

Patterns Of Anti-Jewish Violence In Poland, 1944-1946

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The story of the infamous Kielce pogrom of July 4, 1946, during which forty-two Jews were killed and forty more were injured, has been told and retold in popular and scholarly works to the point where the recent fiftieth anniversary of its occurrence prompted a public commemoration that made news around the world.¹ A fair measure of controversy still exists, however, regarding the meaning of the murderous events.

While the background to the outbreak of violence was a medieval blood libel, one central axis of disagreement is the manner in which the underlying cause of the violence should be represented. Certain depictions have given explanatory primacy to the immediate historical context in which the pogrom occurred - that of a fierce ongoing armed battle between passionate pro- and antigovernment forces, in which Jews assumed a highly visible and remarkably uniform pro-government position, in sharp distinction to the antigovernment attitudes of what was evidently a sizable majority of Polish society.

Such an approach has made the events at Kielce appear mainly either as an instance of political protest - in which case the savage anti-Jewish overtones reflected an unfortunate but nonetheless real correlation between ethnicity and political behavior - or as one of cynical manipulation by a regime bent on exploiting that correlation to deflect or suppress potential opposition to

¹ The most thorough and reliable treatment to date is Bozena Szaynok, *Pogrom Żydów w Kielcach 4 lipca 1946* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Bellona, 1992). Other narrations of the events include Stanisław Meducki, "The Pogrom in Kielce on July 4, 1946," *Polin* 9 (1996), pp. 158-169; Krzysztof Urbanski, *Kieleccy Żydzi* (Krakow: Małopolska Oficyna Wydawnicza) n.d. [1995], pp. 177-228; idem, "Z problematyki żydowskiej w Kieleckiem w latach 1945- 1946," in *Zydzi w Małopolsce: Studia z dziejów osadnictwa i życia społecznego*, edited by Feliks Kiryk (Przemysł: Poludniowo-Wschodni Instytut Naukowy w Przemyślu, 1991), pp. 345-355; Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews in Poland after World War II* (Hebrew), (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 1985), pp. 34-41 (Gutman, The Jews in Poland); Marc Hillel, *Le massacre des survivants: En Pologne après l'holocauste (1945-1947)* (Paris: Plon, 1985), pp. 256-281 (Hillel, Massacre); Michael Checinski, *Poland: Communism, Nationalism, Anti-Semitism* (New York; Karz-Cahl, 1982), pp. 21-34. For a collection of documents relating to the pogrom and subsequent trials, see Stanisław Meducki and Zenon Wrona, eds., *Antyżydowskie wydarzenia kieleckie, 4 lipca 1946: Dokumenty i materiały* (Kielce: Kielce Towarzystwo Naukowe, 1992).

its own serious misdeeds.² In contrast, other portrayals, drawing on the fact that the attack began after a nine-year-old boy reported having been kidnapped and held in the basement of the local Jewish committee headquarters, have posited a decisive role for traditional anti-Jewish motifs. As one especially lachrymose exponent of this interpretation put the case, "The horribly mutilated cadavers in the morgue at Kielce...were struck down more than anything else by the obscurantism of the Poles, who were capable of murdering their fellow creatures out of faith in the superstitions of another age."³

An observation that has often been obscured in this ongoing debate is that the Kielce pogrom was not an isolated instance of anti-Jewish brutality in postwar Poland. On the contrary, Jews had been subjected to deadly violence at Polish hands almost continuously (albeit with fluctuating intensity) ever since the first postwar Polish territories were wrested from the Nazi occupiers almost two years prior to the explosion by the Kielce mob. Such violence was a leitmotif of discussions about the remnants of Polish Jewry, both in Poland and abroad, throughout that entire period.

As early as September 1, 1944, Szlomo Herszenhorn, head of the newly created Bureau for Matters Concerning Aid to the Jewish Population of Poland (Referat dla spraw pomocy ludnosci jzydowskiej w Polsce) of the Polish Committee for National Liberation (Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego - PKWN), the provisional executive authority in the Polish territories east of the Vistula River since the previous July 21,⁴ noted that "instances in which Jews have been murdered following the departure of the Germans, which even now are recurring sporadically, are driving the remaining Jews to desperation, and a relatively large number of Jews is still afraid to come out of hiding."⁵ A

² For an elaboration of these positions, see Krystyna Kersten, *Polacy, Zydzi, komunizm: Anatomia polprawd 1939-68* (Warsaw: Niezalezna Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1992), pp. 90-115 (Kersten, *Polacy, Zydzi, Komunizm*).

³ Hillel, *Massacre*, p. 302.

⁴ On the establishment of PKWN, see, *inter alia*, Antony Polonsky and Boleslaw Drukier, *The Beginnings of Communist Rule in Poland, December 1943-June 1945* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), pp. 21-23 (Polonsky and Drukier, *Beginnings of Communist Rule*). On the Jewish Bureau, see David Engel, "The Reconstruction of Jewish Communal Institutions in Postwar Poland: The Origins of the Central Committee of Polish Jews, 1944-1945," *East European Politics and Societies* 10 (1996), pp. 96-97.

⁵ "Sprawozdanie z dzialalnosci Referatu dla spraw pomocy ludnosci jzydowskiej przy

January 1945 report from Lublin on the situation of Polish Jewry, noting ironically that "on the very day when the prime minister...made an official declaration about equal rights...12 Jews were murdered in Janow-Lubelski," declared that "not a week goes by in which [the body of] a Jewish murder victim is not found, shot or stabbed by an unknown assailant."⁶

Four months later the Central Jewish Committee, in a projected circular letter to "true representatives...of the undying spirit of Polish humanitarianism," lamented that "the initially sporadic outbursts" of which Herszenhorn had spoken previously "have been transformed lately into a systematic, organized action aimed at the annihilation" of the remnants of Polish Jewry.⁷ By September, foreign news services were reporting that an uncontrollable "pogrom atmosphere" hung over Poland,⁸ and representatives of the new Polish regime, though publicly endeavoring to mitigate the force of the characterization, were acknowledging its accuracy, at least in private conversations.⁹ Little had changed in this regard on the eve of the Kielce bloodbath: a May 1946 report prepared by the intelligence service of the U.S. Department of State found that a seemingly endless succession of murderous incidents had placed the handful of Holocaust survivors in the country in immediate fear of their lives.¹⁰

Prezydium Polskiego Komitetu Narodowego Wyzwolenia [sic], 1 September 1944, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw (AAN), PKWN. XI/6, poz. 2. This passage was omitted from the published version of the report; cf. Michał Szulkin, "Sprawozdania z działalności referatu dla spraw pomocy ludności żydowskiej przy prezydium Polskiego Komitetu Wyzwolenia Narodowego," *Bulletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 79 (1971), p. 77.

⁶ "The Condition of the Jews in Liberated Poland," (Hebrew), March 23, 1945, Archives of the Diaspora Research Institute (DRI), A.4/7. The report was originally composed in Lublin in Yiddish in January 1945 and transmitted to the office of Jewish Agency for Palestine in Jerusalem. The date on the report indicates the date on which the Hebrew translation was prepared.

⁷ Draft letter signed by E. Sommerstein and P. Zelicki in the name of the Central Committee of Polish Jews, n.d. [handwritten annotation: "18/V.45"], DRI-INV.153/24.

⁸ See, for example, *JTA Daily News Bulletin*, September 20, 1945 ("Anti-Jewish Terror in Poland Continues: Jews Organize Groups to Fight Assailants"). Cf. Leon Leneman to Adolf Berman, September 19, 1945, DRI-INV.153/39.

⁹ See the transcriptions of the talks held by Ignacy Schwarzbart of the World Jewish Congress in London with Jan Stanczyk, the Polish minister of social welfare, August 16, 1945, Henryk Strassburger, Polish ambassador to the United Kingdom, September 7, 1945, and unidentified informants, September 18 and October 9, 1945, Yad Vashem Archives, Jerusalem, M2/279; also K. Stein, "Report on the Conference with Polish Foreign Minister W. Rzymowski and the Head of the English-American Department in the Polish Foreign Ministry, Mr. Olszewski," October 23, 1945, *ibid.*

¹⁰ Department of State Intelligence Report OCL2312: "The Jews in Poland Since the Liberation," May 15, 1946, Wiener Library, Tel Aviv, WMF 007/9, Doc. 13.

Contemporary observers of this violence tended to explain it as the result of a combination of factors: the persistence of a long-standing tradition of animosity toward Jews that was not overcome during the Nazi years, but actually exacerbated; a similar continuation of the pre-war tendency of certain right-wing Polish political parties to portray Jews as Poland's enemies; the prominence of Jews in the highly unpopular new regime; and the dashed hopes of those Poles who had taken possession of abandoned Jewish property during the war when they discovered that the Nazi occupiers had not rid their country of Jews altogether. In fact, most analyses of the problem represented all of these factors as complementary, each adding to the situation's volatility.¹¹

In contrast, latter-day historians - to the extent that they have commented upon the full range of violence at all - appear more inclined, as in the specific case of Kielce, to separate the conceptual from the contextual factors and to assign prominence to one or the other set. Hence, for example, in a comprehensive treatment of the establishment of communist rule, a leading Polish scholar asserted quite confidently that "the fact that a victim [of an armed attack] was a Jew or was thought to be a Jew was one cause of aggression but usually not the only one" and that "postwar anti-Semitism was directed less against the Jews and more against the communists who were thought to be Jews."¹² Arguing against this tendency to subsume Jewish victims under the rubric of those who died because of their commitment to the communist regime, an Israeli historian has claimed that "it is possible to distinguish clearly between violent attacks upon the regime and its agencies on one hand and the persecution and murder of the Jews."¹³ Another student of the period has contended that "the situation of the Jews in Poland in the

¹¹ For examples of such analyses, see above, notes 9-10. An exception to this tendency is found in the consistent efforts of the Central Committee of Polish Jews to subsume anti-Jewish attacks under the broader rubric of armed opposition to the new communist-dominated administration. The reasons for advancing this explanation, however, were clearly tactical, and there are indications that the people who did so actually understood the events differently. For a fuller discussion of this issue, see David Engel, "Polen und Juden nach 1945: historisches Bewußtsein und politischer Kontext als Faktoren polnisch-jüdischer Beziehungen in der Nachkriegszeit," *Babylon: Beiträge zur jüdischen Gegenwart* 15 (1995), pp. 28-48.

