.[183]

In East Berlin, the appropriation of Jewish space differed substantially from Potsdam, but only after a long and politically contested process. By the late 1970s, a similar kind of "Jewish problem" emerged in the GDR. In 1982, East Germany's Jewish religious community totaled a mere 470.[184] Jewish life in the "antifascist" Germany was on the verge of ending almost completely and its capital clearly reflected this reality: the few remaining spaces of Jewish life were almost all that was left in East Berlin and many of them were in terrible condition. Hundreds of tombstones had fallen over at *Schönhauser Allee* Jewish cemetery in Prenzlauerberg, while the city's most visible Jewish space, the synagogue on *Oranienburgerstraße*, still remained in damaged shape from the war.[185] Beginning in the mid-1970s, state officials in the Ministry for Religious Affairs became increasingly concerned about East Berlin's shattered Jewish spaces. One memo noted that something had to be done with the ruins of the *Oranienburgerstraße* synagogue, which the Jewish community was still using as its administrative office. It suggested vacating the building and concentrating Jewish life in the synagogue on *Rykestraße* that since the 1950s had been the *Gemeinde's* main location. The *Oranienburgerstraße* synagogue could then

[183] Ibid., Letter to Mayor of 21 April 1984.

[184] Burgauer, *Erinnerung*, 359.

[185] LAB, C Rep. 104, Nr. 382, Report by Director of VP-Inspection, Prenzlauer Berg, 19 February 1975; LAB, C Rep. 104, Nr. 382, Remarks on the Jewish cemetery on Schönhauser Allee,11 March 1975.

either be torn down to make room for nearby "important, economic operations" or be turned into a Jewish museum with "international monetary support."[186] Another memo stressed that either solution would be better than the current one of neglect, which hardly presented a vibrant image of Jewish life to the many "international Jewish tourists" visiting the anti-fascist capital. It would also create a "political counterweight to the offensive, reactionary activities of the West Berlin Jewish community under the leadership of Heinz Galinski."[187] Similarly, the poor condition of the Jewish cemetery in *Weißensee* had become a problem. As the largest of its kind in Europe, it received "numerous international and local visitors." State officials concluded that the only solution "from a political perspective" was to carry out a gradual restoration of the cemetery over the next ten years.[188]

This growing concern about Jewish space came from significant pressure put on the party by groups both within and outside the GDR. Local churches in East Berlin were the first to begin preserving Jewish sites in the capital in a clear effort to address an issue that the SED had failed to confront. As early as the mid-1950s, the East German Protestant Church called for the preservation of Jewish sites, but it was not until the early 1970s that any serious reconstruction efforts took place under the leadership of youth organizations such as the Mission for Symbolic Atonement (*Aktion Sühnezeichen*, or AS).[189] The AS played an important role in the 1970s and 1980s in bringing attention to the Nazi persecution of the Jews; they created space for an open dialogue about the past outside the confines of the party, and organized work on East Berlin's

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[186] LAB, C Rep. 104, Nr. 601, "Information zu einigen Problemen der Jüdischen Gemeinde von Groß-Berlin," April 2, 1976.

[187] BA, DY 30 IV/B2 14/174, "Zu einigen Fragen der Situation, Struktur, usw. in den Jüdischen Gemeinden in der DDR," August 19, 1975.

[188] LAB, C Rep. 104, Nr. 601, "Information zu einigen Problemen der Jüdischen Gemeinde von Groß-Berlin," April 2, 1976.

[189] The most notable example was Heinrich Grüber's appeal to the youth of East Berlin to take care of the city's Jewish cemeteries. See "Aufruf Propst Grübers an Berliner Jugend: Wiederherstellung jüdischer Friedhöfe vorgeschlagen," *Neue Zeit*, 18 October 1956. Clipping located in BA-Berlin (SAMPO), DY 30/IV 2/14, Nr. 249.

Jewish cemeteries. In 1976, the AS performed minor repairs on the *Weißensee* cemetery and listened to a lecture about "Jews after Auschwitz and the Formation of the Israeli state."[190] In 1978, the group gathered with other Christians in the Berlin *Sophienkirche* for the fortieth anniversary of *Kristallnacht* for a commemorative service that included afterwards walking along a "track of silent remembrance." The memorial route ended in front of the "ruins of the great Berlin synagogue" on *Oranienburgerstraße*.[191] In 1986, the AS organized efforts to preserve the Jewish cemetery of Berlin's orthodox community Addas Israel. One member wrote poignantly about the meaning this abandoned space and the Addas Israel community had for him. Walking through the *Scheunenviertel* in search of the few "traces" of Jewish life left in the city, he made "painful discoveries" when he came upon the communal building of the no longer existing community. "These discoveries are painful," he continued, "because I know that the people who lived and worked in these buildings were expelled and killed by Germans. The immense and abstract number of six million murdered Jews became somewhat more comprehensible to me in this concrete area."[192]

This emerging interest in the capital's Jewish spaces became even greater in light of a series of highly public controversies about the SED's handling of Jewish sites. In 1986, city officials resurrected an old plan to build a highway over a portion of the *Weißensee* Jewish cemetery. The idea for the project stretched back to 1921 when the city of Berlin purchased an unused portion of the cemetery from the Jewish community.[193] In the mid-1970s, the city government secured general approval for the plan from Jewish community chairman Peter Kirchner, although his support was tepid and he emphasized the importance of leaving untouched

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[190] EZA, 97/944, invitations to events, 1976 and 1978.

[191] EYA, 97/1010, invitation to event, 1978.

[192] EZA 97/879, AS bulletin, May-June, 1986.

[193] BA-Berlin (SAMPO), DY 30/IV/B2/14, Nr. 176, Memo on the building of the highway, undated.

this "eternal" place.[194] Plans to carry it out continued for years until 1986 when the city seemed determined to begin construction on it. The SED probably did not expect the storm of protest that ensued from almost every conceivable direction. Jewish leaders, ordinary citizens, West German journalists, and local pastors came out strongly against the project. The dissident Bärbel Bohley collected 130 signatures against it that she sent to the mayor along with a letter of protest. "It is irresponsible," the letter stated, "to destroy this piece of cultural history that is not only a part of the history of Jews but also of our history."[195] Newspapers in West Berlin reported on this protest action, which particularly angered the SED since it now feared that the matter would "get played up through the imperialistic media as 'desecrating a cemetery.'"[196] Johannes Hildebrant, a local pastor and organizer of the working group "Christians and Jews," worked tirelessly behind the scenes to convince state officials not to construct the road.[197] And Heinz Galinski, the towering West German Jewish leader, personally appealed to Honecker to stop the project. In the end, the stream of protest proved too much. In October 1986, Honecker canceled plans for the road in a letter to Galinski.[198]

Yet just as this controversy was finally coming to an end, the SED faced yet another one. In 1980, Kirchner approached city officials about the condition of the Jewish cemetery of Berlin's former orthodox community Adass Israel, which had now become an "unauthorized waste dump."[199] Since the East Berlin Jewish community could not maintain the cemetery, he suggested

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[194] LAB C Rep. 104, Nr. 492, memo, January 25, 1977; JGB to East Berlin *Magistrat*, December 7, 1976.

[195] BA DY 30/IV/B2/12/176, letter, July 6, 1986; Mertens, *Davidstern*, 267.

[196] "Jüdischer Friedhof bedroht. Zerstörung eines Stücks Kulturgeschichte," *Die Tageszeitung* July 24, 1986; "Trasse durch Jüdischen Friedhof?," *Volksblatt Berlin* July 30, 1986. BA DY 30/IV/B2/12/176, memo, July 31, 1986.

[197] Ostmeyer, *Schuld*, 151-159.

[198] BA-Berlin (SAMPO), DY 30/ vorl. SED, 41910, Büro Jarowinsky, Galinski to Honecker, September 10, 1986; Honecker to Galinski, October 1, 1986.

[199] LAB C Rep. 104, Nr. 633, *Magisrat* to Minister of Church Affairs, February 24, 1989.

that the city take control of it. City officials agreed, but oddly decided to turn the property over to the Ministry of State Security. Although the Stasi placed a protective fence around the cemetery, it started to build an administrative building on an unused portion of it. In 1984, Kirchner warned Klaus Gysi, the Minister of Church Affairs, that this unseemly situation had to change not least because Jewish tourists were beginning to visit the cemetery in greater numbers.[200] The city government drafted an official order to improve maintenance of the cemetery, but its decision came too late.[201] The poor condition of the Jewish cemetery had already started to attract critical attention from journalists and citizens abroad.[202] One protest in particular—from the West Berlin Jew Mario Offenberg—received attention from the GDR's highest authorities. A descendant of an Adass Israel family, Offenberg grew up in Israel and came to West Berlin to complete his dissertation at the Free University. He visited the cemetery just as workers were beginning to construct the Stasi complex on it. Offenberg was nothing less than shocked by the Stasi presence and the general run-down condition of the cemetery.

He sent an impassioned letter to Gysi. In July 1985, he asked angrily, "how could this have happened? Why was this continued destruction never brought to anyone's attention? Why was it never prevented and stopped? Why was no one prosecuted for it? How could this have gone so far?" He wondered how it was possible to treat a Jewish cemetery with such "efficient destruction and methodical desecration" right here "in Berlin, the capital of the GDR, thirty and some years after the collapse of fascism and its murderous anti-Semitism." He noted sardonically that he was writing about a cemetery that "survived the dark night of fascism almost undamaged."[203] The response to these sharp attacks was initially defensive. The director for

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[200] LAB C Rep. 104, Nr. 593, Kirchner to Gysi, April 2, 1984.

[201] LAB C Rep. 104, Nr. 593, Beschlußvorlage, June 21, 1984.

[202] See, for instance the article in the influential New York-based German-Jewish newspaper, *Aufbau*, "Was die Nazis übrigließen: Über die jüdischen Friedhöfe in Ost-Berlin," 8 February 1980.

[203] BA-Berlin (SAMPO), DY 30/IV B2/14, Nr. 180, Letter from Offenberg to Gysi, 29 July 1985.

Church Affairs for the Central Committee, Rudi Bellmann, interpreted them as mere political attempts from "imperial circles from the FRG, the US, and Israel" to challenge the "basic, antifascist position of our state."[204] But Honecker responded more calmly when the matter was finally brought to his attention. Offenberg forwarded to him his letter to Gysi after waiting three months without any response. Honecker wrote back in a swift, ten days.[205] He assured that the cemetery would be rapidly restored. He delivered on his promise. In no less than six months, Offenberg, Honecker, Gysi, surviving members of Adass Jisroel, and Jewish community members from both East and West Germany came together for a celebratory reopening of the newly restored cemetery.[206]

The rapid response of the state to this controversy marked the key turning point in the GDR's appropriation of Jewish space in the capital city. East Berlin now became the center for the SED's sudden celebration of Jewish life in the midst of shifting cold war relations and external pressure. Since only about two hundred Jews actually belonged to the *Gemeinde* by this point, state officials realized that reviving Jewish life could only mean restoring the physical remnants of Berlin's prewar community.[207] Jewish space became central to the regime once it realized that the capital had many Jewish sites to offer, which could now be made "visible."[208] The SED's broadened conception of "heritage and tradition" combined with growing transnational attention toward the capital's dilapidated Jewish sites just as the SED hoped to

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[204] BA-Berlin (SAMPO), DY 30/IV B2/14, Nr. 180, "Zu Bauvorhaben auf einem Gelände am Jüdischen Friedhof 'Adass-Jisroel.'"

[205] BA-Berlin (SAMPO), DY 30/IV B2/14, Nr. 180, Offenberg to Honecker, October 28, 1985; Honecker to Offenberg, November 6, 1985.

[206] "Adass-Jisroel-Friedhof in Berlin wieder der Öffentlichkeit übergeben," *Neues Deutschland* June 27, 1986.

[207] BA-Berlin (SAMPO), DY 30/IV B2/14, Nr. 178, "Information zu Problemen der jüdischen Gemeinden in der DDR," August 21, 1986.

[208] LAB C Rep. 104, Nr. 596, "Gedenk- und Erinnerungsstätten sowie historische Bauten der jüdischen Bevölkerung in Berlin," March 28, 1988.

improve its foreign image set the main foundation for this sudden interest in Jewish space. But it was also social pressure from below that caused this shift. The state was keenly aware that the Protestant church and its organizations had become interested in Jewish topics.[209] The preservation work of local, church groups on Jewish cemeteries brought attention to the fact that the state had long neglected them. It also limited the control of the state over an increasingly sensitive, controversial, and volatile topic. Just as the PZPR had, so too did the SED seek to take back control of Jewish space.

This strategy reached a dramatic height in 1988 when Honecker announced plans for the eighty-five-million mark restoration of the *Neue Synagoge*. The selection of this building could not have been more ironic. Although the synagogue survived *Kristallnacht* with only minor damage, it sustained severe destruction during the war. For nearly four decades, East German officials did not know what to do with the building. In 1958, the SED ordered the destruction of the bombed-out sanctuary, but left the façade standing at the request of the East Berlin Jewish community. In four attempts in 1961, 1965, 1975, and 1981, the East Berlin *Gemeinde* petitioned state and party officials to rebuild the synagogue in order to house a museum of Jewish history.[210] "There is no more important place than this site," the *Gemeinde* wrote, "to build a Jewish museum in the GDR in order to bear witness to Nazi barbarism, the destruction of Berlin Jewry, and to the Jews who once lived in Germany."[211] All four requests went unanswered. In 1975, a GDR citizen, Salomea Genin, made a similar recommendation. She suggested developing a museum that would foster a secular Jewish identity in the GDR; she wanted to create a space

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[209] Illichmann, *DDR und Juden*, 251-60.

[210] BA-Berlin (SAMPO), DO 4, Nr. 1337, VJGvGB to State Secretary for Church Affairs, 7 March 1961; LAB, C Rep. 131-12, Nr. 27, VJGvGB to City Regional Council of Berlin-Mitte, 18 September 1965; LAB C Rep. 104, Nr. 601, VJGvGB to City Director of Church Affairs, 15 July 1975; LAB C Rep. 104, Nr. 601, VJGvGB to mayor, 20 February 1981.

[211] LAB, C Rep. 131-12, Nr. 27, VJGvGB to City Regional Council of Berlin-Mitte, 18 September 1965.

where Jews could discuss their culture and history independent of the *Gemeinde*.[212] The Office for Church Affairs rejected her request.

But by the mid-1980s the government had changed its position entirely, arguing now that the state must preserve the remnants of Jewish life in East Berlin to showcase the GDR's support for Jewish life.[213] The *Neue Synagoge* quickly surfaced as the centerpiece of this new effort and plans were approved in June 1988 for the restoration of its facade. The building was to house the newly formed foundation "*Neue Synagoge – Centrum Judaicum*" that was designed to be at once a monument and museum. A Jewish site that had been rejected for rebuilding as late as 1981 had now suddenly become a building of immense symbolic meaning: "During the years that the so-called final solution to the Jewish question was prepared, this building became throughout Berlin and Europe a symbol of Jewish life, of Jewish solidarity, but also of the brutality of the Nazi annihilation of the Jews."[214] As state officials envisioned the project, the synagogue's rebuilding would be "viewed as an international and national event" to reinforce the GDR's new approach to the Jewish minority.[215] In 1987, Gysi even went so far as to frame the project as a symbolic gesture of accepting limited responsibility for Nazi crimes. Meeting with the vice-director of the World Jewish Congress in Geneva, he observed that "we are Germans and thus we naturally are responsible for what was done in the name of Germans, even if those who did it were our fiercest opponents."[216] Coming from someone who was persecuted in Nazi Germany for being both a

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[212] BA-Berlin (SAMPO), DY 30/IV B2/14, Nr.174, Salomea Genin, "Die Notwendigkeit, sich zur Festigung der Gesellschaft in der DDR mit der historischen Entwicklung des Judentums zu beschäftigen."

[213] BA-Berlin (SAMPO), DY 30/IV B2/14, Nr. 178, "Information zu Problemen der jüdischen Gemeinden in der DDR," August 21, 1986.

[214] LAB, C Rep. 104, Nr. 601, Conception for the rebuilding of the New Synagogue in Berlin, 1 December 1986.

[215] Ibid.

[216] MfS HA XX/4, Nr. 1389, Interne Dienstmeldung, November 26, 1987.

communist and a Jew, Gysi's statement at once reinforced the political persecution of communists and acknowledged the racial persecution of the Jews.

The ceremonial start of the synagogue restoration project was timed to coincide with the GDR's elaborate celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of *Kristallnacht*. What the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising anniversary was for the PZPR, *Kristallnacht* was for the SED. The state hosted a number of different events from lectures on German-Jewish history to commemorative speeches to a politburo viewing of "Nathan the Wise."[217] Some 140 events in over sixty cities took place across the GDR. Although the state's sudden embrace of Jewish victimization on such a grand scale did not provoke nearly as much protest as it did in Poland, a number of events organized by local churches throughout the GDR produced in effect a parallel, non-party anniversary. East Germans who wanted to reflect upon *Kristallnacht* outside the parameters of the state certainly had more than enough opportunity to do so. Churches held services, led commemorative events at Jewish cemeteries, hosted exhibitions, seminars, and lectures, and even published their own pamphlets.[218] Even the Stasi was prepared for this semi-underground commemoration and any possible way it might embarrass the SED. In advance of the anniversary, it ordered that Jewish sites be carefully protected against any "fascist and anti-Semitic markings" and it carefully watched the church events for any hints of political protest.[219]

The reports MfS agents drafted indicated that segments of East German society were not persuaded by the state's sudden embrace of the Jewish past. East Germans clearly saw through the superficiality of the state's new approach, pointing out that the party was now restoring Jewish sites that had long been "forgotten" simply for "political propaganda." Church groups

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[217] For the many political speeches delivered at these events, see *Staatsrat und Volkskammer der DDR gedenken der Opfer der faschistischen Pogromnacht vom 9. November 1938* (East Berlin: Staatsrat und Volkskammer der DDR, 1988).

[218] Offenberg, *Schuld*, 176-181.

[219] MfS HA XX/4, Nr. 2183, "Operativ zu beachtende Probleme der Jüdischen Gemeinde in der DDR," May 26, 1988.

connected the persecution of the Jews under the Nazis with their own plight under the communist dictatorship, while others saw support for the *Neue Synagoge* as hypocritical of the GDR's long-standing rejection of the "'Guilt of the Germans.'"[220] An article in the underground journal *Umweltblätter* pointed out that a state that persecuted "those with different views for decades" cannot "seriously raise the question of despotism."[221] A leaflet distributed at a silent protest in Leipzig put it more bluntly, co-opting the anniversary for its own political agenda: "If we accept the memory of the pogrom for ourselves, we must exercise our responsibility as human beings; the responsibility for human freedom in our country; the responsibility for peace, justice, and safeguarding the environment."[222] Others just seemed plainly uninterested in the entire affair. At a church gathering of 440 people in Karl-Marx-Stadt, one pastor claimed that the East German population was more interested in obtaining car replacement parts than learning about the "murder of an entire people and the extermination of a culture."[223]

What is more, Jewish space could be appropriated and interpreted in rather disturbing ways. In the months and weeks before the anniversary, the Stasi registered a number of anti-Semitic attacks throughout the GDR that targeted both Jewish property and the Jewish community.[224] The day before the unveiling of a plaque at the Jewish cemetery in Fürstenwalde the Stasi quickly arranged for the removal of three swastikas that had been smeared on it, while in

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[220] MfS HA XX/4, Nr. 1368, "Politisch-operative Sicherung der Gedenkveranstaltungen anlässlich des 50. Jahrestages der faschistischen Programnacht vom 9.11.1938," November 25, 1988.

[221] "Die Gedenkfeiern zur NS-Programnacht – Ein Musterbeispiel staatlicher Geschichtsaufarbeitung," *Umweltblätter* no. 12 (1988): 16.

[222] Quoted in Fred Kowach, "Die Entwicklung der Opposition in Leipzig," in Eberhard Kuhrt, ed., *Opposition in der DDR von den 70er Jahren bis zum Zusammenbruch der SED-Herrschaft* (Opladen: Leske and Budrich, 1999), 221.

[223] MfA HA XX/4, Nr. 2183, Bezirksverwaltung für Staatssicherheit Karl Marx Stadt, undated but probably November 9, 1988.

[224] MfA HA XX/4, Nr. 2183, Maßnahmen zur politisch-operativen Sicherung der Veranstaltungen des 50. Jahrestages der faschistischen Pogromnacht am 9.11.1988, August 10, 1988.

July it reported that tombstones at the Potsdam Jewish cemetery had been damaged.[225] In May, the Jewish community office of Thüringen received for the second time an aggressive and frightening phone call. A male voice asked: "Who is there? — Who is there? — Jews — Are there still any? Are they still here? Forgot about you. The ovens are still warm. They are calling for you."[226] In February 1988, five teenagers jumped over the wall of the Jewish cemetery on Schönhauser Allee in Berlin-Prenzlauerburg and destroyed as many as one hundred of its tombstones.[227] The five were quickly arrested, Honecker was immediately informed of the situation, and the state prosecuted the case with a panicked, zealous urgency. The Stasi interrogated the five teenagers for three and a half months. A public trial was staged to demonstrate the GDR's resolve not to tolerate such extremism. The defendants received excessively harsh sentences ranging from six to two years, but were later released in 1990.[228]

As the SED sought to blunt whatever effects these incidents might have in disrupting its carefully planned anniversary, it confronted one final issue that it most certainly wanted resolved before the November celebration. In 1988, the question of returning Jewish property arose once again in the wake of the controversy over the *Weißensee* Jewish cemetery. Honecker proposed to Gysi that the issue be resolved once and for all by simply giving the strip of land back to the Jewish community. But this suggestion raised the complicated question of Jewish property in general. In a candid, three-page reply to Honecker, Gysi sharply portrayed the political repercussions of the state's confiscation of Jewish property over the past four decades, going so far as to say that it was now on the verge of becoming a "small sitting time bomb." Gysi pointed

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[225] MfA HA XX/4, Nr. 2183, information reports, November 8, 1988 and July 27, 1988.

[226] MfA HA XX/4, Nr. 2183, Jewish Community to Gysi, May 12, 1988.

[227] On general issue of the desecration of Jewish cemeteries in the GDR, see Monika Schmidt, *Schändungen jüdischer Friedhöfe in der DDR* (Berlin: Metropol, 2007).

[228] For a full analysis of this case, see Annette Leo, "Der Friedhof, die Schule und die Erinnerung," *Jahrbuch fürAntisemitismusforschung* no. 10 (2001): 67-84; Leo, *Umgestoßen. Provokation auf dem Jüdischen Friedhof in Berlin Prenzlauer Berg 1988* (Berlin: Metropol, 2005).

out three main ways that the issue could become a problem for the GDR: the state's control of property seized by the Nazis gave credence to the claim that the East German state had become "de facto the legal successor to the old fascist Reich;" not returning Jewish property was clearly prejudicial, given that "all churches and religious communities in the GDR and in Berlin … have fully received their property;" and public awareness of the situation could be "unpleasant and damaging" to the GDR. Thus Gysi concluded that those holdings the *Gemeinde* was currently using should be returned, the five out of some eighty pieces the community had been given the right to use in the 1950s. Returning all property, he noted, would be "impossible from a practical standpoint."[229] Honecker agreed with Gysi's assessment and on 25 February 1988 the GDR officially prepared to return five pieces of property to the *Gemeinde*.[230] In the waning hours of the GDR, the highest officials of the SED had realized the costs of their party's earlier policies. Attempting to understand the motivations of both Gysi and Honecker is difficult. As a communist of Jewish decent, Gysi had little interest in the *Gemeinde*, but expressed concern about Jewish issues as reflected in the somewhat regretful tone of his letter. It is possible that he and perhaps even Honecker shared some sense of responsibility for preserving Jewish sites and returning confiscated property, reflecting trends on the local level where religious groups and ordinary citizens increasingly showed interest in Jewish space. But clearly their main concern was to protect the GDR's image.

V. The Localization of Jewish Space in West Germany

In contrast to both the PPR and GDR, the West German federal government never faced the explosive "Jewish problem" of abandoned, desolate, and crumbling Jewish spaces in the 1980s. Part of the reason lies in the simple fact that West German cities were rebuilt much more quickly and extensively than those in the east during the 1950s when urban modernism remained

[229] LAB, C Rep. 104, Nr. 600, Letter from Gysi to Honecker, 15 January 1988.

[230] Ibid., Letter from the Department of Finance to the Office for the Legal Protection of Property in the GDR, 25 February 1988.

supreme. The shattered spaces of Jewish life gradually vanished from the urban landscape as the "new" replaced the "old." Clearing away Jewish ruins was one of the consequences of West Germany's rapid economic recovery. As the state-run economies of East Germany and Poland failed to take off, urban reconstruction slowed and stretched over decades, leaving numerous historic buildings still standing into the 1980s. The east offered a landscape of Jewish ruins that Jewish leaders, citizens, church leaders, dissidents, and party leaders could contest and reappropriate. West Germany did not and therefore never received the kind of international attention that Jewish space did in both Poland and the GDR. Moreover, when the destruction of damaged Jewish sites did occur in the 1950s it took place under the cover of West Germany's relatively extensive program of restitution. If the West German state had not embraced restitution as strongly as it did, the disappearance of the Jewish past in the urban landscape probably would have provoked more attention from outside observers at the time. The posture alone of appearing to make amends for the Nazi past went a long way in improving West Germany's relationship with both international and local Jewish leaders.

More importantly, the actual preservation of Jewish sites was part of West German restitution. In the 1950s, the federal government confronted and largely solved its "Jewish problem" after long negotiations with Jewish leaders. As early as 1949, the American-created Jewish Restitution Successor Organization (JRSO) realized that it had to find a solution to the physical handling of Jewish communal property. For most Jewish sites — schools, hospitals, community centers, and even synagogues — the JRSO sold the property after getting it returned and then left it up to the new owners to decide what to do with it. This solution led to the destruction of numerous Jewish sites across West Germany once local municipalities took over the property. Such a solution, however, was simply not possible for Jewish cemeteries, which according to Jewish religious law must be perpetually maintained. The JRSO appreciated the delicacy of the matter, and in 1951 joined forces with the Central Council of Jews in Germany to find a viable solution. Both organizations turned to the Interior Ministry to see if the state would

be willing to take over the care of the nearly 2,000 Jewish cemeteries left in the FRG. The Interior Ministry was fairly sympathetic to their needs from the beginning. It had already been thinking about the issue and understood its political importance in light of a surge of attacks against Jewish cemeteries in the late 1940s. In 1950, it wrote to all state interior ministries that they needed to protect Jewish cemeteries from vandalism. A year later, the Interior Ministry reached out to the Central Council to inquire about preserving Jewish cemeteries.[231] All the while, it had been supplying funds for the repair of those that the Nazis had damaged. By 1954, nearly all of them had been adequately restored.[232]

But the broader issue of the perpetual maintenance of Jewish cemeteries had not yet been resolved. The JRSO and Central Council firmly maintained that the state must accept responsibility for it since the entire situation of abandoned Jewish cemeteries was a "direct consequence" of the Holocaust.[233] In April 1952, the Interior Ministry accepted this basic premise, but it took another four years for a resolution finally to be found as federal and state officials fought over who should carry the bulk of the financial responsibility.[234] As no resolution appeared in sight by early 1956, the Interior Ministry decided to bring the issue to a cabinet meeting of Adenauer's government. Noting that this was a "pressing issue" for Jewish leaders in Germany and abroad, it advocated strongly that the government pass a resolution for the preservation of Jewish cemeteries.[235] On August 31, 1956, the cabinet approved a measure and announced it publicly in its annual good wishes to the Jewish community on Rosh Hashonoh. In a letter to Central Council president George van Dam, Interior Minister Gerhard Schröder (CDU) wrote that "in order to secure equality and freedom for our Jewish co-citizens" the federal and

[231] BA-Koblenz, B 106, Nr. 21559, BMI to LMI, June 14, 1950; AAJDC-Jerusalem, Geneva IV, 9/1a, file 2, Katzenstein to Kagan, November 21, 1951.

[232] AAJDC-Jerusalem, Geneva IV, Box 9/1a, file 1, Ferencz to van Dam, January 4, 1954.

[233] ZA, B 1/7, Nr. 347, Katzenstein to BMI, June 13, 1955.

[234] BA-Koblenz, B 106, Nr. 21599, Meeting with Central Council of Jews and BMI, April 19, 1952.

[235] BA-Koblenz, B 136, Nr. 5862, BMI to State Secretary of Federal Chancellery, January 13, 1956.

state governments had agreed to accept responsibility for the maintenance of Jewish cemeteries. Van Dam responded with warm thanks that an issue, about which he had received "incessant inquires" both in and outside Germany, had finally been resolved.[236] On a national level, the problem of Jewish sites had now largely been settled.

That does not mean, however, that the issue of Jewish space simply vanished. On the contrary, it reemerged with particular intensity in the 1980s in cities and towns across the Federal Republic. West Germans sought to reappropriate Jewish sites that after the war had either simply been neglected or had been used for other purposes such as garages and storehouses. The difference was that in the FRG these efforts typically remained confined to the local level, attracting little attention from national politicians and international Jewish leaders with a few exceptions.[237] Groups of concerned or politically engaged citizens became interested in their local Jewish space or the absence of that space. Local politicians participated in these efforts, but the role of the state was notably minimal. In a democratic society relatively sure of its international standing among Jewish leaders and organizations, these civic projects neither threatened the power of the state nor posed any serious challenges to its foreign policy.

The sheer multiplicity of these efforts is striking. In the 1980s, Jewish sites became contested, negotiated, and reappropriated from the metropolis to the smallest village: the synagogue in Kippenheim was renovated and turned into a Jewish museum after serving as storage for agricultural products for over three decades; the Jewish district of Rothenburg that had long been neglected as the rest of the city was rebuilt was eventually restored; a citizens's coalition fought to preserve the archaeological remnants of Frankfurt's earlier Jewish community on *Börneplatz*; a controversy erupted as a new mall was built on part of the Jewish cemetery in Hamburg; the synagogue in Rendsburg that was a fish smokehouse from 1939 until the early

[236] ZA B 1/7, Nr. 347, Schröder to van Dam, September 3, 1956; van Dam to Schröder, September 5, 1956.

