The Town Where The Jews Lived Twice

Bezalel Lavi

Introduction

This is the story of a town in which a lively Jewish community existed for around 150 years. Until the end of the Second World War, in 1945, Reichenbach was a Prussian and then a German town and with its downfall it was annexed to Poland, named Rychbach, and later, Dzierżoniów.

Geographically, Dzierżoniów is located in Lower Silesia (in German, Niederschlesien and in Polish, Dolny Śląsk), in southwest Poland today. Until the First World War, Silesia was divided between two nearby Regencies: Breslau and Liegnitz, and another on their east, Oppolen.

In 1919 these territories were divided into two provinces: Lower Silesia, which included Breslau, with Reichenbach, and Liegnitz, and Upper Silesia with Oppolen. In the wake of citizen rebellions and a referendum in Silesia, in 1922, the eastern part of Upper Silesia was transferred to Poland. The names of both provinces refer to their location along the Oder River.

This article describes two time-periods, separate and completely different from each other, which appear to have nothing in common. The Polish era began on the ruins of the German era which, as mentioned before, finished at the end of the Second World War. This article is the first attempt to present the similarities and differences between the following timelines:

The Jewish community in Reichenbach that existed for about 126 years (between the years 1816 through 1942), when its size never reached more than 190 people; relative to the general population, it constituted a very small percentage.

The Jewish community in Dzierżoniów that existed for about 24 years (between 1945 through 1969, although a very small number of Jews continued to live there later); at its peak their number reached about 18,000 people and over a short time they made up a quarter of the town’s population!

On the map of the Jewish communities in Prussia and later in Germany, Reichenbach was a small dot of a settlement. Back then, and for generations to come, the biggest and leading community, and relatively in Germany as well, was Breslau, the capital city of the province. The numeric rate between Reichenbach's Jews and the general population of the town was mostly similar to the general trend across Silesia: in the years 1816-1880 the proportion of Jews moved from 0.3% to 1.8%; the highest rate was in Breslau, and in the final decades of the 19th century it was 1.2% to 1.6%, and in 1905 it even reached 4.7%.(1) After those days Reichenbach's Jewish population gradually decreased, as presented in this article.

A similar picture, but in completely different circumstances, is revealed at the start of the Polish era. In the first few months after the end of the Second World War, when the surviving Jews were traveling in the direction of Lower Silesia, the vast majority arrived in what was already renamed Rychbach, about 45% of all the Jews in the province. In those days Breslau was mostly under rubble because of the heavy fighting that took place between the German defenders and the Soviets advancing to the West. And yet, in one year
with the continual arrival of more Jews to the province - mostly those returning to their homeland from their stay during the war in the Soviet Union - many were allocated to Breslau, whose Polish name by then was already Wroclaw. In the course of over two years, by the start of 1948, it again became the city with the largest number of Jews – 10,954, compared to 6796 in Dzierzoniów. (2)

Despite its relatively small size during the German and Polish eras, certain characteristics, which constitute this article's essence, set the town apart from bigger communities. In order to understand this we have to mention that the 150 years discussed here are a reflection of the regimes of the countries in three time periods: Reichenbach was a community in Prussia until 1871 and in the united Germany until 1945. During these periods significant political and economic processes took place, particularly in the last twelve years under Nazi rule.

The horrors of the Second World War did not affect the town itself, and this made it the basis for the first settlement of the surviving Jews. In the third time period, it lay within the southwest of newly-born Poland, a country now dominated by the Communist party. In the first years the government was a relatively liberal regime, which allowed the Jewish community to manage themselves in relative autonomy. That period lasted for three years, but came to an end when the Polish government followed the path of the Stalinist Soviet Union and eliminated the previous accomplishments. Later in this third period the regime was again tolerant toward the Jews, but before long became an anti-Jewish, anti-Zionist and, last but not least, anti-Israeli government. At the end of that era, like the German one, it was the end of the organized community, although in completely different circumstances.
(a) The Prussian and German Era

1. "The First Jews"

Information regarding Jews in Reichenbach was recorded since the 13th century, although for hundreds of centuries it was mostly businessmen and traders visiting the town who were not permitted to settle permanently. This was evident in the existence of the Jewish alley, the Judengasse, from the beginning of the 17th until the mid 20th century. Ever since the end of the 18th century, it was primarily Jews working in the wool industry that started to visit the town from other regions in Prussia and Austria. In those days the fabric industry became the economic basis for that whole area, and in time, during the 19th century, it would become the center of all of Silesia's textile industry.

It was only after the emancipation decree, in March 1812 that Jews across the Kingdom of Prussia were granted last names and equal rights to their Christian neighbors, including the freedom to purchase land and to work in various professions. Since those days, Jews started to gather in big communities (e.g. Breslau) and later on in smaller communities too.

The first permits were granted to Jews who already possessed permits of residence in other towns. That was the start of the permanent Jewish settlement in Reichenbach. In January 1816, a permit was granted to the trader Isaac Naftali and his family from Breslau before he was granted local citizenship. A year later three more Jews were granted residence in gratitude for their economic support to the town. A year later Naftali and a fellow Jew were allowed to purchase land for burial purposes. Another Jew was also given permission for a different site, which in 1825 was designated and dedicated as a Jewish cemetery. At that time the site was next to the town's northern gate (Breslauer Tor), and today it is located at the Bielawska and Szpitalna streets.

In 1819, the eighteen town Jews united into an established community, with Wilhelm Landsberg elected as the first manager (Gabbai) of the synagogue, followed by Pinkus Baad and Meyer Olsner. During their tenure the community expanded and it was greatly influenced by what was going on in the larger community of Breslau, where a bitter dispute erupted between the traditional, orthodox believers and those who believed in a revival and an open-minded approach to religious matters. The reformists were influenced by the spirit of the Enlightenment Movement which was spreading across Prussia.

In 1820, Breslau's community leaders decided to set up a synagogue, raised the funds and chose a location where previously there had been a tavern bearing the unique name, 'Pod Białym Bociąm' ('The White Stork'), which they adopted as the name of the synagogue. Internal disagreements led to the suspension of the construction work for seven years. It was then completed in two years by a group of Jews with a progressive perspective, the 'First Society of Brothers'. However, over the next 18 years it functioned as the Society's private synagogue and only in 1847 did the synagogue open its doors to the entire Breslau Jewish community. It turned out that the old disagreements remained probably firm for many years as there was no other option, in 1872, but to establish another synagogue this time named, 'Die Neue Synagoge' ('The New Synagogue') which became the prayer house of the reformists, while the more orthodox retained the old synagogue, 'The White Stork'.

This long-standing dispute in Breslau reflected the schism within the local Jewish community, characterized in those days by the events in many communities in Prussia. It was then that the orthodox congregations found themselves quarreling with the proponents
of the new era, the reformists, who tended to identify with Christian state values and become assimilated.

Things looked similar in Reichenbach, the town located around 50 kilometers south of Breslau. After Meyer Olsner left the community in 1841, it found itself divided: the orthodox faction was headed by Abraham Breslauer, while the reformists were led by the Rabbi and teacher Heinrich Schwartz, who arrived from Rawicz, a town in the region of Poznań. Identifying himself with the ideological principles of the Enlightenment Movement, he decided to introduce in his congregation – as had occurred in many places in Prussia – the usage of the German language in the ritual customs, in Jewish education, and to preach homilies in German as was customary in Christian sermons.

In 1854 Schwartz composed a special German-language liberal prayer book (Siddur) in the German language: Poems and Psalms for the Holy Worship of Reichenbach’s Jewish Community in Silesia. Schwartz stayed in his position for another five years while his rival, Abraham Breslauer, had left in 1852.

It should be noted that before the Jewish settlement in Reichenbach was officially recognized, a prayer house had existed since 1811: "Souverâner Malteser Orden" (The Malta Military Sovereign Order)* sold buildings to the Jews for the purpose of setting up a synagogue, spinning mill, printing house and storage facility. The prayer house was named "The Old Synagogue". Since 1834, a prayer room (Bethsaal) was located at the house of a carpenter named Gottfried Klinkhardt, on Breslausstrasse 162. It was set up by Mattias Isaac Cohn, who donated the vestry and Torah Roll. That prayer room came to be known as "The New Synagogue" and served the entire community until 1873, when it was mentioned as a prayer house (Bethaus) that was already too small to continue to serve the increasing number of Jews. (5)

As synagogues, or meeting places, they were determined both as prayer rooms (Bethsaal) owned by municipalities or rented, as well as stand-alone buildings, houses of prayer (Bethaus), which could introduce some confusion within the meaning of Jewish communities. An example of such inaccuracy is the list of 1843, prepared by the office of the Breslau Regency, which did not show the existence of a synagogue in Reichenbach, although according to many sources, prayers were held in private rented rooms. This could be due to the fact that synagogues served different functions, and prayer rooms determined also names as a school-spot study of the Torah and Talmud, school prayer, a house of learning. (6)

Mattias was granted Prussian citizenship in 1826, being recommended by the local authorities who stated that he: "was displaying kindness and humanity, had a big heart and generally conquered our hearts more and more with his positive character, his attention and love towards others, particularly because of the absence of those characteristics amid most of his people". Mattias helped to pay the war debts that were weighing on the town.(7) The unhidden anti-Semitic tone in the final clause of the praise was an echo of that phenomenon in Prussian society.

Despite the existence and activity for years, the Jewish community in Reichenbach was

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* A Catholic order founded in the 11th century in Jerusalem to provide help for the poor and sick, later on became a militant order for knights and nobles. The order helps nowadays those oppressed all over the world irrespective of race or religion.
formally founded in 1834, and only received government certification in 1847. According to the Prussian law of that year which defined the geographical division of the Jewish communities in Lower Silesia, 10 communities were in the Breslau region, including Reichenbach, and 7 in the Liegnitz region. The certificate was required to allow independent activities of the community and depended on population growth. Reichenbach witnessed a steady increase for five decades: in 1819 the Jews numbered 18, in 1840 the number reached 59, and in 1849 it was 78. The community would reach its highest in 1871, with 185 resident Jews. (8)

And yet, in February 1859, due to its relative numeric size, the Jewish community in Reichenbach was subordinated to the bigger community in Schweidnitz, where decisions regarding the community's activities were made. Nevertheless, three independent Jewish associations were active in Reichenbach in matters of support of the poor, the sick and for funerals.

The division between the Reform and Orthodox Jews continued during these years and these community matters were commented on in the local press. On the other hand, the Jews also identified with their Christian neighbors’ festivities. The year 1859 marked the 700th anniversary of the existence of St. George, the town's Catholic Church, and the Jewish residents decorated their houses, a gesture the local press noticed as "solid evidence of assimilation and agreement". (9) In general, events important to the authorities were celebrated in churches and synagogues alike.

In October 1859, a new era began in the life of the Jewish community in Reichenbach: after years of separate perspectives and attitudes, the two camps decided to reunite, accepting in principle the reformists’ stand. The united community leaders decided to invite Rabbi Moritz Cohn, also from the town of Rawicz, to lead the community as a rabbi, religious teacher, cantor, and slaughterer. This nomination consolidated both the Jewish community inwards and its steady status outwards towards the wider German society. With his common sense, moderate views, open and thoughtful attitude, Rabbi Cohn succeeded in mediating prejudices and personal rivalries, and in strengthening the Jewish community's loose bands of unity. His approach in the community found its expressions in the 'Synagogue Regulations' which was published on 18 May 1863. It was evident that a lot of thought was invested in order to reflect the reconciliation and tolerance Rabbi Cohn wished to transmit to his congregation. The document was signed by three Board Members, Yaakov Naftali, Lippmann Brann, and S. Oelsner.

The Regulations contained 19 clauses of "Do's and Don'ts" in the synagogue. In its introduction members of the congregation were required to accept and act immediately to implement them. For instance:

- The Board has the right to confirm, at certain times, only the entrance of people into the synagogue who had purchased tickets in advance (Clause 2);
- Whoever interrupts the prayers could be kicked out (Clause 7);
- To fulfill commandments such as the Torah Reading or the opening of the Holy Ark, you require a card from the Board (Clause 11);
- Anyone who takes part in the Shabbat commandments and Jewish festivals must wear a hat or a skullcap; on Yom Kippur men could wear a white skullcap (Clause 12);
- Whenever the Holy Ark is opened the audience must stand; on Yom Kippur it is not obligatory (Clause 13);
A memorial service is performed in accordance with the Orthodox practice and followed by a sermon (Clause 17); Prayer poetry is limited by the Rabbi to selected segments posted in advance on a bulletin board (Clause 19).

The addendum to the Regulations was signed by Rabbi Moritz Cohn:
"The Synagogue Regulations...are not intended to change Judaism, it is not something that should be imposed on the ancient and lofty customs of our religion, but reflects practices which were hitherto neglected in many synagogues. The Board has consulted me about the wording of these Regulations and I hope that this practice will not hurt in any way any devout member of our community." (10)

The title with which Rabbi Cohn signed this document was not 'Rabbi' but rather 'Jewish Preacher'. He could be called also the 'Cult Official', as the terminology adopted from German became increasingly common among Jews: a synagogue was named the "House of Prayer", "Israelite" replaced "Jew", and the Bar-Mitzvah ceremony was now an "admission" to the congregation. As was common in the Christian churches, men, women and children were no longer separated in the synagogue; except in special cases the community members were not required to cover their heads with a yarmulke, and the community carols were performed in German. It was decided to allow the synagogue to be entered with shoes or boots on, which could be replaced with velvet slippers, as done in the past. The Orthodox version of The Mourner's Kaddish, however, remained in force and was respected beside the grave. The feelings of the Orthodox members were honored, although it was expected that they would keep their Jewish practices privately in the synagogue. (11) The slogan of the Hebrew poet Judah Leib Gordon, "Be a man walking out and a Jew in your tent", became a reality in Reichenbach as across the whole of Prussia.

This was one of the characteristics of assimilation. Another was the adoption of Christian German first names. In the years after the 1860's many of the Reichenbach newborns were given such names – Georg, Frederick, Edward, etc. – as did Rabbi Cohn with his four children, Julius, Theodor, Martin, and Malwine. The birth documents found in the synagogue revealed that the official first name was always followed by the Jewish name. But Rabbi Cohn's name was recorded with his first Jewish name. (12)

The life stories of his children exemplified the duality of German Jews’ life since the mid 19th century onward. Julius Cohn enlisted in the Prussian Army, took part in its war against France and fell in battle in the summer of 1870; the young Theodor migrated to England and his fate is unknown; and Malwine was killed in a concentration camp during the Second World War. Martin's story, on the other hand, is an exceptional that testifies to what might occur within the family of a distinguished rabbi who was a celebrity in his town.

As a child Martin studied at the Lutheran school in Reichenbach, as the Catholic schools were closed to the Jews and the small community did not own a school. The religious classes Rabbi Cohn delivered in the synagogue. Sometime after graduating high school, in 1887, Martin left Reichenbach for Berlin, returning to visit his parents from time to time. He made up his mind to leave his Jewish past behind him and in Berlin he attended academic studies and for some time served in the army.

In 1906 he migrated to Canada and three years later, at the age of 41, he changed his last name to Nordegg. He was engaged in coal mining in the Rocky Mountains of Alberta,
Western Canada. Together with a German company he owned a coal mine, and the nearby coal mining town was named Nordegg after him. During the First World War, Canada nationalized German assets and Martin was forced to leave and he moved to New York. After the war he was allowed to return but by then he had already lost his position in the coal mine. Even though mining ended there a century ago, the ‘ghost’ town of Nordegg still exists as a tourist attraction.

Martin turned to other businesses and with his wife traveled extensively throughout Europe and the world. In the summer of 1924, at the request of his sister Malwine, who lived in Hamburg, they traveled to Reichenbach for the first time since he had left it 37 years before. They paid a visit to their mother Augusta’s grave in the Jewish cemetery and then went to the synagogue where Martin had got his first education in Judaism. But now he refused to enter the synagogue and, unlike his sister, he was reluctant to meet an old acquaintance from high school. "Martin was glad to run away from Reichenbach leaving behind him his ambivalent memories". (13)

Unlike his children, Rabbi Moritz Cohn was rooted in Reichenbach society, admired by his flock and accepted by other religious leaders. After Prussia's military victory over France in 1871 and the establishment of the unified German Empire by Otto von Bismarck, in Reichenbach, as elsewhere, festive ceremonies took place praising the homeland, in which heads of the Protestant and the Catholic Churches as well as Rabbi Cohn, representing the Jewish community, participated.

In June 1873, a laying corner stone ceremony for the reconstruction of the Town Hall Tower ("Ratusz") took place. In the parade of town and religious community dignitaries it was noted that Rabbi Cohn represented the Jewish community. In his speech to the gathered audience he said: "As the representative of the Jewish community, I am here at the laying corner stone: of the happiness and glory for our only German homeland, happiness and glory for our priceless Silesian province, happiness and glory for our beloved town. May the ties of consent and peace encompass the residents". (14) *

One of the most important events for Jews was the legislation of a new municipal law in 1875 which dealt with civil rights. It permitted anyone over the age of 24 who had lived a year in the town and paid taxes to vote and to be elected to the local council. Similar rights had already existed in Breslau for half a century. Whereas the provisions were associated with socio-economic status, it also increased the potential of Jews to be elected. Indeed, three Jews were elected: the merchant Michaelis Moser and the Town Council members, Heymann Cohn and Max Hermstadt, a doctor by profession. (15)

Alongside this, since the mid 19th century, the Jewish community leaders in Reichenbach had worked to preserve the Jewish heritage and inspiration that was most important to them. The Decree of Emancipation, in March 1812, allowed public education for young Jews, like their gentile neighbors. In 1873, among 271 students in the Boys’ High School, 195 were Protestants, 54 Catholics and 22 Jews. They also studied Judaism with the community Rabbi. The girls attended the women’s school in the boarding house of Berthy Ritter. Among 61 students, 41 were Protestants, 17 Jews, and only 3 Catholics. (16) The high percentage of Jewish students, 8% of boys and 28% of girls in this period, which

* The building was built in the fourteenth century and served as the seat of the city council. The Tower Hall was a remnant of the medieval town hall and the ceremony was related to a reconstruction project. (dolny-slask.org.pl / 522638, Dzierzonlow, Ratusz.html)
relative to their number in the general population amounted to 2.8 %, shows the great importance Jews attributed to education and learning as an inevitable phase of their integration into German society.

In order to realize that tendency, the community expressed its desire to set up a Jewish school in the town. In 1868, community representatives Meyer Wartenberg and Heymann Cohn submitted this request. The authorities rejected the request, but instead offered a piece of land which in the past had belonged to a weaver of fabrics by the Franc Gate at the town walls and now was for sale to the Jewish community for the purpose of setting up a synagogue. (17) The proposal was designated to serve the education goals of the community as well as its ritual needs. The community accepted the idea as the location was central, the Trenkstrasse, on the route between the railway station and the town square.

Only in 1874, was it possible to implement the design and construction of the building. Without the involvement and support of Heymann Cohn, Meyer Wartenberg and Lippmann Brann, the project would not have been realized. The planning and implementation was given to the well known town architect and contractor Ewald Böttger. The internal construction and its equipment were financed by twenty-eight community members and their families. The synagogue had to meet civil and religious requirements according to the municipal law: the entrance was to be in front of the building to allow direct access from the street that was on the east side of the building.

Because it was the side of the Ark, Böttger decided that the entry level would be the home of the Rabbi and family, a community assembly room and the place for ritual studies. The first floor was designed as the prayer hall topped by the women’s section. The architecture of the building was a combination of Oriental and Italian neo-Renaissance style, which was typical of assimilated Jews: the Eastern style was a symbol of Jewish sources from the Land of Israel and the neo-Renaissance was considered as one of the "New styles of German nationalism" and as such a symbol of assimilation. Upon completion of the building, several women brought in two candlesticks with three copper arms placed at the sides of the Ark, and the owner of a mansion purchased a chandelier with 32 arms. The high altar and the other furniture were Moorish styled and produced by the furniture manufacturer Herden. (18)

The synagogue was inaugurated in an impressive ceremony which took place on the eve of Pentecost, 8th June 1875, attended by town and religious community dignitaries Heymann Cohn handed the synagogue keys to the Mayor while Rabbi Moritz Cohn delivered a speech expressing his prayers for the success of the Emperor, the German homeland, the town and its residents and the Jewish community. (19) Surrounded by lawns and trees alongside the park planted some decades earlier, the elegant building represented the wealth and pride of the small community that sought to preserve its Jewish roots while at the same time wishing to be assimilated.

In October 1884, the Jewish community and the town leaders celebrated with pomp and ceremony 25 years in office of Rabbi Cohn, the spiritual leader of the Jewish community of Reichenbach. In September 1890, due to health reasons, he resigned after more than three decades in office. As a token of appreciation the community decided to allocate him an annual pension. But a month later his wife Augusta died and was buried in the Jewish cemetery in town. Two months later, Rabbi Moritz Cohn decided to accept the proposal of
his son Martin and went to live with him in Berlin, but only a short time was left for them to be together. In February 1891, Rabbi Cohn passed away.