¹² Krystyna Kersten, *Narodziny systemu władzy: Polska 1943-1948* (Poznań: Krytyka, 1984), pp. 192, 195 (Kersten, *Narodziny systemu władzy*).

¹³ Gutman, *The Jews in Poland*, p. 28.

first years after the war was largely determined by deep-rooted historical, economic and psychological factors" and that the argument "that too many Jews held important posts in the government, the Communist party and the security forces..., though widely used, did not determine...[the tenor of] Polish-Jewish relations after the liberation."¹⁴

The controversy ought to be more easily susceptible of resolution when the full range of violence and not merely the Kielce pogrom is analyzed. Considering a large number of cases in which Jews lost their lives as the result of armed assault permits the discernment of certain characteristic patterns with respect to the chronological and geographical distribution of the attacks, their specific circumstances and motives, the means of murder, and the age, sex, occupation, and place of residence of the victims. Such patterns can serve as a sort of historical fingerprint of the perpetrators and their motives. Moreover, the same information can also be compiled for the many known cases of political killings of non-Jewish government supporters and a similar fingerprint abstracted. Thus, two sets of fingerprints can be compared in order to determine the degree of identity between them. A high degree of correspondence would tend to reinforce the view that attacks upon Jews should be considered primarily as a reflection of the broader political tensions in the country. Alternately, a high degree of variance might well suggest that the murder of the two categories of victims stemmed from different sets of factors and that the causes of anti-Jewish violence in postwar Poland ought to be sought somewhere other than in the overall political context.

Anti-Jewish Violence: The Data

The success of such a strategy depends in the first instance, of course, upon the availability of reliable data from which an accurate profile can be inferred. With regard to anti-Jewish violence in postwar Poland, do such data exist?

The historian Lucjan Dobroszycki announced in 1973 that he had "analyzed records, reports, cables, protocols and press-cuttings of the period

¹⁴ Lucjan Dobroszycki, "Restoring Jewish Life in Post-War Poland," *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 3 (1973), pp. 68-70 (Dobroszycki, "Restoring Jewish Life"). See also Yosef Litwak, *Polish-Jewish Refugees in the USSR 1939-1946*, (Hebrew), (Tel-Aviv, Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Institute of Contemporary Jewry Ghetto Fighters' House HaKibbutz HaMeuchad, Publishing House Ltd., 1988), p. 348.

pertaining to anti-Jewish assaults and murders in 115 localities" in which approximately 300 Jews had been killed.¹⁵ Unfortunately, he did not report the results of that analysis except in the most general terms, nor did he indicate the specific sources from which he had compiled his list of cases. Nevertheless, a separate, systematic examination of the relevant files in the archive of the Polish Ministry of Public Administration, supplemented by reports prepared by the United States embassy in Warsaw and by Jewish sources in Poland, as well as by bulletins published by the Central Committee of Polish Jews and the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, has lent credibility to Dobroszycki's claim: it has turned up more or less detailed descriptions of 130 incidents in 102 locations between September 1944 and September 1946, in which 327 Jews lost their lives.¹⁶ The majority of these descriptions contain rudimentary information, usually based on eyewitness testimony or reconstructions by police investigators, concerning the circumstances of the murders, the identity of the victims, and, in some instances, the identity of the killers. A compendium of statistics culled from these records, showing the chronological and geographical distribution of the Jewish deaths, is presented in Table 1.

¹⁵ Dobroszycki, "Restoring Jewish Life," p. 66.

¹⁶ The Polish files are located at AAN-MAP 786-90. For specific references to the other sources, see below.

Table 1. Jewish Deaths by Violence for which specific record is extant, by month and province.

	Bial	Kielce	Krakow	Lublin	Lodz	Rzeszow	Warsaw	Other	Total
Sept 1944							1		1
Oct				6					6
Nov									0
Dec									0
Jan 1945									0
Feb									0
Mar				7					7
Apr	15		3				3	2	23
May	1	1	2	8			3		15
Jun	17		15	3	4		6	7	52
Jul	3			5					8
Aug	8	1	3	1	19		11	4	47
Sept	3								3
Oct									0
Nov									0
Dec			3						3
Jan 1946								1	1
Feb	2	4	7	5			5		22
Mar			12	4					16
Apr	3	2	20		2		5		32
May		2	11				2		15
Jun		9	5	1			3		18
Jul		51					3		54
Aug									0
Sept			3					1	4
Total	3	104	46	66	28	23	27	30	327

It is clear, however, that this compilation of cases is not exhaustive. There is, to begin with, little overlap among the various sources; only about 10 percent of the incidents could be traced in more than one repository. Such inconsistency suggests that instances of anti-Jewish violence were reported and recorded on a selective basis only; no centralized, systematic effort appears to have been made at the time of the events to preserve information about them. Indeed, documents from the period contain numerous incidental references to fatal attacks upon Jews that were not noted in any official or unofficial registers and about which no detailed information has survived.¹⁷ Other such attacks were mentioned years after the fact in survivors' testimonies, but their memories have not been corroborated by contemporary sources.¹⁸ Periodic numerical estimates of the extent of the violence offered in Polish and Jewish statements from 1945-46 sometimes refer to many more casualties than can be identified from the extant descriptions.¹⁹ Finally, at least two studies of anti-Jewish violence were conducted during the period in question - one by the Ministry of Public Administration, the other by an

¹⁷ For example, speaking at a session of Poland's de facto parliament (KRN) on July 21, 1945, Emil Sommerstein, chairman of the Central Committee of Polish Jews, noted that since the previous May an unspecified number of Jews had been killed "in Przedborz, Suchedniow, Zeran, Wierzbniak, Zabludow, Suchowola, Tarnogrod, and in other locations." Killings in Przedborz (May 27, eight victims), Wierzbniak (June 15, two victims; June 17, one victim), and Tarnogrod (May 15, one victim), can be confirmed in detailed reports, but no trace has been found of attacks in any of the other locations mentioned during the interval in question. For the full text of Sommerstein's speech, see *Dos Naje Lebn*, July 31, 1945 (pp. 2-3: "8-te Sesie fun L.N.R.: Rede fun Dep. Dr. Sommerstein").

¹⁸ Examples are the testimonies quoted in Hillel, *Massacre*, pp. 131-32, concerning the murder of five Jews in Nowy Targ in April 1946; also pp. 195-96, concerning events in Katowice on June 3, 1946. The book also quotes testimonies that have been corroborated: see, for example, the accounts of attacks in Krosienko, Zareta, and the outskirts of Nowy Targ in the spring of 1946, pp. 135-137 (although the report of the date of the Krosienko attack, in which eleven Jews were killed, is inaccurate).

¹⁹ For example, the Central Committee of Polish Jews reported in April 1945 that 150 Jews had been killed by Polish armed action during the first quarter of the year. Kersten, *Narodziny systemu wladzy*, p. 192; cf. Raphael Mahler, "Eastern Europe," *American Jewish Year Book* 47 (1945-46), p. 405. In contrast, only seven killings can be accounted for in detailed descriptions. Similarly, a report issued by the Political Department of the Polish Ministry of Public Administration noted thirty-eight Jews killed during the final quarter of 1945, as opposed to only three for whom detailed descriptions exist. "Sprawozdanie za okres od dnia 1.X.45 r. do 1.I.46 r.," AAN-MAP 786. In contrast, a report printed in the United States in 1947 claimed that "according to reliable data, between January 1 and May 4, 1946, 55 Jews were killed by Polish bandits," whereas detailed descriptions exist of incidents in which eighty Jews were killed during that interval. Leon Shapiro, "Poland," *American Jewish Year Book* 49 (1947-48), p. 383.

unidentified person or agency. The reports of these studies point to a significantly higher number of Jews killed than do the specific records. The first reported 189 Jewish deaths between March and August 1945, with 108 occurring in the month of March alone.²⁰ The second noted 351 deaths between November 1944 and December 1945, with March and August 1945 singled out as the periods with the greatest mortality.²¹ The information from these two contemporary studies is summarized in Tables 2-3.

Table 2: Summary of Jewish Deaths by Violence, March-August 1945, according to Ministry of Public Administration, September 29, 1945

	Bial	Kielce	Krakow	Lublin	Lodz	Rzeszow	Warsaw	Other	Total
Mar 1945*	21	5		33		23	35		108*
Apr		18	2	8			4		32
May				2	8				10
Jun		13		5	1	2	4	1	26
Jul									0
Aug		1		3		3	6		13
Total	21	37	2	51	9	28	49	1	189

* March figures do not distinguish killed from wounded except in overall total (108 killed, 9 wounded)

Table 3: Summary of Jewish deaths by violence, November 1944 – December 1945, according to unidentified report, February 1946

²⁰ F. Stolinski, Political Department, Ministry of Public Administration, to Ministry of Public Security, September 29, 1945 (Nr. II P. 625/2078/45: "Wystepki przeciwko ludnosci zydowskiej..."), AAN-MAP. 786, poz. 17-18. The reporter claimed to have compiled his figures from records held by his ministry, but records matching the numbers presented have not been found.

²¹ "Objawy antysemityzmu w Polsce i walka z nimi," n.d. [handwritten annotation: "February 1946"], DRI-P.21/7.8. The figures presented in the breakdown by province on the first page of this document add up to 346 deaths, although the total is given as 351. The difference of five is most likely the result of a typographical error in the figure of sixty-four deaths given for the Lublin province: later in the document reference was made to "the overall total of sixty-nine deaths in the Lublin province" (section IIc). If the latter figure is used, the total of 351 deaths throughout Poland is accurate.