[237] One important exception is the international controversy over the construction of a shopping mall on the Jewish cemetery in Hamburg. See Ina Lorenz, *Streitfall jüdischer Friedhof Ottensen 1663-1993*, 2 vols. (Hamburg: Dölling and Galitz, 1995)

1980s was turned into a Jewish museum; local residents pushed city officials to place in Essen's synagogue an exhibition on the Third Reich; a group of citizens in Berlin-Schöneberg researched the local history of the district's Jewish past and developed a memorial route to inscribe in the urban environment the absence of this community.[238] The list could go on much longer. All of these attempts sparked intense discussion among citizens, politicians, historic preservationists, local Jewish leaders, and urban planners, and did not always come to the resolution that local activists in support of them wanted. The city of Frankfurt preserved only traces of *Börneplatz* and oddly displayed them in the cellar of the service center that was constructed on top of it.

Still, what is striking is the desire to mark, historicize, contest, and discuss the absence of Jewish life that these spaces reflected, which leads to the central question of why. What led to the proliferation of interest in the Jewish past in the FRG in the 1980s? In the PPR, interest in Jewish space emerged from a mix of political contestation, international attention, and searing debates about Polish-Jewish relations, while in the GDR it came more directly from the state as a result of both external and internal pressure. The West German case more closely converges with the Polish one in the sense that highly public discussions and media attention about the Holocaust helped to stimulate local interest in Jewish space. Of course, significant differences between the two exist not least of all in what caused such discussion in the first place. In Poland, 1968 is crucial to understanding the surge of interest in Jewish-gentile relations, whereas in the Federal Republic it is of less singular importance despite attempts by historians and 1968ers to make it out to be. The historiography on West German memories of the Nazi past is rich and nuanced but has produced a rather predictable narrative: Germans generally suppressed the Nazi past (1940s-1950s), gradually recalled it (1960s-1980s), and now have come to confront it with general

[238] Uwe Schellinger, *Gedächtnis aus Stein. Die Synagoge in Kippenheim, 1852-2002* (Heidelberg: Verlag Regionalkultur, 2002); Hagen, *Preservation*, 280-84; Lorenz, *Streitfall*; Susanne Schönborn, "The New Börneplatz Memorial and the Nazi Past in Frankfurt am Main," in Rosenfeld and Jaskot, *Beyond Berlin*, 273-294; Elke Steiner, *Rendsburg Prinzessinstraße. Die Geschichte einer jüdischen Kleinstadtgemeinde* (Bremen: Edition Panel, 2001).

frequency (1990s-2000s).[239] In this framing, 1968 often appears as the assumed, explanatory caesura when students protested the supposed silence of their parents. To be sure, 1968 broadly challenged the "myth of ignorance" and many of its generation were *later* at the forefront of a more critical interpretation of German history in the 1980s, but the amount of emphasis that has often been placed on it is exaggerated as the most recent research suggests.[240] Moreover, it is important to clearly distinguish what part of the Nazi past started to become discussed. If the "Nazi past" is conceived in the broadest of possible terms, 1968 might be able to maintain some of its mythic, protest status but not if it is analyzed more narrowly. In the case here of explaining growing concern about local Jewish space, I am interested above all in the part of the Nazi past that deals explicitly with the persecution and mass murder of the Jews.

This past was on the minds of New Leftists in the 1960s, but not in a way that they wish to remember years later.[241] In protest of what many saw as the state's superficial philosemitism, they distanced themselves from "the great atonement market" of the past two decades.[242] In so doing, they embraced anti-Jewish prejudices while claiming to be antifascist.[243] Israel's swift victory in the Six Day War provided the context for an explosion of anti-Jewish sentiment.[244] Its most extreme, radical form took place on November 9, 1969 when a West Berlin militant group placed a bomb in the Jewish community center on *Fasanenstraße* to disrupt the commemoration

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[239] See introductory chapter of this work for literature and analysis.

[240] Herzog, *Sex*.

[241] It was not until the late 1980s that some began to think about the ambivalence of the 1968 and New Left movements toward the Holocaust. See Peter Schneider, "Im Todeskreis der Schuld," *Die Zeit* March 27, 1987; Claus Leggewie, "Antifaschisten sind wir sowieso," *Die Zeit* February 19, 1988. But most recently these criticisms have been forgotten in favor of an interpretation of 1968 that sees it as the moment of breaking the alleged postwar silence about Nazism. See Herzog, *Sex*, 182-83 and 251.

[242] Herman Peter Piwitt, "Kristallnacht und Nebel," *Konkret*, Dec. 1978. Quoted from Herzog, *Sex*, 176.

[243] Herzog, *Sex*, 171-183.

[244] Annette Vowinckel, "Der kurze Weg nach Entebbe oder die Verlängerung der deutschen Geschichte in den Nahen Osten," *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History*, Online-Edition, no. 2 (2004).

of *Kristallnacht*.[245] This Jewish space became home to a resurrected West Berlin Jewish community, built as it was on top of the ruins of the *Fasanenstraße* synagogue in 1959 with financial assistance from the city. It was the city's most prominent Jewish space and was no doubt selected for its symbolic importance. Although fortunately the bomb never went off, the perpetrators got their loud and angry message across. The police found a letter left in the building that explained the political motives behind the attack. It spoke of hindering the spread of "imperialism" in the Middle East, embracing what it called the "true antifascism" that did not stand in perpetual solidarity with Israel but with the victims of "Zionism." "Every memorial in West Berlin and the FRG," it continued, "suppresses the fact that the *Kristallnacht* of 1938 is being repeated today by Zionists in the occupied territories, in the refugee camps, and in the Israeli prisons. … The Jews who were expelled by fascism have themselves become fascists."[246] This particular incident is admittedly an extreme example, but anti-Jewish sentiments pervaded parts of the New Left much more than its members at the time and even years later were willing to acknowledge. It was not until the 1980s that anti-Semitism on the Left slowly became discussed when it was sharply brought into the open by some of the movement's earlier Jewish supporters. In 1981, Henryk Broder, who was born in Poland and moved to Germany in 1958 before joining the student movement a decade later, expressed his disappointment with his Leftist colleagues. "I only want to concern myself here," he wrote, "with one point in your racial reservoir, one that affects me in particular: your anti-Semitism. That a leftist…cannot be an anti-Semite, because that is the domain of the right, is a much cherished lying excuse to which you cling."[247]

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[245] Kraushaar, *Bombe*.

[246] Letter located in LAB B 004, Nr. 395. For a full account of the attempted attack, see Wolfgang Kraushaar, *Die Bombe im Jüdischen Gemeindehaus* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2005).

[247] Henryk Broder, "Warum ich gehe," *Die Zeit* March 6, 1981, 8-9; quoted in Gay, *Safe Among the Germans*, 266.

Yet Broder's scathing indictment of the New Left was only partially accurate. He rightly challenged the post-1968 construction of 1968 as a heroic moment of much-needed democratic rebirth and *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, but he overlooked the longer impact of the New Left. The movement later had a fairly noticeable influence on politicians of the SPD and the Greens who in the 1980s became the most outspoken proponents of interpreting the Holocaust. This effect is important because the broad stroke urge of 1968 to discuss the "Nazi past" became more narrowly focused on the persecution and mass murder of the Jews during the 1980s. This is not to imply that certain segments of West German society did not think seriously about the Holocaust, German-Jewish relations, and the problem of anti-Semitism earlier; they certainly did even as early as the 1950s when historians have often long believed an impenetrable silence had fallen upon West Germany.[248] In particular, the Churches and their organizations such as *Aktion Sühnezeichen* provided forums for discussions about German-Jewish relations and trips to Auschwitz.[249] Since 1967, hundreds of West Germans have traveled to Poland to learn about the Holocaust through AS.[250] But what was different in the 1980s is that the Holocaust became a touchstone issue for West Germany's increasingly left-leaning political, intellectual, and cultural elite. By the early 1980s, leftist and left-liberal intellectuals had made significant inroads in West Germany's museums, universities, schools, and media after thirteen years of Social Democratic rule under the leadership of Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt. They tended to embrace with different shades of intensity the "non-German German identity" represented most clearly by Jürgen Habermas who argued for a kind of postnationalism that included indignation for the

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[248] Marcuse, *Legacies*, 199-220.

[249] Kauders, *Democratization*; Benjamin Pearson, "Faith and Democracy: Political Transformations at the German Protestant Kirchentag, 1949-1969," (Ph.D diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2007), chap. 7.

[250] Christian Staffa, "Die 'Aktion Sühnezeichen.' Eine protestantische Initiative zu einer besonderen Art der Wiedergutmachung," in Hans Günter Hockerts and Christiane Kuller, eds., *Nach der Verfolgung. Wiedergutmachung nationalsozialistischen Unrechts in Deutschland*? (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2003), 139-156.

permanent stigma of the Holocaust.[251] These leftists intellectuals wanted to reform the political culture of the Federal Republic, fought for human rights, and advocated reflecting upon the catastrophe of German history.

Their vision sharply clashed with a more conservative one that rejected the Holocaust as a permanent, German stigma. In 1982-83, when Helmut Kohl came to power, conservatives sought to repeal what they saw as an excessive attack on German identity by the Left at a particular, postwar moment when what it meant to be "German" seemed all the more threatened by the country's now sizeable foreign worker population. With nearly five million foreign workers in the country by the early 1980s, Christian Democrats strongly opposed the idea that Germany had become an "immigrant nation" and any attempts to liberalize Germany's ethnically defined citizenship law of 1913.[252] The Nazi past became the touchstone issue for the release of broader anxieties about "Germanness" in a changing, increasingly multicultural West Germany.[253] The last thing conservatives were going to tolerate was a handful of once radical, now middle-aged "68ers" telling them that they should think of themselves as "non-German Germans." Of course, some of the most vocal proponents of such ideas, not least of all Habermas (born 1929), were hardly 68ers, but that did not matter since the perception of 1968 as a disturbing cultural revolution injected verve and urgency to the "spiritual-moral change" that Kohl promised.

What followed were a series of intense, political debates between Right and Left: over Kohl and Regan's visit to Bitburg; over Ernst Nolte's plea for a "normalized" Nazi past; over the construction of history museums in Bonn and Berlin. These debates have received extensive

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[251] "Non-German German" and the notion of the Holocaust as "stigma" come from the highly insightful study of Moses, *German Intellectuals*.

[252] Rita Chin, *The Guest Worker Question in Postwar Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[253] I am not aware of an analysis that connects the debates about the Holocaust with growing concerns about Germany as an "immigrant nation," but such a study would, I think, lead to intriguing connections.

coverage by historians and do not need to be rehearsed here, but what is important is that they ultimately produced a "culture of contrition" among West Germany's political and intellectual elite.[254] The insistence of the Holocaust as a stigma of German history and identity became embraced more broadly than the conservative attempt to treat it as a normal, comparable past. A kind of "political correctness" took hold by the late 1980s that stressed remembrance and contrition.[255] This sensitivity to the Holocaust unfolded mostly in public, political discourses, but the media also played a crucial role in transmitting and popularizing it. In the 1980s, the television channel ZDF showed numerous productions about the Nazi persecution of the Jews. These were mostly survivor stories without a clear sense of who was perpetrating the crime, but the surfeit of programs alone popularized the growing political and intellectual interest in the Holocaust.[256] The print media also contributed its part and not just through highbrow, intellectual weeklies such as *Die Zeit*, but also through tabloids like *Bild*.[257] Axel Springer's tawdry and populist paper — issues are rarely complete without some form of female nudity on its pages — would hardly seem like the venue for spreading a leftist culture of contrition. But German-Jewish reconciliation has long been one of the political foundations of Springer's media empire, and *Bild* has urged Germans to show shame for their past in terse and blunt editorials. All of this is not to imply a progressive narrative of unilinear remembrance. A number of tensions and conflicts have

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[254] Geoffrey H. Hartman, ed., *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); Ilya Levkov, ed., *Bitburg and Beyond: Encounters in American, German, and Jewish History* (New York: Shapolsky Publishers, 1987); Richard J. Evans, *In Hitler's Shadow: West German Historians and the Attempt to Escape from the Past* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989); Charles Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); H. Glen Penny, "The Museum für Deutsche Geschichte and German National Identity," *Central European History* 28 (1995): 343-72. A "culture of contrition" comes Art, *Politics*, chap. 3.

[255] Art, *Politics*.

[256] Kansteiner, *Pursuit*, chapters 6 and 7.

[257] Art's comparative study of Germany and Austria shows convincingly how the print media created "ideational frames" for discussing the Holocaust that produced Germany's relatively unique "culture of contrition." Art, *Politics*.

shaped this interest in the Holocaust.[258] Studies have shown that even as Germans have learned more about the Holocaust they continue to describe the experiences of their own families in terms of resistance, antifascism, and victimization.[259]

Indeed, the contradictory impulses of West German interest in the Holocaust are perhaps no more evident than on the local level. In Essen, the city's main Jewish site, its towering stone synagogue, remained as late as 1978 an exhibition for displaying the newest industrial, consumer products of the West German economic miracle. The city unveiled the exhibition in 1961 after nearly fifteen years of attempting to resolve its "synagogue problem." City officials had finally found a solution but discussion about the building only continued. At the unveiling of the exhibition itself, the cultural minister of North Rhine-Westphalia, Werner Schütz, expressed awkwardness with the decision, realizing as he spoke that perhaps he had agreed to an idea that did not seem altogether right. He suggested that "perhaps it would have been a good solution if in the future the [synagogue] had been devoted only to the purpose of remembrance, as a powerful monument and eloquent accuser of the terrible things in the past."[260] His unease reflected the fact that no matter how much the building had been transformed into the "*Haus Industrieform*" it still remained *the* synagogue, a space saturated with a past that could not simply be "forgotten" or "suppressed." It reflected the absence of a once prominent Jewish community. As Schütz recognized, "the Jewish community, which has been melted down to less than one hundred members, can no longer use for its purposes this enormous building."[261] The absence of Jewish life remained present, if not articulated by the exhibition itself.

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[258] Herzog, *Sex*; Kansteiner, *Pursuit*; Moses, *German Intellectuals*; Marcuse, *Legacies*.

[259] Harald Welzer, Sabine Moller, and Karoline Tschuggnall, *Opa war kein Nazi. Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust im Familiengedächtnis* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2002); Olaf Jensen, *Geschichte machen. Strukturmerkmale des intergenerationellen Sprechens über die NS-Vergangenheit in deutschen Familien* (Tübingen : Edition Diskord, 2004).

[260] ESA, 143, nr. 10798, speech by Werner Schütz, November 24, 1961.

[261] Ibid.

This unease with the synagogue continued long after the "*Haus Industrieform*" was unveiled, as journalists, Christian leaders, politicians, and leftist historians pushed city officials to change the use of the building. In the 1960s, the Essen branch of the Association of the Victims of the Nazi Regime (VVN) and two regional newspapers pressed city officials to build a monument to commemorate the hardship of "victims" conceived in the broadest sense. In 1964, the *Neue Ruhr-Zeitung* demanded that the city "finally" erect a "dignified monument for all victims of war and terror."[262] It invited five individuals from the city government, the Jewish community, and the Protestant church to comment on the proposal. All supported the basic idea but none suggested whose victimization the memorial was to commemorate. Only the mayor (CDU) seemed to narrow the category of victim down slightly to those who suffered during the "war and in particular those for whom it was a deadly crime to have another opinion or to be Jewish." The chairman of the Jewish community responded that "our victims" had its own memorial, but he welcomed a "communal monument for the terror and death of the past."[263] Two years later, the local VVN wrote to Essen's mayor urging him to build quickly a monument for "the victims of Hitler's war" and the "murdered opponents" of his regime.[264]

By the mid-1960s, appeals to find a different use for Essen's synagogue emerged from these broad pleas. In 1966, a principal of a local high school published a short piece in the *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* calling for the construction of a museum for contemporary history in Essen.[265] The suggestion sparked numerous letters to the editor, fifteen of which the newspaper reprinted. Several proposed putting the museum in the synagogue since, as one explained, the building "itself is through its own history a part of the evidence" of the period.

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[262] *Neue Ruhr Zeitung*, February 20, 1964.

[263] *Neue Ruhr Zeitung*, February 22, 1964.

[264] Ruhrlandmuseum, AES, VVN to Wilhelm Nieswandt, February 15, 1966, quoted in Ernst Schmidt, "Alte Synagoge Essen. Der lange Weg zur Mahn- und Gedenkstätte," unpublished documentary essay, 5-6.

[265] Karl Heinz Brokerhoff, "Westdeutschland braucht ein Museum für moderne Geschichte," *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* March 5, 1966.

Another wrote that a museum would be a "better, more suitable use" of the building than its currently "crude" purpose. "The city settled on this solution," it continued, "for monetary reasons, but it should only be a temporary solution."[266] A letter co-written by Ernst Schmidt, an active VVN and German Communist Party (DKP) member who would become one of the main organizers of a new exhibit in the synagogue, strongly advanced this idea. Calling the exhibition "crude" was to "put it very mildly," he exclaimed. He added that a museum in the synagogue would allow "our city leaders to make up for their own failures and crudities in dealing with the past."[267] The idea appealed to "a number of individuals" in Essen.[268] The local Jewish community indicated that it had no problem with the plan, suggesting that it, too, still remained uncomfortable with the display of industrial, consumer products in the synagogue. "It is difficult," it wrote "to find a suitable purpose for this building that was erected as a house of worship."[269]

In 1967, Schmidt prepared a proposal for the VVN's annual meeting that called for the construction of a museum to be located in the synagogue. The exhibition on contemporary history would focus on ten themes, including the Nazi seizure of power, the persecution of the Jews, resistance, occupied Europe, Stalingrad, and the postwar peace.[270] Coming from the VVN, the focus was broad with Jewish victimization merely one part of a broader narrative of Nazi persecution and communist resistance. As Schmidt put it, "thousands of social democrats, communists, trade unionists, Catholics, Protestants, and Jews starved, were convicted by special courts, were put under the guillotine, were beaten to death in the concentration camps, were

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[266] "Geschichtsmuseum in die Synagoge bringen," *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* March 12, 1966.

[267] Ruhrlandmuseum, AES, Hans Lomberg and Ernst Schmidt to Karl Heinz Brokerhoff, March 17, 1966, quoted in Schmidt, "Alte Synagoge," 15.

[268] Ruhrlandmuseum, AES, Karl Heinz Brokerhoff to Hans Lomberg, June 13, 1966, quoted in Schmidt, "Alte Synagoge," 15.

[269] Ruhrlandmuseum, AES, 19-606, Box 1, Jewish Community to Karl Cervik, December 7, 1966.

[270] Ruhrlandmuseum, AES, VVN proposal, April 15-16, 1967, quoted in Schmidt, "Alte Synagoge," 17-18.

gassed or shot while fleeing."[271] In 1973, Schmidt and the local VVN had the chance to put some of these ideas into practice. They organized the first exhibition on the Third Reich in Essen in the Karl Liebknecht bookstore. The local press barely paid attention to the exhibition but a large number of citizens attended it. One of them was a brilliant student from the University of Bochum. Detlev Peukert, who would publish his first book three years later on worker opposition to Nazism in the Ruhr, rapidly became one of the most imaginative German historians of the postwar era before his sudden death in 1990 at the age of thirty-nine.[272] A member of the DKP and then later the SPD, Peukert had much in common with Schmidt politically and intellectually. Schmidt was no *Wunderkind*, but he was able to complete his PhD in history at the University of Bremen on the workers's movement in the Ruhr. Peukert became like a "kid" to Schmidt, visiting his home often, as they forged an intergenerational friendship and alliance to increase knowledge about the history of Nazi Germany.[273]

Schmidt and Peukert focused on developing a permanent exhibition on the Third Reich that they hoped would be housed in the synagogue. 1978-79 proved to be fateful years for their plans. In 1978, *Kristallnacht* was commemorated throughout the Federal Republic on a scale not matched earlier; the fortieth anniversary was the major turning point that put *Kristallnacht* on West Germany's national memorial calendar.[274] In Essen, the anniversary directed attention toward the destruction of the synagogue during the Third Reich and its postwar transformation into the "*Haus Industrieform*." A SPD state representative wrote into the *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* with sharp criticism of the wording of the plaque placed before the synagogue in 1949. He derided the passive voice construction of the phrase, "Jews had to lose their lives,"

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[271] *Ruhrbote*, February 27, 1960, quoted in Schmidt, "Alte Synagoge," 7.

[272] Detlev J.K. Peukert, *Ruhrarbeiter gegen den Faschismus* (Frankfurt: Röderberg, 1976).

[273] Ernst Schmidt interview with author, Essen, August 14, 2006.

[274] Harald Schmid, *Erinnern an den "Tag der Schuld." Das Novemberpogrom von 1938 in der deutschen Geschichtspolitik* (Hamburg: Ergebnisse Verlag, 2001), chap. 6.

calling it a "harmful belittlement of the most evil, outrageous actions of German history."[275] In late September, the *Neue Ruhr Zeitung* reported that local SPD leaders now supported the idea of transforming the synagogue into a museum for contemporary history.[276] It was the first indication of official, municipal support for a project that had been initiated and pushed entirely by ordinary citizens. The idea now started to gain traction like it had not a decade earlier, pushed by a sense of outrage with the city's postwar appropriation of the building. One local citizen put it sharply: "Give due reverence back to the synagogue! This form of restitution is perhaps Essen's moral duty. What a blasphemy it was after the war to debase this old architectural monument of Essen into an exhibition room of industrial products, washing machines, and schnapps glasses."[277] In November 1978, Protestant church leaders working with the local chapter of the Organization for Christian-Jewish Cooperation founded the "*Alte Synagoge*" working group. It was established to develop plans for turning the building into a memorial for "all victims of violence."[278] And then finally, on the actual day of the fortieth-anniversary of *Kristallnacht*, a memorial took place inside the synagogue. The glass cases filled with industrial design products had temporarily been pushed aside as the group gathered in the building to recall its destruction forty years earlier. The surrounding "profanation" of the space made a deep impression on Essen's mayor who spontaneously uttered: "We must make a drastic change here!"[279]

The mayor followed on his words. No more than a month passed than the city government finally seemed willing to rethink its use of the building. On December 8, 1979,

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[275] Johannes Gorlas, "Gedenktafel," *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, November 6, 1978.

[276] *Neue Ruhr Zeitung*, September 26, 1978 and September 30, 1978. On October 7, the newspaper carried for the first time a picture of the synagogue on fire during *Kristallnacht*.

[277] "WAZ leser sprechen mit," *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 17, 1978.

[278] Ruhrlandmuseum, AES, protocol of "Alte Synagoge" working group, quoted in Schmidt, "Alte Synagoge," 26-27.

[279] AAS, 10277, Denkschrift zur Bildung eines Sondervermögens. Forderkreis Alte Synagoge, Gesellschaft für Christlich-Jüdische Zusammenarbeit, February 2, 1981.

Schmidt, Peukert, city archivist Hermann Schröter, Bremen professor of history Hans-Joseph Steinberg, and city officials gathered for a meeting about an exhibition on "resistance in the Third Reich." The synagogue surfaced as the most desirable location for it.[280] Peukert quickly drafted a preliminary sketch of the exhibition's layout, which he divided into four parts: the crisis of the Weimar Republic and the Nazi seizure of power, the Third Reich, World War II, and the new beginning of 1945.[281] Meanwhile, more local political leaders came out in support of the idea.[282] But plans came to a stop on January 18, 1979. At 3:30 in the afternoon, Schmidt, at work, received a call from Peukert: "You can forget the synagogue as the exhibition space," he exclaimed. "It is on fire!"[283] Schmidt ran up stairs where he had a view of the downtown. He watched as billows of smoke puffed out from the building. Coming just two months after the *Kristallnacht* anniversary, one can easily imagine what he and others were thinking. If it was not already clear, an article in the *NZR* made it so. The newspaper placed two large pictures on its full-page spread, both showing crowds of people in front of the burning synagogue. In large, boldened type, it placed the years "1938" and "1979."[284] It was a provocative gesture, but one that elided the clear difference between the two: this time it was a burning cigarette that accidentally started the fire, not barrels of gasoline.

Ironically, though, it was the fire in the synagogue that finally freed the way for a new exhibition in the building. The "*Haus Industrieform*" was almost entirely destroyed, and the city now created a working group to explore the idea of putting a new exhibition in the synagogue. In January 1980, the city council formally accepted its recommendation to turn the building into a

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[280] Ruhrlandmuseum, AES, 19-606, box 1, Amt für Ratsangelegenheiten, Stadt Essen, December 22, 1978.

[281] Ruhrlandmuseum, AES, 19-606, box 1, "Entwurf zur Konzeption einer Ausstellung 'Essen 1933-1945. Verfolgung und Widerstand," December 1978.

[282] "Synagoge als Mahnmal," *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, January 11, 1979.

[283] Schmidt, "Alte Synagoge," 40.

[284] "Flammenmeer in der Synagoge," *Neue Ruhr Zeitung*, January 19, 1979.

museum with an exhibition on resistance and persecution during the Third Reich. This decision represented a clear triumph for Schmidt, Peukert, the VVN, and others who had long been advocating the erection of either a monument or a museum to remember the victims of the Third Reich. Proponents of the idea doubtlessly believed they were engaging in a significant re-appropriation of the space from its earlier, defamed use. The exhibition that opened to the public on November 9, 1980, "Resistance and Persecution in Essen, 1933-1945," followed closely the basic conceptual design that Peukert laid out in 1978-79. It focused broadly on the "rise, meaning, and effects of the Nazi regime."[285] Mirroring Peukert's own scholarly interest in resistance and later in the socio-cultural conditions that made Nazism possible, the exhibit sought to understand how Germany reached 1933 and what local Esseners did to oppose the regime once it was established.[286] In telling this story, the exhibition paid attention to violence and persecution, but here, too, the focus remained problematically broad, grouping together under the category of victim "Jews, ordinary opponents, the old parties, resistance fighters, war prisoners, and foreign workers."[287]

This appropriation of the synagogue produced several meanings. As Essen's only site of remembrance for the Nazi period at the time, it represented the suffering, persecution, and resistance of the German population as a whole. As the WAZ put it, the "synagogue is a memorial for all victims of violence."[288] This formulation oddly placed Jews on the same level as Germans who were supposedly resisting rather than perpetrating Nazi crimes. Historians have long shown the elisions of German memory, but this use of the Essen synagogue uncovers something more than merely a "suppressed" or "forgotten" past. Although the exhibition

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[285] AAS, 10241, "Nutzungskonzeption Alte Synagoge," September 28, 1979.

[286] *Widerstand und Verfolgung in Essen, 1933-1945* (Essen: Alte Synagoge, 1980).

[287] "Widerstand und Verfolgung in Essen, 1933-1945," exhibition pamphlet, located in Essen Stadtbibliothek.

[288] "Synagoge Gedenkstätte für alle Gewaltopfer," *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, January 9, 1980.

obviously mitigated the singularity of the Jewish experience, it remained acutely ambivalent about the deeper issue of German complicity in the everyday persecution of Jews over twelve years of Nazi rule. This part of the Nazi past permeated the stones of Essen's synagogue. It could not be forgotten or suppressed, but because it caused deep anxiety and fear about the collapse of German empathy, it could and was utterly transformed into something altogether different. The exhibition took a feared, anxious past and made it approachable, even soothing for a German audience. It turned an unequivocally Jewish space into a German one. The "*Haus Industrieform*" had vanished. The building was now called the "Old Synagogue." But the Jewishness of the space still remained contested because its Jewishness contested Germanness. The published pamphlet for the exhibition began by describing a photo of the synagogue. It was not the one snapped in 1938, showing a crowd of Esseners gawking at the burning building, but one taken just after the war that showed the synagogue in the middle of a city full of "rubble and ash." The pamphlet took from this picture the dual meanings of Nazi "destruction in a material, moral, and physical sense" and the plight of the "few who were prepared to offer resistance."[289] This photo, placed in the synagogue where the Torah ark once stood, offered a spatial, visual, and mnemonic interpretation of German suffering, provocatively using the powerful, symbolic image of the bombed-out German city.[290]

On November 9, 1980, about 800 Esseners gathered in a synagogue renovated for the second time. In 1961, the unveiling took place two weeks after the anniversary of *Kristallnacht*. The organizers were doubtlessly aware then that opening a display of industrial products on the anniversary of the building's 1938 desecration might suggest uncomfortable parallels. But twenty years later, city officials seemed confident that this time their display matched the solemnity of the anniversary. They had gotten it right this time. Just as in 1961, Essen's mayor stood up to give

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[289] "Widerstand und Verfolgung in Essen, 1933-1945," exhibition pamphlet.

[290] On the symbolic importance of bombed, ruined cities in postwar Germany, see the C*entral European History* volume devoted to the issue, especially Mary Nolan, "Air Wars, Memory Wars," *CEH* no. 1 (2005): 7-40.

a celebratory speech about the building. Horst Katzor (SPD) touched briefly on the "terrible times," "guilt," "murder," and "undesirable crimes" that the building symbolized before moving to a perhaps intonated "*doch*" (but), a sound and word that his audience's ears might have registered with fulfilled anticipation. "But this building in the middle of the city is also a symbol of courage, bravery, inner greatness, human dignity, steadfastness, sturdy belief, unique sacrifice — examples for us and future generations." The "old synagogue belongs" to all Germans who suffered and resisted Nazism. "The people, who in this city did not succumb to the madness of Nazism, and who still believed in life after barbarism, even though the stranglehold of barbarism took to the air, are our hope. The old synagogue belongs to them."[291] It was a stunning interpretation of the synagogue. On the anniversary of its violent destruction, the mayor crafted a narrative of redemption and hope about a victimized German population that made it through tough times, tragedy, and barbarism to build the peaceful, democratic society of today. The meaning of the synagogue could not have become more German.