When he left his office the number of the Jews in Reichenbach was in decline and that trend would continue in the coming decades: whereas at its peak in 1871, as said before, their number was 185, and together with adjacent communities 257 Jews - now their number decreased to 154, around 1.2% of the resident population. (20) As it turned out, the reasons were mostly economic.

2. The Jewish Industrialists

Reichenbach and its surroundings were traditionally well known for their manual weaving workshops, which at the end of the 19th century became the center of an accelerated development of the mechanical weaving and spinning industry. In 1855, the town was connected to the regional rail network which gradually upgraded its economic status with new plants owned by locals that in turn created wealthy industrialists and traders, amongst them Jews, whose number was higher relative to their size in the city’s population.

There were other textile industrial centers in this region of Silesia which competed with Reichenbach, but at the end of the day it became the leading center. This predominance would continue for decades later and even for a short time after the Second World War, when the region would be second only to Łódź as Poland's textile industrial center. (21)

The development of the textile industry in the second half of the 19th century was a by-product of the industrial revolution in Germany, which eventually resulted in machines taking over occupations previously done by hand. With time the process brought to the surface the economic differences between East and West of Prussia. While the western provinces experienced rapid economic progress, the eastern provinces, including Silesia, lagged behind. Indeed, the majority of Silesia remained essentially agricultural; only in the region of Waldenburg in Lower Silesia, where there were coal mines, and in Upper Silesia was there development with the industrial revolution. Its tardy industrialization was due to its relative geographic distance from major European markets and the levying of duties on exports. Therefore, the province depended mainly on closer markets in Berlin and Saxony. The by-product of that was a relatively lower standard of living, which was one of the main reasons for the continuing tendency of migration from the small towns, such as Reichenbach, to big cities like Breslau, and towards the more industrialized and more urban western Germany. (22) This was why the number of the Jews in Reichenbach declined continuously: from 185 at the height in 1871, to 154 in 1890, and 92 in 1910. (23)

Yet, as already stated, not all Jews were economically forced to leave the town. Relative to their proportion of the population, many of them were among the merchants, craftsmen and workers in textile plants, and some were the owners of the plants. Three Jewish families were to play an active role in that industry for decades, until the eve of the Second World War. In general terms, in the early 20th century, the Jews belonged to the more wealthy part of the population in Silesia. For instance, in the provincial capital, Breslau, the Jews constituted 4.3% of the population, yet their share in tax payments was 20.3%. In other cities in Silesia that figure was even higher, pointing to their status within the wider society. (24)
Prior to presenting the stories of the three aforementioned Jewish families, it would be proper to outline in general terms the textile industry in Reichenbach at that time. Despite the modernization of the production processes in the weaving and spinning mills, the process of the decline of manual labor was steady indeed, but lasted for decades. In 1860, in the Reichenbach district 9515 workshops operated, which decreased to 864 by 1910. (25) The work inside the plants was neither easy nor well paid: there was no ventilation, the noisy inner space hampered the communication between people, and workers operated at the same time a number of looms, which often caused accidents.

Erich Hasse, who wrote on the history of Reichenbach up to the late 1920's, noted: (26) "The fate of the weaving working population was more miserable than ever before. The mechanized weaving turned competition on the part of the hand weavers, who still numbered in the region some twenty thousand people, literally impossible. The impoverished weavers appealed on several occasions to the State authorities, even to the Kaiser on 14th June 1890. They claimed that the weekly wage of 5 marks for men and 2.50 for women who worked fourteen hours per day, led inevitably to their economic collapse.

In the days that followed the authorities made numerous attempts to gain control of the emergency situation, but like in the past, all the efforts to change the profession of the hand weavers or transfer them to other areas of work failed due to the passive defiance but stubborn nature of the needy, who preferred living in poverty and distress over the experience of retraining, and leaving their small and neglected homes. It took many years for the transition to the innovative production methods to be completed, which brought at the same time the decline of the hand-weaving sector, and it was only the next generation, the weavers’ male and female descendants, that found its way from the hand-weaving machine to the halls of the machines."

Nevertheless, in the part of the town that once was the neighboring town of Ernsdorf that merged into Reichenbach, in April 1890, manual weaving was still widespread and its residents were among the city's poor. According to Hasse, at the end of 1889 Reichenbach consisted of 6721 residents and Ernsdorf 6042, so that combined it ranged as sixth among the medium sized towns in Silesia. *

Hasse also noted that, in stark contrast to the difficult situation of the weaver population, the commercial sectors were flourishing in a "speculation fever, which was unknown up to that time in the town, which grabbed large parts of the affluent population. Everyone wished to invest his savings in different types of securities, but not always did these moves lead to the desired success. In later years the town experienced severe economic shocks that destroyed overnight any capital." (27)

This description did not provide any evidence whether Jewish businessmen took part in such activities. On the other hand, it was known that the Jewish textile entrepreneurs were definitely involved in the economic life of the town. There were 10 active textile plants in the early 20th century in Reichenbach and in its immediate vicinity; in Langenbielau (today, Bielawa) 13 plants operated, and in Peterswaldau (today, Pieszyce) 14. There were also additional plants in the region. (28) Three plants in Reichenbach were owned and

* In 1892 appeared the play "Die Weber" (The Weavers), by Gerhart Hauptmann, which described sympathetically the Silesian weavers uprising in Peterswaldau, in 1844, against their harsh living and working conditions under industrial capitalism. The play was translated to Yiddish by Pinchas Goldhar.
managed by Jews. This means that one-third of the employees in the town’s textile industry earned their living at Jewish businesses.

One of the largest plants in Reichenbach in the late 90’s of the 19th century and early 20th century was the "Cohn Gebrüder G.m.b.H" (Cohn Brothers Ltd.). The brothers, Hermann and Arnold, founded it in 1873 in Langenbielau, where the textile industry progressed faster than in Reichenbach. Both brothers, like their grandfather and father, were engaged in their past in banking and wholesale trading in Silesia, and they brought that background and knowledge with them into their new business. In the early days of the plant, the threads were sent to weavers in villages in the surrounding mountains, who manually wove the cloth and sent it back to the plant in the town. Considering the low production costs and quality, the plant's profitability was higher than their competitors whose production was still completely manual. After three years, Cohn's plant was too small to continue its development and the brothers decided to transfer it to Reichenbach where the railway enabled the easier and cheap transportation of raw materials and finished products.

Between the years 1876 and 1889 the Cohn brothers, besides their textile plant, owned a store where they sold their products. To ensure the continuing development of their business they purchased land on Schweidnitzerstrasse (today, Świdnicka Street) on which they built during 1889-90 a weaving factory, planned by Ewald Böttger, which went into operation in April 1890. The brothers continued to invest and develop the plant by increasing the number of mechanical looms. In time they were able to carry out all the production stages - spinning, weaving, dyeing, bleaching and finishing. It resulted in a reduction of the production costs and independence from other plants. They also purchased additional land on the Frankensteinerstrasse (today, Ząbkowicka Street) in order to setting up a new weaving plant.

The mechanized factory and its concentrated production phases, plus low wages, contributed to its profitability, but at the same time caused social unrest and a series of street demonstrations demanding the improvement of working conditions and wages. Such demonstrations were held in Reichenbach as well as across the country and were the result of a continuous ferment that began to take place in the working classes. The factory owners took steps to defuse the tensions and it was said that the Cohn brothers held several brewery festivals for their employees. However, in the absence of significant improvements in the harsh working conditions and excessive workloads which caused life-threatening events and health hazards, the unrest of the workers went on.

At this point it should be noted, that in the summer of 1899, the Cohn Brothers’ company was among the main investors in the construction of the railway company "Eulengebirgebahn", that connected the local textile industry to its markets across the mountain range south of the town (Eulengebirge in German and Góry Sowie in Polish), and turned the town into a regional tourist center. (29)

Arnold and Hermann Cohn prepared their children to replace them in due course and sent them to study the textile professions. In 1897, Bruno, Hermann's son, joined the firm and Georg, Arnold's son, joined a year later. For a few years the elders and their offspring were co-owners of the family businesses. Continuous mechanization and proper management yielded good results. The outbreak of the First World War halted the momentum and the business was undermined, as happened to many similar firms in the region and around Germany.
The sons, like many workers, were drafted into the army at the beginning of the war and the factory management returned to Arnold due to the illness of his brother, Hermann. On the eve of the war, the factory employed 510 workers and a year later the number dropped to 450, among them 122 men. That same year the military equipment orders were reduced, production for the commercial market was forbidden and the cotton industry was nationalized by the state. (30) The situation did not improve at once after the war due to high inflation and loss of markets in Poland and the western parts of Germany. It was a time of decline in production and lay-offs which, no doubt, affected the economic situation of the residents of the town and its surroundings.

Hermann Cohn died in 1920 and a year later his brother Arnold. The sons were now the owners and managers of the firm. Despite the many difficulties, they managed to successfully navigate their way, and in the late 1920's developed production lines of fashionable clothes and fabrics for curtains that were very popular on the market. In 1928 they purchased the majority shares of another textile firm and set up a partnership with it. The children of the cousins, Bruno and Georg, joined the company, thus accomplishing the series of three generations managing Cohn Brothers’ plants.

Germany was thrown into the global economic crisis, in 1929, which caused the plants to suffer from the repeated difficulties that had been problematic over the years of operation. In September 1932 strikes broke out at several plants in the Reichenbach area in which 150 employees of the Cohn plants took part, protesting against the extension of weekly working hours from 32 to 40 without salary increments. (31)

Shortly after the Nazis came to power, in January 1933, the economic situation started to improve and in Reichenbach the textile industry began to revive, receiving increasing orders from the German army and other Nazi organs. However, the Cohn Brothers' businesses were unable to fully utilize that development because of their Jewish origin. Before long they came under pressures that with time intensified. At the end of 1936, Georg changed the status of the firm from a limited company to a limited partnership and went into in receivership. No doubt this course of action was imposed upon the firm as now he was responsible for the debts and liabilities of the Partnership as well as for his personal property, due to the fact that he was the person who ran the company and was its sole decision-maker. The other limited, or so-called quiet partners, were Hulda and Betty Cohn, the mothers of Bruno and Georg, and his sisters who lived in Berlin.

The Nazis continued with severe pressures on Georg, including threats to be sent to a concentration camp, which forced him finally to surrender. On 29 October 1938, he sold the company to Otto Hüesker, one of the town's textile entrepreneurs and a protégé of the Nazis. Certainly, the price he paid did not reflect the real value of the lands, machinery, raw materials and finished products. By the end of 1938, the Cohns had been forced to sell either to the town authorities or private merchants all of their remaining properties - real estate, the private villa on Schweidnitzerstrasse, a farm, a farming factory and all their contents. The Nazis also found and confiscated high-value securities including the shares of the last-purchased company. Georg and wife Selma and other family members were allowed to leave the town and emigrate to England, Brazil, Canada and the United States.

The second Jewish enterprise was "Weyl & Nassau", established on January 1884 by Theodor Weyl with his partner Hermann Nassau. Theodor was a salesman for Cohn Brothers when he decided to start his own business. (32) Like the other plants in the region,
at the beginning it was a manual weaving plant based on current practice, nowadays defined as outsourcing. With the death of Theodor, in 1887, his son Albert stepped into his shoes. Hermann Nassau left the company in 1900 and moved to a trading business in Berlin. Initially, the firm was a commercial partnership, later changed to a limited partnership, and finally a limited liability company. The process of its rapid development began in April 1896, when it began an automated plant of weaving and spinning machines, situated between the blocks at Neudorferstrasse (today, Nowowiejska Street) and Schweidnitzerstrasse.

As discussed in connection with the Cohn Brothers, here too the situation of the workers was quite bad, and in 1897 the plant was shut down. The repeated demands of the workers to improve their wages and shorten working hours were, as mentioned earlier, common to all the textile businesses and lasted for years, despite various steps taken by the plant owners to introduce progressive reforms. Weyl & Nassau managers even set up places to house their employees, while the Cohn Brothers sponsored sick funds. (33) Another improvement took place in the early twentieth century with the development of the construction of homes for the workers’ families. The leading entrepreneurs in that field were the owners of the textile industry, who wished to strengthen the connections between the employees and their plants, and to create a tradition of continuity of future work in the local industry. (34)

In 1901, Julius Beer joined the company, and ran it together with Albert. Until 1918 it produced mostly colored linens, aprons and cotton fabrics. In later years the production centered on curtains and other cotton products, synthetic fibers and a mixture of these, that put the company at a leading position in its field. According to Albert Weyl, the company listed 5000 customers throughout Germany and employed 550. (35)

On 26 October 1938, three days before the liquidation of Cohn Brothers’ businesses, the Nazi authorities prohibited Albert from entering the courtyards and using the company telephone. On 18th November, a week after the Kristallnacht pogrom, Julius Beer was murdered at his home.* A month later the company was expropriated from Albert’s by Edgar Flechtner, an owner of a textile plant in Langenbielau. Like his fellow Jewish managers, Albert lost his big villa, which was to serve in the days of the World War as a casino for Nazi officers. Albert managed to leave Reichenbach and settled in Montevideo, capital of Uruguay.

The story of the third Jewish textile company, "A.Fleischer G.m.b.H", tells a more detailed history of that industry thanks to related first-hand testimonies and documented evidence. These are primarily based on information from Hans Fleischer, son of Ernst and grandson of Alexander, who wrote it down in 1958 in Australia, where he lived under the name of John Fletcher, and the testimony of Willy, Ernst’s older brother, which was written in 1969 by his daughter, Kaete Hildegard von Gumppenberg. (36)

The company was founded by Alexander Fleischer, in 1869, in what was then the settlement of Ernsdorf (according to other sources it was in 1877).** Up till then he had ran, with his brother Joseph, a weave-dyeing business at a farm in Neisse which had been

* Another version states that he committed suicide (below, footnote on p. 21)
** The difference may derive from the fact that the first date indicated the company’s registration while the second was the actual date the business was set up.
owned by his family for generations. When the river that provided the water for the plant overflowed, Fleischer was forced to leave the farm and he decided to move to Reichenbach, where the weaving industry was already going on. Fleischer was the first to operate mechanical looms with the power of steam-engines, an operation previously done manually. He set up his plant on Uferstrasse (today, Brzegowa Street). (37)

The site was by the first railroad tracks in the town that led to the town of Swiednitz, in order to be close to transportation links to move both raw materials and finished products. Fleischer built his villa nearby. For some time he was also involved in public affairs, for example, during the local elections in 1879. (38)

At its very beginning the plant operated both spinning and weaving machines, which gave him an advantage over competitors operating a single phase of the production process. In later years the company operated all phases: spinning, weaving, dyeing, and finishing. However, like others the Fleischer firm too experienced labor unrest during the last decade of the 90's. In 1899 Alexander agreed to reduce the daily working of his employees to 10 hours per day. (39)

Wilhelm, called Willy, the eldest son, wanted to be a chemist, but his father convinced him that he could only make a living in this field if he succeeded in making discoveries. He decided instead to join his father and in 1889 he studied the textile trade for one year in order to join the business. He told his father that there was no technical logic in operating one steam engine to run 20 weaving looms. When Willy returned to the factory after his studies his father assigned him to be a salesman, replacing other salesmen previously employed. Willy travelled on business trips throughout Germany and specifically focused on the area of the Rhineland, in the west of the country. This activity would yield very positive results.

When the younger son Ernst finished his training, in 1904, and joined the company, Alexander retired and handed over the management to his sons. The company changed its status to a general partnership, each of them holding a half-ownership. In 1914, Alexander passed away and in 1922, the sons decided to change again the status of the company to a commercial partnership.

In 1905, a large strike of textile workers broke out in Reichenbach. Christian Dierig, who in Langenbielau owned the largest textile factory in the region, and whose businesses extended beyond the boundaries of the European markets, served as the chairman of the regional group of the textile manufacturers’ association in Silesia. While the owners of the small and medium firms sought to end the strike and resume regular work, Dierig, the big capitalist, was interested in prolonging it, since his interest was to continue to sell his inventories in the warehouses. The majority of the factory owners realized that Dierig was actually not representing their interests and voted to oust him. He was replaced by Otto Hüesker and followed by Willy Fleischer.

Hüesker was killed on the front in the First World War, in 1916, and Willy took over his position. Each year the association held elections for the regional chairman. Willy stipulated that he would only stand as a candidate if he had unanimous support. He held the office until 1933, having gained the trust of his fellow-industrialists for many years. He decided to step down in 1933 as a protest against the boycott of Jewish businesses initiated by the Nazis in Reichenbach. In order to appreciate the significance of his personal achievement to win six consecutive elections over sixteen years, one should know that in
the region there were 80 textile plants, of which only three were owned by Jews. Hildegard, his daughter, estimated that the area constituted the largest number of textile plants and production capacity in Germany. (40)

In the years preceding the outbreak of the First World War, the Fleischers continued to develop their business by investing in buildings and equipment. In 1910, they added a dye-house with top cranes to upload and download cloths to and from the boilers. Willy and Ernst registered this device in a US patent, in 1914. At the beginning of the century they were employing mere dozens of workers; however, by 1913 they employed 248, clear evidence of a successful business. The outbreak of the First World War halted the momentum. Both brothers, along with 35 other workers, were mobilized into the army. Their places at the spinning and weaving machines were taken by women. During the war Ernst would be promoted to the rank of Major, while three Jewish residents of Reichenbach fell in the war. (41)

The implications of reduced production and investments were evident after the end of the War. The daily working was curtailed to eight hours per day in a four-day week. Reducing the production and employment was particularly severe in the textile industry of Lower Silesia -- the salaries here were lower by one-third compared to similar factories in the western part of Germany. (42) Nevertheless, the Fleischers continued to invest in their own factory: in 1922 the four-story building was doubled, with a new floor for the weaving mechanization, and in 1925 they purchased from a cattle dealer an additional plot of land to set up a new spinning wing.

In 1924, the firm changed its status from an unlimited commercial partnership to a limited company. After the marriage of his daughter Else, in the summer of 1923, Willy Fleischer assigned her 8.57% of the company shares; and when the young couple settled permanently in Reichenbach, in 1926, her husband Erich Weyl, nephew of Theodor Weyl, who possessed an educational background in textiles, was appointed technical manager and treasurer. Willy assigned a similar dowry to his second daughter Hildegard, in 1929, after her marriage to Baron Max von Gumppenberg.

The Fleischers managed to get through the global economic crisis which began in late 1929 relatively well, without major damage to the business, and without adopting the usual measure of reducing production costs by cutting the number of employees. In his memoir Peter Weyl noted, that Willy Fleischer his grandfather, kept most if not all his employees during the crisis, and even paid them out of his own pocket. (43) During these difficult times the owners continued to invest in the production infrastructure, and in the 1930's the factory manufactured for both the domestic German market and foreign markets such as the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, and Latin America. In 1937, the factory still gave a living to 225 employees; 60% of the production was for their own use and 40% was sold to other textile factories. (44)

Although both Willy and Ernst Fleischer, the elders, continued to work full-time until 1938, they gradually passed on the daily management of the business to the younger generation, Erich Weyl, Willy's son-in-law, and Hans, Ernst's son. They were not given shares in the company, but they were its only authorized signatories. At the beginning of January 1937, the legal status of the company was altered once again, this time from a limited company to a limited partnership. According to Hans's testimony, Willy and Ernst became general partners, which meant that they were personally liable for the debts and assets of the
company and for their private assets, whereas the sisters, Else and Hildegard, were registered as a limited partnership without any change in their share-holdings.

As already stated, similar changes happened to the Cohn Brothers’ company and probably also to Weyl & Nassau, because of the sort of pressures the Nazis imposed upon the Jewish industrialists to deprive them of their assets. Peter Weyl wrote that, in 1938, the Fleischer brothers were willing to hand over the company to a limited partnership of Hans and Hildergard, as the first was half-Jewish (with a Christian mother) and the second bore the name of her husband, a German Baron. The move did not succeed, although Willy, Ernst and Erich were Jews, Hans was first-degree biracial by the Nazis’ racist definition, and therefore considered as a Reich citizen. In those days he was the one who represented the firm with the authorities.

Hans testified that as a modern company the Fleishers’ had become a target for its competitors. One such smaller competitor was the weaving and dyeing plant “Wilhelm Jordan GmbH”, which was in the vicinity of Neurode (today, Nowa Ruda) and its sister plant, "Günther & Gerhard Jordan". They made an initial offer to purchase the Fleischer factory but it was rejected due to its low price. The Fleishers then negotiated with the "Hecking Company" in Westfalen, western Germany, who were ready to pay a more reasonable price. However, Gunther Jordan was an active Nazi and also an economic adviser to the Neurode local council. It was therefore not surprising that the permit to close the deal with the Hecking was not achieved.

Thanks to the efforts of Hans Fleischer the company managed to persuade the Reich Economics Ministry to dispatch to Reichenbach an appraiser to assess the factory’s value. His report was received by a local party official on 10 November 1938, the day after the Kristallnacht program. Willy Fleischer, who had cancer, was in the Jewish hospital in Breslau and survived the horrors of that terrible day. Erich Weyl was arrested that same morning at his home and was sent later that day to the concentration camp Sachsenhausen near Oranienburg.