	Bial	Kielce	Krakow	Lublin	Lodz	Rzeszow	Warsaw	Other	Total
Total	38	79	15	69*	51	34	57	8	351

* Figure corrected according to report section IIc

A comparison of the figures derived from the various available sources reveals several obvious weaknesses in the compendium of detailed descriptions in Table 1. Clearly, the detailed records of violence in the Bialystok province are deficient: although no descriptions of specific cases in that region have turned up, both extant contemporary studies logged nearly 11 percent of Jewish deaths there. The fact that the Bialystok province was indeed a significant locus of attacks upon Jews, especially in late 1944 and early 1945, appears certain from numerous memoirs and testimonies. Jonas Turkow, who served as a member of the Central Committee of Polish Jews until he left the country in October 1945, recalled in 1958, for example, that, during the time in which the committee was based in Lublin (November 1944-January 1945), the majority of reports it received about killings concerned episodes in that region. He also mentioned six incidents that occurred in March 1945, of which three took place in the Bialystok province.²² Other Jews recalled having been warned not to attempt to return to their home towns in that area because of the special danger there.²³

Such statements point to the inadequacy of existing records of attacks that took place not only in the Bialystok region but throughout Poland in March 1945 and earlier - a lacuna also strongly suggested by the two contemporary statistical reports.²⁴ Regrettably, it appears that many accounts of violence during this early period either were not preserved in the Ministry of Public

²² Jonas Turkow, *Nokh der Bafrayung: Zikhroynes* (Buenos Aires: Union Central Israelita Polaca, 1958), pp. 83-84. He claimed that these occurrences represented "only a small portion of the official protocols that the Central Committee received from the provincial Jewish committees." Such protocols have not yet been located.

²³ See, for example, in *Testimonies of Survival; 96 Personal Interviews from Members of Kibbutz Lochamei Hageta'ot*, (Hebrew), Zvika Dror, ed. (Tel-Aviv: Bet Lohamei Hagetaot and HaKibbutz HaMeuchad Publi, 1984), the testimonies of Yehuda Bornstein (pp. 410-411), Meir Feivel Parpari (pp. 475-476), Aharon Feldenkrais (p. 562), and Moshe Noy (p. 942).

²⁴ For additional indications that March 1945 was a particularly devastating month for Polish Jews, see above, note 19.

Administration central files or were discarded some time after the events in question.

The difficulties presented by this lapse in preservation are compounded, moreover, by the fact that the range of sources that could be employed in constructing the compendium for the months following April 1945 is far more limited for the earlier period. Specifically, the ability to use press reports so as to compensate for the scarcity of official government records from March and before is severely circumscribed because the principal organ that reported on anti-Jewish violence during most of the postwar period - the newspaper of the Central Committee of Polish Jews, *Dos Naje Lebn* - began publication only the following April. The importance of press reports as supplements to official records becomes obvious when the Ministry of Public Administration's figures for April-August 1945 are compared to the compendium for the same interval: whereas combined government and press records exist for fifty-eight discreet incidents during this period, in which 145 Jews died, the ministry's report noted only thirty-one incidents and eighty-one deaths. How much more regrettable, therefore, is the absence of press reports from the period before March, from which almost no government records survive.²⁵

Such shortcomings notwithstanding, however, it does appear possible to derive from the available data a number of inferences - albeit highly tentative and approximate - concerning where and when Jews were at the greatest risk of losing their lives. A comparison of the percentage of Jewish deaths in the various Polish provinces, according to the three sources analyzed in the preceding charts, demonstrates that the compendium of detailed descriptions agrees with the two contemporary statistical reports in pointing to the Kielce, Lublin, and Warsaw provinces as the areas in which the greatest number of Jews was killed before December 1945. In fact, these sources are remarkably congruent with respect to the geographical distribution of anti-Jewish violence from the liberation to the end of 1945, with a statistically significant discrepancy only in the case of Bialystok.

²⁵ The unidentified report, too, appears deficient in noting violence in areas outside of the seven major provinces listed in the tables: whereas detailed records exist of killings in the regions of Gdansk, Pomorze, Upper Silesia, Lower Silesia, and Wloclawek, the report mentioned deaths in Pomorze and Upper Silesia only.

Because the incongruity of the figures for Bialystok appears to be mainly the result of shortcomings in reporting and preserving records for March 1945 and before, it seems appropriate to adjust the tallies in the compendium to compensate for this lack. The magnitude of the necessary adjustment is suggested by the fact that the two contemporary studies ascribe a virtually identical percentage of casualties to that region. In order for the compendium to reflect the same percentage for the interval March-August 1945, nineteen deaths in the Bialystok region must be posited, with the assumption of one more death (most likely before March) necessary to maintain the proportion for the interval November 1944-December 1945. Following such an adjustment, the compendium and the unidentified report point to virtually the same geographical spread.

Clearly, though, Bialystok was not the only region in which Jews were attacked in March 1945 and earlier; adjustments should in all likelihood be made to the compendium for those months as well. There appear to be two bases upon which such modifications can be made. The first proceeds from the observation that the posited number of nineteen deaths in the Bialystok province is almost identical to the figure presented in the Ministry of Public Administration report of twenty-one Jews killed or wounded in that province in March. It might well be assumed, then, that had detailed ministry records from March survived for all provinces, the compendium would have shown a figure approximately equal to the 108 deaths noted in the ministry report. An alternative approach notices that the unidentified report counted thirty-two Jews murdered in March in the Bialystok province and another twenty-eight in Lublin. According to the same report, those two provinces accounted for some 29 percent of Jewish deaths between November 1944 and December 1945. If the same percentage held for the month of March, the Jewish death toll for that month throughout Poland could be set at 207, or approximately 59 percent of the 351 deaths counted for the entire period with which the report dealt. The same percentage of the 178 deaths listed during the identical period in the compendium (including the Bialystok adjustment) would suggest that the corresponding figure for March would have stood at 105. Actually, the percentage of Jewish deaths in the Bialystok and Lublin

provinces was probably greater in March than in subsequent months, as throughout the winter and spring of 1945 Jews tended to migrate in large numbers from east to west, leaving fewer available targets in those areas.²⁶ Still, both approaches appear to suggest approximately the same conclusion: that the compendium ought to show upwards of 100 Jews killed in March 1945.

Such an adjustment permits a rough estimate of the chronological distribution of anti-Jewish violence in Poland between March and September 1945. The approximate percentage of deaths during this interval by month is shown in Table 4:

Table 4: Approximate Percentage of Jewish Deaths, 1944-45 by month (adjusted for March)

Mar	40
Apr	9
May	6
Jun	21
Jul	3
Aug	19
Sept	1

Unfortunately, there does not appear to be as sufficient a basis for adjusting compendium figures outside of this seven-month interval, although adjustments are undoubtedly needed, at least at some points. For example, the compendium shows no deaths between November 1944 and February 1945, although the January 1945 report from Lublin and Turkow's highly credible testimony both suggest considerable violence during this period.²⁷ Similarly, the lack of any specific record of deaths in October-November 1945 contradicts a statement by Marian Rubinstein, the Ministry of Public

²⁶ On this westward migration, see David Engel, *Between Liberation and Flight: Holocaust Survivors in Poland and the Struggle for Leadership* (Hebrew), (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1996), pp. 57-58 (Engel, *Between Liberation and Flight*).

²⁷ See above, notes 6, 22.

Administration's advisor on Jewish affairs, that thirty-eight Jews were killed during the final quarter of that year.²⁸ There is, however, no third source against which these discrepancies can be analyzed. Indeed, it might well be argued that absence of any reference to violence in press reports from the last three months of 1945 renders Rubinstein's figure suspiciously high. That suspicion is reinforced by comments from Jewish leaders in March 1946 pointing to a lull in armed anti-Jewish actions during the winter of 1945-46. However, those comments are not consistent with the relatively large number of twenty-two deaths noted in the compendium for February 1946.²⁹

Still, the compendium figures for March 1946 and beyond appear reasonably consistent with several references to anti-Jewish violence in contemporary discussions of the problems. For example, on March 13, 1946, Adolf Berman, vice-chairman of the Central Committee of Polish Jews and a member of Poland's de facto parliament, the National Council for the Homeland (Krajowa Rada Narodowa - KRN), submitted an interpellation to the Committee on Nationalities and Religious Affairs of the latter body regarding the "increasing murders of Jews"; he stated that "fascist criminals" had slain fourteen Jews during the previous ten days,³⁰ a number that is easily reconciled with the extant detailed records of deaths during that period. Similarly, at a meeting of the Central Committee of Polish Jews on May 9, 1946, committee member Salo Fiszgrund reported twenty-four recent deaths, all of which are substantiated by detailed descriptions in Ministry of Public Administration files.³¹ The period between March and May 1946 is also the interval of greatest overlap in the sources from which the compendium was compiled. It does not appear necessary, then, to stretch the imagination excessively to suppose that, for the spring and summer months of 1946, the

²⁸ "Sprawozdanie za okres od dnia 1.X.45 r. do 1.I.46 r." AAN-MAP 786.

²⁹ See, for example, *Dos Naje Lebn*, March 13, 1946 ("Di Banayte Teror-Aktsie"); also the remarks by Paweł Zelicki at the meeting of the presidium of the Central Committee of Polish Jews, "Protokol [sic] posiedzenia Prezydium CKZP," March 12, 1946, Information Center of the Interuniversity Project for the Study of Illegal Jewish Immigration to Palestine, Tel Aviv (IC), 35/12.

³⁰ *Dos Naje Lebn*, March 23, 1946 ("Arum di Letzte Mordn iber Yidn"). Cf. "Protokol [sic] posiedzenia Prezydium CKZP, March 12, 1946, IC-35/12. On the establishment of KRN, see Polonsky and Drukier, *Beginnings of Communist Rule*, pp. 10-21; on its parliamentary function, see Kersten, *Narodziny systemu władzy*, p. 77.

³¹ "Protokol [sic]: Dalszy ciąg posiedzenia Prezydium Centralnego Komitetu Żydów Polskich z dnia 8-maja 1946-r.," May 9, 1946, IC-35/12.

compendium might well be taken as a fairly reliable indicator of the extent and distribution of attacks upon Jews, even without adjustment. Nonetheless, the absence of any studies from this period comparable to the two undertaken in 1945 underscores the uncertainty that must accompany any such reading of the data.