In West Berlin, the re-appropriation of Jewish space took place in a starkly different way. First of all, the city's Jewish sites — especially the synagogues that the postwar Jewish community no longer needed for religious worship — had long vanished from the urban landscape by the 1980s. Most of the Jewish spaces still left standing remained located on the other side of the Berlin Wall. Even so, Berlin never had a definably Jewish area of town or a centralized Jewish space to re-appropriate like there was in Essen and other West German cities.[292] To take just another example, the controversy that erupted in the mid-1980s over Frankfurt's *Börneplatz*, the central space of Jewish life in the city since 1462, could not have

[291] Ruhrlandmuseum, AES, 19-606, box 1, Speech by Horst Katzor, November 9, 1980.

[292] "Nowhere in this city do we run into a district that would amount to the center of Jewish Berlin," a guidebook wrote in 1926. *Jüdisches Jahrbuch für Gross-Berlin. Ein Wegweiser durch die jüdischen Einrichtungen und Organisationen Berlins* (Berlin: Scherbel, 1926), 9.

unfolded in the more diffuse urban landscape of West Berlin.[293] That is not to say, however, that West Berlin did not witness its own growing interest in Jewish sites and its own share of controversy about how best to interpret them. It is merely to illuminate that the mode of appropriating Jewish space differed. West Berliners first rediscovered their city's Jewish past in highly localized ways with the emergence of grass-roots efforts to mark the absence of Jewish life in their individual districts (*Bezirke*). These efforts focused mainly on demarcating what was no longer present, seeking to interpret this absence through a variety of ways such as publishing local histories, sponsoring museum exhibitions, writing guidebooks, and erecting monuments.[294]

One might term this interest as the localization of the absence of Jewish space. The German word, *Verortung*, captures more precisely the duality of this process: the marking of absence in physical spaces that are found in one's own neighborhood. This interest emerged at a particular moment when local history was fairly popular in West Berlin. In the early 1980s, the city became home to a number of active, local history workshops that focused on producing counter-narratives to those developed by professional historians. These organizations embraced "everyday history" with its emphasis on experience as opposed to the grand, structural narratives of social history. Using less traditional types of historical sources such as oral history, they focused on the local, the individual, and the everyday with the aim of understanding one's own space, or as the saying went, to "excavate where you stand" ("*Grabe wo du stehst*"). In 1981 and 1983, the Berlin History Workshop and the Active Museum of Fascism and Resistance were founded and started supporting local, everyday approaches to the study of the city's past with a particular interest in gender history, the Nazi period, and German-Jewish relations.

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[293] Schönborn, "New Börneplatz Memorial."

[294] *Synagogen in Berlin. Zur Geschichte einer zerstörten Architektur* (Berlin: Berlin Museum, 1983); *Wegweiser durch das jüdische Berlin* (Berlin: Nicolai, 1987); *Juden in Spandau. Vom Mittelalter bis 1945* (Berlin: Edition Heinrich, 1988); *Juden in Kreuzberg. Fundstücke, Fragmente, Erinnerungen* (Berlin: Edition Heinrich, 1991); *Berlin-Wilmersdorf — die Juden, Leben und Leiden* (Berlin: Berlin-Wilmersdorf Kunstamt, 1987).

A number of similar local groupings in each district of West Berlin also emerged around this time, and one of the most active ones was located in the affluent, middle-class neighborhood of Schöneberg. In 1983, it organized an exhibition on the Nazi period about "Life in Schöneberg-Friedenau." Intended to engage critically the "failures of the official historiography," the exhibition looked at the past from "below" in order to provide a "piece of everyday life in Nazi Berlin."[295] While preparing the exhibition, the organizers discovered that a sizeable Jewish population had once lived in their district, especially around the area of *Bayerischer Platz* (Bavarian Square). They began to search in the archives for material about Jewish life in Schöneberg, which culminated five years later in an open-air exhibition about the deportation of Jews and the war of destruction in Eastern Europe. These two exhibitions spurned further interest in the district's Jewish population. In the late 1980s, Schöneberg's local history museum initiated a research project on the persecution of its Jewish residents.

Carried out almost entirely by volunteers who sifted through Nazi documents an hour or so before going to work, the year-long research project unearthed a plethora of material about the everyday persecution of Jews in Schöneberg. The richest source base came from the Nazi regional financial office where hundreds of documents were found about the confiscation of Jewish property. This collection revealed that nearly 6,000 Jews had been deported from the district. The high number shocked ordinary residents and local, district politicians. Calls to commemorate the persecution of the district's Jewish population immediately followed. The Schöneberg branch of the SPD submitted a city-council resolution to a build a monument on *Bayerischer Platz* to remember "the 6,000 Jewish victims."[296] It argued that residents of the district should know "where the people that the Nazis deported to the concentration and death

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[295] AGTS, "Offener Ideenwettbewerb, Mahnen und Gedenken im Bayerischen Viertel," 39.

[296] *Drucksachen der Bezirksverordnetenversammlung Schöneberg von Berlin*, Antrag der SPD, April 20, 1988.

camps lived."[297] This spatial demarcation of the district's absent Jewish population would make the crimes of Nazism concretely visible both in a literal and figurative sense: "If one can envision the number of victims from each individual street, almost every citizen today will probably be stunned to confront this situation."[298] The city acted with remarkable speed on the SPD resolution. It quickly approved the idea and established the *Working Group for a Memorial at Bayerischer Platz*, a civic organization charged to carry out a competition for the memorial and to assemble additional material about Jewish life in the district.

What spurred this rather sudden interest in the district's Jewish past? Part of it came from a melancholic awareness that a rich, cultural life had been lost and now could never be retrieved. In 1933, about 16,000 Jews lived in Schöneberg. Most of them came from the middle-class and were highly acculturated. In the prewar and postwar imaginary of "Jewish Berlin," Schöneberg, along with the districts of Wilmersdorf, Tiergarten, and Grunewald, formed the "aristocratic, assimilated" west as opposed to the "proletarian, unassimilated" east located along the streets of the *Scheunenviertel*.[299] The *Bayerische Viertel* was often called the "Jewish Switzerland." By the 1980s, some mourned the loss of this seemingly rich world of acculturated German-Jewry. In the words of the local SPD paper, "just as in Eastern Europe the Jewish culture of the 'Shtetl' was completely destroyed, so too here in Germany Jewish life in many regions disappeared without a trace." The article went on to say that many think this cultural loss is not found in a city such as Berlin with its "historical consciousness and cultural diversity." "Far from it! … Jewish culture once formed a fundamental part of Berlin's urban culture." Today, alas, no one remembers this past. No one remembers that Schöneberg was once the "Jewish Switzerland" with "intellectuals," "professionals," and prominent figures such as "Einstein" and "Egon Erwin Kisch" walking its

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[297] Ibid.

[298] Ibid.

[299] Joachim Schlör, *Das Ich der Stadt. Debatten über Judentum und Urbanität, 1822-1938* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 110.

streets.[300] In a similar vein, the written materials prepared for the memorial competition spoke of the *Bayerischer Viertel* as the "center of bourgeois-Jewish life" with numerous "doctors, lawyers, store keepers, and architects."[301] Schöneberg's Jewish population seemingly reflected the best elements of the German-Jewish symbiosis.

But it also represented the catastrophic, violent breakdown of that symbiosis — a fundamental fact that the Schöneberg project interpreted with extraordinary directness. This local effort to "excavate the past" avoided the temptation to essentialize and romanticize a lost "world." In a rather remarkable way, it reflected on the violent destruction of Jewish life in the district. Just a few sentences after the ones quoted in the above SPD article came a sharp, bitter turn to the violence of the past and the apathy of the present: "Today, those of us who in our beautiful, old 'Berlin apartments' enjoy the blessings of Wilhelmian architectural design, often do not know that these apartments and houses were the setting for indescribable tragedy."[302] The SPD demanded that knowledge about this "part of our city's and our district's history" not remain limited to just "an interested minority." It organized an effort to place posters on all houses where deported Jews had lived in remembrance of the fiftieth-anniversary of *Kristallnacht*. On November 9, 1988, over seventy houses had temporary, cardboard plaques (*Papptafeln*) on them with the names, ages, and deportation dates of Jews. This "*Papptafelaktion*" had a lasting impact on the design and intention of the monument that was eventually erected on *Bayerischer Platz*. A year later, the city district hosted an open-air exhibit of possible designs and collected ideas from local residents. More than half of the citizens who submitted ideas favored a decentralized, non-monumental design much like the cardboard campaign. Such a memorial would provoke, stun, and surprise those passing by on their otherwise normal routine. At a panel discussion sponsored

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[300] "13 November: Gedenken an die Judendeportationen. Wider das Vergessen," *Schönberger Stadtsgespräch* August 1988.

[301] AGTS, "Offener Ideenwettbewerb, Mahnen und Gedenken im Bayerischen Viertel," 31.

[302] "13 November: Gedenken an die Judendeportationen. Wider das Vergessen," *Schönberger Stadtsgespräch* August 1988.

by the Berlin History Workshop, the organizers reached a consensus that it would not be "a solitary monument," but one made up of individual "stumbling blocks" that provide concrete, localized experiences of Jewish suffering.[303]

The idea was to situate and localize the past as a seemingly ordinary part of the built environment, dramatizing the fact that the gradual, step-by-step persecution of the Jews unfolded as a "normal" process of everyday life accepted and absorbed by German society. The description for the competition put it clearly: "In the normality of the past, these events crept in and could be seen and experienced by anyone alert on a daily basis. The crimes of exclusion and mass murder began before everyone's eyes and were implemented through the participation, cognizance, and acquiescence of many."[304] The artists who designed the memorial, Renata Stih and Frieder Schnock, articulated this normalized prejudice through a set of signs posted throughout the *Bayerischer Viertel*. The signs included on one side one of the numerous Nazi anti-Jewish laws enacted over 1933-1945 and on the other side a seemingly innocuous, ordinary image. For example, a sign with an image of musical notes reads: "Jews are excluded from choral groups, August 16, 1933." If one follows the posts, the ever-increasing persecution of the Jews becomes clear.[305] Located on otherwise everyday streets in quiet, suburban Berlin, the signs are at once jarring and normal parts of the urban landscape: they are as easily overlooked as they are not easily ignored. As the district mayor framed their meaning, the "really terrifying" aspect of the numerous Nazi laws is that the "majority of the German population accepted" them.[306]

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[303] AGTS, "Kein vereinzelter Gedenkstein — sondern Steine des (Denk)-Anstoßes," Berliner Geschichts Werkstatt and Aktives Museum Faschismus und Widerstand in Berlin, 1988.

[304] AGTS, "Offener Ideenwettbewerb," 1991.

[305] For a detailed description of the memorial, see Caroline Wiedmer, *The Claims of Memory: Representations of the Holocaust in Contemporary Germany and France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

[306] AGTS, Speech by Uwe Saager, November 6, 1993.

By articulating this "normality of terror," the memorial could not have differed more clearly from the exhibition installed in the Essen synagogue.[307] Politically engaged citizens on the Left organized both projects, but with different interpretations of the Nazi past. While the Essen synagogue reflected German persecution and resistance, the Schöneberg memorial starkly inscribed in the built environment the everyday persecution of Jews by German society. Given its postwar history as a stronghold of leftist and alternative politics, West Berlin perhaps not surprisingly reflected a local embrace of the "non-German German identity" that made central the stigma of the Holocaust. Essen, with its strong ties to the labor movement, resembled the continuing presence of an older, antifascist interpretation among DKP and SPD members that emphasized German victimization and resistance. The point here is not to suggest that the Berlin effort is more successful than the Essen one, but to mark the dissonant and contradictory impulses in West German interpretations of the Holocaust that these two projects illuminate.

VI. Conclusion

In the 1980s, Germans and Poles became interested in the Jewish past by contesting, renegotiating, and reappropriating the cultural meanings of Jewish sites. This interest marked a paradoxical shift in postwar European history. In the region where the Holocaust originated and unfolded, the material traces of Jewish life were being brought back into the urban landscape as part of a broader virtual recreation of the Jewish past. Both societies only forty years earlier had expunged Jews from everyday life and now were suddenly welcoming them back in at roughly the same time in three different states on both sides of the Iron Curtain. This urge stemmed from a growing awareness that the Jewish minority was indeed now gone and its perceived cultural richness had forever been lost except from the few Jewish sites still left standing. This "presence of absence" did not produce any stable meaning of Jewish space, but involved various strategies to mark, historicize, contest, discuss, manipulate, control, and appropriate it. In short, what is

[307] Renata Stih and Frieder Schnock, *Arbeitsbuch für ein Denkmal in Berlin* (Berlin: Gatza Verlag, 1993), 5.

striking about the 1980s, and what distinguishes it from the earlier, postwar decades, is that the absence of Jewish life became a "problem" that had to be dealt with, worked through, solved, deflected, or refuted. In a word, the absence of Jewish life became contentious: it provoked debate, discussion, dispute, discomfort, and interest. In framing it so, I do not mean to imply a logical opposite, namely that the "the presence of absence" was itself absent in the immediate postwar years. One of my central, overarching arguments has been that this absence remained omnipresent, permeating the stones of the empty spaces of Jewish life. It could not simply be suppressed or forgotten in a collective form of cultural amnesia. The absence remained always there, if not always made present as a contentious "problem." It is thus this act of becoming contentious that demands analytical explanation.

This "becoming contentious" unfolded in both different and similar ways across political and national boundaries. In both the GDR and PPR, Jewish sites became a national problem in light of internal and external pressure placed on the SED and PZPR. Unlike in West Germany, the political leadership in the GDR and PPR had long pursued overtly anti-Jewish policies that no longer remained tenable in the midst of shifting cold war tensions. Just as both parties sought to improve their image abroad, Jewish sites started attracting attention from tourists, Jewish leaders, and journalists. This growing transnational interest turned Jewish space into a contentious, political issue that the SED and PZPR had to mitigate in some way. Both parties decided to restore a few select Jewish sites in East Berlin and Warsaw, while staging massive commemorations of *Kristallnacht* and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. In the process, they legitimized the concerns of Jewish leaders who now saw an opening to press them even more. Jewish space became all the more contentious.

Segments of the growing opposition saw the party's shift as nothing more than a crass, hypocritical attempt to curry favor with international Jewish leaders. Since some of them had already been working on preserving Jewish sites for years, they knew well the regime's long-standing policy of neglect and destruction. Jewish space became yet another issue that further

divided state and society, although the extent of this fissure at times was limited despite imaginations to the contrary by dissidents acting the rebellious part. In the PPR especially, the opposition and lay, Catholic intelligentsia became heavily involved in rethinking Polish-Jewish relations, but they also absorbed ideas long propagated by the state. In the wake of 1968, interpretations of Polish-Jewish relations involved at times as much absorption of the PZPR's linguistic and mental framing of the "Jewish problem" as resistance to it. Moreover, the opposition clearly used their embrace of Jewishness for political gain and transnational consumption. They were responding to a distinct political moment and saw an issue they could exploit: it was after all none other than the consummate politician Lech Wałęsa who, just two years after his grand statements about "forgiveness" in 1988, sought to use "Jewishness" in a much different way by implying that his campaign opponent was Jewish in the changed political context of 1990.[308] Opposition figures in the GDR used *Kristallnacht* in similarly political ways to advance their agenda against the state.

Nevertheless, such direct tension between state and society certainly existed more overtly in the GDR and PPR than in West Germany. Since the FRG had long established good relations with international Jewish leaders, Jewish space never became a transnational problem that was contested among international, national, and local leaders. Civic projects to reappropriate Jewish sites simply did not provoke concern from the federal government. Instead when conflict did emerge it typically remained confined to the local level. In Essen, politically engaged citizens pressed city officials to change the use of the building for over a decade, while in West Berlin the organizers of the memorial deliberately sought to create an alternative historical narrative than the one fashioned by professional historians and political leaders. More broadly, left-leaning, politically active citizens and historians in both cities sought to bring attention to their understanding of the Third Reich that they believed had been forgotten. They launched direct, sharp criticisms of postwar West German "amnesia" that they rather simplistically identified as

[308] For the context, see Michlic, *Poland's*, 262-64.

the result of incomplete democratization under the conservative, even reactionary rule of the Christian Democrats for the first twenty years of the republic. That now the CDU was back in power under Kohl and seemed determine to "normalize" the Nazi past, deny the serious legal, cultural, and social questions of West Germany's "foreign" population, and implement a "spiritual-moral change" after a thirteen-year respite from CDU domination in the 1970s injected verve and urgency to their efforts. The actors in Essen and West Berlin were not, of course, cast in the larger drama of revolution, although a few might have dreamt of such roles, but they seemed just as powerfully engaged, concerned, and motivated to create change as their counterparts in the east.

In this sense, the "becoming contentious" of the absence of Jewish life did not always fall along distinct cold war lines. The striking degree of variance from city to city challenges any attempt to produce a grand, homogenizing narrative about remembrance in the pluralistic, democratic west and suppressed memory in the dictatorial, communist east. In all three cases, Jewish sites became contentious on the local level and engaged different social actors. The extent of social engagement and the results their efforts produced depended on the dynamics of a given city where the interactions between the local, the national, and the transnational varied considerably. In the GDR and PPR, Jewish sites in the highly visible capital cities became spaces of intense political contestation among the opposition, state, and international Jews, while those in Potsdam and Wrocław received attention mainly from local citizens (and German tourists in the latter case). In the FRG, no single city became the center for reappropriating the Jewish past, but here, too, the political dynamics in West Berlin and Essen could not have differed more starkly. In short, a stable, definable German and Polish interpretation of the Jewish past in the built environment does not emerge from these five urban contexts.

But can this interpretation be defined — as I just have — as "German" and "Polish"? If cold war differences become less pronounced when looking at the local level, do national differences as well? The historical legacy of the Holocaust is inflected in obviously different

ways in Germany and Poland. As the country that created the problem in the first place, it is not surprising that Germany became home to some of the most sharply self-critical efforts like the one in Berlin-Schöneberg. But such efforts were not that common in the 1980s, and the GDR still remained fixed to its antifascist interpretation of the past that eschewed responsibility for the Holocaust. In many ways, the history of Jewish-gentile relations remained similarly fraught in divided Germany and Poland. The Holocaust became an anxious, feared past that could not be ignored but could be altered and shaped to become less discomforting. And yet, in a certain way, the Holocaust was even more contentious in Poland given its historical, asymmetrical relationship to it. Poland did not produce the "Final Solution" and even refused Hitler's invitation to ally with Nazi Germany. The Holocaust remained in a kind of perpetual contestation with a broad range of socially and politically accepted viewpoints. A Pole could deny responsibility for the Holocaust in a way that West Germans and even to some extent East Germans simply could not (lest they become neo-Nazis). This difference is not so much a "national" one as it is a historically conditioned one.

This asymmetrical relationship to the Holocaust partially explains the uniquely intense dominance of the "Jewish problem" in postwar Poland. Although more than a few historians have tried, one could easily argue that it is impossible to write a history about the PPR without extensive treatment of Polish-Jewish relations.[309] The issue remained dominant across the forty-year history of the communist state as the often-entangled stereotypes of the "Jewish-Communist," "Zionist," "non-Pole," and "cosmopolitan" emerged with varying degrees of intensity in 1945-46, 1956, 1968, and 1981. One reason is the geographically and historically specific intensity of the *żydokomuna* anti-Semitic stereotype in Poland, but another is the history of the Holocaust in that country.[310] Poland became, not by choice, the geographic epicenter of

[309] For example, Paczkowski, *Spring*.

[310] In saying "geographically and historically specific," I am attempting to think of a different analytical descriptor for marking the particular intensity of Polish beliefs in the untrue connection between Jews and

where the Holocaust unfolded. The mass murder of its Jewish community and the everyday entanglement of Poles in the Holocaust was one of the factors that produced the physical violence of 1945-46 and the linguistic violence of 1968. The verbal hate of 1968 not only pushed some 13,000 Jews out of Poland, but it also intensely attacked the idea of the Holocaust and shaped afterwards the mode of discussing it. It is probably true that communist officials were particularly well suited to pen this linguistic hate. As Thomas Haury has shown for the GDR, the communist, Manichean obsession with "friends" and "foes," "good" and "evil," "enemies" and "allies" created an inherent, almost structural urge to purge.[311] To this argument I might add for 1968 at least the importance of the Polish context. The virulence of 1968 and the attack on the Holocaust occurred in Poland because the communist regime, unlike its East German counterpart, had almost no limitations to the intensity of the anti-Jewish hatred it could embrace. Its predecessor never produced the "Final Solution" or a Quisling supporter of it. As Kazimierz Wyka noted in 1945: "If Polish anti-Semitism had comprised itself as collaborationist, it would later have been destroyed or at least unmasked. But since it never had a Quisling character, it retained its position and is still considered a mark of patriotism."[312] Although anti-Semitism certainly was never destroyed in postwar, divided Germany, Wyka points to at least a partial explanation for postwar Poland's particularly uneasy, contested relationship with the Holocaust that no less than denied its specificity in 1968.

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communists. One could say "nationally specific," but that can imply a false Polish/cultural singularity when accusations of "Jewish-Communism" existed across the European continent. The idea of "Jewish-Communism" is strong in Poland largely because of the weakness of the interwar communist movement, the 1919-1921 Polish-Soviet war, the Soviet occupation of eastern Poland, and the Soviet occupation after WWII. It is, in short, historically conditioned. On *żydokomuna*, see Pufelska, *Judäo-Kommune*.

[311] Haury, *Antisemitismus*.

[312] Kazimierz Wyka, "Potęga ciemnoty potwierdzona," *Odrodzenie* September 23, 1945; quoted in Huener, *Auschwitz*, 41.

CHAPTER FIVE

"VIRTUAL" OR "REAL"?
JEWISH SITES AFTER 1989

In *Vanishing Diaspora*, Bernard Wasserstein declares that Europe's Jewish population is currently on the verge of near total collapse. The long history of Diaspora in Europe has come to an end after the Holocaust. "Soon nothing will be left save a disembodied memory," he concludes, noting that the low birth rates of Jews on the continent do not hold any promise for the situation changing anytime soon.[1] Published in 1996, Wasserstein's observations seem not only exaggerated and dramatic but simply outdated for certain parts of the continent, especially Germany and Poland. Both countries have witnessed a reemergence of Jewish life since the collapse of communism that is striking. The number of Jews is not even remotely close to what it was before the war and it is probably safe to say it never will be, but the growth over a fairly short period of time challenges the notion of a "vanishing Diaspora." Germany has seen by far the largest increase with the migration of tens of thousands of Jews from the former Soviet Union since 1989, while Poland's revival has been much more modest, yet still notable as Poles with Jewish roots have expressed a desire to discover their Jewishness. Moreover, Wasserstein defines "Jewishness" narrowly in terms of demographics alone with the pre-war numbers as the reference point for his implicit comparison.[2] But non-Jewish Germans and Poles have increasingly expressed a fascination with the Jewish past, producing a staged, parallel "Jewish" existence that works *both* against and with the Jewish community. This interest began in the 1980s as the

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[1] Wasserstein, *Vanishing Diaspora*, 290.

[2] On the hybridity of Jewish identity, see Jonathan Weber, ed., *Jewish Identities in the New Europe* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1994).

absence of Jewish life became present, but it has intensified since 1989 as an almost insatiable appetite for anything perceived to be "Jewish" has taken hold among some segments of society.[3]

As more tourists have been coming to reunited Germany and postcommunist Poland, this attraction has also become increasingly more transnational. In the 1980s, Jewish sites attracted international attention, but the level of interest has risen dramatically as tens of thousands of Jews and non-Jews from the United States, Israel, Canada, and elsewhere have traveled to Germany and Poland in search of the "Jewish" past. Although Jewish heritage travel is a pan-European development with at least thirty-five guidebooks currently available to lead travelers across the continent, trips almost always include Poland and more increasingly Germany with the growing international appeal of Berlin.[4] The German word *Spurensuche* neatly captures this transnational and local interest in the Jewish past. The "search for traces," although less compact in English, reflects the basic idea behind what has been propelling Germans, Poles, Americans, Israelis, and others to search both near and far for the vestiges of the past. It stems from a certain urge for something seemingly old, authentic, and real that goes beyond the modernist obsession with functionality and novelty; it is part of the heterogeneous postmodern embrace of the "historic" in the urban landscape.[5] As the "traces" part of the word indicates, actual, concrete sites are central here: physical spaces seem particularly real; they can be touched, experienced, photographed, examined, discovered, protected, preserved, recreated, restaged. This act of searching out for the past produces real effects on the built environment, not least of all with the reconstruction of "old" sites or the creation of new ones that display artifacts of the old: "authentic" Jewish sites

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[3] It is impossible to say with any kind of accuracy the number of non-Jewish Poles and Germans who have expressed interest in the Jewish past. It is probably safe to say that most Poles and Germans — just like virtually everyone else in the world — are consumed in their daily lives of work, family, and friends, rarely stopping to think about Jews either positively or negatively. Nevertheless, the intensity of interest since the 1980s is palpable.

[4] The number of guidebooks comes from the USHMM website list of books for "Holocaust-related travel:" http://www.ushmm.org/research/library/bibliography/index.php?content=holocaust_travel. On European Jewish heritage travel, see Gruber, *Virtually Jewish*, chap. 7.

[5] Koshar, *Transient Past*, chap. 7; Rosenfeld, *Munich*, chaps. 9-11.

have been restored, while new "Jewish" spaces, especially museums, have been or are currently being built.

Germany and Poland have been witnessing what one might call the reconstruction and musealization of the Jewish past just as its Jewish communities have been growing.[6] The temporal and geographic tension between these two developments — between the transnational obsession with the past and the present, local expansion of Jewish communal life — is palpable, but it does not amount to a clear binary between the real and the virtual. Some have bemoaned the creation of virtual Jewish worlds on a continent with no "real" Jews.[7] But the notion of the "virtual Diaspora" is as problematic as the "vanishing Diaspora." As Jewish life reemerges in Germany and Poland, the boundaries between the "real" and the "virtual" are not always so clearly drawn. In some cases, interest in Jewish sites, for example in Potsdam as the city looks to build a new synagogue, is directly connected to the new Jewish Diaspora that has emerged in post-1989 Germany, even if it still remains clearly embedded in interpretations of the past. This interest does not just involve discussions among non-Jews for non-Jews. Jewish sites engage the attention, interest, and concern of Germans, Jews, Poles, and tourists in both similar and conflicting ways.

This chapter analyzes this multifaceted interest, while continuing to explain what accounts for its emergence. This chapter builds on the last, which argued that the "presence of absence" emerged in the GDR, FRG, and PPR because of discussions about the Holocaust, international pressure, and political conflicts over Jewish spaces. The one feature that all three cases roughly shared, albeit less so in the GDR, was a growing reflection on the Holocaust. The centrality of the Holocaust has only increased in Germany and Poland after 1989, thanks in no small part to interventions from across the Atlantic by Jan T. Gross and Daniel Goldhagen, but I

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[6] Offe, *Ausstellungen*; Hoppe, *Jüdische Geschichte*; Pieper, *Musealisierung*.

[7] Gruber, *Virtually Jewish*. A somewhat similar argument, although limited to the German case is found in Y. Michal Bodemann, *Gedächtnistheater. Die Jüdische Gemeinschaft und ihre deutsche Erfindung* (Hamburg: Rotbuch Verlag, 1996).

would argue that as intense as theses debates were — and they were intense — they advanced the basic parameters of discussion established in the 1980s. In the Polish case, such an argument will perhaps seem odd given the neo-liberal, postcommunist, westernizing demand to view the communist period as some frozen, closed moment of time when the sinister, totalitarian behemoth controlled every aspect of intellectual life. But, in fear of sounding Rankean, the "real" really does matter here: a number of efforts to reappropriate the Jewish past in the built environment came before *Neighbors* (2000).[8] In what follows then, I forgo analyzing the continuing working through of the Holocaust in post-1989 Germany and Poland — Goldhagen, Gross, the *Wehrmachtaustellung*, Walser-Bubis, the crosses of Auschwitz, the Berlin Holocaust memorial. These public discussions have already received extensive treatment and it is important to make room for other levels of analysis.[9] What is more, the on-going appropriation of Jewish sites does not stem exclusively from concern about the Holocaust, although it certainly remains central. It also comes from the presence of tourists on *Spurensuche*, the postmodern embrace of the historic, and the urge for "cosmopolitanism" in a globalizing world. These factors unfold with various levels of intensity in the five cities discussed here with their different degrees of interest in the Jewish past, number of tourists, and size of Jewish community. Just as in early parts of the

[8] More broadly, the interest in "Jewishness" has been strong since the late 1970s: Irwin-Zarecka, *Neutralizing Memory*; Madeline G. Levine, "Wrestling with Ghosts: Poles and Jews Today," Occasional Papers, No. 36, East European Studies, Woodrow Wilson Center, 1-18; Steinlauf, *Bondage*; Lehrer, "'Shoah-Business;'" chap. 4 of this dissertation.