Hans maintained that because he had approached the Reich ministry, the local Nazis who supported the Jordan Brothers decided to take revenge on him, and that is why he was the only biracial who was imprisoned that day together with his father Ernst and other Jewish residents of the town. The arrest took place at their offices in the factory by two Nazis who were employed there, Christen and Rusig. They were dragged out, beaten and had their homes searched, accompanied by a Nazi Labor Front functionary and a few factory workers who were forced to accompany them.

Afterwards, Hans was moved to the town-hall for interrogation. Here he was beaten again by a man named Jung, the chairman of the Nazi Labor Front district and an SS member. Hans and his father Ernst were moved to the prison at the municipal court in the city and detained in separate cells. Hans was once again beaten by Jung and the district Nazi Party leader, named Müller. On 16 November 1938, Günter and Gerhard Jordan arrived at the prison with their attorney Walter Neugebauer, accompanied by Müller. They presented to Ernst the contract for the sale of the business for his signature. Ostensibly, the purchasers could not pay more than the price set by the Reich Economics Ministry and in the present circumstances it was obviously a lost cause.

In general terms, whereas a lot of Jewish property was destroyed and plundered during the Kristallnacht and the day after throughout Germany, in Reichenbach the damage was
relatively minor, including the Fleischer’s factory. The damage was greatest at their private property which had started even before the pogrom. As in the case of the Cohn Brothers, they lost land, Willy's villa by the factory and Ernst's villa on Schweidnitzerstrasse which he had passed to Hans his son, who was half-Jewish. But, after Kristallnacht, while he was imprisoned with his father, Hans’s social I status was worthless and the large house was a target of destruction and looting. (45)

The pogrom served the Jordan as a pretext to pay much less on the grounds that it was retaliation by the German people against the Jews, which resulted in a significant depreciation of the company assets. The exhausted Ernst tried first to argue, but had to give up the moment Müller pulled out his pistol. This convinced Ernst and Hans that they had to sign the contract of sale of their life’s work for one-third of its appraised value. Ten days later, on November 26, they were both released from what the authorities defined as a "protective detention" by the local SS commander and a member of the town council, named Achtzehn. Hans was called to Müller's office and warned not to enter the offices of the company even though the transaction was not yet completed. This was the tragic end of the Fleischer family enterprise set up seven decades earlier.

In the absence of his very ill elder brother, Ernst Fleischer had run the company in very harsh conditions. He and his Christian wife managed to leave Reichenbach and traveled to Düsseldorf, where they lived in a house that belonged to relatives of his wife's family until Ernst’s death, in March 1942. Hans was able to leave in early January 1939 and traveled to England, leaving behind his German wife and sons in the hope that they would join him shortly. But the outbreak of the war thwarted this. She traveled to live near her parents in Erfurt and after a few months the Nazis deprived Hans of his German citizenship and his wife was therefore required to divorce him. Hans was interned in England, in June 1940, but a month later was sent to Australia and there imprisoned for two years. After his release he was drafted into the Australian Army and, upon finishing his army service, began a new chapter of his life bearing a new name, John Fletcher.

As mentioned above, Willy Fleischer being in hospital was not arrested on the Kristallnacht. Yet he was very shocked by the destruction of his life’s work and, according to his daughter Hildegard, he even refused to leave the hospital. In June 1939, she took him and traveled in a Reich medical train wagon from Breslau to Düsseldorf where her family lived, and there Willy passed away within a month.

His other daughter, Else and her husband Erich, managed to leave Reichenbach and travel to England where their son and daughter, Klaus Peter and Doris, had already escaped to live with their aunt and uncle. In his memoir Peter noted that his parents were allowed to leave and gain access to the UK because Erich’s brother had already moved to England and had been working as a doctor since 1933. The Weyls would continue their voyage to the USA.

In the meantime, in Reichenbach, an additional property tax was imposed upon the Jews, two days after the bloody events, which was “towards the costs of repairing broken businesses and houses”. There was further confiscation of the Jewish property, known as "Aryanization", which affected assets valued over 5000 Reichsmarks and applied to 33 Jews, defined as a "contribution" from the “cooperation between World Jewry and the German Jews". (46)

The continued pressures impoverished the Jews economically and pushed them to emigrate
abroad.* According to Brilling, in 1937 lived in Reichenbach 71 Jews and two years later their number plummeted to 19 and another one in a nearby settlement.(47) However, a census conducted, on 17 May 1939, indicated that, according to Nazi racist definitions, there were 25 "full" Jews (Volljuden) and another 29 bi-racial of first and second degree (one or both grandfathers were Jews) in the town.** Therefore, Hans, whose father was married to his German mother, was a first-degree biracial and his children.

3. The Life Under the Nazis

The story of the three Jewish textile industrial entrepreneurs is a significant part of the history of the small Jewish community in Reichenbach, yet it did not necessarily reflect the situation of other Jews. As we have seen, their numbers dwindled over the years, whereas the textile industrialists managed big businesses and gave a living to hundreds of local families.

The stories detailed above have left some others in obscurity. For instance, who led the community spiritually after Rabbi Moritz Cohn. Bernard Brilling stated, that Rabbi Cohn was in charge until 1884, even though according to other sources, as mentioned above, he stepped down in 1890; he was succeeded by Jacob Bähr, who then moved to Waldenburg; the last was Sigismund Karlsberg, who came to Reichenbach from Pomerania and served as the Rabbi from 1898, but it is unknown till when. (49) It is possible that he served there until the First World War; and it may be that there was no rabbi serving the community and no ritual activity within the synagogue for some time between the World Wars. ** According to existing records, in 1925 the community leader was David Wachsner, while the merchant Samuel Waldhorn used to live in the synagogue, which could be an indication of his role as the guardian of the building. (50)

Reichenbach was small in terms of the Jewish communities in Lower Silesia, and the number of members had decreased steadily over the decades, mainly for economic reasons. In this sense it did not differ from other communities in the region because, as said above, there was a significant difference between the economies of western Germany and the East, in Silesia. Its territorial size was about a quarter of the country, on which lived around one eight of the general population, but its industrial production amounted to about 6% of the Germany GDP. The wage of the workers in all Eastern areas was 35% lower compared to other parts of the Reich. According to a report by the Mayor of Breslau, at the beginning of 1939, every year between the two World Wars thousands of employees from the city traveled westward looking for work, and from a city of more than 600,000 residents it increasingly became a city of pensioners, small businesses and merchants. (51) This migration must have also included Jews.

The economic difficulties continued and grew steadily during the First World War and the

* Felix Danzinger, one of the Jewish community leaders in the beginning of the 1930s, committed suicide, on 11 May 1939, due to the ongoing oppressions. (Grużlewska,"Od asymilacji do wykluczenia: społeczność żydowska w Dzierżoniówie (1870-1944)", p.21
** In 1939 the population in Reichenbach was listed as 17,253, www.verwaltungsgeschichte.de/reichenbach
*** When he passed away, on 16 February 1939, he was registered as Sigismund Izrael Karlsberg. The supplement of "Izrael" was a must imposed upon men, since August 1938, in order to identify their origin. "Sara" was the supplement for the women. (Grużlewska, op.cit, p. 19)
early 1920s, culminating in the outbreak of the global financial crisis in late 1929, which, as we have seen, hit the textile industry of Reichenbach and its surroundings. That reality provided the ground for growing Nazi propaganda and politically-motivated clashes. During the German Presidential elections campaign in 1932, Hitler visited Breslau for the first time. He was to return there a year later, shortly after being elected Chancellor, as a sign of the importance he attributed to the geographical location of Lower Silesia as part of his future war plans.

The Jews in Reichenbach very soon witnessed how the Nazis would consolidate their economic, social and local politics. Among their first acts was the replacement of the old Jewish street name of Judengasse into Georgsstrasse. However, the Nazi authorities allowed the Jewish-owned textile enterprises to continue their business in both internal German markets and external markets abroad, despite the racial laws, denial of citizenship to Jews, and the prohibition of holding private property. As already mentioned, there were periods without a permanent Rabbi to lead the congregation and the synagogue served as a place of residence for other people. Among them was Josef Kaminski from Beuthen (today, Bytom) in Upper Silesia. He came to Reichenbach, in 1930, after he had lost his cloths store which he owned with a partner, who appeared to be addicted to gambling. Offered a similar occupation he turned around in town to look for a dwelling for the family, wife Amalie and two kids, Heinz and Susi. As almost none were available he approached the community housing project GAGWA and put some deposit. But, when the family arrived in town the administrators found out that the Kaminski's are Jews and refused to approve their application. Without other options Josef approached the Jewish community and arranged to get an apartment within the synagogue in exchange to take care of the building. They lived in the place which five decades earlier had served the family of Rabbi Moritz Cohn.* Kaminski would manage a cloths store on Schweidnitzerstrasse until the day, in 1933, when it was confiscated by the newcomers, the Nazis. For about a year he stayed jobless but then was hired by the Weyl & Nassau firm to the payroll department. (52)

In 1933, there were 67 Jews in Reichenbach and another 13 in the surrounding area. The community leader was Hans Reich and alongside him, the merchant Max Warschauer and watchmaker Hermann Hirsch. In the community council served also David Wachsner and Felix Danziger. (53) Nine children, most probably sons, attended religious studies at the synagogue and according to Susi Klein their teacher was Rabbi Franz Rosenthal, who was arriving once a week from Breslau. Holiday and ritual ceremonies were conducted by Rabbi Heidenfeld who came from Schweidnitz.

Klaus Peter Weyl wrote in his memoirs, that he went to an elementary school and began studying at the gymnasium in the town.** At some point the Nazi authorities prevented him from continuing his studies and his parents were able to find a place in a Jewish school in Breslau, and stayed with Jewish families.

* The Kaminski's got the place of an old woman, Paula Zellner, who went to live to another town. (Recalls Susi Klein (né Kaminski), the last known living of those years).
** According to Klein, her brother Heinz attended the elementary Protestant School, close to the Church on Schweidnitzerstrasse, as there was no Jewish school. It should have been the school attended by Klaus Weyl too. Both celebrated their Bar Mitzvah's in the synagogue: Klaus, in May 1937 and Heinz, in April 1938; Felix Danziger attended the ceremony of Klaus and signed on his Bible, whereas at Heinz festivity were present Rabbies Heidenfeld and Rosenthal.
Klaus’s mother, Else Weyl, prepared a late personal written testimony, in 1956, which told of otherwise unknown events of the Jewish life in Reichenbach that showed some bearable events from those dark days. The first was an initiative of the Jewish War Veterans to set up a hostel for few young Jews to stay and spend their leisure time in. An old shed was found and the required drawings for setting it up in the garden at the backyard of the synagogue were prepared, but the town authorities hesitated to grant the requested license. After some actions the license was achieved, the plan was accomplished and the hostel, actually a hut, was set up and functioned until the Kristallnacht. (54) Groups of up to 16 youths accompanied by one or two adults were staying there for several days, up to a week. Students from the Jewish school in Breslau visited the place and during the summer vacations children from the region were invited.

Susi Klein, born 1929, attended the kindergarten directed by Frieda Auerbach, and later a Catholic elementary school. She recalls that the hostel was set up in 1934 or 1935 and was visited by poor Jewish children who were paying pennies (actually, reichspfennigs). They enjoyed the mountains and countryside to do scouting type activities. It was a vacation which their parents otherwise could not have afforded.

At the synagogue on the ground floor, there was a corridor down the middle, leading to a stairway that led to the prayer space on the upper floors. On the left side was accommodation that was originally occupied by the local Rabbi. Now it served as Kaminski family living space, consisting of three rooms and a kitchen where baths were also taken in an iron tub; on the right-hand side were three rooms used for after-school religious teaching and activities and by the summer youth groups. The children used to prepare their meals on their own and clean up. The upper floors were for prayer.

The garden in the backyard was a large open space with the Town Wall and the Tower which lasted ever since the days of Fredrick the Great. While the synagogue may not have been opened every week, the garden was used often. Jewish families were spending here their leisure time on the weekends and during the summer days.

The second story told by Else Weyl was associated with the "Kulturband" (German Jewish Cultural Union), which dispatched Jewish artists to give lectures and concerts at weekends in Reichenbach, to which Jews from other nearby towns and villages were always invited. One of those artists’ groups which the community liked included the singer Max Mansfield and Dr. Ludwig Landau. They were asked to arrive on Thursdays and remain through Saturdays. On the Saturday evening, Mansfield performed cantor songs and Landau acted as a preacher. At other times, guest rabbis, such as Dr. Hermann Vogelstein, the liberal congregation Rabbi in Breslau, came. "And so it happened that they were with us in October 1938 and conducted the last and most beautiful service that little synagogue had ever had…" *

The end was unexpected and tragic: on the Kristallnacht on 9th November, some SA men broke into the synagogue, ordered the Kaminski family to walk to the police station and then move on to the villa of Betty Cohn, the mother of Georg. Their neighbors were watching from the windows but no one came out or said anything. The next afternoon

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* Susi Klein, who lived with her family in the synagogue, recalls neither the mentioned events nor the persons. Therefore, it could not be ruled out that these events actually took place at one of the local wealthy Jews houses.
Josef Kaminski was picked up by the Gestapo and transferred with other Jews to a jail in Breslau from where he was deported to Buchenwald.

A few days later Amalie, Susi's mother, was called by the Mayor and ordered to go back to the synagogue to clear it up. She was scared to death but had to go to collect up father's dresses which she had thrown out the window when intruded, as they were hanging on the trees and bushes. She had also to vacate the synagogue and take all her belongings. As the Jewish men were taken away, Amalie asked four Jewish boys to help her with the task. *

Josef Kaminski returned after three weeks with a wound on his head as he had been badly beaten. What probably might have saved him was a document he had kept in his pocket that indicated that he had been decorated with an 'Iron Cross' in the First World War, in his service as a paramedic.

The family decided to leave the town as fast as possible. With the assistance of mother's cousin in La Paz, capital of Bolivia, who delivered them a visa and her relative who rendered them some money for a ticket, they managed to leave Reichenbach, in mid February 1939, and sailed from Hamburg to Bolivia where they would live for the next nine years before traveling to Argentina and in 1963 to the USA.

In the end, the synagogue in Reichenbach was one of only three synagogues in Lower Silesia that survived the pogrom and later the war: the others were in Münsterberg (today, Ziębice) and Breslau. The former was not destroyed because in the early days of the Nazi regime they vandalized it and turned it into a barn and so it remained to the end of the war. In Breslau, the Nazis burned the New Synagogue but the old 'The White Stork' remained intact, because it was situated among other buildings and the destruction gangs feared that the fire would spread to non-Jewish buildings. The synagogue served the entire community until 1943, when the Nazis turned it into a mechanics workshop and a warehouse for the property looted from the Jews. The synagogue yard was turned into the gathering place of the Jews from all over Lower Silesia before their transportation to the concentration and death camps, in the same way as the Umschlagplatz in Warsaw.

There were no documented details as to the reasons why the Reichenbach synagogue remained intact. (55) The hypothesis that has lasted ever since stated that at some time, probably in 1937, the town administration confiscated the synagogue and the cemetery. The Jewish community leaders called on the German Konrad Springer, who for years had been employed by the community as a guard, gardener and undertaker of the Jewish cemetery, and proposed that he would purchase back the two properties. Apparently with the acquiescence of the Mayor, Kurt Dzierzon, and one or two other town council members, a tender for those assets was organized. Not surprisingly, no one else besides Springer submitted a bid and he got them. It was assumed that some of the wealthy local Jews provided the money for the purpose. (56) Thus, on the Kristallnacht the synagogue was the property of a ‘pure German’ and was therefore immune from the looting and burning of many synagogues throughout Germany.

Based on what is told in this essay, a new version may shed light on that ambiguous

* Klein noted that Julius Beer (page 13, above) was taken into custody by the Germans, released and later hanged himself. He was buried by Konrad Springer in the attendance of those boys, who also said Kaddish after him in the absence of a Minyan (a quorum of ten men required for traditional Jewish public worship).
The fact that the Kaminski family lived in the synagogue until the Kristallnacht events is an indication that at that time it was not a German property; Also, the Mayor's order to Amalie after the tragic night could be regarded as a sign that the synagogue was immune beforehand from destruction; Furthermore, according to Prof. Christofer Frey, born in Reichenbach in 1938, direct compulsory sales of Jewish property took place in Germany only after the 9th November events. Since public authorities were banned from accepting Jewish donations, the auction in Reichenbach, if indeed it took place, enabled Springer to appear as the sole bidder. (57) The final fact to support that thesis is that within a relative short time, in the beginning of 1939, the HitlerJugend posted its headquarters within the synagogue and thus secured finally its immunity for the war years. (58)

The historiography has referred to the Kristallnacht pogroms as a landmark of Nazi brutality towards the Jews in Germany and a clear signal for the future of what was to happen. The destruction campaign, murders and deportation to concentration camps, were a high-level decision, justified as a reaction to the killing of Ernst von Rath, a junior official at the German embassy in Paris, by a Jewish youth Herschel Grynszpan, who wished to react to the oppressions of the Nazis. In Lower Silesia the murderous rampage had a local dimension because the family of von Rath lived in Breslau and he had completed his matriculation there in 1928. (59)

4. Reichenbach in the War

There are two separate Jewish histories related to the town. The first is the fate of the remaining Jews who still lived in the town, and the second relates to the development by the Nazis of forced labor centers in the vicinity of the town. The first is a relatively short-lived tragedy, because of the very small number of Jews left and their eventual extermination. The second development of the Nazis lasted throughout the war years, when Jews were used as slave labor: instead of their direct physical extermination, it was intended that they would be eliminated through forced labor.

The first phase began in 1940, with the initial transportation of the Jews from Lower Silesia to the areas occupied by the Germans in Poland. The final phase prior to their mass destruction began in spring 1941 with the concentration in Breslau of the Jews from all over the province into a ghetto, i.e. a defined residential area. This area stretched between the streets of Włodkowica and Sądowa. From November 1941 through April 1944, Jews were deported from the freight-train station. There were 11 large transports of Jews from the province to concentration camps and killing sites. Many of them were sent to Theresienstadt. (60) Sometimes, before their deportation the Jews underwent a physical and stamina examination in an apartment of a Jew, on Sądowa Street 3/4. Three Gestapo personnel conducted this farce, while a Jewish doctor summoned was never asked about the results. (61) At the end of 1942, there were no Jews left in Reichenbach. (62)

The second phase involved the construction of a huge complex of forced-labor camps in the area around Reichenbach. After the surrender of Poland, in the fall of 1939, the Germans organized transit camps for prisoners in barns on Ufertstrasse, in a building that once was a guest house on Schießhausstrasse (today, Strzelnicza Street, the site of the cinema Włókniarz) and barracks around Ackergasse (today, Wodna Street). The prisoners belonged to the Stalag VIII A camp that was located in Görlitz. In May 1940, a company related to the SS squads purchased from a woman named Margerita Hey a granite quarry at
Gross-Rosen, the German name of the village Rogoźnica, located around 40 km northwest of Reichenbach. In order to provide local and cheap forced labor, it was decided to place a camp near the quarry. It became an extension of the concentration camp of Sachsenhausen and was named "Arbeitslager-AL Gross-Rosen". In August 1940, the first prisoners were transported there and the following May it was decided to turn it into an independent camp. Unlike the death camps, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Majdanek or Treblinka, Gross-Rosen was set up as the largest camp of labor exploitation and deliberate elimination through work. (63)

In its first two years it served as a labor camp for prisoners deported from the concentration camps of Dachau and Sachsenhausen. From 1942, increased bombing by the US and British Air Forces on industrial centers in western Germany forced the authorities in Berlin to evacuate hundreds of thousands of Germans from their homes, along with industrial enterprises vital to the war economy.

According to an official report, in November 1943 were settled in Lower Silesia 133,031 Germans. (64) During that year, the Wehrmacht suffered painful defeats, and the dwindling ranks on the fronts were to be filled with workers from the German civilian sector, including those employed in defense industries, who were replaced by labor-camp prisoners.