However, it does seem reasonably certain that the small number of specific records of Jews killed after July 1946 accurately reflects the almost total disappearance of murderous anti-Jewish violence from that time on. Following its discussions of how to respond to the Kielce pogrom, the Central Committee of Polish Jews, which in periods of heavy violence until that time had steadfastly petitioned government authorities to enhance security arrangements for Jews, appears to have dropped the subject of Jewish security from its agenda altogether. The theme also disappeared from the Jewish press, to the point where by mid-November *Dos Naje Lebn* proclaimed in a headline that, "anti-Semitism in Poland is becoming weaker."³² To be sure, indications of hostility by Poles toward Jews were still in evidence, but that hostility was evidently far less deadly than it had been in the past.³³

In any case, the available data, though far from complete, can for the most part, it seems, be taken as reasonably indicative of the broad patterns of attacks upon Jews in postwar Poland. Based on these data, it appears valid to conclude, for example, that Polish Jews were most vulnerable to assault between March and August 1945 (although the level of exposure fluctuated, with March, June, and August the most dangerous months) and again between February and July 1946. In contrast, they were evidently only moderately vulnerable around the end of 1945 and the beginning of 1946, and minimally vulnerable from August 1946 on. Similarly, it seems permissible to infer that Jews in the Kielce and Lublin provinces were generally in greater danger than Jews living elsewhere throughout the period in question. Jews in the Rzeszow and Warsaw provinces, on the other hand, were far more threatened in 1945 than in 1946, while the situation for Jews in the Krakow

³² *Dos naje Lebn*, November 16, 1946 ("Antisemitizm in Poyln vert shvakher").

³³ See, for example, the statement by Maurycy Zielonka of Plock concerning the circulation of a blood libel in the area of Kutno and Leczyca (Lodz province), September 30, 1946, and the attendant correspondence by government officials, AAN-MAP 787, poz. 148-151; also *Dos Naje Lebn*, October 18, 1946 ("Demaskirt di farbrekherishe plener fun Gen. Anders").

region seems to have been more perilous in 1946 than in 1945. Beyond such general statements about the chronological and geographical distribution of aggressive acts against Jews, however, it appears difficult to derive any firm deductions from them; in particular, it does not seem possible to determine with any reasonable degree of certainty the total number of Jews killed by Poles in the years following the liberation.³⁴ Nevertheless, it turns out that even such general observations are sufficient to permit the sort of comparisons with killings of Polish government supporters that might throw light on the relative importance of contextual and conceptual factors in the anti-Jewish violence.

Murders of Poles

Data concerning political killings of Poles by other Poles were compiled in 1970 by the Institute for Party History of the Polish United Workers (Communist) Party, on the basis of several sets of contemporary records.³⁵ Despite the suspicion that necessarily attaches to any study conducted under such auspices, these data appear to be reliable, especially because they were published together with a complete listing of the names, ages, professions, political affiliations, and date and place of death of each victim included in the statistical compilation. Indeed, the published volume represented its primary purpose as memorial, and there does not seem to be any compelling reason to doubt this assertion.³⁶

The study was limited to government officials and to those defined as government supporters "whose deaths at the hands of illegal organizations could be confirmed."³⁷ The term "illegal organizations" referred to partisan

³⁴ Dobroszycki, "Restoring Jewish Life," p. 66, stated that "according to general estimates 1,500 Jews lost their lives in Poland from liberation until the summer of 1947." He offered no reference for such "general estimates," however, and they have not been confirmed by any other investigator. Gutman, *Jews in Poland*, p. 33, placed the number during the same interval at 1,000; he, too, adduced no proof-text for this figure. Both estimates seem high.

³⁵ Zaklad Historii Partii przy KC PZPR, *Polegli w walce o władzę ludową*, Warsaw 1970 (PWYL). The sources of the compilation are detailed on pp. 17-22.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 26.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 22. The statistical compilations did not include Poles killed in encounters with Ukrainian nationalists, among others. As a result, the numbers reported are considerably less than those put forth in contemporary estimates, which evidently included such encounters. See Kersten, *Narodziny systemu władzy*, pp. 197-198.

groups, formerly affiliated with the armed underground loyal to the Polish government-in-exile in London, who had defied periodic government instructions not to engage in military action against procommunist forces and continued an armed struggle against the new regime long after it had become the de facto authority in liberated Poland. In November 1943, the underground Polish Home Army (Armia Krajowa - AK) - the military arm of the government-in-exile - adopted a policy of revealing the existence of most of its units to Soviet troops advancing against the German occupiers while keeping "the nucleus of a skeletal command network (*zawiazkowa siec szkieletowa dowodcza*)" concealed. This structure was kept separate from the AK, in order to permit the Polish population to carry out "acts of self-defense...against Russians invading our territory," should these prove necessary.³⁸ This new organization, called Independence (Niepodleglosc) or simply No (Nie), did indeed remain underground, in various mutations (including the so-called Armed Forces Delegation [Delegatura Sil Zbrojnych] from April to August 1945, and Freedom and Independence [Wolnosc i Niezwislosc - WiN] thereafter), for at least the next three years. They joined a number of other right-wing nationalist groups that dissented from AK strategy - most notably the organization calling itself the National Armed Forces (Narodowe Sily Zbrojne - NSZ).³⁹ After February 1945, their activities were conducted entirely without the formal blessing of the government-in-exile, which, on February 8, had ordered the cessation of all armed activity on its behalf.⁴⁰

The regime worked assiduously to suppress what it called the "reactionary bands" through a succession of changing tactics. From October 1944 to May 1945, the basic tendency was toward active repression of all pro-London elements by force of (largely Soviet) arms. Forays against underground units resulted in mass arrests, as well as in the killing of some 300 anticommunist

³⁸ "Dowodca Armii Krajowej o zalozeniach, celach i zadaniach wzmozonej akcji dywersyjnej kryptonim 'Burza,'" November 20, 1943, in Eugeniusz Duraczynski, *Miedzy Londynem i Warszawa, lipiec 1943-lipiec 1944* (Warsaw: Panstwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1986), p. 266; see also J. M. Ciechanowski, *Powstanie warszawskie: Zarys podloza politycznego i dyplomatycznego*, (Warsaw: Panstwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1984), pp. 261-268.

³⁹ On the formation and operation of these groups, see Stanislaw Piechowicz, "Podziemie poakowskie," in 1944-1947: *W walce o utrwalenie wladzy ludowej w Polsce*, Jan Czapla et al., eds. (Warsaw: Ksiazka i Wiedza, 1967), pp. 49-77.

⁴⁰ John Coutouvidis and Jaime Reynolds, *Poland 1939-1947* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1986), p. 173 (Coutouvidis and Reynolds, Poland).

fighters between January and April 1945.⁴¹ In addition, an attempt by sixteen pro-London leaders, in March 1945, to negotiate a settlement between the warring sides resulted in their forced removal to Moscow, where, for almost three months, they were held incommunicado. They were eventually made to stand trial for collaborating with the Germans and endangering state security.⁴² By the time of the trial, however, the heads of the regime in Poland had decided to alter their course: in an apparent attempt to divide the underground ranks, the government proclaimed partial amnesties on May 30 and August 21, admitting that many "honest" (as opposed to "reactionary") fighters had been arrested unjustly.⁴³ This new direction coincided with an endeavor by regime leaders to co-opt members of noncommunist parties formerly associated with the exile government into a broad national front. Indeed, on June 28, the former prime minister of the government-in-exile, Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, and five other members of the Polish Peasant Party and Polish Socialist Party joined sixteen communists in a so-called provisional government of national unity. However, efforts to entice Mikolajczyk's Peasant Party into a common list for the anticipated election of a permanent government foundered the following February,⁴⁴ and the communist-controlled security apparatus, fearing Mikolajczyk's rising popularity, inaugurated a new round of armed repression against Peasant Party activists. Between February and April 1946, some twenty-one Peasant Party members were killed by members of the Polish security services; in May, twenty-five more were murdered.⁴⁵ The Peasant Party responded to this situation in part by seeking to utilize a referendum set for June 30, 1946, on three fundamental political issues as a vehicle for demonstrating its strength among the Polish populace;

⁴¹ Coutouvidis and Reynolds, *Poland*, p. 172.

⁴² On the arrest and trial of the sixteen, see, *inter alia*, Kersten, *Narodziny systemu władzy*, p. 121.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 199-200; Coutouvidis and Reynolds, *Poland*, pp. 188-189.

⁴⁴ The Yalta agreements, adopted by the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union in February 1945, had stipulated that the "Polish Provisional Government of National Unity shall be pledged to the holding of free and unfettered elections as soon as possible on the basis of universal suffrage and secret ballot." "Communiqué issued at the end of the Yalta Conference," February 11, 1945, in *Foreign Relations of the United States 1945* (Washington: Government Press Office, 1958), 5:974.

⁴⁵ Coutouvidis and Reynolds, *Poland*, p. 235.

indeed, it appears that the communists had to stuff many ballot boxes in order to ensure that the vote turned out in their favor.⁴⁶

In retaliation for what he regarded as a blatant attempt to subvert the fundamental structure of the new regime, communist leader Wladyslaw Gomulka called, on July 6, for a "mighty lightning offensive...against reaction, against the Polish fascists, against the bandits and diversionaries." These expressions were explicit code words for Mikolajczyk and the Peasant Party.⁴⁷ A desperate attempt by the socialists to forestall such an offensive by mediating between the peasants and the communists collapsed at the end of August; in September, renewed mass arrests of Peasant Party activists were instituted.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ On the referendum and the apparent falsification of the results, see, *inter alia, ibid.*, pp. 253-254; Kersten, *Narodziny systemu wladzy*, pp. 248-249.

⁴⁷ Quoted in Antony Polonsky, "Stalin and the Poles 1941-7," *European History Quarterly* 17 (1987), p. 480.