[9] Jan-Holger Kirsch, *Nationaler Mythos oder historische Trauer? Der Streit um ein zentrales "Holocaust-Mahnmal" für die Berliner Republik* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2003); Hans-Georg Stavginski, *Das Holocaust-Denkmal. Der Streit um das "Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas in Berlin* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2002); Ute Heimrod, Günter Schlusche and Horst Seferens, eds., *Der Denkmalstreit--das Denkmal? Die Debatten um das "Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas." Eine Dokumentation* (Berlin: Philo Verlag, 1999). Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst e.V., ed., *Der Wettbewerb für das "Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas." Eine Streitschrift* (Berlin: Verlag der Kunst Berlin, 1995); Michael S. Cullen, ed., *Das Holocaust-Mahnmal. Dokumentation einer Debatte* (Zürich: Pendo Verlag AG, 1999); Michael Jeismann, ed., *Mahnmal Mitte. Eine Kontroverse* (Köln: DuMont, 1999); Gerhard Schwepphäuser and Jörg H. Gleiter, eds., *Wegschauen? Weiterdenken! Zur Berliner Mahnmal-Debatte* (Bauhaus-Universität Weimar: Universitätsverlag, 1999); Riki Kalbe and Moshe Zuckermann, eds., *Ein Grundstück in Mitte. Das Gelände des künftigen Holocaust-Mahnmals in Wort und Bild* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2000); Holger Thünemann, *Das Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas. Dechiffrierung einer Kontroverse* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2003); Frank Schirrmacher, *Die Walser-Bubis-Debatte. Eine Dokumentation* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1999); Geoff Eley, *The "Goldhagen Effect:" History, Memory, Nazism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2000); Polonsky and Michlic, *Neighbors Respond*; Zubrzycki, *Crosses*.

postwar period, so too after 1989 it remains difficult to pull from diverse urban landscapes a singular narrative about Jewish space. Yet Berlin, Warsaw, Potsdam, Essen, and Wrocław do converge in the central feature that they share: all have witnessed, some more intensely than others and some in rather strikingly similar ways, interest in Jewish sites. All of this has been taking place precisely at the moment when Jewish communal life is arguably at its most secure point in Germany since 1945 and in Poland since 1968. In their rush to find the vestiges of the past, Germans, Poles, and tourists admittedly often overlook this present, on-going reality, but a few subtle hints are surfacing that the reemergence of Jewish life in Germany and Poland is having some impact on interpretations of the past. There is at once intermingling and tension between the "virtual" and the not completely "vanishing" spheres of Jewish life.

I. The Revival of Jewish Life after 1989

In one of the most stunning transformations in its postwar history, Germany has become home to one of the largest and until recently fastest growing Jewish communities in Europe thanks to tens of thousands of Russian Jewish immigrants. The migration started during the waning hours of the East German regime when the new government of Lothar de Mazière opened its borders to Jews from the Soviet Union. What began as a trickle suddenly became a flood after German unification.[10] Germany's historically liberal refugee laws (in contrast to its strict naturalization laws) allowed Jews to enter the country with the legal rights of immigrants, although parliament has steadily been restricting these laws since 1989. In 1993, the Bundestag put tighter restrictions on foreign immigration, while in 2005 it approved an entire overhaul of the system. Now the number of foreigners entering the country has decreased dramatically. In 2007, a mere 2,502 Jews came to Germany, down sharply from a high of 19,437 in 1997.[11] Still, in total

[10] On selecting Germany, Yvonne Schütze, "Warum Deutschland und nicht Israel? Begründungen russischer Juden für die Migration nach Deutschland," *BIOS Zeitschrift Biographieforschung und Oral History* no. 2 (1997): 186-208.

[11] Deutscher Bundestag, 16. Wahlperiode, Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die kleine Anfrage der Fraktion Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, Drucksache 16/8716, April 4, 2008.

some 200,000 Jews from the former Soviet Union have made their way to Germany since 1989.[12] These predominantly Russian-speaking Jews have increased the size of Germany's Jewish religious community by 250 percent. In the late 1980s, the community in the FRG had around 25-30,000 Jews, while the one in the GDR had about 400.[13] In 2005, the Central Council of Jews (*Zentralrat*) reported a total of 105,733 Jewish community members with the largest *Gemeinde* located in Berlin (11,014).[14] This migration of Russian Jews reflects what has long been occurring throughout Germany's postwar history but rarely articulated in public until recently — Germany has become an immigrant nation. It has the largest foreigner population in Europe with 6.7 million (8.2 percent of the population).[15]

Although the Jewish community has officially welcomed this influx of Jews, the transition has not been easy. Despite being the founder of Reform Judaism, the Jews of Germany today are almost entirely Orthodox with only a few liberal synagogues (conservative in the Jewish-American context). The local *Gemeinde* maintains the Halakhic law and is answerable to the *Zentralrat*, a central, organizing body formed in 1950 with the idea that the small Jewish community needed to form an *Einheitsgemeinde* (unified community).[16] The Russian Jewish

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[12] A summary of the numbers from 1991-2007 is found in "Deutschland: Weniger jüdische Zuwanderer," *Migration und Bevölkerung Newsletter*, no. 4, May 2008 (on-line edition; last accessed May 29, 2008). *Focus Migration* publishes this newsletter, which is an information portal on global immigration in partnership with the Hamburg Institute of International Economics (HWWI), the Netzwerk Migration in Europa, and the German Federal Agency for Civic Education.

[13] Burgauer, *Erinnerung*, 358-59.

[14] "Neue Zahlen," *Zukunft* October 28, 2005. The number for Berlin comes from the *Zentralrat's* website with statistical date for each community: www.zentralratdjuden.de/de/topic/59.html?gemeinde=6.

[15] *Ausländerzahlen* (Nürnberg: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2008), 4. On this postwar transformation, see Chin, *Guest*.

[16] On the formation of the *Zentralrat*, see Geller, *Jews*; Jurgen Zieher, "Weder Privilegierung noch Diskriminierung. Die Politik des Zentralrats der Juden in den fünfziger Jahren," *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 13 (2004): 187-211.

population has complicated this long-standing, postwar balance.[17] A number of them either know little about Judaism or do not meet the conservative, religious criteria for membership in the *Gemeinde*. Russian immigrants who consider themselves Jewish because the Soviet state had marked them as a nationality might or might not be halakhically Jewish. If for instance they do not have a Jewish mother, they cannot become a full, religious member of the *Gemeinde*.[18] This has naturally caused resentment, frustration, and anger among Russian Jews.

Moreover, many Russian Jews arrive in need of jobs, housing, education, and welfare support. The resources of the local *Gemeinden*, the *Zentralrat*, and the state have simply been overwhelmed. Although many of them are well educated, they have struggled to find suitable work with doctors, engineers, teachers, and intellectuals having to settle for jobs outside their field. Finally, there is the on-going, culturally fraught issue of "integration," *the* catchword of late not only for German society as whole as it wrestles with what it means to be an immigrant nation but also for the Jewish community. Just as demands have grown for Germany's Turkish immigrant population to acculturate into German society, so too have parallel assumptions surfaced about Russian Jews among the still predominantly German-speaking leadership of the *Gemeinden* and *Zentralrat*. The assumption is that Russian Jews should integrate into the religious life of the community by learning German and becoming versed in Jewish practice. The problem is that such "integration" assumes a cultural and religious superiority that some Russian Jews resent. Many have little attachment to German culture and little desire to pratice religious Judaism, especially Orthodoxy. The result has been fissure, dissonance, and pluralization in the once, seemingly "unified community."[19]

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[17] An extended, insightful reflection on the points I touch upon below is Jeffrey M. Peck, *Being Jewish in the New Germany* (New Brunswick: Rutges University Press, 2006), chap. 3.

[18] Russian Jews also struggled to convince German authorities that they were really Jewish and should be in Germany in the first place. See Franziska Becker, *Ankommen in Deutschland. Einwanderungspolitik als biographische Erfahrung im Migrationsprozeß russischer Juden* (Berlin: Reimer, 2001).

[19] Peck, *Jewish*, chap. 3.

Perhaps no other Jewish community in Germany reflects this fragmentation more acutely than the one in Berlin. The capital of unified Germany has become home to the country's largest Jewish community of 11,000 members and eight synagogues. This number is obviously nowhere near the prewar community of 160,000, but it represents a doubling of the community's size in just fifteen years. But as more Jews have come to the city, what it means to be Jewish has become less unified.[20] Although Berlin's fractious and at times even chaotic *Gemeinde* clearly dominates "Jewishness" in the capital, it is no longer the sole representative of Berlin Jews as it was from 1945 to 1989 in both east and west.[21] A number of Jewish organizations have emerged since 1989 that offer different spaces for Jews to express their identity.[22] There are secular, cultural ones, such as the Jewish museum in Kreuzberg or Centrum Judaicum in Mitte, as well as smaller, religious groups like Adass Yisroel, Chabad Lubavitch, and the World Union of Progressive Judaism. The Jewish Cultural Club, founded by Irene Runge in East Berlin in the late 1980s, offers lectures and discussions about Judaism. Bet Deborah provides space for feminists, while Yachad does the same for gays and lesbians.[23] Finally, the internet has provided an almost limitless space for diversification. Cyberspace has become a central forum for Jews in Berlin and elsewhere to create their own sense of community through chat groups and information portals.[24]

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[20] Micha Brumlik, *Zuhause, keine Heimat: Junge Juden und ihre Zukunft in Deutschland* (Gerlingen, 1998); Michael Brenner, 'The Transformation of the German-Jewish Community', in Leslie Morris and Jack Zipes, eds., *Unlikely History: The Changing German-Jewish Symbiosis, 1945-2000* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 49-62.

[21] On the divisions of the Berlin *Gemeinde*, see Peck, *Jewish*, 45-49.

[22] For an extended analysis of the various Jewish groups in Berlin, see Alexander Jungmann, *Jüdisches Leben in Berlin. Der aktuelle Wandel in einer metropolitanen Diasporagemeinschaft* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2007), 427-542.

[23] As to be expected, the internet is crucial to the proliferation and sustenance of these groups. Some have their own websites, such as Bet Deborah, but most are grouped under the portal "Berlin Judentum," which the website haGalil publishes (http://www.berlin-judentum.de/deutsch.html). HaGalil is the largest German language website on Jewish topics with over 140,000 entries per month. See Thomas von der Osten-Sacken, "A German Jewish Internet Portal Combating Anti-Semitism," HaGalil.com (last accessed May 30, 2008).

[24] On cyberspace, see Peck, *Jewish*, 165-68; Jungmann, *Jüdisches Leben*, 530-41.

Such plurality of Jewish life is less visible across the German border. Poland has witnessed a much less dramatic revival of Jewish life after 1989. There is no steady stream of Jewish immigration into the country. Russian Jews come to Germany in no small part because it is a wealthy country with a strong welfare state. But a revival of Jewish life in Poland has taken place after near extinction in the wake of 1968. It is estimated that the country now has about 10,000 people who describe themselves as Jewish, which is up significantly from the roughly 2-3,000 in the late 1980s.[25] These "new" Jews are Polish citizens who fall into two main groups: 1968ers who discovered their Jewishness in rather negative terms during the anti-Zionist campaign and 1989ers who have become "Jewish" because it is seen as different, interesting, exotic, and cool. These young Poles form the bulk of Poland's expanding Jewish community. They become Jewish in part out of sheer curiosity. As the 1968er Stanisław Krajewski put it: "You know, young people try various alternative, minority ways of life, also religion. So for Jews it may be Judaism, just because it's such an alternative, minority religion."[26] Young Poles also become "Jewish" in search of an imagined cosmopolitanism, believing that Jewishness represents a pluralistic, open, and tolerant form of Polishness.[27]

Several key institutions have been central to stimulating and sustaining this rediscovery of Jewish roots. The Ronald Lauder Foundation, founded in the mid-1980s by the son of the founder of the cosmetics conglomerate Estée Lauder, established an office in Warsaw in 1992 and has played a vital role in the revival of Jewish life in the country through its educational programs, youth retreats, and funding of projects such as the Polish-Jewish magazine *Midrasz.* The foundation also heavily subsidizes the Religious Union of Mosaic Faith, which is headed by

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[25] Unlike in the German case, the exact number of Jews in contemporary Poland is not known exactly. Although today it is fashionable to be "Jewish," there still may be some Jews who do not want to identify themselves as Jewish or simply do not think of themselves as Jewish.

[26] Quoted in Claire Ann Rosenson, "Jewish Identity Construction in Contemporary Poland: Influences and Alternatives in Ethnic Renewal," (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1997), 69.

[27] Marius Gudonis, "Particularizing the Universal: New Polish Jewish Identities and a New Framework of Analysis," in Zvi Gitelman, Barry Kosmin, and Adrás Kovács, eds., *New Jewish Identities: Contemporary Europe and Beyond* (New York: Central European Press, 2003), 247-48.

the American Rabbi Michael Shudrich. As the anthropologist Claire A. Rosenson discovered in her ethnographic study, young Polish Jews strongly credit the Lauder Foundation and Schudrich for strengthening Jewish life in Poland, but remain ambivalent about their insistence on Orthodoxy and whether it makes sense for their contemporary lives.[28] Just as in Germany, Orthodoxy remains dominant in Poland with few other, "Jewish" alternatives beyond the TSKŻ – – which given its close ties with the PZPR and its failure to shift its purpose after 1989 — has attracted few young Polish Jews.

Jews in Poland have confronted a number of different conflicting perspectives on what it means to be Jewish in their country. Their experience as Jews is shaped in part by their interactions with both foreign Jews and non-Jewish Poles. Jews outside of Poland, especially in the United States and Israel, have a particular attraction to Poland that is stronger than to Germany. Although statistics are hard to come by, it is safe to assume that many more Jewish tourists visit Poland per year than to Germany.[29] Poland is at once imagined as the familiar, welcoming place where the rich, pure, and authentic culture of the *Shtetl* blossomed and remembered as the graveyard where this glorious heritage came to a tragic burial. Since the collapse of communism, Jewish tourism to Poland has increased dramatically as tens of thousands of Americans and Israelis have poured into the country in search of the "vestiges of Jewish

[28] Rosenson, "Jewish Identity," chap. 4.

[29] In 2003, a *New York Times* reporter indicated that more than 100,000 Israeli and American Jews visit Poland every year. I do not know of a similar estimate for Germany, but it is most likely lower because standard Jewish tours, for instance those organized by the American Jewish Congress, do not include Germany. The main exception is Berlin, which has become a major site of Jewish travel. Germany probably also gets a sizeable number of non-Jews who come to visit Holocaust sites (as does Poland to Auschwitz). The German National Tourist Office and travel companies such as the Berlin-based Milk and Honey Tours has been trying over the years to increase Jewish tourism to Germany. See Peter S. Green, "Jewish Museum in Poland: More than a Memorial," *New York Times* January 9, 2003; *Germany for the Jewish Traveler* (German National Tourist Office, published and updated since 1990). The Berlin travel company web site is www.milkandhoneytours.com and the American Jewish Congress Travel Program one is www.ayelet.com/AJC/AJCongress%20Homepagev1.htm.

Poland" that was "wiped out in the Holocaust."[30] Coming from fairly affluent, middle-class backgrounds (they have to afford the trip), they perceive "Eastern Europe" as the foil of their own liberal, bourgeois sensibilities — drab, corrupt, backward, digressive, poor, and intolerant. This "Euro-Orientalism," although rooted in the Enlightenment, became solidified during the cold war and has remained strong after the collapse of communism with a commensurate shift from anti-communism to anti-Polish sentiment.[31] These broader perceptions of the "east" strongly shape the mode of Jewish travel to Poland, which has become a ritualized form of engagement with the barren, Jewish graveyard of "Eastern Europe."[32] This is no ordinary heritage tourism taken for pleasure and leisure; it is a "secular ritual," an obligatory encounter with a singular time and space — 1941-1945 and Auschwitz.[33] Just to take one prominent example: the Likud party member Avraham Hirschorn established in 1988 the first annual "March of the Living" trip that over the years has brought thousands of Jews from all over the world to march from Auschwitz to Birkenau on Holocaust Memorial Day.[34] Although billed as an "international, educational program," the MOL rarely explores Poland beyond the death camps and reinforces negative

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[30] Ruth Gruber, "Visiting the Vestiges of Jewish Poland," *New York Times* October 21, 1990. See also her guidebook: *Jewish Heritage Travel: A Guide to Central and Eastern Europe* (New York: Wiley, 1992); republished in 1994 by Wiley and then in 2007 by National Geographic.

[31] Ezequiel Adamovsky, "Euro-Orientalism and the Making of the Concept of Eastern Europe in France, 1810-1880," *Journal of Modern History* (September 2005): 591-628. On the earlier origins of the concept, see Wolff, *Inventing*.

[32] I think Adamovsky's neo-Marxist reading of "Euro-Orientalism" makes sense here. The contrast with Germany could not be clearer. With at least one half of the country part of the "West" throughout the cold war, Germany did not become part of "Eastern Europe." Indeed, it became its opposite — a flourishing, liberal, middle-class, democratic, capitalist miracle. Middle-class Jewish tourists visiting today see its wealth and vibrancy, its excellent roads, fast-speed trains, expensive cars, and clean cities.

[33] Jack Kugelmass, "The Rites of the Tribe: The Meaning of Poland for American Jewish Tourists," *YIVO Annual* 21 (1993): 419.

[34] See Carolyn Slutsky, "March of the Living: Confronting Anti-Polish Stereotypes," in Robert Cherry and Annamaria Orla-Bukowska, eds., *Rethinking Poles and Jews: Troubled Past, Brighter Future* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 189-196.

impressions of the country that probably most participants had before they even left.[35] The trip concludes by flying to Israel from Poland. As one student from Hollywood, Florida put it, the trajectory of the trip is obvious, "from hell to heaven, from despair to joy." Another, from Boca Raton, summed up Poland simply: "We couldn't find anything good there."[36] If in 1968 anxiety on the part of Poles about "anti-Polish" attitudes was largely imagined, it has now become all too real.[37] Poles are often offended by the comments they encounter from foreign Jews and those who are Jewish have distanced themselves from the American-Israeli insistence on the Holocaust as a central marker of Jewish identity.[38]

The experience of Polish Jews is also shaped by their interactions with non-Jewish Poles whose attitudes about them are of central importance in a country of virtually no minorities. Jews tend to be framed in binary ways as either a complicated problem of discussion or an exotic fascination that is worth experiencing (there is also the far-right, anti-Semitic framing that has gained strength since 2001 but it is still relatively marginal compared to the other two).[39] Since 1989, discussions about Polish-Jewish relations, especially during the Holocaust and the immediate postwar years, have sparked enormous controversy. In 1998, ultranationalist Polish

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[35] Quote from its official website, www.motl.org. In the US case at least, these trips reinforce stereotypes that American Jews have of non-Jewish Poles. As Madeline Levine succinctly puts it, "the anti-Semitic Pole has become a stock character in Jewish folk culture," (Levine, "Ghosts," 6).

[36] Greer Fay Cashman, "The March of the Living," *The Jerusalem Post* May 15, 1990.

[37] For a full discussion of these points, see Zubrzycki, *Crosses*, 112-131.

[38] Rosenson, "Jewish Identity," chap. 5. See also Konstanty Gebert's critical piece on the MOL under his pen name, Dawid Warszawski,"Mieszkając na ziemi popiołów," *Gazeta Wyborcza* April 21, 1998.

[39] Since 1989, Polish politics has been erratic. Although the post-communist Left gained strength in the 1990s, forming governments in 1993-97 and 2001-2005, the right has had a strong surge of support since 2001 when the newly formed, strongly nationalist League of Polish Families (*Liga Polskich Rodzin,* or LPR) gained 7.9 percent of the vote in parliamentary elections. From May 2006 to August 2007, LPR was part of the Law and Justice and Self-Defense coalition government. After its collapse, the more moderate, right-of-center Civic Platform has been in power. The far right has, however, a much more vocal position in Poland than it does in Germany with access to a number of media outlets: Radio Maryja, *Nasz Dziennik*, *Angora*, *Myśl Polska*, *Niedziela*, *Najwyższy Czas*, and *Tygodnik Głos*. On contemporary Polish politics and the post-1989 context of anti-Semitism, see Ost, *Defeat of Solidarity*, Michlic, *Poland's*, and Zubrzycki, *Crosses*. For a summary of the most recent events, see *Poland: Democracy and the Challenge of Extremism* (New York: The Anti-Defamation League, 2006).

Catholics placed hundreds of crosses at Auschwitz that ignited an intense debate about Polish and Jewish interpretations of the war, while two years later Jan Gross, who left for the United States in 1968, published his landmark study about Polish involvement in the murder of Jews in the village of Jedwabne.[40] In the spring of 2008, a flurry of reactions about another intervention from Gross flooded Poland's media, this time about the murder of Jews in Kielce after the war.[41] As these controversies about the past have unfolded, some Poles have shown continued fascination with almost anything associated with "Jews." This "Jewish fashion," *moda na Żydów*, has been expressed in an almost insatiable desire for Jewish studies programs, festivals, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Klezmer music, wooden carvings, and the like. Although this interest probably engages only a small part of the total population, it reinforces the mental framing of Jews as different and strange, as exotic objects of wonder or complicated problems of discussion. A similar dynamic is also found in Germany for sure, but it is perhaps sharper in Poland because of its stronger attraction among foreign Jews and the sheer homogeneity of its society (there are other "others" in Germany, not least of all Turks).

II. Reclaiming Jewish Sites in "Cosmopolitan" Capitals

Indeed, even as Jewish life has reemerged in both countries, Germans, Poles, and tourists seem particularly interested in experiencing, creating, and inventing what they perceive to be "Jewish." This interest stems in part from the perception that Jews represent a minority culture that is uniquely rich, authentic, and cosmopolitan. This urge to experience a "culture" that is at once singular and transnational has perhaps not surprisingly become expressed most clearly in the urban environment. Jews have long been linked to the city: their cosmopolitanism comes from their association with urban life for good or bad depending on who is doing the interpreting. In the late nineteenth century, this linkage was often cast in negative, hostile terms in a changing, industrializing world. The anti-Semitic press portrayed Jews as city-dwellers with innumerable,

[40] Zubrzycki, *Crosses*; Polonsky and Michlic, *Neighbors Respond*.

[41] Mariusz Gądek, ed., *Wokół Strachu. Dyskusja o Książce Jana T. Grossa* (Cracow: Znak, 2008).

un-desirable characteristics: the rootless cosmopolitan who has no ties to the "nation," the city-dwelling banker who causes economic misfortune, the urban criminal who brings prostitution, pornography, and incest. Jews came to represent the social, cultural, and economic ills of modern society that the city itself epitomized.[42]

But this cosmopolitanism could also be evaluated differently at times. In 1925, the Austrian journalist and Jewish convert to Christianity Hugo Bettauer published his novel, *The City without Jews*, that imagined what life would be like in Vienna if Jews were suddenly gone. This odd, sardonic novel became a bestseller, was made into a film, and inspired Artur Landsberger to write his own version for Berlin (*Berlin ohne Juden*). The book, the movie, and its Berlin copy portrayed the impoverishment of capitals without Jews.[43] All accounts end with the return of the Jews just in time to prevent the collapse of cultural and economic life.[44] These books when read today seem eerily close to the actual removal of Jews fifteen years later with the exception that there was, of course, no happy ending. The impoverishment was now more than real. In 1956, the scholar Harry Zohn, in an article entitled the "City without Jews," described the "provincialism of daily life, the brutalization of taste, the reduction of cosmopolitanism" in contemporary Vienna.[45]

A similar kind of impulse has emerged since 1989 as non-Jews and Jews seek out "cosmopolitanism" in the restored, preserved, and created Jewish sites of the "Jewish" capitals of Berlin and Warsaw. This attraction surfaced earlier in the 1980s as Germans and Poles started to reflect upon the "presence of absence" in a melancholic nostalgia for the Jewish past, but since

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[42] The most extensive treatment of Jews and the city is Joachim Schlör, *Das Ich der Stadt. Debatten über Judentum und Urbanität, 1822-1938* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005).

[43] Hugo Bettauer, *Die Stadt ohne Juden. Ein Roman von übermorgen* (Vienna: Gloriette-Verlag, 1922); Artur Landsberger, *Berlin ohne Juden* (Hannover: Paul Steegemann, 1925).

[44] Although sardonic texts intent on mocking anti-Semitism, they are hardly innocuous. They reinforce precisely the stereotypes they wish to challenge. See Scott Spector, "Modernism Without Jews: A Counter-Historical Argument," *Modernism/Modernity* no. 4 (2006): 615-633.

[45] Harry Zohn, "Die Stadt ohne Juden," *Das Jüdische Echo*, vol. 4, no. 5 (January 1956); quoted in Guntram Geser and Armin Loacker, eds., *Stadt ohne Juden* (Vienna: Filmarchiv Austria, 2000), 7.

1989 it has expanded in multiple directions. It now engages not just local and national actors but also tourists who have been coming to Germany and Poland in large numbers on "Jewish" and "Holocaust" tours. The different, at times conflicting impulses that have informed this discovery of the Jewish past in the built environment have only increased as Jewish space becomes interpreted locally, nationally, and transnationally.

These tensions are perhaps most pronounced in the city of Berlin where the multiple ways of articulating interest in the Jewish past is dizzying. The new capital has become home to not only the largest, most diverse Jewish population in Germany, but also to the most visible explosion of interest in what is perceived to be Jewish. Contemporary Berlin is perhaps ideal for such a rediscovery. Edgy, young, energetic, and the current European darling of papers like the *New York Times*, Berlin has exploded onto the post-1989 imaginary as a hip, cool, tolerant, free-flowing, almost-everything-goes kind of city where one can drink, smoke, dance, and sex the night away.[46] With a budget deficit in the billions and a structurally weak economy from the city's forty-year division, Berlin is poor and stagnant but revels in its image as a cosmopolitan, tolerant, fun loving, tourist-haven city. "Poor, but sexy," is how the city's hip and media-friendly mayor put it.[47] Of course, this image simplifies and elides the reality of the city's streets.[48] Berlin has problems with right-wing extremism, while its sizeable Turkish population remains spatially and culturally separated from most Berliners.[49] Still, the image persists and millions of tourists keep coming to the city with over 17 million in 2007. Most tourists rarely visit the city's districts

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[46] "Berlin: On this Stage, Every Dancer is a Player," *New York Times* April 20, 2008; "One Wall Down, Thousands to Paint," *New York Times* March 2, 2008; "Street Food with Ambition in Berlin," *New York Times* November 12, 2006; "36 Hours: Berlin," *New York Times* December 10, 2006.

[47] "In Worte gefasst," *Der Tagesspiegel*, March 16, 2008; "The Club Scene, on the Edge," *New York Times* December 12, 2004.

[48] This discrepancy is noticed on occasion. See, for instance, Peter Schneider, "The New Berlin Wall," *New York Times Magazine* December 4, 2005.

[49] Hans H. Nibbrig, "Zahl rechtsradikaler Straftaten steigt," *Berliner Morgenpost* February 8, 2008. Although Turks live in all parts of Berlin, they are concentrated in the district of Kreuzberg and Neukölln.

where its divisions are most apparent.[50] Many absorb the image of the "new Berlin." The vast majority of the 2,164 tourists interviewed by the city's main marketing firm described the city with such adjectives as "multicultural," "creative," "alternative," "young," "innovative," "vibrant," "historically interesting," and "dynamic."[51]

One important part of this image is Berlin's embrace of its Jewish heritage, which has increased dramatically since the fall of the wall. It is now "cool to be Jewish" in Berlin.[52] In 1998, the bi-monthly magazine *Zitty* took stock of this "hype" about Jews in a six-page article. For such an essay to appear in *Zitty*, a popular events magazine that along with its competitor, *Tip*, serves as a kind of cultural arbiter in the city, alone speaks to the wide popularity that "what counts as Jewish" currently has in the city. The front-cover of the issue carried a cubic, psychedelic-looking Star of David with the headline on the bottom right corner: "Trendy Judaism: The Hype about the Star of David." The article began with the evidence: the Jewish restaurants, stores, organizations, and cultural clubs; the menus that cannot possibly leave out the bagels; the city tours of "Jewish Berlin" offered in both German and English; the theater that offers Klezmer music almost every evening. The article, however, did not revel in this "cosmopolitanism" as many Berliners and tourists do. Instead it provided a penetrating analysis of it through a series of interviews with Jewish academics, artists, writers, and community members. Almost all Jews were deeply critical of this interest, viewing it as a form of cultural domination that essentializes and exoticizes Jews. The gadfly Henryk Broder mockingly observed that "the good souls were not there when the train with my mother was rolling out; such enthusiasm was much more guarded then." Julius Hans Schoeps, professor of Jewish history at Potsdam University, argued that "positive" evaluations of Jews were essentially inversions of negative stereotypes that can easily turn into hatred. The co-

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[50] Most tourists stay in the districts of Mitte and Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf. *Imagebefragung: Tourismusstandort Berlin in seiner bezirklichen Vielfalt* (Berlin: KOMBI Consult GmbH, 2006), 82.

[51] Ibid., 77-78.

[52] Jeannie Marshall, "Suddenly in Germany, It's Cool to be Jewish," *National Post* July 29, 2000.

founder of the Jewish artistic group Meshulash, Gabriel Heimler, went so far as to even call this "domination of Jewishness with socially suited clichés a 'cultural Shoah.'" Such charged comments are extreme to say the least and are of little analytical value. But others interviewed offered more insightful observations. One Jewish community member noted simply that it can be "stressful to be a Jew here" since Jews are almost always seen as different and exotic, people to be studied, experienced, preserved, examined, discovered, and identified. As the Berlin Jewish museum director Michael Blumenthal aptly put it, "every time I visit Germany I arrive as an American and then leave as a Jew."[53]

This rediscovery of "Jewish Berlin" is predominantly a spatial experience that involves encountering traces of Jewish culture in the urban landscape, especially in one area of town — the *Spandauer Vorstadt*, popularly known as the *Scheunenviertel* (barn quarter). Located in the middle of the city and once part of East Berlin, the *Scheunenviertel* has become one of the trendier places in the city with a number of bars, restaurants, cafes, and art galleries.[54] The city of Berlin has poured millions of dollars into the careful restoration of the neighborhood, which had fallen into deep disrepair during the GDR.[55] This area, now increasingly gentrified through a postmodern recovery of the "old," has become Berlin's "Jewish" district, a cultural construct that only partially reflects the history of the area.[56] In the late nineteenth century, East European Jews fleeing from the pogroms of 1881 and 1905 settled in the tenement houses of *Spandauer Vorstadt*. By the early 1900s, about 40,000 Jews lived in this area of town. Mostly orthodox and relatively poor, they stood out from the city's acculturated, middle-class Jewish community, but

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[53] Meike Wöhlert, "Der Hype um den Davidstern. Was als jüdisch gilt, ist schwer in Mode. Doch Normalität ist deshalb noch lange nicht eingekehrt," *Zitty* July 30-August 12, 1998, 14-20.

[54] Jungmann, *Jüdisches Leben*.

[55] Hartwig Dieser and Andreas Wilke, *Zwischenbilanz und Ausblick. Stadterneuerung in Berlin-Mitte, Sanierungsgebiet Spandauer Vorstadt* (Berlin: Bezirksamt von Mitte, 2005).