As the war was turning against the Germans, and the demands on regional enterprises grew, an extensive network of around 100 labor camps were established, sprawling over on a huge area south, west and north of Reichenbach. They were set up under the command of Gross-Rosen. Many of the camps were designated for Jewish women and transportation was directed straight to these camps. Jewish male and female prisoners arrived mostly from the Plaszow Concentration Camp and the Łódź Ghetto, after a ‘quarantine’ period in Auschwitz. Similarly, Jewish prisoners arrived from Hungary, Greece and Western Europe. (65) In total, during the war, the main camp and its affiliated camps held around 120,000 prisoners from across Europe and among them 57,000 Jews, mostly from Poland and Hungary. The Gross-Rosen complex held a relatively high percentage of prisoners who were women, 26,000. (66)

The first ‘employees’ in these regional enterprises were Jews from the labor camp Faulbrück (in Polish, Mościsko), north of Reichenbach, set up in March 1941. This camp was the largest in the camp complex, called ZALfJ, the acronym of the name of forced labor camps for the Jews. The other camp operated in the village of Graeditz (ZALfJGraeditz), (in Polish, Grodiszcze), halfway between Reichenbach and Schweidnitz. The camp was occupied by Jewish prisoners from Upper Silesia, France and the Netherlands. These prisoners traveled by train, called the 'Judenzug' (Jews' train), to their work-places in Reichenbach and Langenbielau. In Reichenbach they worked in armament plants and on building projects, including the setting up of the "Sportschule", named after a sports camp that had been active in the 1920s, but since 1935 was a sports school for the Hitlerjugend. The camp was situated to serve Reichenbach, Peterswaldau and Langenbielau and its official name was "Langenbielau I (Sportschule)" because it was administratively affiliated to that town. (67)

In addition to the above mentioned activities, in Reichenbach the prisoners set up six public shelters for protection against air raids on the following sites: (68)
* Strasse der SA (today, Daszyńskiego Street), opposite the headquarters of the Nazi party, which was blown up by the Nazis with weapons and ammunition within its shelters before retreating from the town;
* Schweidnitzerstrasse, the military school for communication in the mountains;
* In the entrance to the yards of today’s bus company PKS, where during the war the production of equipment parts for the Luftwaffe (air force), bombs and ammunition was taking place;
* Opposite the train station to hide rail employees and passengers;
* At the Hagenuk radio plant on Schulstrasse (Szkolna Street);
* Göhlichstrasse (Pilsudskiego Street), by the old walls of the Sadebeck cemetery.

Among those that engaged in activities for the war efforts were the textile companies in the town, converting their plants in order to make new military products as well as to continue producing their original goods. The Jewish prisoners were employed in converting the previous Cohn Brothers’ plant on Schweidnitzerstrasse into a "Telefunken" plant which produced military communication radio devices, and a weaving plant on Schulstrasse was converted for the production of radio devices for the Navy and cannons. This is the site called "Hagenuk", which after the war it would become the Polish radio plant "Diora". The spinning mill on Langenbielauerstrasse (Batalionów Chłopskich Street) was occupied by the "Bosch" company, which manufactured equipment for the air force, while the original weaving-plant was converted for the aviation industry. This factory employed 300 Jewish women while at the weaving-plant of Flechtner (formerly, Weyl & Nassau) on Dreißighubenstrasse (Złota Street) were employed 200 Jewish women. (69)

The Jordan textile factory (formerly, Fleischer) became, in the first half of 1944, an ammunition plant, "Siling II". Testimonies from female employees disclosed that the plant operated also as a forced labor camp. Its commander was Ruth Ragotzi, who after graduating in business studies in Reichenbach, first went to work as an office assistant and later was promoted to accounting, and finally in 1944 was promoted to the job of managing the factory labor camp, in charge of forty female employees. On 17 February 1945, the factory was bombed by the Soviets and damaged, forcing the employees to be evacuated to other plants.

After the war, the female prisoners testified that Rakotsi used to beat them and reduce food rations when output fell, which caused prisoners to suffer from various diseases. She also used to report to the police avoidance of work, which meant prison and in one case even deportation to Auschwitz. She was arrested, tried and sentenced to three years in prison. (70)

What happened within the Fleischer plants after the transfer of the ownership to the Jordan brothers, was told by an employee named Erich Teichmann, in a letter he sent in December 1946 to Erich Weyl, and appears in the memoir of his son, Peter Klaus: (71)
"They [the Jordan's] continued producing the same products as they were unable to innovate and develop new ones. Their primary objective was to make money. As a result, the business started its decline in 1939. As the Second World War began, they obtained military contracts. They were ordered to hire, as manager, a certain Battke, to take charge of the mill. He used to be a bad weaver and knew nothing else. What saved the factory were the large orders resulting from the beginning of the war. The Jordans were going to fire me, but they realized that I was needed. A certain Mr. Hartmann, who formerly worked at Huesker, had to be hired to represent the Nazi party. The Jordans were drafted and as I was the only one who understood the business, they had no alternative but to retain me. Even when the Jordans were there, they did not bother with the factory. As the
war developed, the situation became worse.”

As the war was coming to an end and the Red Army was advancing rapidly toward Germany, the German Eastern front commanded the evacuation of the Auschwitz camp, moving thousands of its prisoners on ‘Death Marches’ westward. One of these marches passed along the streets of Reichenbach and Langenbielau on their way toward Gross-Rosen. But, due to the enormous numbers in the camp, in early February 1945 it was decided to evacuate it faster in a series of marches westward deep into Germany, which resulted in the death of tens of thousands of prisoners. According to the testimony of a resident in Reichenbach, he saw French prisoners marching through the town streets dressed in military uniform, carrying backpacks, wearing boots, marching in military style and unguarded. In contrast, the Jews showed visible signs of misery: dressed in rags, wrapped in blankets, their feet wrapped in rags, and looking very miserable. Alongside every twenty prisoners walked an armed man. The weak were led by hand and the frail were left by the roadside and then shot by the Germans. After each group trailed a cart on which the bodies were loaded. (72)

In February an order was issued to evacuate the civilians from Reichenbach, except those who were engaged in the war effort. The evacuees were moved south, to Neurode (today, Nowa Ruda) and many would return at the end of the war. In April 1945, the Germans decided to turn Reichenbach, as they had earlier in Breslau, into a fortified town, to be protected at all costs. It was said to include defensive lines in the town and the mountain ranges surrounding it. The Jewish prisoners were assigned to dig trenches and anti-tank barriers, weapon stations and observation posts. Yet, unlike Breslau, where the Soviet siege lasted nearly three months, during which tens of thousands of soldiers and civilians were killed and a great part of the city was ruined, Reichenbach was saved from a similar fate because the Germans decided to withdraw from the town, blowing up the Nazi Party headquarters with its weaponry in the shelters before leaving.

(b) The Polish Era

1. Self Identity

When the Soviet troops entered Reichenbach, on 8 May 1945, they found around the hotel "Kaiserhof" (later, hotel Polonia on Kopernika Street) the corpses of a number of German deserters, hanged by the SS men prior their withdrawal.(73) In the town remained 800 living local German residents.(74) There were no Jews. This marks the end of the remained German era and the beginning of a new Polish era with the arrival in the town of the first war survivors, among them many Jews. German Reichenbach changed its nature and was renamed Rychbach.

Two sites remained intact: the synagogue and the Jewish cemetery. The building was handed over by Konrad Springer to the community and would be the immediate center of the return to the Jewish roots, national and religious identity feelings after the horrors of the Holocaust. The other once owned Jewish assets, which changed their identities, were the textile factories: the Telefunken plants, once owned by the "Cohn Brothers" were looted by the Red Army soldiers; the Flechtner plant, owned in the past by "Weyl & Nassau", was the first the Polish authorities took over. In February 1946, it employed 473,
including 157 Poles, which means the majority were Germans. The same was to be said about the Jordan plants, previously "A. Fleischer", which the Poles took over in August 1946. The spinning plant, which was destroyed, as stated above, by Soviet bombing, was restored and equipped with all the production means eliminating the need for subcontractors. The factory employed 262, including 86 Poles. (75)

By this time, there were already Jews in town creating the beginnings of a relatively active and vibrant community life, compared to other places in Poland, which were destroyed during the war. The first newcomers were ex-prisoners of Gross-Rosen and its branches. Activists of the former labor camp in Reichenbach who set up a committee of former prisoners supported their care. On May 13, less than a week after the end of the war, the committee registered 2622 Jews. This was the first place in Poland to care and register surviving Jews. The vast majority were below the age 40 and their origin represented a wide range of European countries: (76) Austria- 7; Belgium- 38; Germany- 24; France-24; Czechoslovakia- 93; the Netherlands- 29; Romania- 32; Hungary- 177; Greece- 1; Yugoslavia- 2; USSR- 5; Palestine…1; Poland- 2189.

The Jews from Central and Western Europe stayed in town for a very short time before going back to their homelands. Many of the natives and residents of Poland returned to their pre-war destinations in search of their families, relatives, and friends. Many of them were painfully disappointed and came back to Lower Silesia to join the Jews who had already decided to set up a home in this region. In addition to the committee of the former prisoners, the Jews organized a semi-Jewish police force to protect their lives and property, getting the weapons from Soviet units in the town with whom they kept close ties. (77)

Five weeks after the end of the war, on 17 June, there was a gathering in the town of delegates representing Jewish committees in the communities of Lower Silesia Jews were already living. The assembly elected a Provincial Jewish Committee * and its Chairman, Jacob Egit. The headquarters were on 23 Krasickiego Street, near the synagogue. The elected committee represented six towns where six thousands Jews were residing and was the province branch of the Central Jewish Committee (CJC) in Poland, its headquarters in the still ruined Warsaw. (78)

Egit represented the Polish Communist Party, ‘Frakcja’ (Fraction), as it was called in the province. It was to hold the main roles at the province as well as on the local committee levels, of the newly formed bodies whose representatives were organized along political party lines. This was decided, not because of the communist influence within the Jewish community, but because this was the dominant party in the new Poland. This became clear when the committee chairmanship was not given to an ex-prisoner in the labor camp in Langenbielau who also set up the ex-prisoners committee, Szymon Balicki, or to Moshe Linkowski, an ex-prisoner in Gross-Rosen. Instead, the CJC decided that its representative to head the province where Jews settled after managing to survive the Holocaust was a man who learned about the concentration camps later and from afar: Egit resided in the Soviet Union during the War.

On the evening of the Jewish Committee’s formation, another event took place which signified the rapid renewal of Jewish life in Poland after the war: a performance of Jewish

* Province is the English version of the Polish term, Województwo
Polish and Russian songs, and readings from the works of the famous poets, Sholem Aleichem, I.L. Peretz and others performed by ex-prisoners in Gross-Rosen and others who arrived from elsewhere in Poland. The evening was organized by Ruth Taru-Kowalska, a Yiddish theatre actress before the War, who had been in the Soviet Union during the War. In the following months, Zalman Koleśnikow and Chaja Rosenthal, organized the first Jewish theatre in Rychbach, Sziraim, that performed in the province and demonstrated that the Jewish public yearned for a professional and established Jewish theatre. Indeed, the theatre in Rychbach was the precursor of the Central Jewish Theatre of Lower Silesia (Niderslezier Yiddisher Teater) which was set up at a conference of Jewish actors, held in Łódź in July 1946. (79)

Rychbach was then seen as the center of new Jewish life in the province. The local committees saw as their immediate mission to provide material and mental assistance to the large influx of survivors who sought a place and opportunities for a new life. The difficulties they faced were not only due to objective conditions on the ground, finding housing and employment, health and welfare concerns, but also not always encountering friendly attitudes toward Jews.

The first decision of the Provincical Committee was to take over an old German sanatorium, "Ulbrichshoehe" in the nearby village of Rościszów. Jacob Egit reported to the CJC in Warsaw about the negative attitude of the Polish county manager, who said that had he known that the sanatorium was such a good property, he would not have passed it to the Jews. Egit added that during his absence, the police chief in Rychbach took his car and furniture from his home, without permission, even though he knew they were legally his. On the other hand, during this period, he reported that 16 Jews were admitted into the ranks of the town police.

Despite the natural problematic conditions, at a meeting in Rychbach the Jews cheered as the Provincical Committee decided to promote the settlement of 20,000 Jews in Lower Silesia: "We welcome Jews from all over Poland and promise to show them our most generous hospitality." (80) In July 1945, there were 1200 Jews in the town and a month later this figure doubled to 2350, which was almost half of all the Jews living in the province. The trend continued during the coming months and in January 1946, there were 4132 Jews in Rychbach. (81)

In the surrounding vicinity of Rychbach apparently there were ideal conditions for people who had just experienced the horrors of the War. On the one hand, there was no physical or significant war destruction, and on the other hand the infrastructure had the potential to enable people who wanted to start of new life - industrial plants, residential buildings and abandoned agricultural farms (where the occupants mostly Germans had already left or were about to leave). The historian Prof. Dariusz Stola noted, in referring to the massive Jewish emigration from Poland during the first months after the war, that Lower Silesia reflected for the Jews a paradoxical ideal – the possibility of staying in Poland but at the same time being ‘somewhere else’ as the area had been a ‘foreign territory’. It also meant that they could be within Poland in a different social environment, with another house and landscape but away from their original communities which had now turned to cemeteries. "It is possible, that if such places had not existed, people would have emigrated [from Poland] even faster." (82)
Indeed, the initial efforts at absorption of Jews were not easy and were complicated by the fact that the local inhabitants of German origin, who were evacuated from the town in the final days of the war, returned and went to their homes and work places, some of which were now taken by the new Jewish citizens. In July 1945, members of CJC reported after their visit to Lower Silesia, that while in Rychbach they heard that the mayor had threatened Jews to send them back to one of the affiliated camps of Gross-Rosen. It was not clear what the circumstances were, although it may be assumed that it was related to difficulties of absorbing so many new inhabitants with housing and employment opportunities, as "in principle Jews often refused to work for a German employer." (83)

An initial unpleasant experience for Jews, who came out from hiding or who had been detained in concentration and forced labor camps was now finding themselves working and living alongside Germans. In Rychbach as in all places formerly under German sovereignty, public areas were still signposted in German. The German language dominated on street names, billboards, transit signs, road signs, offices, and shops. A policy as to what should be done was not yet determined and there was confusion and disorder in public spaces all over Poland.

For instance, the town was at first been known by three names: Reichenbach, Rychbach and Drobniszew, with different authorities using different names. It is not hard to imagine the difficulties caused in communication and public transportation. The Railway Administration took the initiative to regulate the usage by using the name Rychbach, though the matter required a national level resolution. Formally, Reichenbach changed its name twice during the first year of new Poland, first Rychbach and from May 1946, Dzierżoniów.*

In order to determine the Polish rather than the German names, a conference was convened in September 1945, in Szczecin. The issue of names was linked, though not directly, with the question of the future of German residents who remained and the Poles sought to get rid of them as fast as possible. Yet, it was an issue that was to be decided not by the Poles alone but by the leaders of the victorious powers at the Potsdam Conference, in July 1945.

In the meantime, some extreme German groups challenged the new Polish authorities. Most of the German residents accepted the new reality of a Polish government, but among them were also hostile elements who were opposed to the government and the population settled in the region. In the vicinity of Rychbach were two particularly active extreme Nazi-oriented groups, Wehrwolf and Neues Deutschland. Their members were from time to time assaulting Poles, but mostly tried to influence the German population with propaganda to oppose the authorities. These violent groups and others were handled mainly by the Soviet NKWD, which was not subject to the Polish authorities, with its well known methods (from other places) including exile deep into the territory of the Soviet Union or executions and burials in the town's Protestant Cemetery. (84)

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* The name was given in honor of Jan Dzierżon, a Catholic priest and renowned in the study of beekeeping, who lived in the province. Due to blasphemy the Pope dispossessed him from church clergy and then banned him. In his later years they reconciled. It was a very rare coincidence that the last German mayor of Reichenbach was ... Kurt Dzierzon (mentioned in note 55). It seems implausible that a communist dominated administration was aware that the last Nazi Mayor of Reichenbach had bore the name they were going to give to their town. That by itself was a curious matter but over the years it never became a public issue. Kurt's son, Horst Dzierzon, paid a visit to the town, in May 2011, as the guest of the Dzierżoniów Mayor. (http://tygodnikdzierzoniowski.pl, 29 czerwiec 2011)
During the first year of the Jewish settlement in Rychbach, the number of the Germans still exceeded those of Jews and Poles together. In March 1946, the town's population numbered about 20,000 of which 14,357 were of German origin. Shortly thereafter a process of forced deportation of Germans began, sending them to the Soviet occupied zone in East Germany. These deportations lasted a year, from April 1946 to April 1947. On Garncarska Street in Rychbach, was the concentration point for the deportees and their personal belongings from the town and the surrounding settlements. The first to be expelled were those who expressed a desire to go and those who sympathized with the Nazis. Only professionals who were in employment and were considered essential to the operation and production of plants throughout the region were allowed to stay. During that year left the town 13,056 Germans, with only 1305 remaining, most of them experts who could not be replaced by Poles. They received a permit that ensured they could continue living in their apartments, though this did not always happen. Towards the end of 1948, only 329 Germans remained in the town and 1600 in the county.

In the two years, 1946-47, the Jewish community was able to set up a well-established system of independent institutions and organizations to serve their particular interests. Obviously, this was only possible with the blessing of the Polish government which was helpful and understood the needs of the Jewish minority that had gathered in the region with the objective of starting a new life after the horrors of the war and away from the assaults and harassment against Jews, which occurred in other parts of Poland.

The Rychbach Jewish committee, which represented the decisions and views of six municipal committees in neighboring communities, was like the provincial committee and like the CJC in Warsaw, composed of representatives of political parties. Their main ideological line was divided along the critical question of whether there was a future for Jews in Poland and if so, what it should be and how it should operate. The position of the Fraction, actually the Communist Party, and more radically the Bund Party, was that the Jews should stay in Poland and bind their fate with that of the State. Confronting them were five Zionist parties whose ultimate goal was Eretz Israel (settlement in Palestine).

The representatives of the Fraction held the main roles in the province and local committees, including the production department, which was in charge of locating work opportunities and developing economic and business policy, infrastructure, culture and propaganda and youth activities. During 1946 in Lower Silesia were active 40 party cells with 1300 members. The two strongest cells were in Wałbrzych, with 300 members and Dzierzoniów, 200 members. Ideologically, the Fraction saw productivity as its central objective, and it directed the new Jewish settlers to government establishments, especially heavy industries.

The second working sector that the Jewish Communists were proud of, was agriculture which like heavy industry, had not been widespread occupations among Jews before the Second World War. The Jewish farmer, like the Jewish coal miner, was recognized as a symbol of the new Jew after the War. There were Jews who were quick to take over German-owned farms, and in Lower Silesia their number was much greater compared to other regions in Poland. In February 1947, in the province there were 64 active farms including 36 in the county of Dzierzoniów.
In addition to changing the old occupational structure of the Jews, great importance was given to the establishing a range of cooperatives backed by the ‘JOINT’ (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee - JDC) and the Government, designed to sell daily services such as, tailoring, footwear, textiles and baking. The Jews were the first to set them up in Lower Silesia in two counties, Dzierzoniów and Wałbrzych. In the spirit of those days, these cooperatives were also founded on party lines. In a document of the Provincial Committee, that was undated, but according to its context was probably from the end of 1946 beginning 1947, the distribution of the cooperatives in the province was as follows: in total there were 74, among them 11 in Dzierzoniów, 3 in Bielawa and 3 in Petrolesie. Their management by the parties was: 55 the Fraction; 4 Bund; 7 the Zionist parties; 8 not affiliated. In Dzierzoniów and Bielawa, the Zionists managed one cooperative each while in Petrolesie all three were not affiliated. (89)

The Zionist involvement in the cooperatives was minimal at only about 10%, both at the provincial and municipal level. They were apparently less interested in the economic aspects of the Jewish settlement and focused their main activities on preparing and training for one purpose: immigration to Palestine. Their efforts centered on young people and the Zionist party’s youth organizations within the framework of the HeHalutz Hatzayir (the Youth Pioneer movement). One of the leading parties in the province was the Ihud Hatsiyonim Hademocratim (Democratic Zionists Union) which operated, as early as 1946, five kibbutzim (collective settlements), in Rychbach, Bielawa and Wałbrzych, designed for young people, up to the age of 35. In addition the Union operated children and veterans houses.

The first confrontation between the Zionists and the Communists took place following the establishment of the Provincial Committee when the leadership of Jacob Egit, as its chairman, was challenged. In August 1945, a Jewish family named Honik, defiantly criticized the committee’s activities and did not restrain from also criticizing the Polish authorities. Egit decided to expel the family from Rychbach and thus precede the local police. The decision provoked the fury of some Zionist activists who demanded Egit's dismissal. The subject was brought before a senior forum at the CJC in Warsaw, which in the absence of several officials decided to reject the dismissal claim. (90)

During this period the education of children and young people was of paramount importance to all of the Jewish parties. This too became an area of rivalry and struggle for influence between the Communists, the Zionists and the Religious parties. Some of the debate became heated as it was seen as being related to the consciousness of Jews regarding the future of Palestine. The Provincial Committee had lead responsibility for the scope and content of education although HeHalutz and the religious congregations were also involved.