⁴⁸ Coutouvidis and Reynolds, *Poland*, pp. 275-276

Table 5: Approximate numbers (to nearest 5) and percentage distribution of Polish Government officials and supporters killed, September 1944 – December 1946

	Killed	PCTG
Sept 1944	55	0.9
Oct	65	1.0
Nov	65	1.0
Dec	75	1.2
Jan 1945	110	1.7
Feb	190	2.9
Mar	280	4.3
Apr	340	5.2
May	565	8.7
Jun	535	8.3
Jul	195	3.0
Aug	155	2.4
Sept	195	3.0
Oct	185	2.9
Nov	190	2.9
Dec	165	2.6
Jan 1946	195	3.0
Feb	235	3.6
Mar	240	3.7
Apr	285	4.4
May	305	4.7
Jun	295	4.6
Jul	270	4.2
Aug	240	3.7
Sept	370	5.7
Oct	360	5.6
Nov	170	2.6
Dec	145	2.2

As is apparent from the figures in Table 5, which shows the approximate number of government officials and supporters killed by illegal organizations each month between September 1944 and December 1946 and the relative monthly distribution of deaths over that interval,⁴⁹ the most notable swings in the level of antigovernment violence can be easily correlated with changes in the regime's approach to dealing with the underground and legal anticommunist opposition. There can be little doubt, for example, that the increase in killings evident between February and May 1945 was closely related to the mass arrests of opposition partisans carried out by pro-government forces during the same period (as well as to the fact that, following the expulsion of the Germans from the territories west of the Vistula in mid-January, those forces were spread more thinly over a much larger territory). Likewise, the extremely high peak reached in May-June 1945 was undoubtedly influenced by the disappearance and trial of the sixteen underground leaders, while the sharp drop-off in subsequent months reflected the conciliatory policies that the regime had begun to implement at the end of May. The steady rise in deaths between February and May 1946 were surely indicative of mounting retribution for the offensive against the Peasant Party during that same period; the relative high in September-October 1946 can, it seems, also be explained in the same fashion.

In contrast, the power of the changing political context in order to explain the chronological fluctuations in the level of anti-Jewish violence appears limited. To begin with, while political killings of Poles by Poles were unusually frequent in September-October 1946, shortly after the Kielce pogrom, killings of Jews had virtually ceased by that time. To be sure, the high point of Polish-Polish violence, in the spring of 1945, coincided roughly with the period of greatest Jewish exposure, and the moderate swell in deaths of government

⁴⁹ The numbers are approximate because they have been derived from the graphic representation of the data in *PWWL*, presented in *ibid.*, p. 216.

supporters during the spring of 1946 was matched to some extent by a similar rise in the number of Jewish casualties. However, whereas the chronological distribution curve of government supporters' deaths shows fairly steady trends of increase, decrease, and stability extending over many months, the distribution of Jewish deaths over time is marked by sharply alternating peaks and valleys. This incongruity is most obvious when distributions are compared for the time when both groups were most vulnerable, as shown in Table 6:

Table 6: Comparison of percentage distribution of Jewish and Polish Deaths, March-September 1945

	Jews	Poles
Mar 1945	40	12
Apr	9	15
May	6	25
Jun	21	23
Jul	3	9
Aug	19	7
Sept	1	9

Of the three months of greatest relative vulnerability for each group during this interval, only June 1945 was common to both. In contrast, March 1945, an especially bloody time for Jews, was only moderately so for government supporters; and whereas killings of Jews dropped sharply over the next two months, for government supporters they rose to an all-time high. Similarly, the month during which Poles were at the least risk during this span - August 1945 - was relatively perilous for Jews. As by August the regime's tactic of exercising a light hand against the opposition was already firmly in place and had been reflected in a seven-month low in deaths of government supporters, it appears highly unlikely that the relative peak in Jewish deaths noted in this month can be taken as reflecting simply a knee-jerk association of Jews with communists.

A similar disparity can be noted in comparing the geographical distribution of violence against the two groups. Between September 1944 and December 1946, some 30 percent of Jewish deaths were recorded in the Kielce province; in fact, even when the one-time mass slaying of forty-two Jews in the pogrom of July 4, 1946, is removed from consideration, that province still accounted, according to the compendium, for approximately 20 percent of Jewish losses.⁵⁰ In contrast, less than 6 percent of government supporters were killed in that region, making Kielce a province with one of the lowest incidences of Polish-Polish carnage.⁵¹

The Krakow region, too, appears to have been almost twice as safe for Poles as it was for Jews over the entire interval: as a result of especially heavy anti-Jewish violence in the region during the spring of 1946, Jewish casualties there accounted for around 14 percent of the total (over 16 percent if the Kielce pogrom is not taken into account), whereas fewer than 8 percent of government-supporter killings were recorded in the area. Even the Lodz province, where Jews were relatively safer than in the Kielce, Krakow, or Lublin regions, showed almost twice the incidence of Jewish to Polish deaths - a bit over 8 percent for Jews, slightly over 4 percent for government supporters. On the other hand, government supporters appear, on the surface at least, to have been far more in danger than Jews in the Bialystok and Warsaw provinces, even despite what appears to have been the relatively high rate of anti-Jewish violence in those regions during the spring of 1945. The Bialystok province was the location of over 17 percent of government-supporter deaths, as opposed to what was, in all likelihood, around 7 percent of Jewish deaths by the end of 1946;⁵² corresponding figures for Warsaw were over 15 percent for government supporters to some 8 percent for Jews.

To be sure, these comparisons might be somewhat misleading, for they do not take into account differing Polish and Jewish settlement patterns.

⁵⁰ This relative proportion is attested also in the two reports on anti-Jewish violence in 1945.

⁵¹ *PWWL*, p. 30, notes 465 deaths of government supporters in the Kielce province between July 1944 and December 1949, out of a total of 7,963 killings during that interval. Even if all of those deaths occurred between September 1944 and December 1946, they would have accounted for only slightly more than 7 percent of the approximately 6,500 killings that took place in those months. Unfortunately, the geographical distribution of deaths was not tabulated on a month-by-month or even a year-by-year basis.

⁵² The figure for Jews is based upon the adjusted estimate for Bialystok. See above.

Nevertheless, even when these differences are worked into the equation, there are still significant discrepancies in the spatial arrangement of violence against the two groups.⁵³ When the ratios of the percentage distribution of Jewish and Polish deaths to the percentage distribution of the general Jewish and Polish populations are compared, the risk to Jews and government supporters in the Lodz province seems to have been approximately equal (and relatively small), but the greater risk faced by Jews in the Kielce and Rzeszow provinces is magnified significantly. In the Bialystok and Lublin provinces, Jews appear to have been in relatively greater danger than government supporters, instead of in less danger, as suggested by comparing the percentage distribution of deaths alone.

Of course, this adjusted calculation also carries with it a high degree of uncertainty. The reason is not only the indefinite figures for Jewish casualties but also that throughout the period in question successive waves of immigration and emigration joined with steady internal migration to keep the Jewish population of Poland and its geographical distribution constantly in flux.⁵⁴ In addition, the Polish population grew steadily during this interval, mainly as a result of repatriation from Germany and the Soviet Union. The fluid character of both the Jewish and Polish populations, then, together with the changes in the level of violence in the country over time, make it virtually impossible to determine the respective degrees of risk to Jews and government supporters in a particular province at any given moment. Still, it seems fairly certain that, for the most part, the geographical patterns of anti-Jewish and antigovernment violence in postwar Poland are every bit as incongruous as their chronological patterns.

⁵³ Jewish population figures have been calculated from data collected by the Central Committee of Polish Jews in June 1946. The data have been published in Lucjan Dobroszycki, *Survivors of the Holocaust in Poland: A Portrait Based on Jewish Community Records 1944-1947* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1994), p. 85 (Dobroszycki, *Survivors of the Holocaust*). Polish population figures have been calculated on the basis of statistics from the national census of 1950, published in Glowny Urzad Statystyczny PRL, *Rocznik Statystyczny 1955*, Warsaw, 1956, p. 24.

⁵⁴ For example, whereas in June 1946 the Bialystok province accounted for less than 1 percent of the total Jewish population of Poland, in May 1945 almost 3 percent of Polish Jews lived there. More strikingly, the Kielce province accounted for 11 percent of the Jewish population in May 1945, as opposed to only 1 percent in June 1946. See Dobroszycki, *Survivors of the Holocaust*, p. 67. For more on the processes of immigration, emigration, and internal migration, see Engel, *Between Liberation and Flight*, chapters 1, 4. For additional observations on population change as it affected the level of anti-Jewish violence, see below.

Yet another incongruity can be observed in the sex and age distributions of Jewish and non-Jewish victims. Among the cases of anti-Jewish violence for which specific records have been preserved, it is possible to identify fifty-four women killed, or approximately 17 percent of the total identified number of 327 casualties. However, the records failed to identify at least fifty-one victims in a manner that would permit their sex to be determined; hence the percentage of women among identified victims is close to 20 percent. This figure tallies almost precisely with those presented in the unidentified report on anti-Jewish violence between November 1944 and December 1945: of 351 fatalities mentioned in this document, sixty-nine (slightly under 20 percent) were women. In contrast, women constituted only some 7 percent of Polish government supporters killed between 1944 and 1949, although from July 1944 to December 1945 their proportion was a bit larger - 9 percent.⁵⁵ Similarly, the proportion of children under age seventeen among the Jewish victims was almost twice as great as among the Polish victims - 4.3 percent as opposed to 2.5 percent.⁵⁶

Comparing the most easily identifiable and quantifiable features of attacks upon Jews and upon Polish government supporters appears to suggest, then, that each set of aggressive acts displayed its own characteristic fingerprint, as it were, and that the two fingerprints deviated from one another far more than they coincided. Jews were more at risk of being killed at different times and in different places than were government supporters, and Jewish women and children were in considerably greater danger than were Poles of the same sex and age.

Motives for Murder

But what of less readily quantifiable attributes, of the sort that can be identified only through investigation of individual cases?

Consider the following episode, as described in a March 1946 memorandum from the provincial Jewish Committee in Lublin to the governor of Lublin province:

⁵⁵ PWWL, p. 28.

⁵⁶ For the Polish figure, see *ibid*. The Jewish figure is based on the total number of victims specifically identified.