[56] Ulrike Steglich and Peter Kratz, *Das falsche Scheunenviertel* (Berlin: Oliver Seifert, 1994).

they hardly formed an isolated community.[57] The *Spandauer Vorstadt* was a mix of Jews and non-Jews. Berlin never had one single, densely populated Jewish neighborhood like Warsaw had; its population lived in all parts of the city. Nevertheless, the "*Scheunenviertel*" was imagined as the city's "Jewish district" because of the type of Jews who lived there. It was constructed as a kind of quaint *Shtetl* within the metropolis, drawing on long-standing orientalist perceptions of East European Jews. This mental mapping of "Jews" with the "east" stretches back to the Enlightenment when "*Ostjuden*" were seen as dirty and backward, yet also authentic and beautiful.[58] In 1822, Heinrich Heine captured this mix of repulsion and attraction perhaps best when he wrote after visiting Poland, "in spite of the barbarous fur cap which covers his head, and the still more barbarous notions which fill it, I esteem the Polish Jew."[59] The ambivalent reaction to the backward, yet authentic East European Jew reached a climax in World War I when many German soldiers encountered "*Ostjuden*" in Poland for the first time. In the early interwar years, the exotic East European Jew emerged in a number of literary and pictorial representations.[60] *Ostjuden* became "authentic" traces of Jewishness in a modern, assimilating world.[61] But in the late 1920s and 1930s, this strangeness was more often derided than celebrated. In Berlin, anti-Semitic novelists and writers created the "*Scheunenviertel*" as the city's "ghetto."[62] The area, also home to pimps, bars, and prostitutes, seemed like the ideal space to make racist connections between criminality, moral degeneration, urbanization, and Jews.

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[57] Schlör, *Ich*, 111-13.

[58] Steven E. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German-Jewish Consciousness, 1800-1923* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1982).

[59] Quoted in Aschheim, *Brothers*, 185.

[60] Aschheim, *Brothers*, chaps. 7 and 8.

[61] Alfred Döblin, *Reise in Polen* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1926); Joseph Roth, *Juden auf Wanderschaft* (Berlin: Die Schmiede, 1927).

[62] Joachim Schlör, "Bilder Berlins als „jüdischer Stadt." Ein Beitrag zur Wahrnehmungsgeschichte der deutschen Metropole," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 37 (1997): 207-229.

The contemporary construction of the *Scheunenviertel* rests on similar, essentialized notions of "Jews" as exotic, as Eastern European, as Orthodox, as Hasidic that have almost nothing to do with Berlin's historically acculturated Jewish community. The East European Jew represents the authentic, albeit now vanished world of the dirty, backward, yet beautiful and romantic *Shtetl*.[63] Today the *Scheunenviertel* is *the* geographic space for the staging of "Jewish Berlin."[64] Even its edgier side has returned: prostitutes roam the streets of *Oranienburgerstraße* by dusk. It is only the Jews who have not returned. The city's new, burgeoning Jewish community is located mainly in the western parts of the city. But the absence of Jews does not seem to matter much to the numerous tourists who walk through the streets of the *Scheunenviertel* everyday on *Spurensuche*. Tourism has played a major role in the revival of the *Scheunenviertel* myth after 1989. In one week alone, there are at least ten city tours walking the streets of "Jewish Berlin."[65] These tours and the guidebooks that accompany them almost always orient the traveler to the *Scheunenviertel*.[66] The journey often begins in *Mitte* around the area of the *Spandauer Vorstadt*, passing through the renovated apartment building of the "*Scheunenviertel*," the grounds of the former Jewish cemetery on *Grosse Hamburger Straße*, and then ending at the *Neue Synagoge* on *Oranienburgerstraße* where one can buy items in shops with Jewish ritual objects in their windows or dine in restaurants called "Makom."[67] Tourists are involved in this staged drama

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[63] Claudio Magris, *Weit von wo. Die verlorene Welt des Ostjudentums* (Vienna: Europa-Verlag, 1974); Martin Pollack, *Nach Galizien. Von Chassiden, Huzulen, Polen und Ruthenen. Eine imaginäre Reise durch die verschwundene Welt Ostgaliziens und der Bukowina* (Vienna: C. Brandtätter, 1984). For a critical analysis, see Michael Daxner, "Schtetl-Faszination," in Hans Henning Jahn and Jens Stüben, eds., *Jüdische Autoren Ostmitteleuropas im 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2002), 161–171.

[64] Jungmann, *Jüdisches Leben*.

[65] Kristen Küppers, "Marketing mit Davidstern," *Die Tageszeitung* November 20, 2000.

[66] Andrew Roth and Michael Frajman, *The Goldapple Guide to Jewish Berlin* (Berlin: Goldapple, 1998); Bill Rebiger, *Jewish Berlin: Culture, Religion, and Daily Life Yesterday and Today* (Berlin: Jaron, 2005); Rebiger, *Jewish Sites in Berlin* (Berlin: Jaron, 2005).

[67] Joachim Schlör, "From Remnants to Realities: Is there Something Beyond a 'Jewish Disneyland' in Eastern Europe," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* no. 2 (2003): 150-51. See also Schlör, "Auf der Suche

as much as the German storekeepers, guides, and writers who propagate and benefit from it. They seem equally attracted to the traces of the vanished cultural heritage of East European Jewry, which seems more authentic and real to them than that of acculturated Jewry.[68] In 1992-93, the traveling American installation artist, Shimon Attie, showcased a slide projection of pre-war images of "Jewish street life in Berlin" on the buildings of "Berlin's former Jewish quarter, the *Scheunenviertel*."[69] Although obviously more so than any normal tourist, his recreation of this seemingly authentic, now lost "world of the Jewish working class" reflects the intertwined mental mapping of the far away traveler and the local guide, engaged as they are in a process of creation and experience that affects both the identity of place and the actual, material treatment of space.[70]

Some have argued that this interest in the *Scheunenviertel* has effectively produced a "Jewish Disneyland."[71] The Berlin Jewish publicist Iris Weiss, who herself leads tours in the city including one called "Jewish Disneyland — The Marketing of Jewishness," sees a number of problems with this recreated "Jewishness" in the area around *Oranienburgerstraße*. Her main complaint is similar to the ones expressed by other Jews in Berlin — what is "fictitious" becomes "real." "The themes of Jewish Disneyland are romanticism, exoticization, folklorization, and historicization of everything Jewish. As a result, that which is really Jewish becomes (or is made)

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nach dem Ort des Judentums," *Kritische Berichte. Zeitschrift für Kunst- und Kulturwissenschaften* no. 3 (1996): 6-12.

[68] Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog, *Life is with People: The Jewish Little Town of Eastern Europe* (New York: International Universities Press, 1952); Edward Serotta, *Out of the Shadows: A Photographic Portrait of Jewish Life in Central Europe Since the Holocaust* (Secaucus, NJ: Carol Publishing Group, 1991); Michael A. Riff, *The Face of Survival: Jewish Life in Eastern Europe Past and Present* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 1992); Ruth Ellen Gruber, *Upon the Doorposts of Thy House: Jewish Life in East-Central Europe* (New York: J. Wiley, 1994).

[69] Shimon Attie, "The Writing on the Wall, Berlin, 1992-1993: Projections in Berlin's Jewish Quarter," *Art Journal* vol. 62, no. 3 (2003): 75.

[70] Ibid., 75. A fascinating account of the interplay of tourism, preservation, and identity is Hagen, *Preservation*.

[71] Or, more broadly, a "virtual" Jewishness, see Gruber, *Virtually*.

invisible."[72] This imagined, essentialized, virtual Jewish world rarely reflects deeply on the Holocaust and ignores the "real" Jewish life in the city. These critical remarks hold some truth. As the *Gemeinde* member astutely observed in the *Zitty* article, Jews remain marked for their difference and strangeness, although now for their celebrated cosmopolitanism. One visits the *Scheunenviertel* to experience a different "world" from what one finds in other tourist areas such as the Brandenburg Gate, Unter den Linden, and Potsdamer Platz. Weiss also marshals some compelling evidence at times. The American singer Gayle Tufts, who lives in Berlin, remarked rather glibly, "the fact that right here in Berlin's former Jewish quarter one can get bagels, a typical Jewish bread that you find everywhere in New York, well, that's almost a sign of healing."[73] Still, Weiss's observations are not without their own contradictions. She assumes that a definable, real "Jewishness" exists, reducing it to an identifiable feature — typically religion — in a city of multiple meanings of Jewishness. This binary between fictitious Jewishness and authentic Jewishness does exactly what it critiques: it produces a reified understanding of Jewishness.[74]

What is more, the area of Berlin that Weiss leads tourists through does not contain just fictitious productions of Jewish space. She rightly is skeptical of the kitsch and marketing of the *Scheunenviertel*, but the reason why the area attracts the number of tourists and locals that it does is because there is a bit of "real" behind it. Tourists and Berliners walk through an area of town where a number of Jewish sites and Jewish organizations are located. The restaurants, shops, and tour guides make it a staged drama, but they pull into their production actors who are part of the

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[72] Iris Weiss, "Jewish Disneyland — die Aneignung und Enteignung des 'Jüdischen,'" *Golem. Europäisch-jüdisches Magazin* nr. 3 (2000): 47.

[73] Ibid., 47.

[74] Gruber's *Virtually Jewish* makes the same assumptions. For a similar line of critique, see Peck, *Jewish*, 120-21.

contemporary rebuilding of Jewish life in the city.[75] Indeed, perhaps no other Jewish site reflects this complexity more clearly than the building that has become *the* symbol of "Jewish Berlin," more photographed and celebrated than any other — the *Neue Synagoge* on *Oranienburgerstraße*. In 1988, Erich Honecker promised to rebuild this bombed-out building to house the newly created "Centrum Judaicum" that was to be a cultural center, archive, museum, and Holocaust memorial. The fall of the Berlin Wall intervened, but the rebuilding of the synagogue continued throughout the 1990s. In 1996, the meticulously restored façade of the building was unveiled, including its golden cupola that towers over the area today. The building's exterior was retuned to its original, prewar design, while the interior of the building was not. The main prayer hall that was cleared away in 1956 was not restored with the deliberate intention of leaving visible the history of the building's destruction.[76]

If one simply walks by the carefully restored exterior, the building does indeed seem to reflect a reconstructed staging of the Jewish past in the urban landscape, little more than a physical and mental façade of "Jewish Berlin." But if one walks inside its doors such a reading proves superficial. The synagogue contains an exhibition that narrates the history of Berlin's Jewish community through its stones with particular attention to the violent destruction of the building, brought into sharp relief by the large glass wall that looks out onto an empty space where the 3,200-seat prayer hall once stood. This void in the heart of the building starkly represents the absence of Jewish life, suggesting that the beautifully restored façade by no means covers over the emptiness of the Holocaust. The building stands mainly as a memorial to the past, fulfilling the main purpose set out by the East German regime with one main exception: it has now also become a vital space for the city's growing Jewish community. The synagogue's small prayer room is one of the only two liberal, so-called egalitarian houses of worship officially

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[75] A number of Jewish organizations reside in this area, including Centrum Judaicum, the Addas Israel community, and the Leo Baeck Institute.

[76] On the building's reconstruction, see *"Tuet auf die Pforten." Die Neue Synagoge 1866-1955* (Berlin: Stiftung Centrum Judaicum, 1995), 63-83.

recognized by the *Gemeinde* where men and women can participate equally. The *Neue Synagoge* is at once a monument, cultural center, and house of worship, a multifunctional space for tourists, scholars, and Jews. The "real" and the "virtual" parts of Jewish Berlin overlap at times in more complicated ways than initially appears.

Such intermingling is, however, less pronounced outside Berlin when one moves east to the Polish capital. Warsaw has neither Berlin's sizeable Jewish community nor its millions of tourists. The only other city in Poland that matches, if not exceeds Berlin's "hype about the Star of David" is Cracow, which has become a major tourist destination with its own kind of "Jewish Disneyland" in the reconstructed Jewish district of Kazimierz. But Cracow is an exceptional case in Poland and to a certain extent in Europe (Prague is probably the only other city that rivals it; one scholar has called the production of its *Židovské město* "Kazimierz on steroids.")[77] The intense level of local and international interest that has produced "Jewish Kazimierz" simply cannot be found in any other Polish city.[78] Part of the reason is that Kraków's Jewish sites were not destroyed during the war. Although neglected throughout the postwar years, they were never torn down and today provide an "authentic" setting for Jewish restaurants, museums, and shops. In contrast, Jewish sites in many other Polish cities were heavily damaged during the war and were later torn down after 1945. Warsaw is a case in point. Most of the physical traces of Jewish life vanished from its urban landscape when the Nazis leveled the district of Muranów. The rubble that was left behind was then used after the war to build a sprawling, socialist realist housing complex. "Jewish Warsaw" disappeared almost entirely.

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[77] International observers rarely note Cracow's exceptionality. See, for example, Craig S. Smith, "In Poland, a Jewish Revival Thrives — Minus Jews," *New York Times* July 12, 2007. Characterization of Prague from Lehrer, "'Shoah-Business,'" 44. On Prague, see Gruber, *Virtually Jewish*, 143-48.

[78] On the local and transnational production and consumption of Kazimierz, see Lehrer, "'Shoah Business.'" See also several of the numerous guidebooks on Kazimierz, Stanisław Markowski, *Krakowski Kazimierz* (Cracow: ARKA, 1992); Agnieszka Legutko-Olownia, *Krakowski Kazimierz* (Cracow: Bezdroża, 2004); Michał Rożek, *Żydowskie zabytki krakowskiego Kazimierza* (Cracow: Cracovia, 1990); Jacek Zgrzebnicki, *Żydowski Kazimierz* (Cracow: Wiktor, 1994); Jarosław Knap, *Magiczny Kazimierz* (Cracow: Krakowska Grupa Multimedialna, 2005); Eugeniusz Duda, *Żydowski Kraków (*Cracow: Etiuda, 2003).

But there were a few fragments left and today just as in Berlin they have been rediscovered. The sole, remaining tenement houses of Muranów located on Próżna street have become important "Jewish" traces worthy of preservation. This small side street in the heart of Warsaw runs into Grzybowski square, a central part of prewar Jewish life and today the location of the city's only synagogue. The city's drab, tired-looking Yiddish theater and a few Jewish shops are also located nearby. Most of the area was entirely rebuilt after the war and became home to Warsaw's most celebrated, social realist building project, Stalin's gift to Poland — the "Palace of Culture and Art" that to this day remains the focal point of Warsaw's skyline. The rediscovery of this "Jewish" area began in the late 1980s when a group of architects, historic preservationists, and historians fought to put the tenement houses on Próżna street on the city's list of historic monuments. In March 1987, city officials finally relented after a bombardment of petitions from the Jewish Historical Institute, the Warsaw branch of the Society for Historic Preservation, the TSKŻ, and the Group of Cultural Conservators.[79]

But plans to save the heavily damaged buildings only emerged nearly a decade later. In 1997-98, the Ronald Lauder Foundation through its newly created Jewish Renaissance Project purchased the tenement houses on Próżna street with the intention of "reconstructing the appearance of the street from the time when the majority of its residents were Jews."[80] The street was to have a kosher restaurant, Jewish bookstore, bakery, and shop, but would not be exactly "as it was before the war." Instead the "material setting" of the street would be returned.[81] When asked by a journalist if this would not produce a "Jewish Disneyland," the director of the project confidently said no, explaining that Próżna would somehow be an "authentic" Jewish space:

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[79] Tomasz Markiewicz, "Próżna: czas podsumowań," *Gazeta Wyborcza* March 19, 1999; Janusz Sujecki, *Próżna. Ocalona ulica żydowskiej Warszawy* (Warsaw: Ortis, 1993), 26-28.

[80] "Próżna po staremu," *Gazeta Wyborcza* February 6, 1998.

[81] Dariusz Bartoszewicz, "Próżna jak dawniej," *Gazeta Wyborcza* March 12, 1999.

"Próżna will be a living part of Warsaw, as well as of Jewish Warsaw."[82] The project was estimated to cost about 10 millions dollars, but no work on it ever began, and as each year passed the buildings only fell deeper into disrepair. In 2004, the Lauder foundation, probably realizing that it was going to cost too much, abandoned the project. It sold the buildings to an Austrian developer, who is planning to use them to build a luxury hotel. Plans for restoring the "material setting" of this "Jewish" street now seem unlikely.

This decision has not been popular. The Warsaw section of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Poland's largest and most influential newspaper, has included sharp commentaries about plans to build a luxury hotel on Próżna street. "The talk is no longer about kosher restaurants and Jewish stores. Today what matters is economic calculations," one article wrote.[83] Another decried the "sad and lifeless" appearance of the street that has not changed since 1989 despite numerous promises.[84] Even as the project appears to be going forward, resistance has only mounted.[85] The greatest challenge to it has come from the "Singer's Warsaw" Jewish festival that has taken place along Próżna street since 2004. Inspired in part by the annual Jewish festival in Cracow, this one started out as a celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Isaac Bashevis Singer who grew up in Warsaw before leaving for the United States in 1935. It has since grown into an annual event with the entire street of Próżna turning into a staged, imagined Jewish world.[86] The street takes on its "prewar appearance" as "Singer returns to Próżna."[87] Just as in Berlin where the staging of the Jewish past takes place in the "*Scheunenviertel*," so, too, in Warsaw it unfolds

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[82] Dariusz Bartoszewicz, "To nie będzie 'żydowskiej Disneyland,'" *Gazeta Wyborcza* March 12, 1999.

[83] Tomasz Urzykowski, "Kto uratuje Próżną," *Gazeta Wyborcza* September 20, 2005.

[84] Dorota Jarecka, "Kto uratuje żółte drzwi z Próżnej," *Gazeta Wyborcza* September 10, 2007.

[85] Michał Wojtczuk, "Czy zrujnowana Próżna doczeka się remontu?," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, April 28, 2008.

[86] The Warsaw-based Shalom foundation established the annual event, an organization founded by the popular Yiddish singer Golda Tencer that aims to preserve the memory of Polish Jews.

[87] Joanna Woźniczko, "Święto żydowskiej kultury," *Gazeta Wyborcza* September 9, 2005; Karolina Błońska and Tomasz Urzykowski, "Singer wraca na Próżną," *Gazeta Wyborcza* October 14, 2004.

within a physical space that seems "authentically" Jewish, as if the festival's "Jewish" musicians, artists, and shopkeepers somehow seem more real along Próżna than they would elsewhere in the city. The festival produces a kitschy nostalgia of "Jewish Warsaw" that glosses over the tensions of prewar Polish-Jewish relations when few Poles would have looked so favorably upon the dirty, cramped tenement houses of Muranów. It reflects an urge to discover something "real" and "authentic," to experience one of the few streets left in Warsaw that still has "prewar buildings" in an urban landscape dominated by drab communist buildings and glossy, capitalist skyscrapers.[88] The festival on Próżna provides a bit of cosmopolitanism to one of the world's most ethnically homogenous capital cities. It rarely includes efforts to think deeply and reflectively about the fractured relationship between Poles and Jews, producing instead an imagined, fictitious multicultural past and present.

Yet there are a few exceptions that go beyond the festival's kitschy surface. In 2006, a group of artists installed a series of exhibitions about Jews and the Holocaust in the building on Próżna no. 9. Once part of the Warsaw ghetto, the building sits today in catastrophic state with rain coming through its roof. This is the structure that the Austrian developer has slated to turn into a luxury hotel, but for a brief moment it served as a physical testament to the destruction of Polish Jewry. One artist narrated the death of her family in the Warsaw ghetto through a display of toys in an aquarium, while another showed an Israeli film of elderly Jews singing Polish songs. A review of the exhibition published in *Gazeta Wyborcza* applauded these efforts to move beyond the "sentimental-folk climate" and the "fiction" of "playing back" the past that dominates the festival just outside the building. "The artistic exhibition in Próżna no. 7/9 is something different," the journalist wrote, "no orchestral beats, no singing cantors, no Jewish cuisine, no folk paper cut-outs. Here nobody believes it is possible to go back to the past."[89] The stark contrast between the outside noise of Klezmer music and the inside solemnity of remembrance

[88] "Projekt Próżna 2007," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, September 2-9, 2007 (a special insert for the festival).

[89] Dorota Jarecka, "Pusta Próżna," *Gazeta Wyborcza* September 6, 2006.

uncovers the long-standing, uneasy presence of the Holocaust that has long complicated Polish interest in the Jewish past since the 1980s.

Indeed, this tension has clearly surfaced in the most ambitious project to display the Jewish past in Warsaw — the Museum of the History of Polish Jews currently being built. In a truly transnational effort that has involved funding and organization from Germany, Israel, the United States, the United Kingdom, Sweden, and Holland, the idea to build the museum came from the Warsaw native Jeshayahu Weinberg in the early 1990s. A major initiator of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Weinberg headed the planning committee until his death in 2000, the same year Jerzy Halberszstadt took over as museum director after working for the USHMM for over a decade. As with any project of its size, the planning for the museum has moved slowly but the response in Poland has been overwhelmingly positive. In 1997, the Warsaw city council donated about 145,000 square feet of land for the museum and the Polish government has committed 26 million dollars towards the costs of construction (the rest has come from donations including five million Euros from the German government).[90] The 2005 design competition became one of the most celebrated architectural moments in Warsaw's postwar history. The jury selected eleven finalist designs by some of the world's most renowned architects, including Daniel Libeskind and Peter Eisenman. Libeskind, himself of Polish-Jewish background, was believed to be the favorite, but the winning prize went to the Finish architects Rainer Mahlamäki and Ilmari Lahdelma with their compact design of glass dramatized by a large tear that cuts through the building, reflecting the "complicated and tragic" historical journey of Jews in Poland.[91] On June 26, 2007, the ground breaking of the museum took place with dignitaries from around the world. The Polish president, Lech Kaczyński, emphasized the importance of the museum in offering a "tremendous opportunity to overcome a mutual lack of

[90] "Bundesregierung unterstützt Jüdisches Museum in Polen," *Die Welt*, June 15, 2006.

[91] "The Winner: The Never-Ending Dialogue Project," *Newsletter of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews* (Summer 2005): 9.

understanding," while the Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, Meir Lau, said that the museum will ensure that no one "forget[s] the Jews of this land." Former German president Richard von Weizsäcker spoke of his country being moved in a "special way" by the project given its "responsibility for the Shoah."[92]

Located on the former site of the ghetto just in front of Rapoport's monument, the museum rests on a plot of land steeped in the past — the center of prewar Jewish life, the site of mass murder, the space of the socialist future. Close to the *Umschlagplatz* and surrounded by socialist realist apartment buildings, it sits in an area that reflects above all the absence of Jewish life in the city, captured by the museum's design: the large tear through the building intentionally looks out to the ghetto monument. The Holocaust obviously dominates the museum, but it is not intended to be just a "Holocaust museum" as the organizers and Polish press have stressed countless times.[93] The master plan for the exhibition, which was prepared before the design competition was announced so that the interior and exterior would form a cohesive whole, envisions nine galleries that narrate Polish-Jewish history from its earliest beginnings to the present.[94] The gallery on the interwar period that includes a virtual reconstruction of Nalewki street, Warsaw's commercial center of Jewish life, has tellingly attracted the most attention in the Polish press.[95] Visitors will be able to travel along the street as it "once was before the war, as described by the writer Isaac Bashevis Singer."[96] Although one could interpret this as yet another kitschy attempt to recreate a lost Jewish world, it comes in part from an urge to show a more

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[92] Quotes located in "The Groundbreaking Ceremony," *Newsletter of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews* (fall 2007): 5-6.

[93] For example, see Joanna Podgórska, "Muzeum życia," *Polityka* June 27, 2007; Tomasz Urzykowski, "Podróż w czasie," *Gazeta Wyborcza* January 31, 2005.

[94] On the content of the museum, see Michael C. Steinlauf, "What Story to Tell? Shaping the Narrative of the Museum of the Holocaust of Polish Jews," *Polin* vol. 20 (2008): 318-23.

[95] See, for example, Bartosz Marzec, "Przejdźmy się Nalewkami," *Rzeczpospolita* July 18, 2002; "Wirtualne Nalewki," *Gazeta Wyborcza* April 20, 2001.

[96] Andrezj Osęka, "Blizna pamięci," *Wprost* July 10, 2005, 33.

multidimensional view of Polish-Jewish relations than the one offered over the 1990s by tourist trips such as the March of the Living. Both non-Jewish and Jewish Poles resent the perception of Poland as simply one large "cemetery, one black hole in the history of Jews."[97] Some of this resentment stems from an anxiousness about the Holocaust that has long been present in Polish discussions about Polish-Jewish relations (so strongly reinforced by 1968). But it is also a reaction to the numerous Jewish tourists who see the country as temporally frozen in the 1940s, as nothing more than the landscape of the Holocaust.[98] These visitors are often astonished to find out that people actually live in Poland. "It was a place where millions of people had been slaughtered," remarked a Jewish student from Toronto. "I always had images of it in black and white. I didn't expect to see grass, and shopping malls, and billboards, and people holding hands."[99] In part, the museum aims to counterbalance this perception by providing a different space than simply Auschwitz to experience, think about, and reflect upon the long, entangled, and complex history of Jews in Poland.

The design and the purpose of the museum is also a rather direct response to Europe's other, most celebrated and discussed post-1989 Jewish museum, designed by none other than Warsaw's runner-up — the famed Daniel Libeskind. Historians have already analyzed at length the long, disputed history of the Berlin Jewish Museum and I do not wish to repeat it here, but I would like to put it into conversation with the one in Warsaw to think through these two attempts to narrate, catalogue, and preserve the Jewish past.[100] The Berlin and Warsaw museums reflect similar and different variations on a broader trend in Europe to represent the Jewish past in the built environment through the formation of Jewish museums. This "*Musealisierung*" of the Jewish past started in the 1980s in West Germany with the conversion of synagogues into

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[97] Stanisław Krajewski, "Muzeum Żydów Polskich a polscy Żydzi," *Midrasz* (July-August 2002): 66.

[98] Łukasz Sakiewicz, "Polska to nie tylko Holocaust," *Gazeta Wyborzca* January 4, 2005.

[99] Jan Cienski, "Poland Moves to Embrace its Jewish Past," *The Financial Times*, January 24, 2005.

[100] The most extensive treatment is Pieper, *Musealisierung*.

museums with Essen as one, if complicated, example, and reached an apex in 2001 with the opening of the Jewish museum in Berlin.[101] The idea for the museum, technically an expansion of the Berlin City Museum founded 1962, emerged in the early 1970s when the West Berlin Jewish community under the leadership of Heinz Galinski organized an exhibition on the history of Jewish life in the city. The exhibition, entitled "Achievement and Fate — The 300 Year History of the Berlin Jewish Community," focused mostly on the positive contribution of Jewish culture and largely avoided any serious reflection on the tragic "fate" of the Jewish community. The Holocaust remained an implicit, but nebulous aspect of the exhibition. The goal was to show that "the best times of communal existence and impact can reemerge in contemporary Berlin after a terrible caesura."[102]

The positive response to the exhibition encouraged Galinski to push for a permanent one in Berlin. The Berlin Museum director at the time, Irmgard Wirth, supported the idea and argued that the exhibition should be integrated directly into the city museum so as to avoid separating "German" and "Jewish" history into distinct, separate parts.[103] Galinski agreed with this integrated concept and Wirth submitted a general plan for the exhibition that envisioned three main sections on the history of Berlin Jewry from the beginning to the present, Jewish religion, and the cultural accomplishments of Jewish figures in the city.[104] The Berlin city council approved of this basic plan, but years passed with little action as it searched for the best location for the Jewish department of the museum. By the mid-1980s, as the East German leadership announced its own plans for a Jewish museum in the *Neue Synagoge*, the city rushed to find a solution. In 1986, it temporarily installed the Jewish department in the newly restored Martin

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[101] On this development throughout the FRG, see Offe, *Ausstellungen* and Hoppe, *Jüdische*.

[102] *Leistung und Schicksal. 300 Jahre Jüdische Gemeinde zu Berlin* (Berlin: Berlin Museum, 1971), 7.

[103] Irmgard Wirth, "Die Jüdische Abteilung. Zur geplanten Neugründung des Berlin Museums," *Berlinische Notizen* nr. 1/2 (1975): 7-12.

[104] Ibid., 11-12.

Gropius building about a mile away from the Berlin Museum. Although Galinski supported this temporary solution, he remained adamant that the city build an annex to the Berlin Museum to ensure the spatial integration of the Jewish department with the city museum, reflecting his continued commitment to the idea of showcasing Jewish history as part of Berlin's history.[105] The model of an integrated museum was itself to reflect the integration of Jews in Berlin society.

Galinski eventually got his way. In November 1988, at the height of the fiftieth anniversary of *Kristallnacht* widely celebrated in East Berlin, the city agreed to expand the Berlin Museum by building an annex for the Jewish department. It launched a major architectural competition that year. The materials drafted for the competition emphasized that the annex should be spatially integrated into the current building to dramatize "Jewish history as a definite component of Berlin."[106] The museum was still envisioned mainly to be about the cultural, economic, and religious development of German-Jewish history in Berlin, although by the late 1980s a stronger emphasis on the Holocaust started to emerge in discussions about the exhibition's content as the mass murder of the Jews became more widely debated in the FRG.[107] But these ideas remained rather vaguely formulated and the entire issue of exactly how to narrate Jews as an "integrated" part of the city's history after the Holocaust was left unresolved.[108] In contrast to Warsaw where the entire concept of the exhibition was developed before the design competition, the architects for the Berlin Jewish Museum had little sense of the overarching purpose of the exhibition. The design of the building by Daniel Libeskind was selected before any consensus was reached about what actually to put in it. The result was not surprising. Libeskind's

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[105] Gesellschaft für ein Jüdisches Museum in Berlin to Mayor Richard von Weizsäcker, June 10, 1983, reprinted in Martina Weinland and Kurt Winkler, eds., *Das Jüdische Museum im Stadtmuseum Berlin. Eine Dokumentation* (Berlin: Nicolai, 1997), 172-173.