As early as July 1945, the Central Jewish Committee decided to open Jewish schools throughout the country. Most of them were secular in nature but differed in their language teaching of Hebrew and Yiddish and their attitude to religion. In the schools under the Committee’s supervision the teaching language was Yiddish, while the HeHalutz schools teaching was in Hebrew. Yiddish schools operated in all Jewish communities, whereas the schools teaching Hebrew along with Yiddish, operated from the middle of 1947 in six communities: Wrocław, Dzierzoniów, Bielawa, Wałbrzych, Legnica, Świdnica.
The linguistic differences in schools was in part a struggle between ‘class and culture’ within the Jewish communities. An old article re-published in April 1948, by the organ of the Bund party stated that among other things, "the struggle for the Yiddish or Hebrew languages is therefore a struggle of two cultures - an aristocratic culture and labor culture."(91)

Alongside these schools, the committees also operated a vocational education system, aimed at preparing young people for practical work and as a reserve workforce. In May 1946, the first branch was opened in Dzierzoniów in order to train 160 Jewish families who operated private farms. (92) The schools trained students in general and professional studies in a wide range of subjects related to industry and cooperatives. A few months later, in October, 107 in Dzierzoniów attended the school whereas all over Poland were 623. A year and a half later the figure in town doubled to 202 and across Poland it increased threefold to 1834. (93)

A foreigner paid a visit to Dzierzoniów, in 1947, praised the town and described it as a town that no one had heard of before the war but now has quickly become an important centre of Jewish life in Poland: "Dzierzoniów is not just a settlement. It is a large workshop and an educational center, a means for physical and spiritual wound healing caused by the War and enabling to gain an occupation. Mostly it is busy in educating a new generation of Polish Jews, teaching adults a profession, and creating a system of productive work for those who can take part in it ..." (94)

A variety of sports attracted the attention of the Jewish youth. The first 14 clubs in Lower Silesia, which were set after the spring of 1946, were Jewish sports clubs (Żydowskie Kluby Sportowe - (ŻKS)). Among the sport branches in Dzierzoniów were table tennis (active since 1946), football (1947) and boxing (1948). That same year the Workers Jews Sport Club, "Gwiazda" (Star), was set up. Except for table tennis, the Jewish clubs did not demonstrate success on the national level. However, the clubs contributed to the popularity of sport among the Jewish population and their existence gave young people a psychological boost enabling them to see their physical capabilities no worse than others. (95)

The health situation and the demographic structure of the rapidly growing Jewish population in Lower Silesia required immediate action. Tuberculosis was affecting both the former camp prisoners in Poland and the Soviet labor camps. In August 1945, the operation of the 'Jewish Health Protection Organization', (Towarzystwo Ochrony Zdrowia - (TOZ)) that had been operating in Poland since the early 1920's through the Second World War, resumed full activity. The provincial center was located in Dzierzoniów on Mickiewicza Street 10. The center had clinics that specialized in the full range of medical services and community health and hygiene education and support. They supervised health care and health education across the entire education system, children's homes, hostels and kibbutzim from a site on Świerczewskiego Street 19. In October 1948, the provincial office off the organization was moved to Wrocław and in Dzierzoniów the clinic for mother and child care remained. (96)

The sphere in which the committees and the secular parties were not involved was religion. In May 1945, the Jewish religious community was established (from 1946 its name was the Congregation of the Jewish Faith (Kongregacja Wyznania Mojżeszowego)) in Wrocław and other towns. It set up branches similar to the secular ones as described above.
The government allowed the freedom of religious worship but stated that the Jewish Religious Communities in Poland were not legally the successors of the pre-war communities, and as such were not the owners of the former German religious assets, e.g. synagogues, prayer houses, cemeteries, ritual baths, etc. Nevertheless, in March 1946, it gave them the management and maintenance of those assets. In Dzierzoniów and other four communities in the province functioned a local Rabbi - the others were Wrocław, Legnica and Wałbrzych. (97) The local Rabbi was Mordka Szpiro and the head of the religious community M. Rubin. (98)

The size of the Jewish community, including those not registered with the local committees, can be seen from the size of the annual Passover matzo distribution that was carried out under the supervision of the CJC in Warsaw. In the report of the Provincial Committee in Wrocław, in 1946, it stated that in Lower Silesia 55,597 kilograms were allocated to 37,060 people. In the county of Rychbach were 15,320 and another 150 children in an orphanage in Petrolesie. In Wrocław there were 7010 and in Wałbrzych 7300. (99)

A new period commenced in February 1946, with the beginning of the repatriations of Jews from the Soviet Union back to Poland. These were Jews who had managed to flee east and spent the war there. The first had already started arriving half a year earlier, but the main organized mass arrivals were in 1946.

As in more than forty other communities in Lower Silesia, during the six months of the operation Dzierzoniów was absorbing immigrants and accordingly the number of its residents increased significantly. At the same time the Germans were being moved to East Germany and thus leaving the town and their homes and jobs were made available to the newcomers. In March 1946, the Jewish population numbered 5832 and two months later, in May, it had risen to 9495 and by June to 11,051. In June for the first time, the number of Jews in Wrocław was higher than that of Dzierzoniów, 15,057. (100) In April 1946 the Provincial Committee headquarters was moved from Dzierzoniów to Wrocław, even though the central parts of the city were still in ruins, regaining its status as the central city in Lower Silesia as it had had before the War.

Even during the repatriation operation, more than once the schism between the Zionists and Communists was apparent. The passengers arriving from the Soviet Union after a very strenuous and exhausting trip that often lasted weeks were greeted at the train station by representatives of the district committee who were briefing them about the conditions in the designated places. Also on hand were representatives of the Zionist parties, who tried to persuade new arrivals not to stay in Poland and to move on to Palestine. It obviously caused verbal skirmishes between the opposing parties. In one case, at the beginning of the operation in February 1946, a representative of the CJC was told about an event at the station in Wrocław, when an Ihud Party representative tried to persuade people not to travel to Rychbach telling them that the Jews were killed there. They seemed to be saying this in order to encourage the new arrivals to stay in Wrocław, because from there it would be easier for them to leave Poland. (101)

While the operation was approaching its end, on July 4th 1946, groups of Poles in Kielce, in southern Poland, carried out a pogrom, slaughtering 42 Jews and injuring 80. This shocking incident opened wounds that were still not healed and aroused emotional anxiety and fear of an uncertain future for Jews in Poland. The immediate result was a big exodus.
of Jews leaving the country. Also in this period other anti-Semitic events took place. Jews in Dzierzoniów experienced beatings, there were other incitements and firecrackers were thrown on the local committee offices. The peak of the events was when the young pioneer, Bezalel Zilberberg, was murdered on 26 September 1946, while on duty guarding the Ihud Party kibbutz. No one was arrested and his funeral was attended by almost all the Jews in town and representatives of the municipality and the county as a demonstration and protest against the actions of Hitler's successors. (102)

One of the immediate side effects of the Kielce pogrom was the departure of Jews from the small and isolated communities to the bigger Jewish communities in larger towns. At the same time, Jews continued arriving from Central and Eastern Poland and the Jewish population in Dzierzoniów grew during the six months after the pogrom by about half: their number reaching a peak in November 1946 of 17,800, but a month later it had decreased to 16,000, while the figure in Wrocław decreased to 15,000. Together the two cities were home to about 55% of all Jews in Lower Silesia. However, in February 1947 the numbers of people had decreased and a year later, in February 1948, the Jewish population of Dzierzoniów was 6,796 and in Wrocław, 10,954. (103) At that time the largest Jewish population was in Łódź, at 15,826; Szczecin 6,628, Kraków 6,397 and Warsaw 6,044 were the others. "The highest percentage of Jews relative to the overall number of city residents was in Dzierzoniów, and the most assimilated Jews were in Warsaw." (104) In May 1948, the total population in Dzierzoniów was 21,612, which meant that the Jews constituted more than a quarter of the population. (105) The Jews relative high number was exceptional in the Jewish history in Poland after the war, and therefore the town gained, among others, the nickname "Polish Jerusalem."(106) *

2. Personal Testimonies

Rychbach, and later Dzierzoniów, became a hub around which new Jewish settlement in Lower Silesia developed. It was in fact the largest hub in Poland immediately after World War II. The first committee established was the Camp Prisoners' Committee, designed to help Holocaust survivors. It was where the first gathering of representatives of the Jews who began arriving en masse from the camps and other parts of Poland. The Committee outlined in a memo the principles for the establishment of the settlement. Among other things, the memo expressed the psychological needs of the survivors to live near others with similar experiences. After the war, that dimension was of vital importance for Jews. (107) That was a reason the town became a focal point for foreign visitors wishing to examine more closely what had happened to people.

One of the visitors was Pessah Nowik, an activist of the Bund in the Soviet Union, who had migrated to the United States before World War I, and was a journalist and author of books in Yiddish. He made an extensive tour throughout Europe for about six months from May 1946, and three of those he spent in Poland. His purpose was to examine the situation of Jews who had survived the Holocaust. At the end of his comprehensive tour, he wrote about his impressions of what he had seen in Lower Silesia, where he believed the ‘best odds’ existed for the rebirth of a new Jewish life in Poland. His impressions were given in

* In those days were Poles who used to call the town maliciously, "Żydbach" (Ży /Jew) and the Jews responded head held high, "Żydbach". (Helga Hirsch, "Last Respects", Die Welt, 19 August 2008)
a Yiddish book published in 1948 in New York under the title: "Europe - Cwishn Mylhome Un Shulem" (Europe - between War and Peace).

He described his impressions of Wrocław, which was by then already the seat of the Jewish District Committee and where hundreds of Jews were employed in the railway car factory "Pafawag", the largest in Poland and one of the largest in Europe. Nowik wrote: "There was 85 days of fighting here. 85 Days! The Red Army was in Berlin, and here there were still battles." The ruins of the city, he said, resembled the ruins of Warsaw; here and there he saw German-language street signs, and Germans still lived there. In the city there was already quite a large concentration of Jews, but during his visit Nowik noted that they still could not develop a foothold there and the fact that the city was in ruins did not help. Hence, he concluded that greater importance should be given to those Jewish communities in Lower Silesia where Jewish people held a more tangible grip. First and foremost he mentioned Rychbach which was the heart of Jewish settlement in the province. (108)

According to Nowik, Rychbach had the following nicknames: "Vilnius of Lower Silesia", "Jerusalem of Lower Silesia", "Tel Aviv". He found the Jewish Culture House, the building of the Jewish Committee near the synagogue, exciting. In the past it had been the home of a German dignitary. He reported that everywhere he saw many Jews: in the synagogue, on the sidewalks, in the middle of the street: Jews from the camps, Soviet Jews. He noted that Jews who had lived in the town for some time were well-dressed, while those who were newer arrivals and had not yet integrated dressed more poorly. But for him the most important factor was that Polish Jews lived! The proof was the Culture House and the sign on its front written in Yiddish – Kultur Hoiz.

Jacob Egit told Nowik that when he first arrived in Rychbach, in May 1945, he chose the most beautiful German building, saying, “This is it, here will be the committee!” When it was decided to move the headquarters to Wrocław, the house remained the seat of the local Jewish Committee for Rychbach and the surrounding towns. As the area of Rychbach with the highest concentration of Jews in the town, Nowik described the Jewish quarter as a neighborhood where one could listen to Yiddish songs late into the night, and it was where the Jewish theatre was located and the cultural life was very intense. On the walls of these buildings one could see a lot of advertisements for shows, lectures, guest performances and so on. While the level of activity was very low compared to the Jewish life in Poland before the War, it was the resurgence of a healthy Jewish life.

Nowik recounted a story from the time he stayed with Jacob Egit in his apartment. One day there was a knock on the door and a German woman entered and asked if she should come the next day to clean the apartment: "Clean a Jewish house...we felt then that most certainly we were in liberated Lower Silesia."

Another eyewitness, who wrote about Dzierzoniów shortly after the Kielce pogrom in July 1946, was a British reporter for the Manchester Guardian (his name was not specified). (109) He reported that the town police chief was a Jew, as well as two deputies to the district governor. Not identifying names, he wrote that the Police Chief "is probably the first Jew to hold such an office in Poland." Several Jews held senior administrative positions and important roles in many factories and mines. "However, the Jews did not feel safe." Outside the buildings of the Jewish community and the synagogue he regularly saw
armed Jewish guards. Thus, even though there were no serious security incidents, Jews were worried, particularly after the Kielce pogrom, and many expressed their desire to leave Poland. The reporter noted that a Jewish doctor with a good practice in Dzierzoniów told him that he was leaving because he was afraid to go out of town to visit a patient, fearing attack after his daughter experienced attacks and insults at her school from non-Jewish fellow pupils. He also reported about a Jewish shop owner who managed his business under a non-Jewish pseudonym as a precaution, in case he might be boycotted.

The third testimony is from Feliks Nieznanowski, a Jew whose family had lived in the Old Town of Warsaw prior the Second World War. During the war he was in the Soviet Union and returned to Poland at its end. He did not want to live in Warsaw because his brother was the only member of his family to survive. Instead, he was among the first immigrants of the repatriation who arrived in Rychbach, in February 1946. His impressions were first-hand and from his personal point of view. (110)

He arrived in the town and found himself, with a wooden suitcase and a worn-out Soviet jacket, on the street among many Jews, which reminded him of the hustle and bustle of the Jews on Nawelki Street in Old Warsaw. "Hey, who are you? How old are you? Where are you from?" – asked a passer-by, and before he was able to respond the man loaded him and his belongings on his bike and rode to the local Jewish Committee on Daszyńskiego Street, where Feliks’s brother Józef was employed as the director of the youth department of the Provincial Jewish Committee. In front of the building there was a large crowd of Jews who had arrived in the town and were waiting for a place to stay and food to eat, as they had nothing. The two brothers met there for the first time since 1941. "Take the keys," said Joseph: "There is an apartment: go there as I cannot leave the office now. Find some clothes and get dressed." At the apartment Feliks found a swastika and various Germans clothes, and on opening a drawer he found a pistol. There was also a bathroom and that was the most important thing at that moment!

As he had just arrived from the Soviet Union, and he had left-leaning political beliefs, he was told to join the ZWM, the 'Fighting Youth Union', a communist youth organization established in the war to fight the Germans. It was now aligned with the Polish Communist Party. He wrote down his own impressions on Jewish daily life in Rychbach from his political perspective. He emphasized how different groups wrangled over who would be responsible for the distribution of the large amounts of machinery, textiles, materials and varied food products that were funded by the JDC. The goods were arriving at the port of Gdansk on the Baltic Sea, and then were transported overland to Rychbach. In his opinion, it was "typical of Jews that they quarreled about who would be responsible for all of this, every party wanting to be important." As he was young and still without a family, he proposed himself as the warehouseman, as half the products meant for distribution were already finding their way onto the black market. Lists were prepared, and the committees decided how the products were distributed in the cooperatives and factories; however, he believed that many were receiving food and equipment they did not deserve.

Someone said to Feliks: "There is one person you can trust, named Springer. He is a German who saved the synagogue and the Jewish cemetery here, and he was here throughout the war. He is the only person you can trust." Feliks let the others in charge know that he had brought in a locksmith and all door locks had been replaced, and "only I and Springer have keys to them now, and no one is allowed to enter in the warehouses." So
it happened that the same German who saved the synagogue before the war was now a confidant of the "new Jew."

Not surprisingly, Feliks’s attempt to take control of the distribution of goods was not welcomed by the others and he encountered difficulties following the products that were distributed. At some point it was suggested that the matter should be handled in rotation between different parties. Feliks became fed up with what was going on and gave up his role in distribution. One year after arriving, he left the town and enlisted in the Polish army, although the Party tried to dissuade him and offered to release him from the service, but he refused and expressed his wish to serve in the army. He was to serve for many years and reached the rank of Major. Joseph, his brother migrated to Israel in the mid 1950s. After marriage Feliks returned and settled in his home city, Warsaw.

The fourth account of Jewish life in Rychbach came from a research carried out during the years 1947-50 by the Polish sociologist Dr. Irena Hurwic-Nowakowska. She carried out the first, and in fact the last, survey designed to examine the attitudes and mental state of the Jews in Poland after the Holocaust. The survey was conducted through an anonymous questionnaire in three cities: Warsaw, because it was the capital of Poland, with the largest number of assimilated Jews; Łódź and its surroundings, because of the largest concentration of Jews in Poland at that time; and Dzierzoniów, the town with the highest ratio of Jews within the general population. According to the survey data, in 1947, there were 16,646 inhabitants in the town, including 6750 Jews. "Dzierzoniów was also interesting as a new type of a settlement in the western territories."

In the preamble of the English version of her book, published 35 years later, Hurwic-Nowakowska noted that in 1947 the Jews numbered 37% of the town’s population, which was "quite an exceptional figure considering the postwar conditions. It was there that I found a Jewish community with an indigenous folklore and culture... Postwar Dzierzoniów represented a half-conscious tendency of Jews to live close to each other. Results of the field work and the survey confirm this." (111)

She sent out 19,244 questionnaires to all Jews over the age of 18 in the three cities. Approximately 13,000 reached their destination; however, she only received 817 responses, approximately 6%, including 107 in Dzierzoniów. Hurwic-Nowakowski acknowledged that numerically it was not a success, but "the material is much richer in terms of quality: the respondents represent many different social strata, political opinions, and cultural backgrounds, from the most orthodox to the completely assimilated."

One of the issues identified in the survey was that the Jews chose to live together. This was true before the war, when there were areas where the Jewish presence was dense, with entire towns inhabited almost exclusively by Jews, as well as entire quarters in big cities.

This may have been an important factor which made Dzierzoniów attractive, with its large number of Jews and Jewish institutions. Many of the Jews had arrived on their own accord to live in a Jewish environment. Due to their number and their percentage of the population, the Jews in Dzierzoniów constituted a more compelling community than the Jews who returned to Warsaw and Łódź. Hurwic-Nowakowski found in her survey, however, that in Dzierzoniów they more often mentioned the Kielce pogrom (one of the respondents was a victim) as an event affecting them personally, while the respondents in Warsaw and Łódź mentioned it less. She concluded that those who were affected more by
the tragedy of Kielce looked for a shelter within a Jewish environment. (113) One of the survey respondents, an official in a social organization in Dzierżoniów, said that for him Poland was his homeland since it allowed the existence of the Jewish community. As to his future plans, he replied he intended to live among Jews, and therefore had chosen to settle in the town. "I would try to live wherever Jews are. If the Jewish community in Poland vanished, I too would leave the country. I would prefer, of course, [to live in] democratic countries." (114)

3. Community Life Turnover

After the anxious departure of tens of thousands of Jews following the Kielce pogrom, a calm and stable atmosphere prevailed in the Jewish communities, in part due to the border crossings being blocked, preventing illegal or semi-legal migration from Poland. Since the end of 1946, and for nearly the next two years, the life of the Jews in Dzierżoniów became routine, with all aspects of daily life being as they had been during the previous year and a half.

Jewish identity was emphasized, particularly in the fields of culture and education, with direct linkage between the Jewish past and present. In February 1947, the responsibility for cultural affairs was passed from the Provincial Committee to a new body, the 'Jewish Society of Culture and Art' (Żydowskie Towarzystwo Kultury i Sztuki-ŻTKS). The organization operated branches in the province, including in Dzierżoniów, and managed cultural houses, clubs, libraries, visual arts, music, evening courses and languages. The cultural life gained significant importance because of the activity of the Jewish theatre which was established in Dzierżoniów. The theatre performed before enthusiastic Jewish audiences in many localities in the province. (The Theatre’s permanent home was later moved to Wrocław).

In the middle of 1948, it was decided to instigate a fund-raising campaign among the Jewish communities in Lower Silesia to build a permanent house for the theatre. During the coming months significant sums were raised. In one of the Fraction reports it was said, inter alia, that the Zionists had been negative on the fundraising because it is "unjustifiable to build a theatre while in Palestine Jewish blood is being shed...and anyway there will be no Jews in Poland, the theatre will be nationalized and the Jews will not utilize it. The Zionist propaganda was a complete failure, however. They found an attentive ear only among the merchants and production workers." (115)

At this time the rivalry between the Communists and Zionists had reached its highest point, with the establishment of the Jewish Independent State of Israel in May 1948. The trend had been accelerated the year before, early in 1947, with the parliamentary general elections to the new Sejm (Parliament) with the cooperation of the Jewish parties. The Communists were proud of the participation rates: in Dzierżoniów it reached 97% and Wrocław 99%. (116) The election resulted in a landslide victory for the Polish Communist Party, which would soon become the only party in the country – and the cooperation between the Jewish parties would soon come to an end.

The coming months after the elections were marked by accelerated activity in the United Nations on the question of the future of Palestine, and that sharpened the relationships between the parties. The Communists and the Bund had had a clear objective to establish a
new Jewish identity within the newborn national political structure in Poland. For that purpose they continued to emphasize the socialist elements of work, productivity facilities and competitiveness, and cultural activities. In June 1947 and 1948, they organized events to mark the second and third years of the new Jewish presence in Lower Silesia, and also took part in the events of the First of May and the October Revolution. The overt purpose of these activities was to increase their significance among the local Jewish population. On the other hand, the Zionist parties saw the ongoing activities in the United Nations as essential in the process of realizing the Zionist dream.