"On February 5 of this year [1946] the country town of Parczew was surrounded by a uniformed band of marauders, 100-120 strong, equipped with firearms. For five hours the band ran amok with impunity through the town. [Three] unarmed Polish citizens of Jewish nationality - Mendel Turbiner (age 31), Abram Zysman (age 43), and David Tempy (age 42) - fell at the hands of the assailants; Lejb Frajberger was wounded. Almost all Jewish homes were ransacked. Goods were placed in wagons and carried off; in a number of cases where Jewish property was not of interest to the attackers, [the property] was destroyed and rendered unusable."⁵⁷

This incident reveals several features that might well lead to its characterization as primarily a political attack. It took place in one of the heaviest areas of antigovernment violence. The perpetrators wore uniforms, and they were organized in an armed formation of a size not uncharacteristic of underground units in the region.⁵⁸ They had prepared wagons in advance for hauling off useful items they expected to confiscate, after the fashion of guerrilla bands forced to support themselves through plunder, as was becoming increasingly the case among the antigovernment forces.⁵⁹ And although they sought such plunder in "almost all Jewish homes," they physically harmed only four Jewish men out of the 155 Jews counted in the town close to the time of the occurrence.⁶⁰

The relatively small number of Jews killed or wounded in this incident raises the question of whether the victims had been singled out from among other Jews for reasons having to do with specific behavior, not necessarily related to their ethnic identity, and whether the attackers had been searching for them in particular. Indeed, a parallel account of the events in Parczew noted that eyewitnesses "observed how the assailants detained, demanded

⁵⁷ "Memorial w sprawie bezpieczeństwa życia i mienia zydostwa lubelskiego," March 25, 1946, AAN-MAP 787, poz. 116.

⁵⁸ A report from April 1945 indicated two guerrilla bands operating in the Parczew area, one numbering 100 fighters, the other 150. "Meldunek," April 5, 1945, IC-35/12.

⁵⁹ On the dependence of the antigovernment underground upon forceful expropriations from the local population, see Kersten, *Narodziny systemu władzy*, p. 198.

⁶⁰ For the population estimate, see Dobroszycki, *Survivors of the Holocaust*, p. 79.

that they show identification and shouted at them to raise their hands," suggesting that they were looking for certain individuals only.⁶¹

This motif of selection has been employed in support of the view that not only the Parczew incident but anti-Jewish violence in postwar Poland in general was essentially political in character. Referring to a different episode, the killing of eight Jews in Przedborz (a town of some 3,500 residents, located on the Pilica River 85 km. from Lodz in the direction of Kielce), on May 27, 1945, Wladyslaw Kolacinski, the commander of an underground unit that actually claimed responsibility for the attack, argued that he had carefully designated his targets from among 300 local Jewish residents, shooting only "paid agents of Moscow." "If this had been intended as a pogrom," he later wrote, "the procedure would have been entirely different."⁶²

Unfortunately, in this particular case the facts do not appear to have been as Kolacinski alleged. The killings in Przedborz made a significant impression at the time: attention was even called to them at a session of KRN, the provisional Polish parliament, on July 21, 1945.⁶³ One reason for this notice may well have been the fact that the attack actually resulted in at least the temporary liquidation of the entire Jewish settlement in the town.⁶⁴ Unlike in the case of Parczew, and Kolacinski's assertion to the contrary, the killing in Przedborz appears to have been indiscriminate and wholesale, much more akin to a pogrom than to a surgical strike against specific known enemies.

In the event, attacks resulting in the death of significant proportion of the Jews living in a particular locality appear to have been relatively common, especially during the earliest period following liberation. Before August 15, 1945, some twenty-seven assaults (out of a total of fifty-seven) were recorded in small villages where no Jewish settlement was noted in the Jewish population survey released by the Central Committee of Polish Jews on that

⁶¹ "Protokol," February 14, 1946, AAN-MAP 786, poz. 41.

⁶² Quoted in Kersten, *Polacy, Zydzi, komunizm*, p. 116.

⁶³ See above, note 17.

⁶⁴ A list from August 15, 1945, shows six Jews living in the town; according to a similar list from the end of 1945, the number of Jewish residents had dropped to two. Dobroszycki, *Survivors of the Holocaust*, pp. 73, 79. At no time following the liberation does Przedborz appear to have a Jewish population of more than a dozen; see *Pinkas HaKehillot: Encyclopaedia of Jewish Communities Polin*, vol. 1: *The Communities of Lodz and its Region (Hebrew)* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1976), p. 208; also *Dos Naje Lebn*, July 11, 1945 (p. 9: "Vider Mordn iber Yidn"), which stated that "all nine Jewish residents were abducted."

day.⁶⁵ Seven Jews were killed in the town of Klimontow, Kielce province, on the night of April 17-18, 1945; only eighteen Jews were reported living in the town four months later.⁶⁶ On July 8, 1945, attackers said to belong to the underground NSZ killed three of eight Jews in Opoczno, Lodz province, including thirty-two-year-old David Mandelbaum, an Auschwitz survivor who had just returned to town.⁶⁷ The entire Jewish community of Lezajsk, near Rzeszow, appears to have been liquidated altogether on August 7, 1945, when, in what was evidently the deadliest single outbreak of anti-Jewish violence before the Kielce pogrom, sixteen Jews were blown up by a bomb planted under the house that they all shared.⁶⁸

Lack of discrimination in choosing Jewish victims was demonstrated in other ways as well. For example, an order from the NSZ central command to district commanders, dated March 25, 1945, recommended certain elements of the population for "swift execution: 1. German and Soviet spies (working for the NKVD); 2. the more capable among those working for the Polish Workers [Communist] Party and PKWN workers who have declared their [party] membership; 3. all Jews and Jewesses; 4. all those who hid Jews during the German occupation...."⁶⁹ In other words, where only those Poles who had committed certain clearly defined acts were to be attacked, all Jews were to be set upon, no matter what evidence they had given of communist sympathies.

Indeed, some targets could hardly have been considered dangerous to Poles or active fighters for a communist regime: a thirteen-year-old boy from the village of Ostrowice, Warsaw province, for example, found decapitated on September 15, 1944;⁷⁰ two women and two children who were the sole victims of a murder in Wierzbnik-Starochowice on June 8, 1945;⁷¹ or the invalid

⁶⁵ For the population survey, see Dobroszycki, *Survivors of the Holocaust*, pp. 69-75.

⁶⁶ "Opisy niektórych mordow i rabunkow dokonywanych na obywatelach polskich narodowosci zydowskiej," n.d. AAN - MAP 786, poz. 19.

⁶⁷ *Dos Naje Lebn*, July 11, 1945 (p. 9: "Vider Mordn iber Yidn").

⁶⁸ *Jewish Telegraphic Agency Daily News Bulletin*, August 8, 1945.

⁶⁹ Reproduced in above, note 21.

⁷⁰ Referat dla spraw pomocy ludnosci zydowskiej przy Prezydium PKWN, "Drugie sprawozdanie z dzialalnosci," September 17, 1944, AAN - PKWN, I/47, poz.29.

⁷¹ "Opisy niektórych mordow i rabunkow dokonywanych na obywatelach polskich narodowosci zydowskiej." n.d., AAN-MAP 786, poz. 20.

invalid woman whose two feet had been amputated, killed in Radzyn, Lublin province, in early March 1946.⁷² On the other hand, there were numerous instances in which assailants appear to have chosen their victims carefully, although the primary criterion for selection was simply the fact of being Jewish. Such instances often took place on trains or highways. On October 14, 1944, for example, one Jewish man and three Jewish women were pulled from two separate carts traveling on the road to Krasnik in Lublin province; in both cases the victims had been riding together with Christian passengers, who were unharmed.⁷³ In June-July 1946, eleven different incidents were recorded in which armed uniformed bands stopped trains in stations or on isolated tracks, selected Jews from among the passengers, dragged them off into the surrounding woods, and murdered them.⁷⁴

Nonetheless, there were not a few incidents, like the Parczew episode of February 1946, that differed from these patterns. In these cases the Jewish victims in all likelihood were indeed killed because of their association with elements favorable to the regime. On June 11, 1945, a NSZ unit in Zelechow, Lublin province, fell upon a group of "Polish democratic activists" that included several Jews.⁷⁵ On June 23, 1946, a NSZ band boarded a repatriant train, looking specifically for demobilized soldiers Chaim Galant and Chune Kosmajewicz; they carried them off "in an unknown direction" while leaving other Jewish passengers unharmed.⁷⁶ Such incidents appear, however, to have been less common than those in which no behavioral provocation can be discerned. In fact, in cases where evidence of motive is present in the extant descriptions, several reasons for attacking Jews turn up more

⁷² See above, note 55.

⁷³ Referat dla spraw pomocy ludnosci zydowskiej przy Prezydium PKWN, "Czwarte sprawozdanie z dzialalnosci," AAN-PKWN XI/6, poz. 24-25.

⁷⁴ See, for example, A. Grabowski, Ministry of Public Administration, to W. Wolski, Government Plenipotentiary for Repatriate Affairs, June 25, 1946, AAN-MAP 786, poz. 42; R. Gruenglas, "Protokol," July 5, 1946, AAN-MAP 786, poz. 45; District Jewish Committee, Czestochowa, to Central Committee of Polish Jews, July 10, 1946, AAN-MAP 787, poz. 29; L. Rakowska, "Protokol," July 9, 1946, AAN-MAP 786, poz. 53; *Dos Naje Lebn*, June 7, 1946 (p. 2: "Bestialisher Mord iker Yidn bay Nowy Sacz"); *Jewish Telegraphic Association Daily News Bulletin*, June 7, 1946.

⁷⁵ *Dos Naje Lebn*, June 20, 1945 (p. 1: "Di Mord-Bandes vern oisgerish mitn Vurtsl"). For other incidents of Jews killed because of their political association, see *Dos Naje Lebn*, August 31, 1945 (p. 1: "Di Reaktsie vildevet on Oifher"); Provincial Jewish Committee, Katowice, to Central Committee of Polish Jews, February 4, 1946, AAN-MAP 787, poz. 186.