[106] *Realisierungswettbewerb Erweiterung Berlin Museum mit Abteilung Jüdisches Museum* (Berlin: Senat für Bau und Wohnungswesen, 1988), 15.

[107] Pieper, *Musealisierung*, 225-32.

[108] See the conceptual documents on the exhibition written in 1988, reprinted in Weinland and Winkler, eds., *Jüdische Museum*, 226-52.

building today directly conflicts with the entire conceptual thrust of the integrated museum. It stands as an architectural symbol of the Holocaust with its empty voids, underground axes, Holocaust tower, and Garden of Exile.[109] The building orients visitors to the failure of integration with its powerful, imposing design that is only nominally connected to the Berlin Museum through underground hallways. It hardly appears as an integrated element of the original museum, separating German and Jewish history into distinct, spatial parts.

And yet the exhibition eventually installed in the building after intense discussions over the 1990s strives for a unified narrative of German-Jewish history over two millennia.[110] Just as in Warsaw, the exhibition intends to put the Holocaust into broader historical perspective. The Jewish Museum is not supposed to be only about the Holocaust. As the American museum director Michael Blumenthal explained, the exhibition displays the "ups and downs" of German-Jewish history.[111] In his speech at the opening of the museum in 2001, German president Johannes Rau put it more clearly: "The Berlin Jewish Museum does not want to be and should not be a Holocaust museum. … We must keep alive the memory of this catastrophe. This building, which today we are opening, does that, this exhibition does that. But that must not lead to the wrong conclusion that the Holocaust is the sum of German-Jewish history."[112] And yet, oddly, the Holocaust dominates the structure of the building, making for an awkward, discordant interaction between exterior and interior.

The construction of Jewish museums in Warsaw and Berlin produce several shared meanings. Both museums intersect in certain ways with the rediscovery of "Jewish Berlin" and "Jewish Warsaw" along the streets of Oranienburger and Próżna. Of course, they hope to move

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[109] For Libeskind's interpretation, see Libeskind, "Between the Lines," in Kristin Feireiss, ed., *Erweiterung des Berlin Museums mit Abteilung Jüdisches Museum* (Berlin: Ernst & Sohn, 1992), 57-66.

[110] Pieper, *Musealisierung*, 250-302.

[111] *Stories of an Exhibition: Two Millennia of German-Jewish History* (Berlin: Jewish Museum Berlin, 2001), 14.

[112] "Grußwort von Bundespräsident Johannes Rau bei der Eröffnung der ständigen Ausstellungdes Jüdischen Museums Berlin," September 9, 2001, *Mitteilungen für die Presse. Bundespräsidialamt*.

beyond precisely the clichés that these productions reinforce, but at the same time they also reflect a similar urge for "cosmopolitanism." These museums make Jews an integral part of German and Polish society, celebrating and mourning the presence and absence of "integration," "tolerance," and "multiculturalism." The Warsaw museum, with its reconstructed Nalewki street, embraces this perhaps more overtly than its Berlin counterpart, but the impulse to stage, catalogue, and preserve the Jewish past in both capitals reflects a shared longing for the cosmopolitanism that Jews seem to reflect. They become modes of producing cosmopolitan capitals as Germans and Poles, especially those on the political Left, take plurality and cosmopolitanism to be crucial components of Germanness and Polishness after a century of war, genocide, ethnic strife, and expulsions.[113] The stakes are, to be sure, different in Berlin and Warsaw. Sitting in the district of Kreuzberg, Berlin's most concentrated area of Turks, the Jewish museum's narrative of acculturation, destroyed by unchecked prejudice, implicitly produces contemporary meanings. By making the "Jewish co-citizen" (*jüdische Mitbürger*) a part of German society, culture, and history, the museum reinforces the demand for integration, tolerance, and acceptance, putting Germany's current minorities into the conceptual category of "foreign co-citizen" (*ausländische Mitbürger*).[114] Warsaw has no such contemporary implications. It is Berlin's opposite — almost entirely ethnically homogenous thanks to the policies of an earlier Berlin. The Jewish museum now being built sits on top of the material ruins of the city's once large minority population. It offers not just a more complicated, sophisticated narrative about the past for Polish citizens and Jewish tourists alike, but a powerful symbol of the "Central European," cosmopolitan capital now embracing its rich, Jewish heritage.

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[113] This urge is weaker in Poland where an exclusivist, nationalist right is generally stronger than in Germany. Andrzej Walicki, "The Troubling Legacy of Dmowski," *East European Politics and Society* no. 1 (1999): 12-46; Michlic, *Poland's*, chap. 8. See also fn. 189 below.

[114] I am not aware of a historical, linguistic analysis that compares these two constructs, but such a comparison would yield interesting insights. For a brief comparison of Jews and Turks in Germany today, see Peck, *Jewish*, chap. 5. A brief discussion of the "foreign co-citizen," developed as a critique of German notions of the "guest worker," is found in Chin, *Guest*, 117-19.

In short, the striking feature of both museums is the link between Jewishness and cosmopolitanism. For most of the twentieth century, Jews appeared as quintessential cosmopolitan urbanites for which they were more likely to be derided than celebrated by fascists and communists alike. I do not submit to the simplistic argument that philosemitism is just the inverse of anti-Semitism. But this move to extract from the Jewish past broader meanings about "integration," "acculturation," and "cosmopolitanism," even while recognizing the failure of all three, essentializes, reifies, and categorizes: Jews become an object of study, fascination, reflection, preservation, and discussion. This is not a German and Polish peculiarity — witness the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, to take just two American examples. It is perhaps a peculiarity of both the allure for and the fragility of cosmopolitanism itself, an idea that celebrates human difference as much as it creates it.

III. Jewish Spaces in Wrocław, Essen, and Potsdam

Indeed, these paradoxes of cosmopolitanism surface clearly in the city of Wrocław, which has been imagined among some since 1989 as the quintessential border town of multiculturalism. In the 1980s, local, ordinary citizens became interested in moving beyond the state's decades-long narrative of Wrocław as a bastion of Silesian, Polish culture by exploring its German and Jewish past. This rediscovery of "Breslau" increased dramatically after the fall of communism as the once eternally Polish Wrocław became stylized as the "multicultural metropolis," the eternally fluctuating border town rich in its variety and diversity. As the city's official website proudly boasts: "Wrocław is an excellent example of a multicultural metropolis situated at the interface of ethnically diverse areas."[115] It leaves out the fact that the city today is almost completely Polish and Catholic. This postwar Polonization of the city is in fact even offered as just further evidence of Wrocław's ever-changing, diverse history: "Multiculturalism again left a very deep impression on the city's character after the Second World War, when the

[115] http://www.wroclaw.pl/m6850/ (last accessed on June 8, 2008).

city's German population was largely replaced by people arriving from various regions of Poland, including those resettled from the eastern provinces of Poland taken over by the Soviet Union. In particular, many former citizens of Wilno and Lwów settled here."[116] Such rather imaginative, deeply problematic constructions of the "multicultural metropolis" are part of a much broader rethinking of the city's identity since 1989 as writers, journalist, and historians have rushed to rediscover the city's cosmopolitan past.[117]

The most prominent example came in 2003 when the British historian Norman Davies, who is probably more beloved in Poland than any other historian for the hagiographic narratives he writes, published a new history of Wrocław commissioned by the city. Davies takes Wrocław to be a "microcosm" of the diversity, multiplicity, and cosmopolitanism of this region of Europe.[118] He plays with the city's at least fifty recorded names — Vratislavia, Wrotizla, Vretslav, Presslaw, Breslau, Wrocław — in a grandiose and solipsistic account. Such imaginings create a past that seems so different from the harsh reality of the twentieth-century when the city's Jewish population was murdered, its former German residents expelled, and its current inhabitants forcibly resettled from central and eastern Poland. The provincialism of the book conflicts with the invented multiculturalism of the subject, reinforced all the more by its seemingly innocuous subtitle: "a portrait of a central European city." The concept of "Central Europe," long embraced and constructed by writers in the region, is "Eastern Europe's" foil: sophisticated, urban, tolerant, diverse, cosmopolitan, multiethnic, multilingual.[119]

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[116] Ibid.

[117] Gregor Thum, "Wrocław and the Myth of the Multicultural Border City," *European Review* no. 2 (2005): 227-235.

[118] Davies and Moorhouse, *Microcosm*.

[119] On the complications of the term, see Iver B. Neumann, "Russia as Central Europe's Constituting Other," *East European Politics and Societies* no. 7 (1993): 349-369; Jeno Szucs "The Three Historical Regions of Europe," *Acta Historica Academiae Scientarium Hungaricae* 29 (1983): 131-84; Tony Judt, "The Rediscovery of Central Europe," in Stephen R. Graubard, ed., *Eastern Europe – Central Europe – Europe* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1991), 23-58; Gale Stokes, "Eastern Europe's Defining Fault Lines," in Gale Stokes, ed., *Three Eras of Political Change in Eastern Europe.* (New York: Oxford, 1997), 7-22;

And Jewish. "Jewishness" has become one of Central Europe's defining elements. In Wrocław, the newly reconstituted Jewish community is small, but its White Storch Synagogue has recently become an important space of the "multicultural metropolis." Its now celebrated status is a dramatic shift from the appropriation of the building in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Just before the collapse of communism, the "synagogue problem" continued to plague city officials as they searched for a suitable use for the crumbling, dilapidated structure. The last solution proposed before 1989 was to transform the synagogue into a performance hall for the Wrocław Musical Academy, but lack of funds prevented such plans from being carried out. Shortly after the collapse of communism the new Wrocław Jewish community under the leadership of Jerzy Kirchler expressed interest in renovating the synagogue. In 1993, it secured funds from the Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation to rebuild the roof.[120] But the Music Academy was the official owner of the building and expressed no desire to return it to the Jewish community. In 1992, it even sold the building to another party just as the community had made it clear that it wanted it back.[121] The new owner, a local developer, seemed equally intractable. In 1993-1994, Kirchler and other members of the Jewish community attempted to negotiate the return of the building from him, but he simply kept demanding a higher price every time they met.[122] The Jewish community turned to the city and the citizens of Wrocław for help.[123] In a

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Jacques Rupnik, "Central Europe or Mitteleuropa?" in Graubard, ed., *Eastern Europe*, 233-65; Peter Bugge, "The Use of the Middle: Mitteleuropa vs. Střední Evropa," *European Review of History* no. 1 (1999): 15-35; Maciej Janowski, "Pitfalls and Opportunities: The Concept of East-Central Europe as a Tool of Historical Analysis," *European Review of History* no. 1 (1999): 91-100. A recent, excellent historical analysis of German perceptions of France and Poland that problematizes the "east-west" divide is Bernhard Struck, *Nicht West - nicht Ost. Frankreich und Polen in der Wahrnehmung deutscher Reisender zwischen 1750 und 1850* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006).

[120] AMKZW, Synagogue File, "Synagoga pod Białym Bocianem we Wrocławiu," undated.

[121] Ibid.

[122] Ibid. See also "Dzieje Synagogi pod Białym Bocianem," in *Biuletyn Informacyjny Gminy Wyznaniowej Żydowskiej we Wrocławiu* no. 3 (July 1999): 1-3.

[123] AMKZW, Synagogue File, Jewish Community of Wrocław to State Minister for Culture and Art, March 29, 1994.

public letter in 1995, it wrote with a sense of frustration and sadness that it now found itself fighting for its property: "The authorities of the German Reich pursued the extermination of the Jewish population in Wrocław. After the war, Polish authorities robbed the Jewish community of all of its property and to this day this injustice has not been redressed."[124]

On April 21, 1995, the Warsaw Council of Ministers finally returned the synagogue to the Jewish community after a long, extended series of negotiations. It based its decision on a 1971 law that allowed religious organizations in the "recovered territories" to reclaim their property.[125] This decision cleared the way for the renovation of the building after nearly thirty-five years of neglect and destruction. "I feel sick when I look through the window," Kirchler said as he described the total destruction of the building's interior to the local newspaper before its renovation.[126] In 1996, the reconstruction of the building finally began and it continues to this day. As the synagogue has slowly been brought back to life, it has become a celebrated space in the multicultural metropolis, *the* site to experience and discover the city's Jewish past and present among both Jews and non-Jews. In 1996, a local musical director established the Choir of the White Storch Synagogue. The group has been performing concerts in the synagogue and elsewhere in Poland for over a decade now. Although developed in consultation with Kirchler, the choir is made up mainly of non-Jews who sing in Hebrew and Yiddish.[127] It has played an instrumental part in the city's annual "Festival of Jewish Culture" that is now in its tenth year.[128] Taking place mainly in the synagogue, the Wrocław version is less kitschy than its Warsaw

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[124] AMKZW, Synagogue File, public letter, September 24, 1995.

[125] *Dziennik Ustaw Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej*, June 29, 1971, Nr. 16.

[126] "Ocalić wierzącym, uwierzyć ocalonym," *Gazeta Dolnośląska* January 27, 1995.

[127] "'Oddech wieczności' ze Stanisławem Michałem Rybarczykiem, założycielem i dyrygentem Chóru Synagogi Pod Białym Bocianem we Wrocławiu," January 13, 2006, *Forum Zydów Polskich* (http://fzp.net.pl/roz4.html; last accessed June 9, 2008).

[128] "I spotkania z kulturą Żydowską," *Gazeta Wyborcza* January 29, 1999; "Na pograniczu dwóch światów," *Gazeta Wyborcza* May 29, 2000. See also the festival's official web-site: www.simcha.art.pl.

counterpart on Próżna street. It involves mainly lectures, film showings, theatrical performances, book readings, and Klezmer concerts.

Kirchler and the local Jewish community are also more directly involved in these events than is the case in Warsaw, blurring the seemingly clear lines between the "real" and the "virtual."[129] Although many of the locals attending the events are non-Jewish, this is not simply a "Jewish revival minus the Jews."[130] Wrocław has the second largest Jewish community in Poland after Warsaw with around 1,000 members. It has made reaching out to non-Jews one of its central priorities. In 2005, the Jewish community established the Wrocław Center for Jewish Culture and Education and appointed the well-known Jewish-Norwegian performing artist Bente Kahan to head it through a foundation she created in her name. The Kahan foundation organizes Klezmer music concerts, theatrical performances, and educational activities that focus mainly on the Holocaust. It is also involved in carrying out the final stages of the reconstruction of the synagogue where eventually a museum on the history of Jews in Wrocław will be installed. The museum will preserve "the rich heritage of the city's decimated Jewish community."[131] Since the building also serves as a place of religious worship, it is unclear exactly how this interplay between past and present will be negotiated in one single space.

This revival of Jewish culture in the city has been welcomed and celebrated. In 2006, Bente Kahan received the Wrocław Mayor's Prize for her work, while the local edition of *Gazeta Wyborcza* has published numerous articles on Jewish life in the city.[132] Two coffee table-style

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[129] Gruber, *Virtually Jewish*.

[130] Craig S. Smith, "In Poland, a Jewish Revival Thrives — Minus Jews," *New York Times* July 12, 2007.

[131] See the official BKF web-site (www.fbk.org.pl); quote comes from its first page (last accessed June 9, 2008).

[132] See, for example, the two-part series, "Wallstrasse dla Włodkowica," *Gazeta Wyborcza* March 20, 1999 and March 27, 1999, as well as the three-part series, "Jak zostałem Żydem," *Gazeta Wyborcza* November 10, 2006, November 17, 2006, and November 24, 2006.

books on the history of Jews in Wrocław appeared in 1994 and 2000.[133] The presence of Jewish culture fits neatly into the city's image as a "multicultural metropolis" that Kirchler, Kahn, and others have clearly absorbed. Kahn writes about a "vital Jewish heart in the middle of Europe," while Kirchler helped establish the "District of Four Religions" that celebrates the presence of the Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox faiths in the surrounding area of the synagogue.[134] These cultural constructions of cosmopolitanism not only overlook the violent, destructive history of the city, but they also rest on rather exaggerated interpretations of the present. The synagogue to this day remains unfinished in a city of beautifully restored buildings. The contrast becomes clear as one walks just a few blocks away from the lively, tourist-centered old town to the street where the synagogue stands next to the Jewish community's dilapidated building.

Moreover, the only open Jewish cemetery in the city remains in deep disrepair. Lacking funds to maintain it, the Jewish community depends on others for help. A group of American students from Albion and Alma Colleges have been coming to Wrocław since 1999 to restore the cemetery.[135] After visiting Prague, Berlin, Cracow, and Auschwitz, this group finally makes its way to the border city of Wrocław, but there they do not find the richly textured multiculturalism that the city promises. Coming mostly from middle-class backgrounds probably with little knowledge about Poland beyond a few clichés about its poverty and backwardness, they spend their time in the "jungle" of the Jewish cemetery helping out a community too "old and poor to cook for themselves," let alone "perform hard labor."[136] If there is a revival of Jewish life in the city, it seems to have escaped them altogether. This view of the present is, of course, as provincial and naïve as is the one of the "multicultural metropolis," but it shows at least the continued

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[133] Maciej Łagiewski, *Wrocławscy Żydzi 1850-1944* (Wrocław: Muzeum Historyczne, 1994); Leszek Ziątkowski, *Dzieje Żydów we Wrocławiu* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 2000).

[134] Kahn quote from her official web-site, http://www.fbk.org.pl/about.php?lang=en (last accessed June 9, 2008).

[135] "Amerykanie sprzątają cmentarz," *Gazeta Wyborcza* May 16, 2007.

[136] John Arnold and Ute Stargardt, "The Wrocław Project," *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* no 4. (2003): 68.

neglect of some Jewish sites even as others are restored. It also points to a clear tension between past and present. The transnational and local attraction to Jewish culture can at times mix awkwardly with the on-going rebuilding of Jewish life. In this case, American tourists overlook it entirely, while in the earlier example of the synagogue the Kahn foundation hopes to somehow integrate a museum about "decimation" in the same building that Jews gather to worship.

This uneasy relationship between past and present is perhaps even starker in the case of Essen, which has seen yet another shift in the appropriation of its towering stone synagogue since the "*Haus Industrieform*" exhibition was removed in 1979-80. In that year, Ernst Schmidt and Detlev Peukert convinced city officials to change the exhibition after a fire broke out in the building. The newly installed exhibition, "Resistance and Persecution in the Third Reich," explored the suffering and resistance of Germans with limited attention to the Nazi persecution of the Jews. Yet this redemptive, German appropriation of the synagogue did not last long. As the Jewish past and the Holocaust became the subject of intense discussion throughout the Federal Republic in the 1980s, segments of Essen's population advocated changing the function of the building yet again to express more explicitly its "Jewishness." In the early 1980s, the organizational working group for the synagogue discussed the idea of restoring the interior of the synagogue to its original, pre-war design, which had been heavily damaged in *Kristallnacht* and then completely altered in 1960 with the construction of the "*Haus Industrieform*."[137] Local church leaders were especially pushing for restoration.[138] They were joined by former Jewish residents of Essen who returned to the city in the early 1980s only to find that the interior had been transformed into a functional exhibition space. Just as these plans to restore the interior were emerging, members of the local Jewish community and Jewish leaders outside of Essen voiced discomfort with the exhibition that Peukert had designed, arguing that it eclipsed the history of

[137] Ruhrlandmuseum, AES, 19-606, box 1, meeting protocols, March 18, 1980, November 26, 1981, and March 16, 1982.

[138] Wilhelm Godde, "Warnehmung eines Monuments im Herzen der Stadt," in *Ein Haus*, 52. Godde was heavily involved in these discussions as the city's deputy for culture and education.

the very community that once worshiped in the building. The chairman of Essen's Jewish community argued that a permanent exhibition on Jews in Essen was "paramount," while chief rabbi of North Rhine Westphalia Abraham Hochwald strongly urged city officials to include a much "clearer explanation of the Jewish fate" in the current exhibition since the "overwhelming number of victims were Jews."[139] As criticism of the exhibition continued to mount, the mayor of Essen called a high level meeting with Jewish leaders in the fall of 1986 to discuss future plans for the building. He met with the chairperson of the Essen Jewish community, Rabbi Hochwald, and Ignatz Bubis of the Central Council of Jews in Germany. The mayor told them that the city had decided to restore the interior of the building to its original form. It also planned to revise the current exhibition to make the Jewish experience and fate more central to it.[140]

This meeting ultimately produced the most significant change in the postwar appropriation of the Essen synagogue since its adaptation into a museum of industrial products. After two years of meticulous reconstruction work that cost the state and federal governments about twelve million marks, the synagogue was returned to the basic shape and design of its pre-war interior. It was not restored exactly as it once was in a complete nostalgic recovery of the past; rather the point was to bring back its general design without "obscuring the irreparable damage the building suffered" since 1938.[141] But the synagogue looked more like it did in 1913 than it ever had since its first destruction during *Kristallnacht*. In the newly renovated building, an entirely new exhibition was created that focused solely on Jewish life in Essen. This new exhibition, called the "Stations of Jewish Life: From Emancipation to the Present," was placed in the newly restored main hall of the synagogue, while Peukert's original exhibition on resistance and persecution remained unchanged with the exception that it was now given a new, much less

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[139] Ruhrlandmuseum, AES, 19-606, box 1, meeting protocol, March 16, 1982; memo on meeting with chief rabbi Hochwald, November 27, 1984.

[140] Ruhrlandmuseum, AES, 19-606, box 1, notes on meeting, October 2, 1986.

[141] *Gestern Synagoge — Alte Synagoge heute* (Essen: Alte Synagoge, 1999), 20.

prominent location.[142] Placed in the balcony, its importance could not have been more clearly reduced.

Reaction to these changes was mixed. The local press celebrated the restoration of this "masterwork" by the Essen architect Edmund Körner.[143] The architectural splendor of the building still continued to amaze, perhaps all the more so in the 1980s when Essen's urban landscape had little more to offer than rows of modernist department stores, towering skyscrapers, and wide boulevards. But few articles explored in much depth why such a restoration was necessary in the first place. The destruction of the building, especially during the postwar period, was rarely discussed. One newspaper article included photos of the building from 1913, 1938, and 1945, billing them as "three pictures that exemplify German history."[144] A photo from 1961 with the interior of the building turned into a museum of industrial products tellingly did not count. Another article began by claiming that "after 1945 much was destroyed," but then offered little specific information about what was actually torn down.[145] The violent destruction of the building in 1938 proved easier to discuss than its adaptation in a peaceful, democratic West Germany. The installation of a new exhibition provoked an even more ambivalent response. City officials found themselves in an awkward position. As one noted frankly, the synagogue belongs to "Jews" but since 1945 it has been taken over by "non-Jews."[146] The exhibition had to be re-worked to satisfy the growing concerns of Jewish leaders, while not dismissing altogether the work of "non-Jews" such as Schmidt and Peukert. Someone was bound to be offended. It turned out to be Schmidt who was hardly pleased with the idea of the new exhibition. "There must not

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[142] *Stationen jüdischen Lebens. Von der Emanzipation bis zur Gegenwart* (Essen: Alte Synagoge, 1990).

[143] "Werk eines Meisters," *Wesetdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* November 5, 1988.

[144] "Bauwerk der Erinnerung," *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* November 5, 1988.

[145] "Nach 1945 wurde noch viel zerstört," *Neue Ruhr Zeitung*, September 6, 1986.

[146] Ruhrlandmuseum, AES, 19-606, box 1, Godde to Gaudig, April 17, 1985.

be two exhibitions," he thundered, "two exhibitions will mean that one will be valued over the other."[147] But this was a battle he was not going to win.

On November 5, 1988, the synagogue reopened its doors to a restored interior and new exhibition on Jewish life. It was the third, post-1945 transformation of the building. Just as in 1961 and 1981, a large crowd gathered for the ceremony to hear speeches about the synagogue's importance. Mayor Peter Reuschenbach (SPD) emphasized that the building served as a countermeasure to "any attempts to smooth over our history," while prime minister Johannes Rau (SPD) urged Esseners to act "against forgetting and silence."[148] The synagogue, long incorporated into Essen's identity of postwar consumption and then briefly re-appropriated as a symbol of German resistance and victimization, was now articulated as a specifically "Jewish" space whose symbolism should never be forgotten. This singular expression contradicted the spatial and architectural modes of acculturation that the building once reflected. Located in the heart of the city and grandly built in massive stone, it captured the dual identity of Imperial Germany's confident, exuberant Jewish community. The Holocaust shattered that symbiosis, however fraught and fragile it was at times before 1933. With the shattering of that dual identity came the shattering of Essen's synagogue, a space that could be appropriated as "German" or "Jewish" but rarely as "German-Jewish."[149]

Indeed, the synagogue today is undergoing yet another transformation — its fourth — that will express even more clearly its identity as a singularly "Jewish" space. In February 2008,

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[147] Ruhrlandmuseum, AES, 19-606, box 1, Schmidt to Drewel, September 17, 1987.

[148] "Alte Synagoge in Essen wurde wiedereröffnet," *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, November 7, 1988; "Weiter wirken als Stein des Anstoßes," *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, November 7, 1988.

[149] On Jewish identities in the FRG, see Micha Brumlik et al., eds., *Jüdisches Leben in Deutschland seit 1945* (Frankfurt: Jüdischer Verlag bei Athenäum, 1986); Morris and Zipes, eds., *Unlikely History*; Anson Rabinbach and Jack Zipes, eds., *Germans and Jews since the Holocaust: The Changing Situation in West Germany* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1986); Lynn Rapaport, *Jews in Germany after the Holocaust: Memory, Identity, and Jewish-German Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Susanne Schönborn, ed., *Zwischen Erinnerung und Neubeginn. Zur deutsch-jüdischen Geschichte nach 1945* (Munich: Martin Meidenbauer, 2006); Stephanie Tauchert, *Jüdische Identitäten in Deutschland. Das Selbstverständnis von Juden in der Bundesrepublik und der DDR, 1950 bis 2000* (Berlin: Metropol, 2007).

Essen's city council approved a 7.4 million Euro plan to transform the building into a "House of Jewish Culture."[150] A building whose "Jewish character for too long was 'deformed, concealed, or ignored'" will now be openly displayed and celebrated just in time for Essen's debut as the 2010 "European Capital of Culture."[151] The synagogue will no longer be simply a memorial that "reduces Jews only to the role of the victim" but will be an "open house, a meeting point for lively exchange."[152] As the Israeli-born director Edna Brocke put it, the new exhibition will move beyond the "See, I told-you-so pedagogy" of focusing only on shamefully reminding Germans of the crimes of National Socialism.[153] The Peukert-Schmidt exhibition will move out of the building to the House of Essen History, while the sarcophagus memorial just outside the front door of the building that the city erected in 1949 to the "Jews who had to lose their life" will be taken down. The exhibition on the "Stations of Jewish Life" will become part of a larger cultural space for exchange between Jews and non-Jews. This new center will be spoken in the "same breath with the Jewish museum in Berlin."[154]

Essen might dream of being put alongside Berlin, but this rather dull "shopping city" will never get there. Even if it did the comparison would not be apt because this latest shift in the synagogue's purpose could not be more different from developments in Berlin where the Holocaust has become a permanent mark on the urban landscape with its Jewish museum and most recently its enormous Holocaust memorial right near the Brandenburg Gate.[155] The Essen case suggests the possible emergence of a shifting relationship to the Holocaust at a moment when Germany's Jewish community has been expanding rapidly. Essen's Orthodox community

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[150] "Neukonzeption Alte Synagoge Essen*," Niederschrift über die Sitzung des Rates der Stadt*, February 27, 2008.

[151] Marcus Schymiczek, "Ein Haus des Austauschs," *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* March 5, 2008.

[152] Ibid.

[153] Ibid.

[154] Ibid.

[155] Kirsch, *Nationaler Mythos*; Stavginski, *Holocaust-Denkmal*.

now has 905 members.[156] Although the "House of Jewish Culture" will be secular, it reflects the desire among some to contextualize and situate the Holocaust at a time when the Jewish community in Germany is more secure, confident, and stable than it has ever been since 1945. It also reflects perhaps a certain degree of discomfort with the now ritualistic, redemptive quality of the "non-German German" emphasis on the stigma of the Holocaust.[157] Finally, this new appropriation of the building serves as perhaps the coda to the synagogue's long, seemingly ever shifting history since 1913. As one local journalist put it: "It was for twenty-five years the spiritual center of Jewish life in Essen until November 9, 1938 when the Nazis turned synagogues throughout the country into rubble and ash. It protruded through the rubble of the bombed-out city as a kind of memorial. It was transformed into a museum of industrial products and today it is a monument. Now it is to become a house of Jewish culture."[158]

Although much less dramatically than in Essen, Wrocław, Warsaw, and Berlin, there has also been an on-going reemergence of Jewish culture and life in the city of Potsdam. This once Prussian military town, now self-proclaimed to be "a European influenced city," draws a large number of tourists to visit its palaces just outside the city-center but continues to be dwarfed by nearby Berlin.[159] Its downtown, dominated by East German *Plattenbauten* except for the historically preserved Dutch quarter, hardly fits the confident billing that Potsdam is "without a doubt one of Germany's most beautiful cities."[160] As with other East German cities, Potsdam also suffers from persistent problems with right-wing extremism that politicians and local citizens

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[156] Zentralrat der Juden, Jüdische Kultusgemeinde Essen, http://www.zentralratdjuden.de/de/topic/59.html?gemeinde=60 (last accessed June 9, 2008).

[157] Moses, *German Intellectuals*, chap. 12. On the ritualistic dynamic of Holocaust memory, see Atina Grossmann, "The 'Goldhagen Effect:' Memory, Repetition, and Responsibility in the New Germany," in Eley, ed.,"*Goldhagen Effect*," 89-130.

[158] Schymiczek, "Haus."

[159] Quote from Potsdam's official web-site, http://www.potsdam.de/cms/ziel/26822/DE/ (last accessed June 10, 2008).