In the second half 1947, the Dzierzoniów Fraction branch of the Party was the largest in the province: 500 members compared to 400 and 300 in Wałbrzych and Wrocław respectively, a total of 3500. (117) Following the UN Resolution, of November 1947, which endorsed the establishment of two states in Palestine, Jewish and Arab, the reaction of the Fraction was to be grateful to the Soviet Union and the Polish government for supporting the decision, and they organized mass street demonstrations in the province towns. The left wing of the Zionist parties maintained a similar position. They organized a rally in Dzierzoniów carrying banners of gratitude to the governments of the USSR and Poland for their support to realize the Jewish People’s vision to establish a national homeland in Palestine. Party activists of the Zionist Ihud Party treated the rally with mixed feelings. (118)

The complicated relations between the Communist and Zionist activists were given practical implications following the UN partition plan. Making the Communist Party the ruling party in Poland did not, during its first year, create any significant changes in the life of the Jews. The Independence Declaration of the State of Israel, in May 1948, aroused very great enthusiasm among the Jews on all sides of the political arena. However, that historical event was soon to create a radical change in Jewish life in Poland. The first indication was in July 1948, when Jacob Egit, the chairman of the Provincial Committee, was told that the Jewish pavilion at the projected exhibition dealing with the liberated territories (those annexed to Poland at the end of World War II) in Wrocław, in which the Committee invested a lot of work in order to exhibit the achievements of Jews, was to be incorporated into the general display instead of being separated as planned. It was a surprising announcement in itself as well as one which rang alarm bells as to its meaning. Very soon it was clear: the Soviet Union had decided to change its policy and adopt a strident anti-Israel and anti-Jewish approach which Poland was obliged to follow. (119)

One of the initial hallmarks of the change was the reorganization of the Jewish committees in order to strengthen the control of the Communists on the committees and include their representatives from workers’ organizations. The change was to match the traditional communist propaganda that actions are done as a response to the alleged demands of the Jewish population. An example of the latter was the employees of a carpet co-operative in Dzierzoniów. They argued that, after listening to what was happening in the country, they came to the conclusion that the structure and composition of the Jewish committee was not compatible with the socio-economic situation of Jews in Poland, and therefore it was necessary to reorganize the committees in order to change the representation of the entities taking part in building the Jewish Poland. (120) It involved also the change of the ruling party functionaries, among them the Chairman of the Dzierzoniów Jewish Committee, Israel Orlin, who was dismissed in December 1948.

While the communists’ grip on the leadership of the Jewish community tightened, the
opposite trend, the desire to migrate to Israel, grew. This desire was not hidden nor did its scope decrease, and it even permeated the ranks of the Jewish schools. In November 1948, it was reported that school children in Dzierzoniów refused to listen to talks on unification of the working class, explaining that "they were more interested in issues in Palestine, which was in the midst of a struggle, and at the same time they refused to sing the Polish national anthem." (121)

One of the communist representatives said in a report, that at the Jewish school in Bielawa some children refused to sing the Polish national anthem. When the director asked them why they had not sung it, and had stopped going to school in the middle of the academic year, they responded that "since Poland is not our homeland, we do not need to finish school here." (122) In another report of March 1949, a communist representative of the Dzierzoniów local committee talked about the increasing interest in emigration: "Since March it is noticeable of people who are still arriving, that what they want is to get the necessary certifications to get a passport for travel. If at first it was a phenomenon of individuals, now it has taken on a mass character - the same can be seen in Bielawa, Pieszyce, etc." (123)

The two issues, (1) the taking control by the Communist Party of the regional Jewish committees, and through them control of Jewish community life, and (2) the growing desire of Jews to leave Poland, were actually two faces of the same coin. The independent organizations established by the Jews since the end of the War faced abolition or nationalization, including the political parties, youth organizations, schools, theatres, cooperatives, health organization, the 'Jewish National Fund' and 'Keren Hayesod'. The 'JOINT', whose assistance to the Holocaust survivors was very significant, was ordered to cease its activities in Poland. In August 1949, instead of the existing religious organization, 'Religious Union of Mosaic Faith' (Związek Religijny Wyznania Mojżeszowego - (ZRWM)) was established as the ritual organization representing the interests of the Jews.

In October 1950, the Central Jewish Committee was abolished, along with all province committees, and replaced by one central organization, the 'Society of Socio-Cultural Jews in Poland' (Towarzystwo Społeczno-Kulturalne Żydów w Polsce -- (TSKŻ)). Despite its official name, the real mission of the organization was to represent the interests of the country only party, the Communist Party, and ideologically oversee the Jewish population in order to strengthen their loyalty to the state. TSKŻ together with ZRWM, were henceforth the only two organs to represent the interests of the Jews in Poland.

The other side of the coin was the fact that the Polish government recognized the affinity of large numbers of the Jews with the State of Israel. In August 1949, the Minister of Public Administration (actually the Minister of the Interior), Władysław Wolski, told the Israeli Envoy to Warsaw, Israel Barzilaj, of the government's decision for a defined time, to allow the emigration of Jews from Poland. A month later, the government released that message to the press. The decision was the result of the "internal national needs of the country" and the wish to allow "undesirable elements – Zionist and religious zealots" to leave the country. (124)

At that time, there were 5680 registered Jews in Dzierzoniów, 16% less than in February 1948. For the first time it lagged behind Wroclaw, with a Jewish population of 12,240, and Wałbrzych with 7208. (125) As the figures in those two cities had increased during that
period and migration from Poland was prohibited, it should be assumed that the Jews had left Dzierzoniów either for those cities or to other regions in the country. The atmosphere of departure encompassed large parts of the Jewish community. A report of the Provincial Committee in Wroclaw stated that in Dzierzoniów even "some of our activists doubted their propaganda against traveling." The strong desire to depart existed in the ranks of factory workers, clerks and co-operative employees. Until August 1950, there were 3730 Jews registered for migration in the region of Dzierzoniów, which constituted 28% of the Jews in the region. In other regions the figures were even higher. The emigration, together with the elimination of the Jewish institutions, brought an end to a remarkable period in the unique character in the life of Jews in Dzierzoniów and the province. Not many remembered at that time that the town was once named the "Polish Jerusalem." (126)

Dzierzoniów was indeed exceptional in being the only town in post-war Poland that was inhabited by a high percentage of Jews, who lived in an atmosphere similar to the pre-war shtetl, with Yiddish billboards and Yiddish spoken on the streets. At news-stands there were Jewish newspapers printed in Yiddish alongside Hebrew and Polish magazines. They covered national as well international news and dealt also with specific topics of interest for the Jewish community, such as daily hardships, searches for relatives, anti-Semitic struggles and Jewish schools. The most popular paper in Dzierzoniów distributed to subscribers, was 'Dos Naye Lebn' ('Nowe Życie' / 'The New Life'), the organ of the Provincial Committee, which at its beginning in the summer of 1946 was weekly, and then published three times a week. The same was true of the organs of the other parties. From 1947, 'Folks Sztyme' (Voice of the People), the Yiddish organ of the Polish Communist Party, was printed weekly and then daily. In 1949 the publishing of the Jewish Historical Institute newsletter named, 'Biuletyn', was also started.

All these came to an end with the winding-up of the wide variety and autonomy of Jewish organizations and the emigration operation, which lasted a year from September 1949 to September 1950. Upon completion of this change in the life of Polish Jews, the Jewish press throughout the country was reduced to the publishing of only the daily 'Folks Sztyme' and the 'Biuletyn' as a historical research magazine. Their distribution in Dzierzoniów was conducted by the TSKŻ through subscribers, evening readings and meetings with editors. (127)

One of the victims of the turnover in Jewish life in Lower Silesia was Jacob Egit, who headed the Provincial Committee from its beginning until autumn 1949, when he was ousted from office. (128) He was publishing his actual work in articles in Yiddish newspapers and books. Yet, already in those days there were rumors regarding his conduct. In 1947, one of the Communist Fraction documents reported that "Egit is suffering from growing madness. [He] is restrained in relations with friends. On the other hand [he] is surrounded by people with dubious morality and a very negative past." He was also accused of collaborating with the Ihud Party and showing sympathy for Zionism. (129) Then it could have been considered a sin. But the fact that Egit was neither called to order nor ousted, as had happened two years earlier when a Jewish family was required to leave the town after questioning the leadership, as mentioned above - might indicate his solid status in the party hierarchy prior to his removal.

Egit, in his autobiography, Grand Illusion, published in 1991, more than four decades after the end of his term of office, not surprisingly did not deal with those personal matters. After his dismissal, the security services began to collect materials in order to accuse him,
on the one hand of promoting a Jewish nationalistic and autonomous presence in Lower Silesia, and on the other hand of acting for personal financial gains, such as taking parcels intended for coal miners and distributing them in the kibbutzim. (130) That took place during the height of anti-Semitic campaigns towards the end of Stalin's reign, beginning 1953, such accusations were commonplace, and many people lost their lives in show trials: Jacob Egit was saved from that fate.

In documents hidden in the archives of the Polish security forces and published after his autobiography, there are details that confirm to some extent the financial allegations against Egit. A series of articles published recently stated, that since his youth Egit had been interested in wealth and was always looking for ways to achieve it. (131) The accusations against him included ideological allegations of Zionist sympathies and financial deviations; the assumption in the documents was that a senior position entails also inappropriate economic benefits.

In this sense Jacob Egit was apparently no different than others. For instance, he took funds in collaboration with the book-keeper of the Provincial Committee, appropriating goods intended for Jewish coal miners. His apartment in Wroclaw was funded with money received from the Provincial Committee, and he received two pensions, one from the Committee and the other from the publishing house where he worked after his dismissal in Wroclaw. The author of the article series, Marek Szajda, noted that it was difficult to refute these accusations, and it was unlikely that their inventions were the fruit of his opponents. On the other hand, it was also difficult to prove their reliability, considering the fact that he was not ousted because of these actions, but for ideological reasons that have been proven absurd in retrospect. Szajda concluded, that documents from the Jewish committee archives from all over Poland revealed many cases of cheating, fraud and cronyism. Egit did not differ from the heads of other committees, except perhaps only in the extent of the propaganda concerning him.

4. *Between Staying and Leaving*

Despite three years of Jewish autonomy, thousands of Jews were still "sitting on suitcases" and took advantage of the first opportunity to leave Poland. In the second half of 1949, 5680 Jews lived in Dzierzoniów, 2800 in Bielawa, 935 in Pieszyce, 12,240 in Wroclaw, 7208 in Walbrzych, and 4452 in Legnica – in total 43,135 were registered in Lower Silesia. At the beginning of 1950, about 30,000 Jews remained in the district. (132) After a year and a half, in the context of the annual Matzo distribution, the data were updated downwards, although like in the past they did not necessarily reflect the true numbers. In June and July 1951 in Lower Silesia were registered 17,205 Jews, including Dzierzoniów and its surroundings 2775, Bielawa 1550, Pieszyce 340, Wroclaw 4800, Legnica 2925, and Walbrzych 2000. (133)

The main Jewish communities remained, but now they did not have the same status. The body forced upon them to represent and promote the objectives of the ruling Communist Party was, as stated, the TSKŻ. That organization was active on two fronts: firstly, around cultural issues, setting up libraries and reading rooms, and organizing valuable artistic performances that were very popular among Jewish people in the large communities in Poland. It also set up cultural centers and theaters which were designed to continue to preserve the national identity of the Jewish community.
The second strand of work was designed to serve the interests and the political propaganda of the party, which in the early 1950s focused on the struggle against 'Jewish nationalism and Zionists of all shades". Zionism was identified then as a spy-agency of Anglo-American imperialism. Those were the days of the most extreme anti-Jewish and anti-Zionist Stalinism. Jacob Egit was arrested, in February 1953, charged with the accusations mentioned earlier, and due to his alleged intentions to separate Lower Silesia from Poland with the support of the JOINT. At that time, the Secretary-General of that organization in Poland, Joseph Gitler-Barski, was arrested. It was even said that the entire Jewish leadership might be imprisoned. In Dzierzonów, in April 1953, it was reported that a man was arrested suspected of belonging to a spy network related to an operation nicknamed "Jordan." (134)

Within the political propaganda framework, the issue of women's membership and activity in the TSKŻ, which seemed unsatisfactory to its functionaries, aroused concern and was published in the press. An organized propaganda campaign all over the country recruited women for various tasks initiated by the Party, such as collecting scrap metal and wastepaper. During the election campaign to the new Sejm (Parliament), in October 1952, in Bielawa 80% of the agitators on the streets were women. Some expressed greater ideological extremism than the men, demanding the final eradication of the "remnants of Jewish nationalism". In the same year, in Dzierzonów Jewish women were the first to collect aid for the North Koreans, who were in a war against the South. However, a group of 15 Jewish women who worked loading coal-cars in a coal-mine in Wałbrzych outdid all other 'patriotic' activities, by deciding to celebrate the October Revolution by handing over their wages to families where the husband or son was serving in the Polish Army. At the end of their shift, instead of going home, they went to the Union branch to report what they had done. Their story was highlighted on the pages of Folks Sztyme. (135) However, the objective of encouraging more women into occupations yielded limited results as far as TSKŻ was concerned. In Dzierzonów, the results were relatively more encouraging: in 1951, there were 500 unemployed women registered, whereas after four years the number had dropped to 260. (136)

The issue of Jewish employment, that was central in building the image of the "new Jew" at the beginning of the post-war period, continued to be so after the mass emigration of 1949-50, although the context differed. The fact that hundreds of Jews were employed in coal-mines in the early days was something the Jewish leaders emphasized and praised. The fact that in the following years the figures dropped was quietly forgotten. On the other hand, Jewish agriculture, which had also been a new area of work, had not disappeared entirely: about 2% of Jews found their livelihood in farming in the late 1940s, when this sector's first cooperatives were established in Poland. In spring 1950, the first cooperative, "May 1", was set up in Pieszyce. A year later "Dzierzoniów 2" opened, and the following year eighteen Jewish families set up a cooperative in the name of Feliks Dzierżyński.* These cooperatives also employed non-Jews. (137)

In the early 1950s, the Polish government introduced economic plans modeled on those in the Soviet Union. The plan in 1952 was intended, inter alia, to transfer the majority of employment from the co-operatives to heavy industry. Dzierzoniów, Łódź and Wałbrzych were the cities where the number of Jews employed in co-operatives was the highest and

* He set up after the Soviet October Revolution, in 1917, the secret service 'Cheka' which preceded the NKVD and later, the KGB.
these were to be significantly downsized. Most of the lay-offs were at the clothing factories. (138)

The changes in employment and remuneration in the production cooperatives, with significant reductions in wages, was the main reason that year for the departure of hundreds of Jews from the small towns in Lower Silesia. According to local estimates, the Jewish population in Dzierzoniów decreased from 3000 to 2600 and the trend continued. In April 1954, there were a thousand adults and adolescents living in the town who were considered as members of the TSKŻ. It is important to note that the Jewish population figures almost always vary according to the sources. One source was the Israeli legation in Warsaw, which tended to increase them. According to those figures, in Dzierzoniów and Kraków there were 5000 Jews, while the local functionaries estimated 2000 to 2500. It seems that the local functionaries’ estimates were closer to the real figures. (139) In fact, the Israeli legation based its assessments on the Matzo distributions throughout Poland at the end of 1953-54, except for Dzierzoniów, Kraków, Częstochowa, and Gliwice. (140)

Another area that the party was involved in was the educational system and its programs. Party functionaries and TSKŻ activists not only examined schools on their pedagogical subjects but also on their political identity. Schools performed follow-up discussions on "class enemies", while teachers, parents and children were required to toe the line. The Hebrew language was removed from the curriculum in 1951-52 and Jewish history a year later. Instead, a study of the annals of the Jewish people was added, excluding the study of the patriarchs. In the town of Ziębice, south of Dzierzoniów, a school director was fired because despite explicit instructions, to the contrary he continued to teach Jewish history. Despite a shortage of teachers he could not get a job in another Jewish school.

In the middle of 1953, the authorities presented as role models, the schools in Dzierzoniów, Legnica and Łódź, and the schools in Wrocław were told to emulate those schools in order to "eradicate the wickedness", and to look for inspiration in the classical works of Marx and Lenin. In such an atmosphere it was not surprising that Jewish traditional festivities were discontinued. Instead, in Dzierzoniów a Christmas tree was placed in the New Year celebrations.

In the annual festivities the only Jewish aspect was glorifying the heroes and martyrs of the Warsaw Ghetto. At the end of 1956, there were only seven schools in Poland that were teaching the Yiddish language - Łódź and Szczecin, and the rest were in Lower Silesia: Dzierzoniów, Bielawa, Legnica, Wałbrzych, and Wrocław. (141)

In 1954, there were 2600 Jews in Dzierzoniów; a third of them, 820, were listed as members of the TSKŻ. Relative to other branches of the Society in Poland, the sign-ups here were the largest. In 1951, of the 3000 Jews in town, 350 were members. (142) However, among the Jews were also who did not find an interest in the organization, arguing that they intended to migrate to Israel, and feared that membership might disrupt that. One factory worker did not fear to express his hostility explicitly: "Through its [the organization’s] window the sun will yet arrive to shine, and the Jewish Communists will pay for everything. In due time everything". (143)

Actually, a new light began gradually to dawn, at the beginning of 1956, after the secret speech of the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, in February, in which he revealed for the first time the extent of Stalin's crimes. This exposure resulted in dramatic changes in
Poland, with waves of unrest among the public, an uprising attempt in Poznań and the bringing to light of the evils of the Stalinist regime that had ruled until then. In April, the third National Congress of TSKŻ convened in Warsaw, and it was the first time that representatives of the periphery allowed themselves to criticize the organization leadership. During the sessions the matter of anti-Semitic incidents across the country was raised, but the leadership representatives still argued that in Poland it is a marginal phenomenon. In the months to come they continued to believe that the plagues bothering the Jewish communities could be clarified at the level of the local Society branches.

In the second half of 1956, public order in Poland was poor, and the symptoms that had been observed two years earlier worsened, such as rude behavior and aggressive hooliganism that ended sometimes in robbery. Among the Jews, as survivors, this fueled their worst fears and they suffered anxiety, insomnia, nightmares, and feelings of vulnerability and danger. They were particularly troubled by the fate of the children, who were being offended and insulted by their schoolmates on the streets and in the yards. (144)

In October, the ruling Communist Party initiated the move necessary to send a message to the public that the changes they demanded were going to be put through. Władysław Gomułka, was elected party secretary after years of imprisonment and disqualification from the centers of political activity. One of his first acts was to open the gates to Jews wishing to leave Poland. Unlike the previous operation, in 1949-50, whose hidden intention was to enable first of all the migration of those who were considered by the authorities to be "problematic elements," this time it was to be an outspoken operation.

While the atmosphere of openness that prevailed throughout Poland led, among other things, to the leadership of the ruling party taking a sympathetic attitude towards the desire of the Jews to leave the country, there were those who interpreted it differently. In their eyes the Jews represented the old Stalinist criminal regime, and therefore it was necessary to make them pay. The anti-Semitism of 1956 was one of the results of the thaw following Khrushchev's speech. In Lower Silesia it manifested itself in its most extreme expression, with even situations of racially-motivated pogroms. Less dramatic outbreaks occurred in various locations – in Dzierzoniów and Bielawa shots were fired on Jews. (145)

It must be admitted, and this was reflected in the activities of the Jewish Communist Fraction members in the various committees and later in the TSKŻ, that many Jews believed that the communist state represented equality, social justice and the best chance to succeed in life. For many of them, the Soviet Union was regarded as a liberator, and the repatriates were convinced that they had survived the war thanks to their stay in its territory. And above all, before the war Jews in Poland were generally considered as second-class citizens and now, for the first time, were given the possibility to work in state institutions and to have senior positions. Therefore, the Jewish minority found it easier than most Poles to adjust themselves to the Polish system that was forced on them. In Polish society the myth was entrenched that Jews were a minority with special privileges, and that their economic status was much higher than that of most citizens. To the historical stereotype of the Jews who killed Jesus, was added a new myth: the Jews were communists who had brought an alien regime to Poland. That image was awarded the nickname Żydokomuna. (146)

Many citizens used to write to the Central Committee of the Communist Party in Warsaw with complaints about their living conditions and seeking a cure for their distress. The
letters were collected in leaflets and presented to party seniors. Copies of anti-Semitic letters were presented in a special bulletin (No.28, June 1956) only for members of the Politburo. The dimensions of the problem were evident in a statement by Jewish activists in Dzierzoniów adopted at a meeting on 28 October 1956, which accused the local authorities of turning a blind eye to events in which Jews were insulted and attacked: "Recent months have witnessed 40 cases without penalty, of insults and attacks against Jews. We declare that the authorities in the province and county react inappropriately in these incidents and [fail to] intervene. The most painful fact is that only on October 27, there were four cases of assault, only a week after the eighth plenum [of the party]."

In another letter sent to the Party organ 'Trybuna Ludu', in December 1956, the author pointed out that "just like in Wroclaw, the Jews do not go out after seven o'clock in the evening. All the Jews leave Wroclaw and other cities, sites of assault and other incidents. You can come and see for yourself." And the writer concluded that it is a "shame, a terrible shame. The party leadership is silent. Why?" That question never got a reply. (147)

Although anti-Semitism was the main reason for the desire and intention to migrate, other reasons were dismissal from work, the economic situation in the country and the recognition that the majority of Jews intended to leave. Although the community had continued to run normally despite some menace and bullying, the very fact that relatives, friends and many around the country had filed applications to leave stimulated others, including those who did not identify with the State of Israel, for fear of remaining in a small and perhaps also unprotected Jewish community. (148) There were also Jews who had been unable to leave during the previous campaign of 1949-50 and now sought to do so.