⁷⁶ D. Goldberg, "Protokol" June 25, 1946, AAN-MAP 787, poz. 125.

frequently than political retribution.⁷⁷ One such aim appears to have been robbery - not the seemingly purposeful but ancillary plunder discernible in the Parczew attack, but simple thievery, born of the bandit's desire to enrich himself. The bandits, moreover, were generally not associated with the armed antigovernment underground. The following scenario, for example, was repeated on several occasions:

"On Saturday, February 2, 1946, around 7:00 P.M., two unidentified men, one 25-27 years old, the other 15-16, broke into apartment number 11 at 21 Jagiellonska St. [Gliwice]; present in [the apartment] were Szlomo Kagan, his 11-year-old son Mojzesz, Szmul Kamieniecki and Zelig Weisberg. [The attackers] were dressed in civilian clothes. Shouting "Hands up!", they forced everyone to go into the other room and lie on the floor, face down. Next they searched those present, cursing them with the words, "Damned Jews, why have you come to Poland (*parszywi Zydzi, pocoscie przyjechali do Polski?*)?" etc. They kicked them and abused them. From Kagan they took 500 zl. and a ring; from Kamieniecki 7,000 zl. and a ring; and from Weisberg only a ring, because they found no money on him. After searching the entire apartment, the bandits began to terrorize Weisberg, demanding money and valuables from him. When Weisberg replied that they had already taken all that he owned, and that he had no more, the older bandit shot him six times.... Sensing that a similar fate awaited them, the others began to shout and make noise. The bandits became frightened and ran away; the younger one left his revolver behind in haste."⁷⁸

It seems difficult to regard this incident as anything but a burglary that turned fatal when the robbers became frustrated with their meager haul, with

⁷⁷ The Ministry of Public Administration report on violence of September 29, 1945, noted that "of 30 attacks [examined], 11 involved robbery; 1 [took place] against the background of the return of items stolen from Jews during the occupation; 2 [took place] against the background of the reclamation of agricultural property; 2 [involved] the repossession of a home. The remaining 14 attacks are the result of Hitlerite propaganda, which during the occupation period polluted our society with the poison of racial hatred." See above, note 20.

⁷⁸ Central Jewish Committee in Warsaw, Gliwice Division, to Central Committee of Polish Jews, February 7, 1946, AAN-MAP 786, poz. 37.

the added dimension of specifically anti-Jewish hatred indicated by the use of a malicious epithet.⁷⁹

Other killings may have been prompted by Jewish demands for restoration of their former property or by the fear that recently returned Jews were liable to demand reinstatement of their belongings, even before they had taken any action in that regard. For example, a Jew from Tarnow was murdered on February 8, 1946, after submitting an official request to regain possession of his home.⁸⁰ Such killings may have been intended to warn other Jews against attempting to reclaim property; they may also have been connected with efforts to extort protection payments from Jews as the price for securing their belongings.⁸¹

Still other murders appear to have taken place within the context of a terror campaign aimed at inducing Jews to leave Poland altogether. Evidence of such a campaign is found, *inter alia*, in leaflets distributed among Poles and Jews in various places throughout Poland and at various times during the post-liberation period - most of it emanating, it appears, from organized underground groups. A flyer circulated in early April 1945 in the Lublin region, for example, informed Jews in the town of Piaski that "because you have turned out to be enemies of the Poles, we *order* you to leave the Piaski area within a week; otherwise, appropriate measures will be taken against you."⁸² Another broadside called upon Poles to "take weapons in hand and strike the Jews, in order to cleanse Poland of filth and manure;" it promised that "Poland

⁷⁹ For additional examples of this *modus operandi*, see the statement by Jozef Strenger, February 19, 1946, AAN-MAP 787, poz. 38; Provincial Jewish Committee, Katowice, to Central Committee of Polish Jews, February 4, 1946, *ibid.*, poz. 186; Regional Jewish Committee, Tarnów, to Central Committee of Polish Jews, July 4, 1946, AAN-MAP 786, poz. 49; also above, note 75.

⁸⁰ S. Margoshes to G. Keith, U.S. Embassy, Warsaw, February 12, 1946, in David Engel, "The Situation of Polish Jewry as Reflected in United States Diplomatic Documents, December 1945-July 1946," *Gal-Ed: On the History of the Jews in Poland*, 14 (1995), p. 118. For further examples, see *Dos Naje Lebn*, June 10, 1945 (p. 1: "Mordn iber Yidn"); also above, note 66.

⁸¹ See, for example, the observation in a field report from the Kielce province prepared in May 1945, "Sprawozdanie insp. Zeliwskiego z podrózy inspecyjnej...," May 7-17, 1945, DRI-INV. 153/24.

⁸² "Odezwa do ludnosci zydowskiej," April 3, 1945, DRI-P.21/7.7; emphasis in source. For an attestation that this leaflet was in fact distributed, see "Sprawozdanie z delegatury do Chelmu," April 4-6, 1945, IC-35/12.

will soon be free from the Jews," who were told in no uncertain terms to remove themselves to Palestine.⁸³

A number of recorded acts of anti-Jewish violence seem to have been aimed primarily at accelerating this process, and they bear the imprint of unadorned terror. On October 27, 1944, a grenade was thrown into the building that had been occupied by the handful of Jews who had returned to the village of Losice, near Siedlce.⁸⁴ Snipers were active in many places.⁸⁵ On Saturday, August 11, 1945, a mob attacked the synagogue and Jewish hostel on Miodowa St. in the old Jewish quarter of Krakow, beating the residents and worshippers, destroying their property, burning Torah scrolls, and killing one elderly Jewish woman.⁸⁶ A leaflet distributed while the events were going on (prepared, no doubt, in advance) announced that "there is no room in Poland for the German, the Bolshevik, or the Jew."⁸⁷

To be sure, much of the literature accompanying the terror campaign justified the demand that the Jews leave Poland on the grounds that Jewish survivors of the Nazi Holocaust, who owed their lives to the heroic and selfless actions of Poles on their behalf, had betrayed their Polish homeland through their active support of the communist regime.⁸⁸ It appears, however, that motifs having nothing to do with the immediate political context were employed with equal frequency. One broadsheet, lamenting that, even though Poland had regained nominal independence, its people "suffer hunger and privation, live in dilapidated hovels, are decimated by various and sundry diseases, its youth loitering about aimlessly," attributed the situation entirely to

⁸³ "Bij Zyda!", DRI-P.21/7.7.

⁸⁴ See note 73. The grenade exploded in the courtyard; none of the Jews living in the building was injured.

⁸⁵ See note 66; also "Protokol przesłuchania świadka Wilhelma Zylbermana," July 11, 1946, AAN-MAP 786, poz. 50.

⁸⁶ For contemporary descriptions of the Krakow pogrom and the events leading up to it, see, *inter alia*, *Dos Naje Lebn*, August 20, 1945 (p. 1: "Di Gesheenishn in Kroke"); "Protokol posiedzenia Plenum Centralnego Komitetu," August 14, 1945, IC-35/12; cable, Arthur Bliss Lane, U.S. embassy, Warsaw, to U.S. State Department, August 19, 1945 (Nr. 107), United States National Archives, Washington, RG 59/860C. 4016/9-1945. See also Hillel, *Massacre*, p. 126.

⁸⁷ "Polacy!", August 11 [1945], DRI-P.21/6.

⁸⁸ An example is the flyer distributed in Piaski, which was signed by a group calling itself the "Polish Anticommunist Military Organization"; see above, note 82. For additional examples, see the notice entitled "Do Zydow w Polsce," DRI-INV. 153/33, and the handbills located in DRI-P.21/7.7.

the Jews, who, it asserted, "have settled themselves comfortably throughout our country...[and placed] industry, commerce, finance, and, to an extent, agriculture in their hands..., exporting from the Polish lands our most nourishing juices and consuming our most beautiful fruits."⁸⁹ This charge of nefarious Jewish dominance of Polish economic life echoed the anti-Jewish propaganda of the Polish right from the inter-war and even the late partition periods. An even more sinister note was sounded in handbills warning Polish parents to "protect [their] children, [as] more and more children are disappearing."⁹⁰ This admonition evoked the historic calumny of ritual murder, which was to be the most audible motif of, among others, the Kielce pogrom. It was a charge heard in Chelm in April 1945, where three Jews were actually detained after a complaint of kidnapping was lodged against them;⁹¹ it surfaced again shortly thereafter in Lublin, Rzeszow, Tarnow, and Sosnowiec.⁹²

Aside from the manifold deliberate attacks upon Jews - whether for purposes of punishment, plunder, or terror - there is evidence of several outbreaks of spontaneous mob violence, evidently unrelated to any underground activity at all. On September 30, 1945, in the town of Zdunska Wola, Lodz province, an altercation over an unpaid bill between a disabled Polish war veteran and the Jewish owner of a local restaurant quickly exploded into a massive street brawl. A handful of Jews was pitted against a Polish throng numbering more than 1,000 people. Before the local militia arrived, the Jewish-owned restaurant had been destroyed completely and its entire inventory looted. No Jews were killed or injured in the fray - a seemingly miraculous outcome in view of the fact that security forces were able to subdue the crowd only under threat of machine-gun fire and that later, when three men were arrested for their role in the violence, a reassembled mob destroyed the jail in which they were held, freeing the detainees.⁹³ Local

⁸⁹ "Dzien Dobry!!!", DRI-P.21/7.7.

⁹⁰ Untitled handbill in DRI-P.21/6.

⁹¹ "Sprawozdanie z delegatury do Chelmu"; see note 82.

⁹² "Sprawozdanie czlonkow Centralnego Komitetu Zydow Polskich J. Sacka i S.

Fiszgrunda...", July 1, 1945, DRI-INV.153/24; "Objawy antysemityzmu..." (see note 21).

⁹³ Lodz provincial governor to Political Department, Ministry of Public Administration, December 18, 1945, AAN-MAP 787, poz. 139-140.

authorities in Krakow had similar difficulties controlling a spontaneous riot by a group of veterans in March 1946.⁹⁴

The hostile climate of feeling toward Jews in Poland following the liberation was, in short, so highly volatile and was fed by such a variety of motives that violent anti-Jewish attacks could break out virtually anywhere, at any time, under any conditions, and with no provocation whatsoever. A pogrom like the one in Kielce, on July 4, 1946, certainly required no outside provocation. If Jews were at greater risk at certain times and in certain locations than in others, such variations could hardly have been governed only by the manner in which the armed underground conceived of its struggle against the regime.

Explaining the Violence

At least some of the chronological and geographical distribution of anti-Jewish violence can and must be explained in significant measure by reference to factors unrelated to the concomitant civil war.⁹⁵ One such factor was no doubt the constant fluctuations in the Polish Jewish population. The major peak periods of violence - March-August 1945 and February- July 1946 - both appear to have coincided with periods during which the number of Jews in Poland was increasing. The beginning of the first interval followed closely upon the liberation of Polish territories west of the Vistula, which permitted an estimated 15,000 Jews - more than double the number under Polish rule until then--to emerge from hiding, thereby exposing themselves to the arrows of their Polish fellow citizens;⁹⁶ the second half coincided with the return to Poland of another 25-30,000 Jews from camps in recently vanquished Germany and Austria.⁹⁷ Similarly, the second period overlapped the mass repatriation of Polish Jews from the Soviet Union, a process that brought upwards of 130,000 Jews to the country and raised the total Jewish

⁹⁴ "Wystapienie antyzydowskie inwalidów W.P. w Rynku Głównym w Krakowie," March 21, 1946, AAN-MAP, 787, poz. 400.