[160] Ibid.

have strongly attempted to counteract.[161] Most recently in 2006, a German citizen originally from Ethiopia was beaten almost to death at a Potsdam bus stop. Occurring just as Germany was about to invite millions of tourists for the World Cup, the incident attracted prolonged and extensive coverage in the national media about the threat of right-wing violence.[162] This explosion of anxiety came just as minorities within Germany and outside were making lists of "No-Go-Areas" that foreigners should avoid.

Post-1989 Potsdam is certainly not a "No-Go-Area," but that these perceptions exit has only made the revival of Jewish life there all the more important for the city, even if it is often overlooked with Berlin's booming Jewish life and "hype" only a commuter rail ride away. There is indeed little hype in Potsdam, but there is a notable presence of Jewish life in the city that is all the more astonishing since a Jewish community has not existed there since the late 1930s. Today the Orthodox community totals 396 Jews, mainly from the former Soviet Union. Its prayer house is located in the center of town on *Schloßstraße*, and just around the corner sits the Moses Mendelssohn Center for European Jewish Studies founded in 1992. Directed by the outspoken Julius Hans Schoeps, son of a famously acculturated German-Jewish family, the center focuses mainly on scholarship but its many public lectures, conferences, and cultural activities make it an important part of Jewish cultural life in the city. Its quarterly newsletter, *Dialog*, aims to stimulate a broad conversation about Jewish culture, religion, and history.[163] With the opening in 1995 of the Simon Dubnow Institute in Leipzig, a certain degree of academic prominence has eluded the MMZ, but it has a large staff, a growing Jewish studies program, and financial commitment from

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[161] On the upsurge of right-wing violence, see *Extremismus in Deutschland. Erscheinungsformnen und aktuelle Bestandsaufnahme. Texte zur Inneren Sicherheit* (Berlin: Bundesministerium des Inneren, 2004); Julius Hans Schoeps, et al., *Rechtsextremismus in Brandenburg. Handbuch für Analyse, Prävention und Intervention* (Berlin: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 2007).

[162] See, for example, the coverage in Germany's national weekly *Die Zeit*: "Fremdenfeindlicher Angriff," April 17, 2006; "Schwarzes Opfer," April 27, 2006; "Gewalt gegen Ausländer," May 26, 2006.

[163] See Schoeps's opening editorial of the first issue, *Dialog*, no. 1 (1998): 1.

the state. Each year Potsdam also hosts with the city of Berlin a Jewish film festival. Founded in 1995, it welcomes Jewish artists from around the world to both cities to display their work.[164]

Yet the most important, symbolic development that has been going on now for years in the city are plans to construct a new synagogue. The building of new synagogues has long carried heavy symbolic importance in postwar Germany. They are highly visible, spatial markers of Jewish presence and reflect the notion that "who builds a house stays."[165] The fact that Jews wish to live in Germany still stirs discussion and reflection even as the country has become home to a new Jewish Diaspora. In 2006, Munich unveiled a 72 million-dollar Jewish center with a synagogue, museum, and kindergarten that replaced the city's main synagogue destroyed in 1938. Although the new building could not be erected on the same plot of land as the old one, it was constructed only a few blocks away and given the exact same name. Unveiled on the anniversary of *Kristallnacht* by the German president with hundreds of onlookers and 1,500 police officers, this new presence of Jews in Hitler's "capital of the movement" served as a powerful symbol of renewal and growth after the Holocaust. Potsdam's new synagogue has received much less attention, but it faces the same kind of questions that Munich did: Is the new synagogue to be a replacement of the old? Where should it be built? How should it be constructed? How should it negotiate the relationship between past and present, between memory and communal life?

Discussion about these questions has been going on with various degrees of intensity since the mid-1990s. Both the Jewish community and the city have struggled in particular to figure out where the building should be located. Several different locations have emerged. In 1995, the city agreed to give the *Gemeinde* an abandoned church in nearby Babelsberg, but the

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[164] See the festival's official web-site, www.jffb.de.

[165] Jürgen Zieher, " 'Wer ein Haus baut, will bleiben.' Synagogenbau in Dortmund, Düsseldorf, und Köln in den fünfziger Jahren," *Beiträge zur Geschichte Dortmunds und der Grafschaft Mark Band* 91 (2000): 203-43.

Jewish community was not enthused about the idea of being located outside Potsdam.[166] The old synagogue was after all located right in the heart of Potsdam. As the Babelsberg location lost appeal, plans to rebuild a replica of the old one gained traction. Since 1990, a local, grass-roots organization, the Working Group for the Construction of Potsdam's Historic Downtown, had been urging city officials to rebuild the synagogue as part of restoring the old, Wilhelmian square of which its was the architectural focal point. The local Jewish community welcomed the idea and Potsdam's city council officially approved of the plan in January 1998.[167] But no sooner had these plans been accepted than the idea became "precarious" and "a complex problem."[168] The recreation of the synagogue was going to involve tearing down the apartment building located there and relocating all of its residents. The idea quickly seemed impractical, expensive, and unrealistic. It also seemed more like a nostalgic urge to reconstruct "old" Potsdam than an attempt to met the needs of the current Jewish community. As Julius Hans Schoeps put it simply, Potsdam has a "new Jewish community — it should build a synagogue in a different location."[169] Plans for the synagogue stalled and no viable alternative surfaced for years as the Jewish community insisted that it was not going to pay for a new plot of land.[170] In late 2004, a resolution finally appeared likely as both parties settled on a site for the synagogue. The city offered to sell for one euro the plot of land on *Schlosstraße* 1 where the community currently resides in a *Plattenbau*. The current plan is to tear down the apartment building and erect in its place a synagogue, library, and community center. In 2005, the Building Organization of the Potsdam Synagogue was founded to raise private donations and hold an architectural competition for the building.

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[166] Thomas Kunze, "Aus einer Kirchenruine soll die Synagoge wachsen," *Berliner Zeitung* April 6, 1995.

[167] Werner van Bebber, "Neubau der Synagoge is es noch weit," *Der Tagesspiegel* March 10, 1998.

[168] Ibid.

[169] Thorsten Metzner, "Authentische Orte des Schreckens als Gedenkstätten," *Der Tagesspiegel* October 30, 1998.

[170] Volker Eckert, "Auf der Suche nach dem verlorenen Ort," *Der Tagesspiegel* February 2, 2004.

But plans for the synagogue have only continued to move slowly and frustration has mounted. "We have four hundred community members," one member explained, "but our prayer room is only seventy square meters large; we have to fight for seats at gatherings with the shortage of space."[171] Standing in front of the plaque of the old synagogue on the anniversary of *Kristallnacht*, another community member remarked: "Without a synagogue in Potsdam it is difficult to get my children excited about our religion."[172] The main problem, as the mayor noted at the same event, is money. The city and state cannot afford to pay for all of the synagogue's construction. It "has to be built by everyone," the mayor explained.[173] But private funds have been slow to come in and the Central Council of Jews has appeared ambivalent about the project. Stephan Kramer, the General Secretary of the Council, called the plan "cynical" and a "mockery" given the poor financial state of the Potsdam Jewish community.[174] The Council's president, Charlotte Knobloch, distanced herself from these remarks and publically supported the project, while Kramer later implied that his comments were directed at city and state officials who must finance the project for it ever to be realized.[175] The financial situation remains tenuous, but appears to be improving as of late. In May 2008, Brandenburg's cultural minister indicated that the state might be able to finance part of the construction, recognizing that private donations alone would not be enough to cover the estimated five million Euro project.[176] An architectural competition is supposed to begin soon and the current plan is for the synagogue to be completed by 2012. Since the initial target was 2001, few are holding out hope that this deadline will be met.

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[171] Ildiko Röd, "Jüdische Gemeinde ohne Platz," *Märkische Allgemeine* January 29, 2007.

[172] Christoph Tanneberger, "Geld für neue Synagoge fehlt," *Märkische Allgemeine* November 10, 2007.

[173] Ibid.

[174] Ildiko Röd, "Bauverein sieht Projekt ohne 'einhelligen Segen' vom Zentralrat der Juden gefährdet," *Märkische Allgemeine* January 25, 2007.

[175] Ildiko Röd, "Generalsekretär des Zentralrats der Juden sieht Land und Stadt bei Unterhalt einer neuen Synagoge gefordert," *Märkische Allgemeine* September 26, 2007.

[176] "Synagoge mit Landesbeteiligung," *Potsdamer Neueste Nachrichten* May 13, 2008.

"A synagogue is more than a symbol," Potsdam's Rabbi remarked, "it is fundamental to Jewish life in Potsdam. So far, all of our estimates have been false."[177] In spite of such pessimism, it appears likely that Potsdam will have a new synagogue at some point. The long, frustrating process has caused bitterness and frustration, but when the building is finally unveiled the symbolism of it will be lost on few. The synagogue will mark Jewish life in the city for the first time since 1957 when the pre-war synagogue was torn down, reflecting the presence of a new Jewish Diaspora in Germany.

IV. Conclusion

In light of this new Diaspora, the Jewish writer and historian Diana Pinto has recently argued for embracing a new, European Jewish identity around the concept of Jewish space. Conceiving it as places where Jews and non-Jews gather, she invites Jews in Europe not to view their small numbers as an "impoverishment" but as a challenge "unique to Europe." "For if Jews now live in Europe in a voluntary manner," Pinto writes, "it means they share a series of complex affinities with 'others' and it is this link that must be deepened and turned into creative dialogue, starting with non-Jews who choose to enter the Jewish space."[178] In fashioning this new, European Jewish identity, Jews on the continent cannot be seen as merely a "dying species." "European Jews in the future if they are to flourish must above all not be the guardians of a static and finalized pre-Holocaust heritage. They must not become the museum keepers of world Jewry."[179] They must, in short, form a "third pillar" between the "American and Israeli poles of world Judaism."[180] Although these observations are intended to be programmatic and for some Jewish commentators are overly optimistic, they point to one of the central tensions that has

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[177] Dieter Weirauch, "Potsdam bekommt eine neue Synagoge," *Die Welt* November 17, 2004.

[178] Diana Pinto, "The Jewish Challenge in the New Europe," in Daniel Levy and Yfaat Weiss, eds., *Challenging Ethnic Citizenship: German and Israeli Perspectives on Immigration* (New York: Berghahn, 2002), 251.

[179] Diana Pinto, "The Third Pillar? Toward a European Jewish Identity," *Golem. Europäisch-jüdisches Magazin* nr. 1 (1999): 37-38.

[180] Ibid., 37.

emerged since 1989 — the temporal dissonance between past and present, between the insistence on the Holocaust and the growth of a new Jewish communal life.[181]

This tension has emerged precisely because of the transnational interest in the Jewish past that has accelerated since 1989. Just as the Jewish populations of Germany and Poland have increased, Germans, Poles, Americans, Israelis, Jews, and non-Jews have only continued to express interest in "Jewishness," including a particular fascination with Jewish spaces, whether they are "authentic" Jewish sites or newly created ones. This obsession with the material remnants of Jewish life has effectively led to the reconstruction and musealization of the Jewish past. "Jewishness" becomes something to be experienced, photographed, catalogued, preserved, displaced, and recreated. It is essentialized, reified, managed, and controlled; it is located in the past as artifacts of a lost population and cultural heritage. This interest in the Jewish past builds on the melancholic nostalgia for Jews that emerged in the 1980s, what I have called the becoming presence of the absence of Jewish life, but it also stems from presentist urges for "cosmopolitism," postmodern appeals for recovering the "historic," and tourist *Spurensuche*. There are few signs that this obsession with the past will abate anytime soon sustained as it is by strong local and transnational interest. Even if Germans and Poles tire of the "Jewish fashion," it is probably safe to assume that American and Israeli tourists will continue to travel to Germany and Poland to experience Europe's "pre-Holocaust heritage."

This transnationalization of Jewish space is, in fact, one of the most important transformations since 1989. Jewish sites certainly attracted international attention earlier, but nothing like they have since the collapse of communism. Jewish spaces now engage an array of people across the European continent and parts of the world. It is not just the thousands of tourists, but the architects, museum directors, intellectuals, artists, and ordinary citizens who are deeply invested in a given locality and project: the American director of the Berlin Jewish Museum and its Polish-Jewish architect; the Israeli founder of the Warsaw Jewish museum and

[181] On the differing notions of European Jewish identity, see Peck, *Jewish*, 118-124.

its British exhibition design team; the Jewish-Norwegian artist of the Wrocław Jewish cultural center; the largely Russian population of Potsdam's Jewish community; the Israeli director of Essen's Alte Synagoge. Today this transnationalization of Jewish space is accelerating at an almost frantic pace thanks to the globalizing power of technology. One now does not even need to leave one's home computer, television, or reading chair to experience the material traces of German and Polish Jewry. Numerous books have appeared that offer pictures and narrative descriptions of Jewish sites, while images of Jewish spaces dominate film and documentaries.[182] As just one example, the Polish-Jewish survivor and film director Marian Marzynski produced for PBS's *Frontline* two searing portraits of Holocaust memory in contemporary Poland and Germany. In *Shtetl* (1996), he followed his American friend as he searched for his family's history in the village of Brańsk east of Warsaw. As they walked through the town, they asked local villagers if they remember where the town's five synagogues once stood, now all empty spaces.[183] In *A Jew Among the Germans* (2005), he traveled to Berlin to visit the city's Holocaust memorial and Jewish museum, debating with Germans and Americans the best ways to "preserve the memory."[184]

Of course, the most globalizing, transnational medium today is not a book or even a television anymore but a computer. Cyberspace transmits images and stories about Jewish sites around the world at the click of a mouse. One can watch videos on *YouTube* of Jan Jagielski, an employee of the Jewish Historical Institute and long-time conservator of Jewish sites, discussing the history of Poland's Jewish cemeteries, or a three-minute memorial that melancholically

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[182] Jan Jagielski, *Jewish Sites in Warsaw* (Warsaw: City of Warsaw, 2002); *Jewish Warsaw Today* (Warsaw: HHoyasz, 2006); Maciej Łagiewski, *An Old Jewish Cemetery in Wrocław* (Wrocław: Nova, 2006); Irena Diekmann, *Wegweiser durch das jüdische Brandenburg* (Berlin: Hentrich, 1995); Hermann Simon, *Jüdische Stätten in Berlin* (Berlin: Jüdische Presse, 2001); *Gestern Synagoge — Alte Synagoge heute* (Essen: Alte Synagoge, 1999); *Synagogen in Berlin. Zur Geschichte einer zerstörten Architektur* (Berlin: Berlin Museum, 1983).

[183] *Shtetl*, prod. and dir. Marian Marzynski, 120 min., PBS Frontline, 1996, videocassette.

[184] *A Jew Among the Germans*, prod. and dir. Marian Marzynski, 60 min., PBS Frontline, 2005, DVD.

moves through Warsaw's Jewish cemetery (there are dozens more of other Polish cities).[185] The American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, a non-profit organization established in 1993, publishes as part of its well-known "Virtual Jewish Library" a "Virtual Jewish History Tour" of select cities, including Berlin and Warsaw, that provide pictures of Jewish sites accompanied by brief historical narratives.[186] The internet portal "Polin – Polish Jewish Heritage," managed by the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland, offers a multimedia presentation of Jewish towns, while the University of Technology in Darmstadt has recreated 2,200 synagogues using CAD technology.[187] These appropriations of Jewish sites truly are virtual.

But what are the effects of this transnational insistence on "preserving the memory" that today appears to be spreading at an almost dizzying rate? One of them, to return to Pinto's observations, is clear. This obsession with Europe's "pre-Holocaust heritage" implicitly assumes the death of the continent's Jewish Diaspora when it has not just vanished but is growing. "I left for America with the image of Shtetl life frozen in time. It smelled of death," Marzynski explains at the beginning of his film.[188] Some Jews in Germany and Poland see this fixation on the Holocaust as problematic. As Edna Brocke of the Essen synagogue put it succinctly, it automatically puts Jews into the category of the victim. She hopes to broaden the definition of Jewishness by creating a "House of Jewish Culture." The Berlin and Warsaw museums move toward a similar aim. The Holocaust will obviously remain a dominant point of identity and discussion in Germany and Poland, although some non-Jews have attacked it in disturbing, apologetic, and at times even anti-Semitic ways. But such voices, while hardly marginal especially in Poland where the right wing at the moment is stronger for precise reasons, are

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[185] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ymjUmcyxzFY&feature=related; http://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=qxGo5xAm91k&feature=related (last accessed June 25, 2008).

[186] www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org.

[187] *Synagogen in Deutschland. Eine virtuelle Rekonstruktion* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2004); the website is www.synagogen.info. The polish one is www.polon.org.pl.

[188] *Shtetl*. Quote from official, PBS transcript published at http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline /shtetl/shtetlscript.html (last accessed June 25, 2008).

probably less pronounced than those who have embraced the Holocaust and Jewishness.[189] Although one might be tempted to interpret this as the culmination of a successful "learning process," it is not without its own tensions. This almost frantic interest in the Jewish past does not just dominate, reconstruct, create, and invent Jewishness in a kind of "memory theater," putting Jewish artifacts in museums, restoring Jewish sites, recreating Jewish streets.[190] It also has real consequences for Jews living in Poland and Germany today. A Berlin Jewish community member perhaps put it best when she noted that at times it can simply be "stressful" to be Jewish in Germany. The same could easily be applied to Poland. What she means, I think, is not something overly negative; she is not scared or anxious. She is plainly exhausted at times because by being Jewish she inevitably gets pulled into the observed, discussed, probed, and created world of "Jewishness" no matter if it is located on a real street or a virtual one. The transnational interest in the Jewish past makes an already elusive "normality" in Poland and Germany even more so. In this sense, Pinto's notion of dialogue in Jewish spaces does indeed seem overly optimistic. Perhaps some spaces — the Warsaw museum or the Essen synagogue — will eventually provide such forums. But at the moment the tension between the past and present, between the

[189] The comparison between Germany and Poland is useful in illuminating these precise reasons. The strength of the far right in Poland since 1989 stems from a compilation of factors that are also present in Germany — unemployment, dissatisfaction with the collapse of communism, and traditional prejudices of Jews. The main difference is that Germany's political elite — the Greens, SPD, and CDU — have since reunification reacted strongly against even the slightest hint of right-wing populism. As David Art has shown in his apt comparison of contemporary Germany and Austria, this is the case mainly because of the political consensus about the Holocaust that developed in the FRG by the late 1980s. Such a consensus does not exist in Austria where the far right has been much more successful (the political rise of Jörg Haider). In short, anti-Semitism has not been as fully discredited in public discourse in Poland as it has been in Germany after a long "learning process" since 1945 as Werner Bergmann has shown. Still, Poland seems to be going through this process rapidly. The LPR has been, at least in public, much more vociferous and direct in their attacks against gays than they have against Jews (that this dangerous demonization and xenophobia takes places with little condemnation is one of the dilemmas of redemptive cosmopolitanism that I discuss in my concluding remarks). See Art, *Politics*; Bergmann, *Antisemitismus*. For a useful explanation of the recent success of the far right in Poland, see Brian Porter, "The Return of the Radical Right in Poland: The Betrayal of Solidarity and the Politics of Discontent," *Jewish Currents* September 2006 (accessed on-line at www.jewishcurrents.org). See also Michlic, *Poland's*, chap. 8, and Zubrzycki, *Crosses*.

[190] Bodemann, *Gedächtnistheater.*

transnational and the local has not been adequately worked out. "One of the still unresolved questions," Pinto admits, "is how to define Auschwitz in terms of the Jewish space."[191]

[191] Pinto, "Jewish Challenge," 251.

CONCLUSION

SPATIAL HERMENEUTICS AND REDEMPTIVE COSMOPOLITANISM

In *Truth and Method*, Hans Georg Gadamer builds on the hermeneutical tradition that takes human understanding to be interpretative, finite, and non-absolute. His most enduring contribution is to show how the past fundamentally shapes our interpretation of reality. History limits and makes possible our understanding; the past cannot be overcome, denied, forgotten, or suppressed. "Our usual relationship to the past," he writes, "is not characterized by distancing and freeing ourselves from tradition. Rather, we are always situated within traditions."[1] He concludes: "in all understanding, whether we are expressly aware of it or not, the efficacy of history is at work."[2] This omnipresence of the past — what Gadamer calls the "history of effect" (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) — is what makes up our "standpoints" of interpretation. The past makes our interpretations prejudicial not in the pejorative sense of the word but in the purer sense of pre-judging. Our various, multiple "standpoints" limit our "possibility of vision."[3] But they do so not necessarily in a deterministic, rigid way. Our "horizons" of understanding are "always in motion" as we encounter conflicting viewpoints from others and attempt to understand the past, to challenge ourselves to think about our own prejudices and traditions.[4] The perspectives of others and our consciousness of history can broaden our horizon of interpretation.

This constant entanglement with the past I called earlier "spatial hermeneutics" as a way to capture the various, conflicting ways that Poles, Germans, Americans, Israelis, Jews, and non-

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[1] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 283.

[2] Ibid., 300.

[3] Ibid., 301.

[4] Ibid., 303.

Jews have interpreted the material remnants of Jewish life after 1945. The shifting history of Jewish space in Poland and Germany has unfolded within different standpoints and horizons of interpretation at changing points in time. The basic narrative of this history divides roughly into three periods when interpretations of Jewish sites shifted as different horizons of the past emerged. These shifts occurred as divergent, transnational interpretations conflicted and as some Poles and Germans started to think reflectively about the traditions that conditioned their own prejudices. They emerged because of the transnationalization of Jewish spaces and the growth of localized efforts to think about the past, to understand one's own historical standpoint, to be conscious, in short, of the "hermeneutical situation" of being thrown into a world conditioned by a traumatic past.[5]

In the early postwar decades, the immediate, wartime past and to a certain extent the presentist demands of the cold war conditioned the way Germans and Poles interpreted Jewish sites. They first confronted them as a legal problem as Jewish survivors and international Jewish leaders demanded the return of property confiscated by the Nazis. Government officials responded to these demands differently depending on which side of the Iron Curtain they were on. In both the GDR and PPR, state authorities flatly refused to return Jewish property despite numerous pleas from local Jewish leaders that they do so. As the SED embraced antifascist anti-Semitism and the PZPR feared the political backlash from Poland's obsession with *żydokomuna* expressed in widespread violent anti-Semitism, any support that Jews might have once enjoyed from communists vanished almost completely. Communist leaders knew that fighting for Jews after 1945 gained them virtually nothing in societies where Jewish hatred had become a normalized part of everyday life after the Holocaust. Abandoning Jews was an "implicit 'give' for the 'take' of power" in the GDR and PPR.[6] In contrast, support for Jews in West Germany was a requirement for power. The American occupiers made this clear from the beginning, arguing that

[5] Ibid., 301.

[6] Gross, *Fear*, 243.

combating anti-Semitism and supporting Jews were integral elements of democratization.[7] The CDU and the SPD continued this policy and usually supported restitution in the face of growing opposition to it. There was little broad, social acceptance for the return of Jewish property, which was dismissed as "victor's justice." Few German intellectuals, church leaders, writers, journalists, and ordinary citizens were pushing for it. Restitution did not become an accepted and normalized part of West German politics and society.[8] In this sense, the seemingly sharp divergence of the West German case from its communist neighbors appears less stark. In all three cases just after the war, no broad, social norm emerged that called for and sanctioned the return of Jewish property. The Iron Curtain was not always so ironclad.

Indeed, the appropriation of Jewish sites in Warsaw, Berlin, Potsdam, Essen, and Wrocław points to the central importance of the local level. Of course, the local was deeply entangled in the political — perhaps it makes sense to speak of the localization of the cold war — but the point here is that the postwar history of Jewish space did not necessarily fall neatly along the lines of divergent political cultures. In the immediate postwar decades, the material traces of Jewish life rarely fit into the postwar transformation of each city's urban landscape and identity. Essen's synagogue, once an integral part of the city's built environment, became spatially and physically excluded from its postwar transformation into the "shopping city." The synagogue was abandoned for fifteen years until city leaders turned it into the "*Haus Industrieform*," making it a peculiar space for displaying and celebrating the city's postwar consumerist identity. In Wrocław, Jewish leaders struggled in vain to find even the slightest amount of support for rebuilding its properties in a city of massive historic reconstruction. As local officials rushed to preserve the city's "Polish" buildings, they completely neglected the synagogue and Jewish cemetery. In the late 1960s, they even went so far as to confiscate the synagogue from the Jewish community. In Potsdam, no Jewish community ever emerged after the war. Its now abandoned synagogue

[7] Kauders, *Democratization.*

[8] Lillteicher, *Raub*

remained in damaged form for thirteen years until city officials tore it down in 1958. As local party leaders sought to construct a new, socialist Potsdam, they built in its place an apartment complex. This decision received little opposition from historic preservationists even as they fought strenuously for the protection of other historic sites in the city. The synagogue did not fit into the culturally constructed boundaries of the "historic."

The material traces of Jewish life also rarely fit into the postwar reconstruction of divided Berlin and Warsaw. Brutally destroyed by the Nazis, Warsaw became after the war Poland's "martyr city," *the* national symbol of the country's rebirth and reconstruction from the catastrophe of the Nazi occupation. In an eclectic blending of the old and the new, urban planners combined modernism, socialist realism, and historic reconstruction into one monumental project that preserved the cultural remnants of the nation and built the socialist future. A similarly grandiose plan did not emerge in divided Berlin. With the main exception of the competing, cold war projects of Stalinallee and the Hansaviertel, both Berlins implemented a fairly practical form of urban modernism that involved few major, highly symbolic architectural projects (although the East German regime certainly organized many that never materialized). In spite of these important differences, divided Berlin and Warsaw reflected a shared, teleological sense of time. Muranów, Stalinallee, and the Hansaviertel were common appropriations of urban space that were used for the building of new socialist and democratic societies. Urban reconstruction promised to deliver a better, more progressive tomorrow, but Jewish spaces did not fit into these visions of the future. The material traces of Jewish life remained bracketed from the temporal framing of urban renewal, one of the consequences of modernity's destructive creativity.

In five diverse urban landscapes, Jewish sites were transformed, neglected, and cleared away for the building of something perceived to be better. This shared, parallel history across national and political borders is perhaps what is most salient about the immediate postwar decades. In the 1950s and 1960s, Poles and Germans interpreted and appropriated Jewish sites in strikingly similar ways. Jewish sites reflected a minority culture that did not easily fit into the

temporal demands of urban modernism, socialist realism, and the cultural aesthetics of historic preservation. As cultural geographers have shown, the production of urban space is a socio-cultural construct that conditions, manages, and controls reality; the creation of urban space reflects and reinforces dominant economic, social, cultural, ethnic, racial, and gender norms.[9] In the GDR and PPR, this production of space configured to the ideological demands of communism as both states attempted to fashion a new, socialist city from the ruins of war, while in the FRG it conformed to the social relations of capitalism. In all three cases, the aesthetics of the "historic" reflected the dominance of exclusivist, ethnically defined perceptions of cultural goods. This dynamic is perhaps most evident in Wrocław and Warsaw where historic reconstruction was much more dominant, but it also clear in Potsdam and Essen where historic preservationists remained acutely ambivalent about the cultural importance of each city's synagogue. There was, in short, a spatial version of the Jewish question. As urban officials rushed to build postwar capitalist and socialist cities, they produced new urban spaces for a more progressive future and restored only select historic buildings that conformed to their cultural biases. Warsaw dramatizes this duality like few other cities. As Jan Zachwatowicz's team of conservators waded through the ruins of the old town searching for every possible architectural trace to be saved, catalogued, and rebuilt, Varsovians sifted through the rubble of Muranów scavenging for anything that could be reused, sold, or taken. The ruins of the old town were preserved as "sacred" remnants of Polish culture; the ruins of the ghetto were recycled as just material to be consumed and used for the socialist future.

Jewish spaces such as Muranów also symbolized violence and persecution on otherwise everyday streets. They were paved over, expunged, and neglected not necessarily out of malice,

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[9] Christine Bauhardt, *Stadtentwicklung und Verkehrspolitik. Eine Analyse aus feministischer Sicht* (Berlin: Birkhäuser, 1995); Michael Keith and Steve Pile, *Place and the Politics of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1991); Doreen B. Massey, *For Space* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005); Karen M. Morin and Jeanne Kay Guelke, *Women, Religion, and Space: Global Perspectives on Gender and Faith* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2007); Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (New York: Verso, 1989).

but out of a deep sense of discomfort with the fragility of human empathy that shattered Jewish spaces reflected. One might be tempted to interpret this appropriation of Jewish sites as a mnemonic attempt to flee from the past, as yet additional evidence that Germans and Poles suppressed the "memory" of the Holocaust. But the absence of Jewish life saturated the stones of these shattered spaces. It remained always there, if not always made present as a contentious "problem." In the early postwar decades, Germans and Poles did not make the absence of Jewish life a "problem" because the most recent, wartime past shaped their hermeneutical standpoint of interpretation. Germans and Poles became entangled in the persecution and mass murder of the Jews in ways similar, yet also clearly different as I attempted to stake out earlier. This past itself conditioned the postwar appropriation of Jewish space; it limited the horizon of interpretation. There were few others around in these early postwar years to contest and resist this dominant mode of interpretation, to expand the hermeneutical horizon of Germans and Poles by challenging their prejudices. There were some and they tended to be mostly Jews. I have attempted to include their voices here as much as possible, but they often went unheard in the 1950s and 1960s.[10]

This dynamic started to shift in the late 1970s as the absence of Jewish life gradually became present. The fact that Jews were no longer around became a contentious "problem" that deserved discussion, reflection, and contestation. This act of becoming contentious unfolded in both different and similar ways across political and national boundaries. In the GDR and PPR, Jewish sites became a national issue in light of internal and external pressure placed on both

[10] In this sense, my analysis has departed significantly from the historiography, which rarely incorporates Jews into discussions about "German" and "Polish" memory (the complete absence of other minorities such as Turks is also apparent in the FRG case). I do not think it is anything more than a scholarly lapse, but it is striking nonetheless because the linguistic formulation of "German" and "Polish" assumes a homogenous memory culture where minority voices do not register. Part of this might be a scholarly absorption of the subject studied at least in the German case. For example, as A. Dirk Moses has pointed out, Jürgen Habermas has stressed that the stigma of the Holocaust only pertains to ethnic Germans, while Leah Rosh told the Jewish leader Heinz Galinski to "keep out" of the discussion about Berlin's Holocaust memorial since "the descendants of the perpetrators are building the memorial, not the Jews," (Moses, *German Intellectuals*, 265, 267). But Jews never did keep out. Although the Jewish communities in the PPR, GDR, and FRG were extremely small, I have attempted to show that in all three cases they challenged the postwar treatment of Jewish sites. They continue to do so to this day, especially as the Jewish communities in both countries have grown.

ruling elites. Just as the SED and PZPR were hoping to improve their image abroad, Jewish sites started attracting attention from tourists, Jewish leaders, and foreign journalists. This growing transnational interest turned Jewish sites into a major political issue that the SED and PZPR were forced to mitigate by shifting their policies toward the Jewish minority. But in doing so they only exacerbated the problem as Jewish sites became intensely contested among state officials and members of the growing opposition. Although this conflict emerged strongly at times in the GDR, it was most pronounced in Poland because of the "anti-Zionist" campaign of 1968 that stimulated intense local, national, and transnational interest in the Jewish past. The centrality of 1968 for Poland distinguishes it from both the GDR and FRG; it marks in a sense a key "national" difference, although one more precisely embedded in the postwar history of communism and Polish-Jewish relations.