As in other cases presented here, in the emigration campaign of late 1956 and 1957, the Jews in Lower Silesia migrated in larger numbers than from other provinces. Prior to 1956, 33,000 Jews were living in the province and until October 1957 almost 70% (over 23,000) emigrated. According to the Ministry of Foreign Passports, during that year and a half 39,715 Jews left Poland, declaring their destination as Israel. (149) It meant that the Jews from Lower Silesia constituted approximately 59% of all emigrants.

However, not all Jews who had declared Israel as their destination went there. The figures in the table below show, that the highest percentage of "dropouts" was during the first year of the migration, 1956. After the record year of 1957 the numbers of the emigrants decreased sharply, and in the following years among them were also repatriates from the Soviet Union, who were been returning to Poland in small numbers since 1955 but in their thousands after the signing of an agreement between Poland and the Soviet Union, in February 1957. (150)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Emigrants</th>
<th>Israel stated destination</th>
<th>Actual Destination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>9,384</td>
<td>6,209</td>
<td>3,680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>30,331</td>
<td>30,331</td>
<td>29,526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>3,143</td>
<td>3,143</td>
<td>3,124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>3,561</td>
<td>3,561</td>
<td>2,546</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Like the 1946 campaign, those repatriates were brought to Jewish locations, and the majority was redirected to Dzierzoniów, Świdnica, Wrocław, Legnica, and Wałbrzych. Over time they mainly concentrated in the last three. It appears that this time most of the Jews who were repatriated did this to leave the Soviet Union, and saw their stay in Poland only as a way-station, and from the early 1960s around 75% of them emigrated from Poland. (151)

Jewish migration in those years is a historical milestone in the history of Poland, as the small Jewish minority shrank considerably. In the aftermath, institutions, businesses, and plants were closed. According to surveys conducted by TSKŻ, in 1960-61 it was estimated that in Lower Silesia there lived approximately 8,000 to 9,000 thousand Jews, half of them in Wrocław, 1500 in Legnica, 1350 in Wałbrzych, over 400 in Dzierzoniów and about 370 in Świdnica. (152) Szyje Bronsztejn, who estimated that about a fifth of the province Jews were repatriates from the Soviet Union, presented another distribution: Wrocław 3800, Legnica 1425, Wałbrzych 1100, Dzierzoniów 320, Świdnica 255, Bielawa 255. (153) According to the testimony of Mojżesz Jakubowicz, the TSKŻ secretary in Dzierzoniów, in the early 1960s in the town were living indeed 320 Jews. (154)

The dwindling numbers of the Jews signified that the days of the decade of the Jews in Dzierzoniów, and the active community there, had gone. This is despite a testimony from a woman resident, to the effect that in those days, Jews flocked to the synagogue during the holidays, and there was a social club, cultural activities, shows and library services. (155) It could be assumed that these were Jews who either continued to believe in Communism, or by reason of age, status or economic situation saw no point in leaving and starting a new life elsewhere.

The handful of Jews in the town, and the thousands that still remained in Poland, could not foresee what would happen, further afield. In June 1967, the Six Day War erupted in the Middle East, and before the dimension of Israel's victory became clear, the Soviet Union and all the Eastern European countries, except Romania, severed diplomatic relations with Israel. Gomułka, who 10 years earlier had been friendly and empathetic with the Jews, was now the leader who initiated a sharp anti-Israel campaign, threatening the remnant of Jews in a style that recalled Stalin's dark days. A week after the end of the war, on June 19, he delivered a speech in which he compared the reaction of the small Jewish community to Israel's victory on the battlefield as the behavior of a fifth column, "and we cannot remain indifferent to people ...who support the aggressor." He urged those concerned to leave Poland. However, due to pressure from his colleagues, Gomułka was forced to accept that the expression 'fifth column' should be deleted from the official wording of the speech to be published. It was an unprecedented event that the Party leader agreed to censor his speech which had already been broadcasted on the radio! (156) The speech provided the press with the ammunition to continue the campaign against Israel and the denunciation of Jews in Poland.

The leadership of TSKŻ came under pressure to condemn the "Israeli aggression". On 8 July, a month after the war ended, the branches in Dzierzoniów, Wałbrzych and Bielawa adopted resolutions to this effect. Four days later, Wrocław branch adopted a similar resolution. The more important and sensitive result of the campaign was that the state security branches began to keep a close watch on the Jewish population. (157)
In retrospect, June 1967 was the preface to a much bigger organized campaign that began in March 1968, when there was growing unrest across Poland following Warsaw student riots. On March 19, Gomułka delivered another speech in which he emphasized that there was a problem with the identity of some of the Jews who were more closely aligned to Israel than to Poland. He repeated his motif from June that "I assume that the Jews in this category will leave our country sooner or later." (158) The speech was immediately followed up with practical expressions of extreme anti-Semitic propaganda in the mass media and organized incitement in workplaces that led to the dismissal of hundreds and thousands of Jews. It was not only the modern communications that distributed nationwide the anti-Jewish and anti-Semitic messages: an extensive use was made of the traditional methods in communist countries of organizing huge public demonstrations to which hundreds of thousands of people came, as well as thousands at more limited meetings that were organized everywhere.

This happened in Dzierzoniów also, where in the main square people gathered and shouted: "Jews to Madagascar! Down with Zionism!" (159) Local press followed the national press with anti-Jewish texts. The hostility was not only demonstrated in public, Jews were also harassed by phone and threatened in their homes. In the workplace they were treated as second-class citizens and were dismissed without any explanation. And, as had happened nine months earlier, the TSKŻ branches were ordered to pass resolutions following the party line. On March 30, the Wrocław branch decided, inter alia, that "the Jewish community in Wroclaw is united around the demands and claims of the party leadership, as expressed in the speech of Comrade Władysław Gomułka." Similar decisions were made in the branches in Dzierzoniów, Wałbrzych, Legnica and Świdnica. (160)

One of the targets in Dzierzoniów was the Jewish library, located within the organization building, which in the early 1950s was regarded alongside the libraries in Wrocław and Wałbrzych, as among the 16 biggest libraries in Lower Silesia (in Poland as a whole there were then 26 Jewish libraries). (161) In order to avoid damaging the foreign language books, they were transferred to the general public library, but many Yiddish volumes were taken to the library roof and shredded. Luckily, a thousand of copies which were in the possession of private people and Mojżesz Jakubowicz, were rescued. (162) The next March and April the windows of the building were broken several times and a smoked candle was thrown through the door. (163)

Given these harsh circumstances, most of the remaining Jews in Dzierzoniów decided to leave and emigrate. Dariusz Stola, who was researching the events of 1968, found in records of emigrants that when they met in the streets the questions heard, like in the previous departure operations, were: "and when are you leaving?" and the concern, "I cannot stay because I will be the only Jew left." (164)

It was the last exodus of Polish Jews. It was characterized by two main aspects: unlike those that preceded it, it was imposed on Jews in difficult circumstances, similar to various expulsions in the history of the People of Israel. The second aspect was that this was an exodus of an educated and economically successful population. In the years 1968-1971, the declared number of emigrants to Israel was 12,927, but only 1349 arrived in 1968 and 1735 in 1969, in Israel. Thus, only about a quarter of "the Zionists", who were the targets of the anti-Jewish and anti-Zionist offensive, actually traveled to Israel. Others chose to go to Sweden, the USA, France and other countries where they had relatives or friends. (165)
There was no precise data on how many of these migrants were from Lower Silesia and no certainty of their final destination. But the estimates are that one-third of those who left in those years were from Lower Silesia. (166)

Under these circumstances, the activities of the TSKŻ in Dzierżoniów contracted as with some 30 members, most of them aged over seventy, it was hard to develop organized and continuing cultural activities. According to Mojżesz Jakubowicz, already by the late 1960s it was difficult to arrange a Minyan (the quorum of ten men required for public prayer services). In 1980, the tiny local congregation attempted to set up the synagogue as a museum, sponsored by the Town Council. But the renovation works were not completed and in the process colorful and beautiful murals were lost under the cover of white paint. In 1994, the community became subordinate to the larger Jewish community in Wrocław. (167) It was a déjà vu: 135 years before due to similar circumstances, the Reichenbach community was subordinated to that of Schweidnitz (page 5 above).

**Summary: Two Eras – A Comparative Perspective**

At first glance, there is no similarity and certainly no connection between the Jewish community in Reichenbach in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, in the periods of imperial and republican Germany, on the one hand, and the community in Dzierżoniów in the second half of the 20th century during the period of Communist domination on the other. Indeed, it is difficult to find any correlations between the different historical periods and the changes taking place during such long periods. Had the two periods been in the same country, a comparative discussion might have been possible and even expected, but our discussion here has been of two separate political entities with absolute differences, the only connection between them being that one was built on the ruins of the other.

In the Jewish context, three physical objects survived the German era: the synagogue, the cemetery and the textile factories. The Jewish identity of the first two was re-established upon the arrival of Jews to the town, "New Jews", those who had managed to survive the horrors of the Holocaust and the Second World War. Of the original three Jewish-owned textile factories, some had been converted to military objectives during the War, and two went back to operating as textile factories after the War, while the Cohn Brothers’ facilities were reconfigured during the war to make radio parts and later became the radio factory "Diora."

The first factory to renew its operation after the War in February 1946 was the Flechtner factory (formerly, Weyl & Nassau), and six months later the Jordan factory (previously, Fleischer) in the summer of 1946. Both plants were unified with other plants and six months later were set up as a government corporation (in effect, nationalized). In the summer of 1949, the textile industry in Poland was subordinated to a centre office in Łódź and the Ministry of Light Industry in Warsaw. The textile factories employed then 300 Jews. (168)

Indeed, these were monuments for a past that no longer existed. Nevertheless, despite the clear and definite differences between the German and Polish eras, they were characterized by two similarities that constituted the common thread between the two eras: assimilation and emigration. For the purposes of this article, the first manifestation has been outlined in
its broader context. In this sense, assimilation reflected the desire of the Jews to fit into their immediate surroundings, to accept the culture of the country they lived in, and to integrate into its society. Prof. Stola states that "one needs great determination to integrate socially [within the local society] and remain a Jew." In his view, many historical examples show that the strongest motivation to assimilate was the possibility to advance within the economic, political and social hierarchy. Assimilation on a mass scale occurred in countries that were experiencing development and modernization processes. (169) For instance, Prussia could be regarded thus ever since the mid 19th century. Even in a small Jewish community such as Reichenbach, several Jewish assimilated families succeeded in setting up prosperous trading businesses in the town. The more wealthy families managed to set up and conduct textile plants which were in operation for decades, including in times of war and economic crises, and maintained hundreds of the town and county citizens, and thus established for themselves a honorable social status that survived for several years, even under Nazi rule until just before the outbreak of World War II. Not only that: the community initiated and managed to set up for itself a synagogue with assimilated characteristics that may be considered the other side of their assimilated status, enabling them to preserve the Jewish spark.

Almost a century later, in the survey conducted by Dr Irena Hurwicz-Nowakowska in three Jewish communities immediately after the end of World War II, many of the respondents expressed their opinion that assimilation had not solved the Jewish problem, and as evidence pointed to the fate of the German Jews doomed by Hitler. Among the respondents were also those who defined themselves as assimilated. (170) A white-collar worker in Dzierżoniów, noted: "Without a natural rebirth of the Jewish people in their own independent national state in Palestine, national-cultural Jewish autonomy in Poland is a house of cards." (171)

This approach stood out compared to the respondents who lived in Warsaw and Łódź. To the question of their national identity, approximately 55% of the Warsaw Jews responded that they were Jews, about 38% Poles, and 3% both; in Łódź the figures were: 78%, 19%, and 2% respectively. In Dzierżoniów, 93.5% identified themselves as Jews and 4.7% as Poles. The third figure was null. As to the question of what was their preferred homeland, in Warsaw 63% responded in favor of Poland and 25.7% for Israel; in Łódź the results were 45.5% and 39.5%; but in Dzierżoniów they were 36.4% and 53.3%. (172)

In standing the test of time and its outcomes, Reichenbach as a Jewish-German community stood out compared to Dzierżoniów as a Jewish-Polish community. Being rooted in German society and, despite its very small size relative to the general population, its impact was inversely proportional on the town's life due to the three textile manufacturers. That fact passed the tests of the difficult times of the First World War, the ensuing economic crisis in Germany and the global financial crisis of 1929.

The fact that they were Jews did not prevent their integration, until the Nazis confiscated their fortunes. In Communist Poland, the nationalized and centralized economy did not provide individuals with the possibilities to be entrepreneurial or establish independent businesses. The Jews were active and involved in social and culture activities in order to preserve their national identity. Beata Hebzda-Solodub noted, that Jewish cultural activity in Dzierżoniów had developed dynamically and multi-directionally from the beginning, and has had a considerable influence on the cultural development of the town. This activity
was a component in the integration and absorption processes of the Jewish community, and played an important role in creating and preserving the national consciousness of the Jewish population. (173)

The benefits for the Jews of their cultural and educational activities matched and well served the interests of the communist authorities. Dariusz Stola is of the opinion, that the very existence of TSKŻ, after the exodus of 1968, as well as the Jewish Theater and the Jewish Historical Institute, were designed to serve governmental propaganda objectives both internally and externally. In fact, the authorities allowed the Jewish minority, as they did with other minorities, a certain leeway in cultivating their traditions, by running schools, libraries, newspapers and cultural events, in exchange for demonstrating absolute loyalty to the authorities: "Not without reason was TSKŻ supervised by the Ministry of the Interior." (174)

This complete subordination to the will of government power, leaving no space for independent action, distinguished the Polish era, which lasted two decades after World War II, from the German era until the mid 1930s – the initial period of the Nazi regime. Whereas the era of German modernization in the second half of the 19th century was a product of the industrial revolution, in which the individual could progress economically and socially in accordance with his personal capabilities, in post-war Poland, as in other communist countries, modernization was carried out by means and methods that had been cast and tested earlier in the Soviet Union, namely, the demand for meeting objectives designed and directed from above. In these countries, opportunities for social advancement were defined under conditions, i.e., those who were promoted were primarily those who had chosen the principles of socialism. (175) The identification with the objectives of the authoritarian communist regime, and the ways and means to achieve them, were for the Jews a ticket to try and acquire status in Polish society. In Germany it occurred in the years before Hitler.

That identification with the state in Poland was particularly pronounced in the service of Jews within the frameworks of the internal security forces, which in the period discussed here constituted the long, severe and covert arm of the regime. Their relatively large number was a result of the recruitment among groups of communists of Jewish origin that had spent the war years in the Soviet Union and won the confidence of the authorities there. The historian Dr. Krzysztof Szwarzgajz, who carried out research on the subject, believes that the number of Jews at the senior levels of command and management of these systems was higher than their percentage of the population. This led to many Poles to believe that Jews ran these systems. According to his data, 13.7% of the commanders and deputy commanders at the national level of the security apparatus (Ministerstwo Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego - (MBP)), and in fact the General Security Services, were of Jewish descent. Their biggest share was in Wrocław Province, 18.7%. During the years of the Stalinist regime, in the Dzierżoniów regional office, the commanders were all Jews: Arthur Górny, in the years 1946-47; Michael (Moses) Wajsman, 1947-48; Adam Kulberg 1951-54. Among eight Deputy Regional Commanders, three were Jews: Edward Last, 1945-46; Adam Kulberg, 1950-51; Isaac Winnykamień, 1952. (176) *

The fact that until 1956, among 16 senior officers of the security apparatus in Dzierżoniów

* One or more of these men might be whom the reporter of the Manchester Guardian meant in his published article (pages 34-35 above).
five were of Jewish origin, was an unprecedented phenomenon at that level of regional government officials. This figure could have been higher, but in the absence of evidence it has been assumed that unidentified persons were non-Jewish. The only one who in his registration documents pointed out that he was Jewish, a son of Mosaic faith, was Adam Kulberg, and he was also the person who later turned down a job in the security services on the grounds that his family intended to migrate to Israel, where he went in 1968. (177)

To the list of top security officials of Jewish descent has to be added Franciszek (Ephraim) Klitenik, who served as commander of the prisons in Wrocław (1946-47), Dzierżoniów (1947-51), Łódź (1951-58). Dzierżoniów was one of nine towns in Lower Silesia in which death sentences were carried out – eight executions in the years 1946-1950. Shortly after his appointment, Klitenik attended personally the execution of the only German accused of war crimes. Within the protocol of the sentence appeared also the name of the Public Prosecutor, Ely Wasserstrum. (178)

The loyalty of these people to the regime, which they served for many years, was however of no value during the anti-Semitic campaign of 1968. Szwagryzki noted that the investigations directed at them, as with other Jews, were organized and directed by those who only a short time earlier had been their co-workers! He has pointed out that the Jewish multiplicity in the security apparatus was based on figures, and as such reflected a historical fact, but the research does not provide an answer as to the question of how numerical figures could be used as an argument in that emotional debate which has been ongoing for many years. (179)

In summary, the social and cultural assimilation of the German Jews on the one side, and the ideological assimilation of the Polish Jews on the other side, turned out worthless when the respective governments had identified them as ‘foreign elements’ which should be uprooted. The big difference between Reichenbach and Dzierżoniów was that during the German era, the process occurred after 120 years and was mainly characterized by the prominence of a few Jews in the field of economic activities, which affected their status and social relationships in the town. The Polish era was very brief, no more than two decades, and was characterized by a relative Jewish cultural freedom, but also by their recruitment to serve the communist government’s objectives, either by membership in the TSKŻ or employment in the omnipotent security services.

A much greater similarity could be found in the emigration issue, despite the difference in scale. Although the community in Reichenbach was very small in absolute and relative terms, the data points out a steady decline in its size over the years. At its peak, in 1871, the ratio was 2.7% (185 of 6935 people) and that figure dwindled over the years, reaching almost zero in 1933. During the rise of the Nazis, the Jewish population ratio was 0.4% (67 of 17,521), while in 1939, on the eve of World War II, the percentage dropped to 0.1% (19 of 17,253). In fact, only during the years 1870-1890, were there more than a hundred Jews in the town. In other periods their numbers did not exceed dozens. This encouraged the trend to migrate to other places in Germany, and probably also abroad, mainly for economic reasons. The fact that there were three wealthy Jewish families, owners of textile factories, who employed hundreds of locals while other Jews were leaving in their quest for places of employment elsewhere, may be a clear indication of the socio-economical heterogeneity of the small Jewish community. That obviously could not be said of the departure process in the 1930's, the Nazi period, when the direction of the
movement was definitely out of Germany. The fact that the Jewish textile industrialists continued with their businesses for another five years after the arrival of the Nazis, was apparently that they were able to provide some ‘added value’ in the eyes of the racist anti-Jewish authorities.

As we get to the Polish era, the centrality of Dzierżoniów was significant in the broad sense of Jewish physical presence in its initial phases. At the end of the Second World War it was the largest center in Lower Silesia, and for a short time in all of Poland. In August 1945, 2300 Jews lived in the town, while in July there were 1725 Poles. A year later, the Jewish population was 12,000, including repatriates from the USSR, within a general population of 16,646, i.e. 72%! After the Kielce pogrom, thousands of Jews left Poland and the town's Jewish community contracted, although the relative rate remained high. In May 1948, there were 21,612 Poles, and 6,800 Jews (in February), i.e. 24% of the population. After the big exodus of 1956-57, the Jewish population dwindled dramatically and according to a census in 1961, there remained only 320 Jews in the town, within a population of 27,152 in 1960, i.e., approximately 1.1%. The figures dwindled further during continued departures until it reached the final figure of only a handful of Jews who had lived in Reichenbach. And that happened in the course of 25 years!

The emigration issue from Dzierżoniów was two-dimensional: internal, to other locations in Poland, and external, outside its borders. When emigration from Poland was halted in the early 1950s, Jews moved to other urban centers, and as in Reichenbach, the main reason was economic, albeit on a relatively smaller scale. But obviously, the external dimension was the crucial element in the gradual diminution of the Jewish population in town. From a historical point of view, it could be said that in every emigration wave there were many leaving who had not left before: after the Kielce pogrom, in July 1946, there were only half of those left who had lived there from mid-1946; four years later, half of those remaining who had lived in the town from the mid 1940’s had left. The exoduses of 1949-50 and 1956-57 were a sort of ethno-political processes of Jews who came to the conclusion that after living several years in Dzierżoniów, they preferred not to live any longer in Poland. Among those who left in the mid-fifties were, for the first time, members of the Communist Party – managers and employees of the security forces who had served faithfully the government. Among them was Jacob Egit, who after his removal from office in Lower Silesia lived and worked in Warsaw. His repeated requests to emigrate were denied for years till then. It was a clear sign that his, like all the other state officials, state loyalty was actually a sort of a functional loyalty which proved to be worthless at a certain point of time.