⁹⁵ What follows does not purport to be a comprehensive discussion of the various factors influencing the level and dispersion of attacks upon Jews. Its purpose is merely to demonstrate the probable operation of factors other than those that affected violence against Polish government supporters.

⁹⁶ For the derivation of the figure, see Engel, *Between Liberation and Flight*, p. 165, n. 6.

⁹⁷ See Dobroszycki, *Survivors of the Holocaust*, pp. 67-68.

population to over 200,000 by the beginning of July 1946.⁹⁸ Over the next several months, however, the Jewish population entered a period of precipitous decline, due almost entirely to a massive wave of emigration that would reduce the number of Jews in Poland to less than half of its peak amount by mid-1947.⁹⁹ Was it merely coincidental that this period of mass exodus would also be the one in which assaults upon Jews fell to a minimum?¹⁰⁰

It stands to reason, of course, that, on the whole, Jews would be more vulnerable to attack the greater the number of available Jewish targets. That vulnerability appears to have been tempered as well, however, by measures that the Jews themselves took when violence appeared especially threatening. The most important of these was the progressive abandonment of villages and small towns, where the overwhelming majority of attacks occurred, in favor of large cities, which tended to be more securely under government control and where concentrated Jewish communities could provide relative safety in numbers.¹⁰¹ In response to the sharp rise in attacks in March 1945, the Central Committee of Polish Jews began actively to encourage this process, evidently with considerable success; no doubt this move played an important role in reducing the number of Jewish casualties in April and May.¹⁰² The committee redoubled its efforts in this direction following the Kielce pogrom, promising to evacuate all of the small towns within two weeks.¹⁰³ It also organized armed Jewish self-defense committees in order to protect Jewish homes, neighborhoods, and community institutions - a step widely regarded as effective.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁸ See Engel, *Between Liberation and Flight*, pp. 120-124, 156-157.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 157. Concern for physical safety was only one of a number of factors driving this emigration. An extensive discussion of the origins and motives of the exodus is offered in ibid., *passim*. For an alternative explanation, see Gutman, *Jews in Poland*, pp. 44-49

¹⁰⁰ The relatively low level of anti-Jewish violence between September 1945 and January 1946 was also accompanied by a substantial emigration wave. See Engel, *Between Liberation and Flight*, pp. 64-65.

¹⁰¹ On this process, see ibid., pp. 46-47, 52-53. Avoidance also involved moving from what were initially the most dangerous areas, like the Bialystok, Lublin, and Kielce provinces, to relatively safer areas like Lodz and Silesia.

¹⁰² "Protokol posiedzenia Prezydium Centralnego Komitetu," March 25, 1945, IC-35/12.

¹⁰³ "Protokol posiedzenia Prezydium CKZP", July 10, 1946, *ibid*

¹⁰⁴ These committees are described, *inter alia*, in a letter from Wanda [family name not given] to Adolf Berman, November 7, 1946, DRI-INV. 153/40. See also Jan T. Gross, "In the

It is difficult to fathom, however, how such actions, even when taken together with the sharp drop in Jewish population in the second half of 1946, could have brought about the *almost complete extinction* of anti-Jewish violence from August 1946 on, especially when, in September-October 1946, there was a relatively high number of killings of Polish government supporters.¹⁰⁵ For the same reason it seems highly unlikely that government repression could have contributed decisively to this development, even though the authorities did augment their efforts to combat the spread of anti-Jewish propaganda in the spring of 1946.¹⁰⁶ After all, the regime already had a difficult time maintaining overall order in the territories it purported to rule and could hardly have been expected to direct its resources specifically toward the purpose of suppressing attacks against the Jews.¹⁰⁷ Instead, it appears, quite surprisingly, that armed antigovernment underground organizations themselves may have exercised an important restraining influence. The solicitous attention focused worldwide on the situation of Polish Jewry following the Kielce pogrom was understood by much of the armed opposition to be detrimental to the anticommunist cause. An August 1946 publication of the conspiratorial group WiN¹⁰⁸ admonished its supporters, for example, that "at the present moment it is not in our interest to fan the flames of anti-Semitism," since the "Jew-communists" were trying to stir up the Jewish problem in Poland "for the purpose of proving to the outside world that the presence of Russian security forces in an intolerant Poland is necessary in order to educate the Poles in the spirit of 'democracy'."¹⁰⁹ The same document even charged that the Kielce pogrom had been the handiwork of Jewish communists, provoked "in order to arouse the worst opinion of Poland abroad."

"Aftermath of the Kielce Pogrom: The Special Commission of the Central Committee of Jews in Poland," *Gal-Ed: On the History of the Jews in Poland* 15 (1997) pp. 119-136.

¹⁰⁵ In contrast, the dormant period from September 1945 to January 1946 was also a relatively quiet time for antigovernment violence.

¹⁰⁶ See Engel, *Between Liberation and Flight*, p.129.

¹⁰⁷ There is evidence, however, to suggest that security forces quelled incipient violence in Lignice and Miedzyrzecz in October 1946, after blood accusations began to circulate in those towns. See Arie J. Kochavi, "The Catholic Church and Anti-Semitism in Poland Following World War II as Reflected in British Diplomatic Documents," *Gal-Ed: On the History of the Jews in Poland* 11 (1989), p. 120.

¹⁰⁸ Dobroszycki, "Restoring Jewish Life," p. 66

¹⁰⁹ "Wyciąg z wydawnictwa WiN-u," August [1946], DRI-P.21/6.

This refrain was also taken up by anticommunist Polish émigré circles: a pamphlet associated with the Polish exile army of General Wladyslaw Anders spoke of a combined Soviet-Jewish campaign against Poland that endeavored to "incite the... masses to anti-Semitic pogroms," in order "to demonstrate how reactionary the Poles are and how very necessary the stationing of Red Army personnel in the Polish rump-state is for peace and security," as well "as to arouse world public opinion in favor of a Jewish Palestine."¹¹⁰ A WiN bulletin released in October 1946 actually went so far as to accuse the government of giving Jews license to kill Poles, including 160 prisoners in a Radom jail, as "satisfaction" for Kielce.¹¹¹ It may well be, then, that, in the aftermath of the Kielce killings, the underground believed it advisable to try to restrain violent armed action against Jews in order not to play into the hands of their enemies and to provide the regime with a pretext for even more brutal repression against them.

Indeed, just as it stands to reason that the presence or absence of Jewish targets, the employment of avoidance measures by Jews, and government action ought to have influenced the level of anti-Jewish violence, so, too, is it plausible to suppose that the intensity of the antigovernment forces' desire to kill Jews would have had a crucial effect upon the degree of danger faced by Jews at any given moment and location. The majority of recorded attacks upon Jews were said to have been perpetrated by one or another underground unit, or at least by individuals wearing the uniform of such a unit. The organized underground also contributed heavily to the spread of the anti-Jewish propaganda that helped keep hostility toward Jews constantly near the flash point. Such activities, to be sure, do not appear to justify the representation of anti-Jewish violence in postwar Poland as a subsidiary division of the war against the communist administration; the motivations for the violence were numerous and varied, and only in a minority of cases did Jewish victims die because they were known to have supported the regime. The armed underground was composed largely of right-wing political groups

¹¹⁰ Excerpt from Marek Romanski, *Dlaczego nie wracamy*, prepared by J. Pogorzelska, KRN deputy chairman, DRI-INV.153/21. See also the document entitled "Communist Pogroms on Jews in Poland," Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, California USA, Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, Box 40.

¹¹¹ *Honor i Ojczyzna*, October 1946 ("Zydzi"). Copy in DRI-P.21/7.7.

whose anti-communism masked a vision of a future Polish state formed long before communists had emerged as the greatest threat to its realization - a vision rooted in an ethnocentric nationalism, sometimes buttressed by racial theory, in which Jews had no place.¹¹² The military battle against the communist government thus seems to have provided them with a convenient cover for attempting to realize that much older ideal. It even seems likely that, in some cases, the attentions of at least some underground fighters were directed more toward the anti-Jewish than toward the anticommunist aspects of their struggle. Perhaps it was partly for this reason that the Kielce province proved so much more dangerous to Jews than to government supporters.

By the same token, it will not do to represent anti-Jewish violence simply as a continuation of ancient hatreds that the Nazi Holocaust either intensified or, at the very least, failed to uproot, without reference to the political context in which it occurred. The bands that were most heavily responsible for killing Jews would not have existed except for the circumstances of the communist takeover; otherwise, those who carried out the attacks would not have been in a position to do so. Moreover, the civil war enabled people who simply coveted Jewish property, without any attached political motives, to justify aggression against Jews in the guise of resistance to a new foreign occupation. The postwar political context thus constitutes a necessary part of the explanation of why attacks upon Jews assumed the proportions that they did even after the German occupiers had been expelled from the country. By itself, however, the context does not provide a sufficient explanation for the phenomenon.

In the final analysis, therefore, it appears that those contemporary observers who, in private discussions at least, pointed to a multiplicity of factors as responsible for armed attacks upon Jews in postwar Poland, while assigning primacy of place to no one factor in particular, displayed a keener understanding of the situation than later writers, who have insisted upon representing the violence as either contextually or conceptually driven. The story of postwar anti-Jewish violence actually demonstrates the complex

¹¹² On the political outlooks and programs of these groups, see Ryszard Nazarewicz, *Drogi do wyzwolenia: Koncepcje walki z okupantem w Polsce i ich treści polityczne, 1939-1945* (Warsaw: Ksiazka i Wiedza, 1979), *passim*.

interplay of context and concept as determinants of the tenor of Polish-Jewish relations.

Source: *Yad Vashem Studies* Vol. XXVI, Jerusalem 1998, pp 43-85.