Indeed, this direct tension between state and society was much less palpable in West Germany because of its democratic system and long-standing, officially philosemitic policy formulated at the dawn of the cold war. Jewish sites in the FRG never became a national and international problem as they did in the PPR and GDR; they remained an issue confined mainly to the local level. As the Holocaust became widely contested in the 1980s, historians, religious leaders, politicians, and ordinary citizens, typically on the Left, challenged the postwar appropriation of Jewish sites. In a democratic society, their civic engagement did not provoke anxiety among national leaders who had little to fear about West Germany's relationship with the United States and Israel. National leaders had no reason to embrace "Jewishness" like their counterparts in the GDR and PPR in order to improve blemished images and secure foreign loans. The stark politicization of Jewish space in the GDR and PPR was a direct consequence of earlier, anti-Jewish policies that simply did not exist in the FRG.[11]

[11] This divergence is crucial, I think, to understanding Jewish issues in contemporary Poland and Germany. One of the main reasons for the intense, acerbic negative perception of Poland among Jews is the postwar history of Jewish life in the PPR. The anti-Jewish policies of the PZPR — its confiscation of Jewish property, its destruction of Jewish sites, and its expulsion of Jews in 1968 — remain with Poland to this

In all three cases, Jewish sites engaged a variety of social actors who shared a common purpose of contesting dominant modes of interpretation. The 1980s were pivotal years when some Poles and Germans started to broaden their horizon of interpretation. This shifting, widening standpoint emerged as they challenged themselves and were challenged by others to think about the past. They became more aware of their hermeneutical condition as constantly situated within a past and considered the prejudices that it involved. This self-reflective understanding became entangled in a broader melancholic nostalgia for the "lost world" of Polish and German Jewry. This sense of cultural loss emerged precisely because Jews — at least in their prewar, large numbers — were gone and no longer a "real" problem as a minority group. It emerged from the ashes of genocide and ethnic hatred. Nostalgia can, after all, only "survive in a long-distance relationship" as the desired object remains something sought after, yet never fully grasped.[12] In Poland and Germany, this sentimental nostalgia took on both "reflective" and "restorative" forms

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day. For example, Poland is still continuing to struggle with the return of Jewish communal property since the passage of legislation in 1997 (so far less than 20 percent of communal holdings have been returned. This law does not apply to individual properties). Almost the opposite is the case with reunited Germany. Although the FRG inherited the problems left by the collapsed GDR regime, it settled them over the 1990s in numerous restitution agreements, including the return of Jewish property (both communal and individual). The West German, cold war framework of restitution was simply applied to the former territories of the GDR (Germany obviously also had the means to do so as Europe's largest economy). What is more, the fairly strong perception that Germany has successfully reckoned with its past is based *only* on the postwar history of the FRG. It requires ignoring the GDR almost entirely, a mental move that does not work for Poland and the PPR. Germany is seen as the "successful" example of moral reckoning, while Poland is perceived to be the case of its complete failure — it not only did nothing to help the Jews after the war but even murdered them in 1945-46 and expelled them in 1968. Indeed, I think the rise of anti-Polish sentiment after 1945 is in large part a cold war product on two entangled levels: 1) the "east"/"Poland" is demonized for not being a liberal, democratic, and capitalist country; 2) the "east"/"Poland" is demonized as inherently anti-Semitic, a mental connection that is made automatically with the "east" and with "communism." Of course, there is evidence to support both claims; these are not "myths" so much as they are orientalist, bourgeois perceptions of reality that view Poland in exaggerated, essentialized, and stereotypical terms. Although more research would have to be done on this, my hunch is that anti-Polonism is more directly a product of the postwar/cold war order than of the Holocaust, which caused for sure numerous bitter memories among survivors. But my guess is that these memories became even more bitter refracted through the lenses of 1945-46 and 1968. Jews certainly had bad memories of Germans after all, but today the country is not portrayed nearly as negatively as Poland is in part, I believe, because of the West German narrative of "successful" integration into the democratic, capitalist "west" that involved not least of all, as the Americans clearly stressed from the beginning, restitution and strong ties with Israel. In short, Germany got it right after the Holocaust, Poland did not. This narrative of (West) Germany overshadows the anti-Zionist, anti-Semitic, and anti-restitution one of the GDR.

[12] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xiii.

— the lingering on the patina of Jewish ruins and the urge to rebuild them, to harness them for the present and future.[13] The tension between these two expressions of longing, as well the fundamental, traumatic symbolism of shattered Jewish spaces, has strongly animated the conflicted, interrupted, circumlocutory, and intense engagement with Jewishness in Poland and Germany.

This attraction to the Jewish past has remained, of course, deeply embedded in the different historical conditions of Germany and Poland. In the FRG at least, Germans on the Left embraced the "stigma" of the Holocaust more strongly than their counterparts in Poland given their country's unequivocal responsibility for mass murder. Poland's asymmetrical relationship to the Holocaust, as the geographic epicenter of where it unfolded but not the country that caused the entire problem in the first place, strongly shaped its interpretation of the past. Non-Jewish Poles experienced the brutality of Nazi colonialism; they often viewed this past through the eyes of the colonized. As Barbara Engelking-Boni has insightfully put it, Poles looked upon the war as a sacred, heroic, lofty time of communal strength, survival, and resistance that fit into deeper, collective self-perceptions of victimization.[14] But in the 1980s some started to consider the "dark" moments of this past.

This mnemonic shift was precipitated in no small part by the growing transnational appeal of the Jewish past. Although Jewish sites attracted international attention in the early postwar decades, it increased steadily in the 1980s as tourists, international Jewish leaders, and foreign journalists paid more attention to the material traces of Jewish life in divided Germany and Poland. This transnational interest emerged most strongly in Poland as American and Israeli Jewish leaders became intensely concerned about Jewish sites in the wake of 1968, but it was present in the two Germanys where it involved mental and physical traversing of the German-German border. In the late 1980s, the two Germanys intensely competed over embracing

[13] Ibid., chaps. 4 and 5.

[14] Engelking-Boni, *Holocaust and Memory*.

"Jewishness" and the "Holocaust." West Berlin finally approved of the Berlin Jewish Museum in 1988 at the height of the GDR's massive celebration of *Kristallnacht*, while Honecker's regime preserved Jewish sites such as the Addas Israel cemetery in direct response to West German provocation.

This steady transnationalization of the Jewish past has increased dramatically since 1989. Thousands of American and Israeli tourists now travel to Germany and Poland on "Jewish" and "Holocaust" tours in search of the vestiges of the Jewish past. The collapse of communism obviously opened up the possibility of such travel, but the linkage between 1989 and this transnationalization is not so direct. It is not simply the consequence of democracy's progressive expansion. One can, of course, view 1989 as a major, historical caesura, a revolution on the order of 1789 that precipitated great change; such an argument is probably generally true for Europe where the cold war really was cold.[15] But this neo-liberal embrace of 1989 often involves essentializing the communist period as merely some frozen, totalitarian moment.[16] "Polish and Jewish relations [since 1945] were in the freezer," Poland's chief Rabbi and New York native commented to the *Boston Globe*, "the fall of communism was the single most positive event for

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[15] Of course, other parts of the world were not so lucky. The Americans and the Soviets kept their hot, imperial clashes confined far away to Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East (with Afghanistan an exception for the Soviets). Historians are now only beginning to conceptualize the cold war globally. See Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[16] A number of historians working on the GDR (the PPR is far off on this score) do not submit to such assumptions, especially those working at the Potsdam Center for Contemporary Research. A recent discussion of much of their work is Corey Ross, *The East German Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of the GDR* (New York: Arnold, 2002). Recent examples of such an approach on the PPR are Stegmann, "Die Aufwertung der Familie," and Zaremba, *Komunizm*. The historiography on Soviet Russia is also well beyond this conceptualization. As examples of some of the most recent work, see Dan Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia: The Regulation of Sexual and Gender Dissent* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2001); Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002). Two recent, powerful books that strongly contest the neo-liberal embrace of 1989 by vividly showing the violent, on-going impact of the cold war are Heonik Kwon, *Ghosts of War in Vietnam* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), and Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2004).

these relations in 50 years."[17] I have attempted to suggest otherwise by showing the fluidity of political and cultural appropriations of the Jewish past in both the GDR and PPR, drawing on and advancing the work of historians who have put forward a more differentiated approach to state and society in the Soviet bloc.[18] The 1980s laid the foundation for the multifaceted interest in the Jewish past that has taken hold since the collapse of communism. The local helped enable the transnational. The rediscovery and preservation of "Jewish" sites has provided the cultural spaces for tourists, architects, museum directors, and tour guides to experience, photograph, discover, design, and narrate.

What has changed since 1989 is the interactive dynamic between the local and the transnational. Tourists who visit Berlin's *Scheunenviertel* on "Jewish tours" help to sustain its identity as the city's "Jewish" district, while American college students who come to Wrocław as travelers of a different sort restore its Jewish cemetery. The local and transnational intersect in interactive, reinforcing ways.[19] They produce different, conflicting meanings, but shape together the mental and physical politics of space. It is not just the growing discussion about the Holocaust that brings tourists and locals together, but also the urge for "authenticity" and "cosmopolitanism" in a globalizing world. Jewishness has become attractive at a particular postmodern, global moment when the "historic" seems somehow "real" and the "Jewish" seems somehow "cosmopolitan." Jewishness serves the fantasies of the actors involved in its cultural construction and consumption. Although it is impossible to know for sure the socio-economic background of all involved, it is safe to assume that most are well educated with relative

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[17] Rory Boland, "In Poland, lamp of Jewish culture shines anew," *Boston Globe* September 30, 2007.

[18] See Ross, *East German*, chap. 3 and 5.

[19] Recent research on tourism and the built environment has uncovered a similar dynamic. See Hagen, *Preservation*, and Lehrer's fascinating discussion of the interplay of the transnational and the local in the production of Jewish Kazimierz in Cracow, "'Shoah Busines.'"

affluence (based on where they are from).[20] These are educated, bourgeois appropriations of Jewishness that configure to similar socio-economic, yet different national identities as Poles, Germans, Americans, Israelis, and Jews find various shared and conflicting meanings in the Jewish sites they encounter.

This entangled, transnational engagement with the Jewish past is indeed the most visible shift since 1989 and it appears only to be increasing with the globalizing power of cyberspace. As a way to touch on some of the tensions and conflicts that underlie it, I would like to return briefly to the two films directed by the Polish-Jewish survivor and American citizen Marian Marzynski mentioned earlier but only in passing. The *Shtetl*, produced in 1996 for PBS *Frontline*, follows an American Jew as he travels to his parents's hometown in the village of Brańsk about 60 miles east of Warsaw. As the two men walk through the streets of this impoverished small town, they search for the traces of Jewish life. Their tour guide is the non-Jewish Pole Zbyszek Romaniuk who has made it his life's work to rediscover Brańsk's Jewish past, including digging up and restoring Jewish tombstones buried throughout the village. This is, however, no ordinary heritage travel. Marzynski's mission is to explore the role that Poles played in persecuting Jews during the Holocaust. This task involves traveling to the United States and Israel where one of the film's most tension-filled scenes unfolds with a group of Israeli high school students who have just returned from a trip to Poland. They are ruthless in their assault on Romaniuk who visibly appears angered by their accusations of Polish complicity and their complete historical ignorance of Nazi occupied Poland.

Marzynski's other film, *A Jew Among the Germans* (2005), is much shorter and less intense. He seems detached as he moves through Berlin, although his opening line that he is visiting the "land of my enemy" gives the film its anticipated tension. One of the most arresting scenes takes place just outside the Berlin Jewish Museum as Marzynski and an American friend

[20] A somewhat analogous, class-based appropriation of Indianness emerged in the United States at the turn of the century and then accelerated greatly after post-WWII prosperity. See Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

of his debate with a gentile curator the importance of the Holocaust. The German explains that the museum is not supposed to be only about genocide, but they do not seem to listen to him, urging that he agree with their point that the Holocaust must be central to the museum. Marzynski even oddly implies that the Libeskind building does not provide enough spaces to "contemplate Jewish death."[21] These two films offer at times absorbing moments, but they can be rather predictable and irritating. The cultural superiority of Americans over Poles and Germans is virtually a given. Romaniuk (and Poland) endures this insolence the most: the stark imagery of the impoverished, "third world" Brańsk versus the groomed, affluent Atlanta suburb, the peasant with dirt ingrained hands versus the American crisply typing on a word processor. In both films, Marzynski never speaks to one single Jew currently living in Germany and Poland. Both countries are just Jewish graveyards, this after 1989 with the expansion of Jewish communal life. Marzynski even throws in for good measure that it is a "well known secret" that Russian Jews have "fabricated their Jewish origin" to come to Germany.[22]

The various interpretations that emerge in these two films, conditioned by and embedded in different pasts, conflict, yet potentially offer the possibility of a broader horizon of understanding provided that the actors involved try to transpose themselves from their own particular standpoints. This attempted embrace of the universal can never possibly be complete given our hermeneutical condition, but Marzynski does not even attempt such a move.[23] He does not seem remotely interested in *why* a German would possibly spend his free time curating a Jewish museum, or *why* a Pole would possibly go around his small town digging up buried Jewish tombstones to be restored and reinstalled in a Jewish cemetery. Marzynski seemingly would agree with the explanation provided by the *Boston Globe* that Romaniuk's actions are

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[21] PBS transcript published at www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/germans/etc/script.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Based on one of the films, the book by Eva Hoffman provides a richer and more sophisticated analysis. *Shtetl: The History of a Small Town and an Extinguished World* (New York: Vintage, 1999).

simply "mysterious."[24] The same probably would have been said of the German curator had the newspaper been writing about him.

In short, Marzynski overlooks several deeper questions about Polish and German interest in the Jewish past. What does this attempt to transcend one's own particular standpoint involve? What are its consequences, tensions, and complications? These questions deserve some brief, final reflection here not to establish some kind of false analytical balance by focusing on the positive over the negative. Marzynski's perspective is certainly valid: numerous Poles and Germans remain ambivalent about the Holocaust, some even hostile to it.[25] A number also subscribe to ethnic notions of Germanness and Polishness that exclude Jews, Turks, Afro-Germans, and other minorities.[26] The point here is not to overturn a "Tory" narrative with a "Whig" one. Rather, it is to probe the underlying tensions that shape the move toward a broader standpoint — a cosmopolitan embrace if you will. In Germany, this cosmopolitan impulse tends to come from the Left and celebrates pluralism, democracy, pacifism, the rights of minorities, and "Europe." It strives to move beyond the ethnic nation-state, arguing that citizens are part of a democratic, constitutional state rather than a specifically German, cultural community. Its most well known proponent is the philosopher Jürgen Habermas who has envisioned for Germany a postnational, constitutional patriotism with supra allegiances to Europe.[27] In Poland, cosmopolitanism also draws mainly from the Left and espouses similar notions of tolerance, democracy, and pluralism. If Germany locates its supra identity in "Europe," Poland finds it perhaps more often in "Central Europe" with its supposed Polish-Lithuanian and Habsburg

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[24] Frederic M. Biddle, "Jewish Americans return to still divided 'Shtetl,'" *Boston Globe* April 17, 1996.

[25] Welzer, Moller, and Tschuggnall, *Opa*; Jensen, *Geschichte machen*; Polonsky and Michlic, *Neighbors Respond*; Zubrzycki, *Crosses*.

[26] Ireneusz Krzemiński, *Czy Polacy są antysemitami?* (Warsaw: Oficyna Naukowa, 1996); Grzegorz Janusz, *Raport o sytuacji osób należących do mniejszości narodowych i etnicznych w Polsce* (Warsaw: HFPC, 1994); Heide Fehrenbach, *Race after Hitler: Black Occupation Children in Postwar Germany and America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Chin, *Guest*.

[27] Jürgen Habermas, "Citizenship and National Identity: Some Reflections on the Future of Europe," *Praxis International* no. 1 (1992): 1-19.

multiculturalism.[28] Poland's version is also more deeply entangled with the progressive wing of the Catholic Church, which since the 1970s has been working through the ethnic and religious exclusivity of the "*Polak-katolik*." As the highly respected politician and writer Tadeusz Mazowiecki put it, Poles need to embrace "open Polishness with open Catholicism."[29]

An embrace of "Jewishness" has become a central marker of cosmopolitanism in both countries.[30] Jewish sites, such as the museums in Berlin and Warsaw, become spaces to display, reinforce, and celebrate tolerance, plurality, and multiculturalism. In 2005, the Polish president Aleksander Kwaśniewski (SLD) remarked at length about what the Jewish museum would showcase: "The Jewish community, which has lived here for eight hundred years, found in Poland a climate of freedom and tolerance. Many generations of Polish Jews had made a splendid spiritual, cultural, and economic contribution here and made an enormous contribution to our joint history, while also drawing on Polish influences and experiences."[31] Germany's commissioner for cultural affairs framed the Berlin Jewish museum similarly, emphasizing how it showed that German culture "has always been, and today, under changed conditions, continues to be the result of cross-pollination and synthesis between diverse cultures and influences." She then noted the museum's contemporary "political impact:" "respect and recognition for minorities and

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[28] On the Central European cosmopolitanism, see Malachi Haim Hacohen, "Dilemmas of Cosmopolitanism: Karl Popper, Jewish Identity, and 'Central European Culture,'" *Journal of Modern History* vol. 71 (March 1999): 105-149. On its rediscovery starting in the 1980s, see Timothy Garton Ash, "Does Central Europe Exist?," in *The Uses of Adversity: Essays on the Fate of Central Europe*, compiled by Timothy Garton Ash (New York: Random House, 1989), 179-213; Tony Judt, "The Rediscovery of Central Europe," in *Eastern Europe*, ed., Graubard, 23-58.

[29] Tadeusz Mazowiecki, "Questions to Ourselves," *Dialectics and Humanism* no. 2 (1990): 13.

[30] In Poland, such an embrace carries, however, negative connotations that tend to be at least voiced more often by the far right than in Germany. "Cosmopolitanism" and civic nationalism are seen as inventions by Jews. Those who subscribe to it must either be Jewish or crypto-Jewish. See Geneviève Zubrzycki, "'Poles-Catholics' and 'Symbolic Jews:' Jewishness as Social Closure in Poland," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* (2005): 79-80.

[31] Quoted in *Newsletter of the Museum of the History of Polish Jews* (Summer 2005): 17.

tolerance in the sense of appreciating difference as a necessary condition both of democracy and of a culture increasingly characterized by diversity."[32]

Jewish spaces are appropriated in part to validate claims of revived cosmopolitanism. They are spaces of Jewish-gentile symbiosis, tolerance, and cross-cultural pollination. In some eyes, Jewish spaces are made to produce more precisely what one might call "redemptive cosmopolitanism," a counter discourse to the dominant narrative of redemptive suffering that has long pervaded German and Polish society.[33] The recovery of material traces atones for the Holocaust and displays tolerance for local, national, and transnational consumption. Jews are brought back into contemporary Polish and Germany society: they become "Jewish co-citizens" and "co-stewards of this land" (*Mitbürger*, *współobywatele, współgospodarze*). One speaks of their "enormous contribution" to a "joint history" of symbiotic, harmonious relations broken only by brief periods of catastrophic and ethnic nationalism.[34] This redemptive cosmopolitanism has cathartic appeal and effect. The recovery of Jewish culture purifies Germans and Poles of past sins by recalling the past and reconstructing in the present a tolerant, democratic society. Jewish spaces become signifiers of successful rehabilitation and respectful mourning. They are used for one's own redemption from a past that was hardly tolerant, symbiotic, or multicultural; they are used to sustain a liberal, democratic politics of national recovery.

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[32] *Stories of an Exhibition,* 12-13.

[33] It is probably fair to say that this image of "victimization" is stronger in Poland where "redemptive cosmopolitanism" is less prominent. Germany's "culture of contrition" — at least in public — is more ritualistically present, but it probably reaches a fairly limited percent of the populace. Wulf Kansteiner speaks of a "memory pyramid" with elite discourses at the top, which are more often than not self-critical to some degree. He estimates that these engage somewhere between 15 to 25 percent of the German population. Similar research to my knowledge has not been done on Poland, but it might be somewhere around there. There is, however, a significant difference in that Poland's cultural, intellectual, media, and political elite has far from reached the kind of general consensus about the Holocaust that the German one has at the moment. Kansteiner, *Pursuit*, 319-22.

[34] I am using "catastrophic nationalism" to describe the German case, ethnic nationalism to describe the Polish one. "Catastrophic nationalism" is obviously much different in its violence, genocide, and imperialism, in its demand for empire in the east that involves mass murder, colonialism, and war. The term comes from Jarausch and Geyer, *Shattered Past*, 122.

This redemptive cosmopolitanism takes on predictable, almost ritualistic form in public discourse.[35] In 2001, speaking in Washington, DC, the German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer (Greens) noted the cultural loss of Jews that has made German "culture poorer ever since," a cultural void "painfully visible — especially where I live, in the old Jewish quarter of Berlin, the town of Moses Mendelssohn, who lies buried in the old Jewish cemetery not far from my apartment." Moving away from this symbiotic past, Fischer turned to the present and to Germany's cathartic "second chance:" "Only when our Jewish fellow-citizens can live in freedom and security in Germany, will Hitler's terrible anti-Semitism finally be defeated." This Jewish "yardstick" of "an open, tolerant society" is all the more important today in "multicultural" Berlin with its large Turkish population.[36] In that same year, the Polish president Aleksander Kwaśniewski, speaking about Jedwabne, also pulled from a traumatic past glimpses of catharsis. The "truth," he observed, "will allow the cleansing of memory's wound. That is our hope. That is why we are here." Poles offer words of "grief and bitterness" not just because the "world is listening" but because it is "we ourselves who need them most." "We do this," he concluded, "in order to be better, stronger in a moral sense, free of aversions, anger, and hatred. To respect mankind and love people. To turn evil into goodness."[37] Kwaśniewski admitted, openly, that such remembrance is a form of redemptive cleansing — a communal baptism that washes away Polish sins. But this ritual act is not only for local and national consumption. It is not just Poles and Germans who need it. Just as Fischer was speaking to an international audience, so too was Kwaśniewski. Both politicians are engaged in a much broader, transnational appropriation of the Holocaust that extracts from it a liberal, democratic, and universal narrative of tolerance, human

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[35] An extended, highly insightful analysis for the German case is Moses, *German Intellectuals*, chap. 10.

[36] Joschka Fischer, "A Second Chance? Germany and the Jewish Community Today," Annual Meeting of the American Jewish Committee, May 3, 2001, Washington, DC, published at www.germany.info/relaunch /politics/speeches/050301 (last accessed on July 3, 2008).

[37] Polonsky and Michlic, *Neighbors Respond*, 132.

rights, democracy, and pluralism.[38] Redemptive cosmopolitanism offers, appropriately, international meanings, putting forward linguistic and mnemonic formulations that transnational audiences understand, appreciate, and perhaps even demand.

And yet the national still has arguably a stronger pull. The embrace of Jewishness in Germany and Poland is informed by each country's distinct, historically conditioned standpoints. In two countries on a "dark continent" that has seen genocide, war, expulsions, and ethnic hatred, redemptive cosmopolitanism has appeal, to put it modestly, all the more so in Germany as the primary source of Europe's violent half century and the country where the leftist belief in redemption through democracy and "enlightened knowledge" has deep roots stretching back to the early years of the SPD.[39] Its allure is perhaps understandable, perhaps even not altogether that troubling given its alternative. Indeed, some see it as a clear positive. Diana Pinto writes of Poland at the "heart of Europe's cultural renewal" as it builds a new "Jewish and Polish memory," while Germany presents a unique opportunity for Jews and non-Jews to interact in "Jewish space."[40] She has reason to be optimistic, but she overlooks the dilemmas of cosmopolitanism.[41] At a moment when Jewish life in both countries is growing, Jews remain a "problem" or "issue" that is discussed, used, catalogued, preserved, restored, examined. Jews are offered as "second chances" to turn "evil into goodness," to create a better, more secure liberal, democratic future. But just as Jews are embraced, they are held at a distance. Jews are not just

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[38] Paul Eisenstein, *Traumatic Encounters: Holocaust Representation and the Hegelian Subject* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2003).

[39] "Enlightened knowledge" from Geyer, "Politics of Memory." Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: Vintage, 1999).

[40] Diana Pinto, "Fifty Years after the Holocaust: Building a New Jewish and Polish Memory," *East European Jewish Affairs* no. 2 (1996): 80-81; Pinto, "Jewish Challenges."

[41] In marking the dilemmas of what I call "redemptive cosmopolitanism," I am *not* attempting to embrace the "hermeneutics of suspicion" that others have in writing about philosemitism. As I suggested earlier, I do not see philosemitism as only a pernicious attempt to curry favor with Jews or worse as simply anti-Semitism in disguise. I do, however, think that there are underlying tensions to it that deserve analysis. "Hermeneutics of suspicion" comes from Anthony Kauders's insightful piece, "History as Censure: 'Repression' and 'Philosemitism' in Postwar Germany," *History and Memory* no. 1 (2003): 97-122.

"citizens" but "co-citizens" who are accepted as equals, yet marked as still different from the national politic. Redemptive cosmopolitanism reinforces ethnic difference even as it strives to overcome ethnic nationalism. As A. Dirk Moses has insightfully observed, the concept of "constitutional patriotism" that Habermas has envisioned demands that "German/German" citizens accept responsibility for the Holocaust based on their ethnic lineage to a national community of perpetrators.[42] Minorities such as Turks who have become citizens do not count. Cosmopolitanism in Poland runs into a similar dilemma. As commentators, intellectuals, and writers embrace "civic nationalism" as a "counterdiscourse" to "ethnic nationalism," they do so by creating a distinctly Polish narrative of religious tolerance and democratic pluralism that stretches back to the sixteenth-century Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as if somehow such ideas are ethnically ingrained parts of the Polish collective.[43]

More broadly, redemptive cosmopolitanism harnesses the Holocaust for a European utopianism as Germany and Poland return to "Europe" precisely at a moment when the continent remains divided socially and politically. Jews are now part of Europe's "core" for some in a way that other minorities are not.[44] The social, cultural, and legal position of the numerous immigrants who have come to Europe through postcolonial, labor, and asylum migration remains precarious to say the least. The controversy over the wearing of the "veil" by Muslim women is merely one recent example.[45] As these conflicts unfold, the embrace of the "Jewish co-citizen," the display of restored Jewish sites, and the building of Jewish museums provide brief reprieves of redemptive cosmopolitanism, cursory moments of cultural diversity. It is what Europeans can agree upon:

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[42] Moses, *German Intellectuals*, 237-38.

[43] Such views are often published in *Polityka*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, and *Tygodnik Powszechny*. "Counterdiscourse" comes from Zubrzycki, *Crosses*, 84. See also Zubrzycki, "'We, the Polish Nation:' Ethnic and Civic Visions of Nationhood in Post-Communist Constitutional Debates," *Theory and Society* no. 5 (2001): 629-669.

[44] Daniel Levy, Max Pensky, and John Torpey, eds., *Old Europe, New Europe, Core Europe: Transatlantic Relations after the Iraq War* (New York: Verso, 2005).

[45] Joan Wallach Scott, *The Politics of the Veil* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton, 2007).

even as Germans and Poles remain bitterly divided over the war and the expulsions it produced they are able to stand united in Jewish spaces.[46] The Holocaust has become since 1989 a thread of European unity that is transmitted and received transnationally.[47] As Germans, Poles, Europeans, and Americans embrace a democratic, universal message from a catastrophic past, some at least run the risk of believing that such tolerance has been realized in the present day or where it does not that the main answer to achieving it is through greater remembrance of a singularly defined evil.[48] In celebrating the triumph of the "civic nation" over the Holocaust, they run the risk of missing, overlooking, or at least underestimating the struggles for equality and acceptance going on around them in the present moment. Redemptive cosmopolitanism produces at times satisfaction with the strength of liberal-democratic institutions in a post-fascist and post-communist world; it produces, ironically, a kind of provincialism that harnesses a singular past for democracy's cathartic, celebrated arrival.[49]

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[46] Paweł Lutomski, "The Debate about a Center against Expulsions: An Unexpected Crisis in German-Polish Relations?," *German Studies Review* 27, no. 3 (2004): 449-468.

[47] Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 803-831.

[48] For a somewhat similar view except for his overly wrought division of "eastern" and "western" Europe, see Tony Judt, "The 'Problem of Evil' in Postwar Europe," *New York Review of Books* February 14, 2008. His invocation of Arendt is on target: "The greatest danger of recognizing totalitarianism as the curse of the century would be an obsession with it to the extent of becoming blind to the numerous small and not so small evils with which the road to hell is paved," (Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding*, 271-72).

[49] A similar dynamic is clearly evident in the United States. See Eisenstein, *Traumatic Encounters*.

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