The fourth wave of emigration was the result of an anti-Israeli campaign that turned into the worst type of anti-Semitism. It began with the Six Day War, and peaked in March 1968 and the following months. In the later years it was to be a milestone in the history of post-Communist Poland. The actual mass deportation of Jews was neither caused nor accompanied by a pogrom like Kielce or those in the distant past, but was fixed as a traumatic conscious event. The well-known Polish intellectual Adam Michnik has written of those days in one of his books that "the year 1968 was horror of horrors", and later compared it to Katyn, the site where in 1940 the Soviets massacred tens of thousands of Polish military officers and other citizens. (181)

In Dzierżoniów, in face of no other options but shred Jewish books in order not to let them
be looted, or worse put in fire, was a sad reminiscent of tragic events in the past. But it was the general anti-Jews atmosphere with personal harassments that was the clear traffic sign that they are not wanted. The remaining Jews of the very small community were actually forced to leave the town and the country and most of them emigrated to Israel and other western countries. (182) The events of 1968 brought to an end a thousand years of Polish Jewry, although the great exodus of 1956-57 was the actually the most important exodus, after which the Jewish population in Poland, including Dzierżoniów, dropped dramatically.

What has not received the proper attention in the historiography of this event was the fact, that it has not been separated from another context: the emigration of the German minority. After Stalin's death, Poland continued to be dependent on the consent of the Soviet Union for its internal as well external policies. Allowing the Jews to emigrate in 1956 was recognized by Moscow as Poland's internal affair, and like in Hungary and Romania, Jews were allowed to depart. The Polish leadership was not only interested in the Jewish exodus, but first and foremost allowed around 200,000 Germans, who had remained in Poland since the end of the war, to leave. The move was designed to serve the national objective of an ethnically-unified state. Moscow was not against minority migrations and the German departure from Poland opened the exit gates also for the Jews. (183)

Like the Jews, the Germans were not allowed to leave Poland after the early 1950s except in small numbers. In the spring of 1954, there were still 194 Germans in Dzierżoniów, but the relationships with Poles were not friendly outside the workplace, despite directives from Warsaw to treat Germans as they would other residents. Most Germans were willing to emigrate, in particular the elderly who were unemployed and without social security benefits. Only after relations thawed, in late 1956, did the authorities provide medical and nursing care and organize cultural activities for them. But, as was the case as with the Jews, the Germans continued to "sit on suitcases". Since the end of 1955, 200 Germans were waiting for emigration permits, but only 35 had received them a year later, in November 1956. The emigration operation that followed brought to an end the German settlement in Dzierżoniów that had lasted for centuries. (184)

It brought closure to a historical era. Ten years earlier, the first post-war Jews had arrived in the town and turned it into a major and vivid center for thousands of Jews. The Germans had been ousted and those who remained were living beside them privately, primarily in the southeastern part of the town. The decision of the Polish government to allow the emigration of Jews and Germans at more or less the same time should by itself not have a special historical meaning. However, our present discussion focuses on a town where Germans had lived for hundreds years and Jews for 150 years (although a handful continued to live beyond this date). While during the German era only the last few years were difficult and very tragic for the Jews, the Polish era was very short, and in hindsight its end might have been predicted given the pervasive anti-Semitism and the resulting overt and constant desire to emigrate. Despite the initial autonomy it was, as turned out, a display that lasted only for a short time. The following years reflected life under a regime which failed to instill hope in the hearts of the Jews that it was a place worth staying in and continuing to build their lives. The events of 1967-68 demonstrated that the Communist regime did not want them, a sentiment that had first been made clear a decade earlier.

Two of Dzierżoniów landmarks from its far past remain intact - the Jewish cemetery and the synagogue. That synagogue was inactive and neglected for many years. In order to
prevent its complete decay, the "Beiteinu Chaj - 2004 Foundation" (in Hebrew, Our Home Lives), was set up by Rafael and Dorin Blau, citizens of both Israel and Poland, to restore and operate it as an active Jewish Cultural Center. Thus, the building that served the ritual needs of the local Jews and in other times served as a dwelling place, has turned to preserve the Jewish Heritage which was an integral part of the town for many generations.
NOTES

1 Leszek Wiatrowski, Stanisław Żyga, "Żydzi na Śląsku w XIX in na Początku XX Wieku Struktura Demograficzna, Działalność Gospodarcza, Naukowa i Kulturalna," Krzysztof Matwijowski (red), Z Dziejów Ludności żydowskiej na Śląsku, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław, 1991, pp.12, 15


4. An unnamed source that chronicled the history of the Reichenbach community towards the end of the 19th century, stated that at the end of the 1840s it was comprised of 22 Reform community members who insisted that religious services be accompanied by psalms performed by a choir, and that its prayers should be conducted in German. Since the elder members of the community opposed this idea, the community split, with the Orthodox led by the Cantor Löbel Naphtali keeping the prayer house and other community assets, while the reformers invited Heinrich Schwarz to lead them.


The testimony of that source has been discovered in documents that, according to the author's version, miraculously survived the Nazi years and found their way into the archives of _The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints of Salt Lake City_, Utah State, USA. My efforts to trace them proved unsuccessful.

5 Dr Anna Grużlewska, historian of the Jews in Reichenbach, kindly forwarded me her article _Dzierżoniowska synagoga - świadek historii żydowskiej_, and replied to my enquiries.

6 Ibid. In another place she stated that in the first half of the 19th century the congregation had not owned a building for religious services and that in 1851 a prayer room was opened on Breslaustrasse. ("Od asymilacji do wykluczenia: społeczność żydowska w Dzierżoniówie (1870-1944)", _Dzierżoniów-wiek miniony_, Materiał pokonferencyjny pod redakcją Sebastiana Ligarskiego i Tomasz Przerwy, IPN, Wrocław, 2007, p.13); Architect Dr. Piotr Kmiecik, who had researched the architecture of the town in the 19th century, confirmed the existence of the prayer room since 1851. He noticed also that the last prayer in the "Old Synagogue" took place on 7 March 1853. (email, 25 March 2015)

7 Brilling, op.cit. p.163, note 7

8 Ibid,op.cit,p.19


10 The original document and its translation: _Leo Baec Institute_, AR 450

11 Koch, op. cit. p.24

12 Ibid, p. 26. (Julius was not mentioned in the book).

13 Ibid, p. 269

14 Grużlewska, op.cit. p.11
15 Note 9, op.cit.

16 Grużlewska, op.cit.p.11

17 Erich Haase, *Chronik der Stadt Reichenbach im Eulengebirge*, Reichenbacher Tageblatt, 1929, p. 200

18 Architect Piotr Kmiecik kindly provided me with this information.

19 Hasse, op.cit., 13


21 Bartosz Grygorcewicz, "Przemysł włokienniczy w Dzierżonowie: dwa początki Dzierżoniów- wiek miniony", op.cit. p.158


23 Note 20, op.cit.

24 Wiatrowski, Żyga, op.cit. p.21

25 Grygorcewicz, op. cit. p.160

26 Haase. op. cit. p. 227

27 Ibid


29 Hasse, op.cit., pp. 242-243

30 Anna Grużlewska, Fabryka "Cohn Gebrüder"-funkcjonowanie żydowskiego przedsiębiorstwa na przełomie XIX i XX w., *Bibliotheca Bielaviana 2010*, Wrocław-Bielawa 2011, p.5 (the author handed me kindly the manuscript of the article).

31 Ibid, pp. 6-7

32 *Ueberlebt in Berlin 1941-1945*, Leo Baeck Institute, *ME 565*

33 Grużlewska, "Cohn Gebrüder", op.cit. p. 14

34 Grygorcewicz, op.cit. p.160

35 *Alberto Weyl Collection*, Leo Baeck Institute, *AR 91*

36 *Alexander Fleischer Family Collection*, Leo Baeck Institute, *AR 3641*

Hans, who studied textile and worked in the family business, fled Reichenbach for England, in January 1939, and in July 1940, along with another 2,000 German Jewish prisoners, was taken under guard on a ship that sailed to Australia. There he was put under arrest for two years and then drafted into military service. Upon his release he managed to build a new life for himself under the name of John Fletcher.

Hildergard married a German Baron, a Catholic, who received the Church confirmation under the condition that their children would grow up as Catholics. During the war, her husband and two children remained in Germany, while she fled to France and spent the war years with a false
identity of a dead French woman. After the war she joined her son: both migrated to the United States but returned later to Germany.

(Private memoir: **Family History**, by Peter K. Weyl, grandson of Willy Fleischer and son of Else Weyl; the manuscript was kindly forwarded to me by his daughter, Ruth W. Geall)


38 Grużlewska, Fabryka “A. Fleischer G.m.b.H.” w Dzierżoniowie, op. cit, pp. 15-16

39 Ibid, p.18

40 Alexander Fleischer Family Collection, AR 3641 op.cit.

41 Grygorcewicz, op. cit. p. 162

42 Grużlewska, "A. Fleischer G.m.b.H", op. cit. pp. 22-23

43 Weyl, Family History, op. cit.

44 Grużlewska, "A. Fleischer G.m.b.H", op. cit. p. 23


46 Grużlewska, "Od asymilacji do wykluczenia: społeczność żydowska w Dzierżoniowie (1870-1944)", op.cit. p. 20

47 Brilling, op.cit. pp.19, 21;

48 Ibid.

49 Brilling, op.cit. p.163 (footnote 12)

50 Grużlewska, "Od asymilacji do wykluczenia:..." op. cit., p.16

51 Karol Fiedor, **Dolny Śląsk w Świetle Dokumentów Niemieckich z Lat 1926-1939**, Zakład Narodowy Im, Ossolińskich – Wydawnictwo, Wrocław, 1963, pp.12, 26-27

52 Suzi Klein, kindly provided me with her personal written reminiscences (January-February 2016).

53 Grużlewska, " Od asymilacji...", op.cit. p.17

54 (note 37 above). According to Else Weyl, "So it happened that our plans went all the way up to Goering who approved the building permit." (?) It seems a very strange statement: without any comments and in the absence of any other background source, it must be considered completely unreasonable to assume that the second man in the Nazi hierarchy could be involved in such a meaningless matter. The only possible hypothesis is that it might be somehow connected to the life-story of Else's aunt, Elizabeth, sister of her father Willy Fleischer: Elizabeth was baptized into the Russian Orthodox Church before she married Peter Argutinsky, a pediatrician and a Russian aristocrat in the early twentieth century. After his death, she moved to his large estate near Tbilisi, Georgia, and lived there during the First World War. German prisoners of war, who stayed in a nearby site, were allowed to work on the estate during the day. One of the imprisoned officers she struck up a friendship with was Heinrich von Ficker. As a scientist in the field of meteorology, he would serve in the 1920s and 1930s as a professor at the University of Berlin, during which he also was director of the Prussian Meteorological Institute. In those years Elizabeth lived in Berlin. Ficker was connected in his professional capacity to the Luftwaffe, commanded by Hermann Goering. Elizabeth Argutinsky asked for and received Ficker’s help when she was due to be
deported in 1942. Elizabeth believed and told her family that it was Ficker that ensured she went to Theresienstadt concentration camp and, unlike many prisoners there, survived not being sent on to Auschwitz or Bergen-Belsen. Elizabeth also believed that Ficker was able to help her because of his professional relationship with Goering. It is not known, and seems unlikely that Elizabeth would have asked Ficker, and then he Goering, about the synagogue, but this is the only other known reference to Goering made by the Fleischer family, so there may be something in it. (Ruth W. Geall).

55 Grużlewska, *Dzierżoniowska synagoga - świadek historii żydowskiej*, op.cit.


57 Christopher Frey (email, 8 April 2016)

58 (a) Grużlewska, note 55, op.cit.

(b) In the epilogue of Erich Haase’s book (note 17 above), published in 1929, wrote Hans Hilbich on the life in Reichenbach since then till after WWII. Commenting on the Kristallnacht, he stated: "The next day the windows of a textile shop at the center of the square were shattered; on the fate of the Jewish families in Reichenbach I know nothing. The synagogue on Trankstrasse was not destroyed, but later was used for other purposes ..." (op.cit, p. 369)

(c) Christopher Frey (*Ruhr-Universität Bochum*) remembers, that in 1944 within the synagogue operated an office which administered the food stamps allocation for the local residents. (email, 6 November 2012)

59 Karol Jonca, "Etapy Polityki Rasistowskiej w Trzeciej Rzeszy, (Ze Szczególnym Uwzględnieniem Śląska)", *Dzieje Najnowsze, Rocznik XVIII-1986, 3-4*, p. 181

60 Franciszek Połomski, "Deportacje Żydów z Dolnego Śląska w Latach 1941-1944, Próba Rekonstrukcji", Krystyn Matwijowski (red.), *Z Dziejów Ludności żydowskiej na Śląsku*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław, 1991, p.119

61 Ibid, p. 91


63 Aleksandra Kobielec, *Więźniowie Żydzi w KL Gross-Rosen*, (Stan Badań), Państwowe Muzeum Gross-Rosen, 1993, pp. 5-7

64 Sebastian Siebel-Achenbach, *Lower Silesia from Nazi Germany to Communist Poland, 1942-49*, St. Martin’s Press, 1994, p. 23

65 Kobielec, op.cit,p.10


67 Ibid, p. 268

68 Stanisław Jarowicki, "Żydzi w Dzierżoniowie w latach 1930-1960", *Rocznik Dzierżoniowski, 1992*, pp. 18-19

69 Ibid, p.20

70 Pawlak,op.cit, p.266 (footnote 12)

71 Weyl, Family History, op.cit.
72 Jarowicki, op.cit., p.19

73 www.dzierzoniow.policja.gov.pl

74 Jakob Tyszkiewicz, "Ludność niemiecka w Dzierżoniowie", Dzierżoniów- wiek miniony, op.cit., p. 36

75 Gregorowicz, op.cit., 165 (footnote 32); Erich Teichman testified about his life conditions as an employee of the factory under Polish rule: "In my home, I had to share one room with 6 other Germans. All other rooms were occupied by Poles. Everyday saw attacks and stealing". (Weyl, Family History, op.cit.)

76 Jarowicki, op.cit., p. 22

77 www.dzierzoniow.policja.gov.pl

78 On the establishment and development of the Jewish presence in Lower Silesia after the war, see Bezalel Lavi, "The Jewish Community in Lower Silesia 1945-1950," Moreshet (8) 91, June 2012, pp 124-159 (in Hebrew).

79 http://zydowskiwroclaw.uni.wroc.pl

80 The minutes of receiving the clinic, 22.06.1945; Report by Jacob Egit, 02.07.1945; Diaspora Research Institute Archives, Tel Aviv University, P-70/141


The data that referred to all communities in Lower Silesia reflected only partly the exact figures because of the mobility of Jews among the towns, emigration from Poland and the existence of duplicate registrations in different places.


83 Katarina Čapková, "Germans or Jews? German Speaking Jews In Poland And Czechoslovakia After World War II", Jewish History of Quarterly, Czerwiec 2013, Nr. 2 (246), p. 351

84 Note 73, op.cit.

85 Tyszkiewicz, op.cit., p. 38

86 Ibid, p. 39

87 Szaynok, op.cit., pp. 61-62

88 Ibid, p.114

89 Diaspora Research Institute Archives, op.cit., P-70/107

90 Marek Szajda, "Komunista, syjonista, patriota? Życie i działalność Jakuba Egita, Chydusz Magazyn Społeczności Żydowskie, 2 Marca 2015

91 Szaynok,op.cit., p.124


93 Szaynok, op.cit., p.115


[99] The Diaspora Research Institute Archives, op.cit, P-70/ 143

[100] Szaynok, op.cit, pp.50-51

[101] Ibid, p. 46

[102] Bronsztejn, op.cit. p.15

[103] Szaynok, op.cit., pp. 102-103, 105


[105] [http://www.poland 24h.pl/atrakcje/Dzierzoniow](http://www.poland 24h.pl/atrakcje/Dzierzoniow)


[108] [zydowskiwroclaw.uni.wroc.pl/.../nowy-zydowski-dom](zydowskiwroclaw.uni.wroc.pl/.../nowy-zydowski-dom)


[110] [www.centropa.org/biography/feliks-nieznanowski](http://www.centropa.org/biography/feliks-nieznanowski)


[112] Ibid, p.10

[113] Ibid, pp. 32-33

[114] Ibid, p. 82

[115] Szaynok, "Ludność żydowska na Dolnym Śląsku 1945-1950", op.cit. p. 120

[116] Ibid, pp. 161- 62

[117] Ibid, p.147

[118] Ibid, pp. 159-60

[119] Lavi, op.cit.,p.151

[120] Szaynok, Ludność żydowska na Dolnym Śląsku 1945-1950, op.cit.,p.171

[121] Szaynok, Żydzi w Dzierzoniowie (1945-1950), op.cit. p .32
122 Szaynok, Ludność żydowska na Dolnym Śląsku 1945-1950, op.cit. p.183

123 Ibid. p. 178


126 Szaynok, Żydzi w Dzierzoniowie (1945-1950), op.cit. p. 33


128 About his happenings after dismissal, see Lavi, op.cit, p.155

129 Szaynok, "Ludność żydowska na Dolnym Śląsku 1945-1950", op.cit, p.144


131 Szajda, "Komunista, syjonista, patriota? Życie i działalność Jakuba Egita", op.cit, 8 Stycznia i 2 Marca 2015


133 Grzegorz Berendt, Życie Żydowskie w Polsce w Latach 1950-1956, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, Gdańsk, 2006, p. 95

134 Szaynok, Z Historią, I Moskwą w Tle Polska A Izrael 1944-1968, op. cit. p. 230

135 Berendt, Życie Żydowskie w Polsce w Latach 1950-1956, op. cit., p. 205

136 Ibid. p. 112

137 Ibid. p. 111

138 Ibid. p. 106

139 Ibid, pp. 97-98

140 Ibid, p. 343

141 Ibid, pp. 218-219, 222

142 Ibid, pp. 343-344

143 Ibid, p.269

144 Ibid, p.332


(Manuscript of the Ph.D.thesis the author kindly forwarded me)
In the light of anti-Semitic incidents, on 20 November, members of the Communist Party in TSKŻ, turned to the Politburo asking for help. In their letter they mentioned a series of cases of dismissal of Jews due to anti-Semitics. The organization leaders appealed also to the Polish public opinion to condemn the racist incidents (Węgrzyn, op.cit. p. 63).

Węgrzyn, op. cit. pp. 71-72

Węgrzyn, op. cit., p. 127

Ibid, p. 144

Szydzisz, op. cit., p. 86

Bronsztajn, op. cit, p. 20

Piotr Piłuk, Interview with Mojżesz Jakubowicz, "Dzierżoniowscy Żydzi", Słowo Żydowskie Dwutygodnik Społeczno-Kulturanly, 14 czerwca 1996, 12 (116)

The testimony of a resident in the town identified as Pauline, early 1990's

http://www.sztetl.org.pl/he/city/dzierzoniow


web.ceu.hu/jewishstudies/pdf/02_stola.pdf

Szydzisz, op. cit. pp. 89; On the other hand, S.Bronsztajn wrote that the branches in Dzierżoniów, Bielawa and Kłodzko did not support the condemnation decision contrary to all other branches which toed the line "reluctantly bolt." (Bronsztajn, op. cit., p. 22)

Stola, note 156, op.cit. p.2

Note 155, op.cit.

Szydzisz, op. cit. pp. 92-93

Ibid, p.110

Hebza-Sołogub, "Życie Kulturalne Dzierżoniowskich Żydów w latach 1945-1968", op.cit, p.15

Szydzisz, op.cit, p.94

Stola, note 82, op.cit, p. 14

Stola, note 156, op.cit, p.6

Szydrisz, op.cit. p. 95

Note 154, op.cit

Berendt, op. cit., p. 107

Stola, note 82, op.cit. p. 20

Hurwic- Nowakowska, A Social Analysis of Postwar Polish Jewry, op.cit, pp.113-114
Ibid, p.111

Ibid, Tables 6, 8

Hebzda-Sołogub, "Życie Kulturalne Dzierżoniowskich Żydów w latach 1945-1968," op. cit., p.17

Stola, note 82, op. cit., pp. 21-22

Ibid, p.20


Ibid, Klementowski, pp. 287, 298

Klitenik had attended the last execution in Dzierzoniów, in July 1950. He migrated to Israel in 1969; Wasserstrum migrated to Israel in 1957. (Krzysztof Szwagrzyk, "Egzekucje w więzieniu dzierżoniowskim (1946-1950)", Dzierżoniów-wiek miniony, op. cit., pp.302, 307-308, 311)


www.sztetl.org.pl/article/dzierzoniow/6.demografia
www.encyclopedia.naukowy.pl/Ludność_Dzierżoniowa:
www.poland24h.pl/atrakcje/Dzierzoniow

www.rodaknet.com/rp_art_3660_czytelnia_marcz68.htm

Hebzda-Sołogub, op. cit., pp. 17-18

Węgrzyn, op. cit., pp.168-169

Tyszkiewicz, op. cit., pp.41-42