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A Tangled Web: Polish-Jewish Relations in Wartime Northeastern Poland and the Aftermath (Part 3)  
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The charge—advanced by Jewish historians—that the pogrom in Kielce was inspired by local hostility toward Jewish survivors who wanted to reclaim their property and possessions has been authoritatively discredited as hundreds of properties were returned to Jews in Kielce without incident.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, there is no evidence that anyone who had to return property to Jews, or was afraid that they might have to, was behind the outbreak of the violence in Kielce. Sources from that era, including Jewish testimonies, do not even allude to that as a factor. As well, many Jews attest to favourable relations with Poles in Kielce after the war.<sup>2</sup> The *American Jewish Year Book*, which closely monitored conditions in Poland, reported that—unlike in the Eastern Polish territories seized by the Soviet Union—“The return of Jewish property, if claimed by the owner or his descendant, and if not subject to state control, proceeded more or less smoothly.”<sup>3</sup> Indeed, relaxed criteria with a simplified inheritance procedure, under a special restitution law

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<sup>1</sup> Contrary to Jan T. Gross’s thesis, the fear of loss of Jewish property and a perceived threat to material gains allegedly acquired by Poles during the war was by no means a central cause of the violence directed against Jews in the postwar period. Official records from that period confirm that Jews returning to Kielce, and elsewhere, were usually able to reclaim their property without any significant difficulties. Title to hundreds of properties was recovered by Jews in Kielce alone. For the most part they then sold these properties to Poles before leaving Poland. Historian Stanisław Meducki summarizes the findings of his research as follows: “By the strength of a special law enacted 6 May 1945 ‘On Abandoned Real Estates’, a strongly simplified inheritance procedure was applied. Jews could recover their property: former apartments, workshops, firms, on condition that they had not been seized by the Nazis. Courts had to examine every motion within 21 days. In Kielce, Jews did not have any difficulties with recovering their own property. As a rule, every motion was settled favorably and quickly. In most cases, the property was taken over by the relatives of the former owners, whose rights were ascertained on the grounds of witnesses’ testimony. Witnesses, most often Poles, neighbors or acquaintances from before the war, testified before the court willingly, without reluctance or prejudice.” See Marta Pawlina-Meducka, ed., *Z kroniki utraconego sąsiedztwa: Kielce, wrzesień 2000/From the Chronicle of the Lost Neighborhood: Kielce, September 2000* (Kielce: Kieleckie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 2001), 202. See also Urbański, *Kieleccy Żydzi*, 180–90; Krzysztof Urbański, “Żydzi w Kielcach w latach 1939–1945,” in Bukowski, Jankowski, and Żaryn, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego*, vol. 2, 41–43. There is no evidence that any pogrom, whether in Kielce, Kraków or Rzeszów, was inspired by disgruntled Poles who had lost or feared losing property to Jews. Thousands of properties were returned to Jews throughout Poland without incident, and property disputes accounted for only a small portion, perhaps several hundred cases, of the violent conflicts which Jews experienced. Far more often, Poles came forward as witnesses in property claims filed by Jewish survivors, as borne out by the documents cited below concerning Jedwabne and other places.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Chodakiewicz, *After the Holocaust*, 187; Kamiński and Żaryn, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego*, vol. 1, 360; Bukowski, Jankowski, and Żaryn, *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego*, vol. 2, 44.

<sup>3</sup> *American Jewish Year Book*, 5708 (1947–1948), vol. 49 (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1947), 390. Examples of nationalized properties include several industrial properties reclaimed by Jews in Częstochowa that were later nationalized together with similar properties owned by Poles. See Jarosław Kapsa,

“On Abandoned Real Estates” enacted May 6, 1945, remained in place until the end of 1948. Dispossessed owners or their relatives and heirs, whether residing in Poland or abroad, were able to reclaim privately owned property in an expedited fashion with minimal costs.<sup>4</sup> The existence of these procedures were well known. Thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, of properties were reclaimed by Jews without incident,<sup>5</sup>

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“Ocalenie matki ministrów,” November 10, 2012, Internet: <<http://www.cz.info.pl/zdarzylo-sie-tutaj/6553-historie-jaroslawka-kapsy-opowiesc-31>>.

<sup>4</sup> Alina Skibińska, “Problemy rewindykacji żydowskich nieruchomości w latach 1944–1950: Zagadnienia ogólne i szczegółowe (na przykładzie Szczeczeszyna),” and Łukasz Krzyżanowski, “‘Chcielibyśmy, by ten dom nie pozostał w obcych rękach’: Sądowa restytucja prywatnego mienia żydowskiego w Polsce na przykładzie Radomia i Kalisza 1945–1948,” in Grabowski and Libionka, *Klucze i kasa*, 522–23, 529, 568–69 (judges in Szczeczeszyn facilitated the processing of restitution applications), 575–607. Many of these claims were pursued by Jewish organizations and foreign firms using Jewish lawyers; the claims were often processed by local courts on the day they were filed.

<sup>5</sup> As mentioned earlier, hundreds of properties were recovered in Kielce alone. In 1945–1948, Jews brought 291 court applications for the return of property in Zamość. See Adam Kopciowski, *Zagłada Żydów w Zamościu* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2005), 203; Grabowski and Libionka, *Klucze i kasa*, 562–63. Jews submitted 240 applications in the municipal court in Włodawa, and were able to recover real estate, houses, farm buildings, livestock, carriages, and utensils. See Adam Kopciowski, “Anti-Jewish Incidents in the Lublin Region in the Early Years after World War II,” in *Holocaust: Studies and Materials*, vol. 1 (2008): 188. Of approximately 210 privately owned prewar Jewish properties in Szczeczeszyn, at least one third were reclaimed by 1950 and promptly sold to Christian Poles. See Alina Skibińska, “Problemy rewindykacji żydowskich nieruchomości w latach 1944–1950: Zagadnienia ogólne i szczegółowe (na przykładzie Szczeczeszyna),” in Grabowski and Libionka, *Klucze i kasa*, 562–63. Out of a total of 894 properties in Parczew, 301 were in Jewish hands in 1945–1946, including the most valuable ones. See Bechta, *Pogrom czy odwet?*, 217. The return of property also proceeded smoothly in Radom, where several hundred properties were returned to prewar Jewish owners or their heirs. See Sebastian Piątkowski, *Dni życia, dni śmierci: Ludność żydowska w Radomiu w latach 1918–1950* (Warsaw: Naczelna Dyrekcja Archiwów Państwowych, 2006), 268–71. For a well-documented study regarding the situation in Szydłowiec see Grzegorz Miernik, “Losy Żydów i nieruchomości żydowskiej w Szydłowcu po II wojnie światowej,” in Jacek Wijaczka, ed., *Żyzi szydłowieccy: Materiały sesji popularnonaukowej 22 lutego 1997 roku* (Szydłowiec: Muzeum Ludowych Instrumentów Muzycznych w Szydłowcu, 1997), 135–66. A Jew from Lublin, who was able to recover several properties with the assistance of helpful Poles, states: “At that time, there was a Minister in the Polish government by the name of Somershteyn [Emil Sommerstein, chairman of the Central Committee of Jews in Poland in 1944–1946]. Any surviving Jew whose property had been taken by others received from the Minister a confirmation of ownership to help him recover the property. . . . In those days a law was enacted, that any Jew who had a store before the War which passed into foreign hands could get it back.” See Shiye Goldberg (Shie Chehever), *The Undeclared* (Tel Aviv: H. Leivick Publishing House, 1985), 215, 220. For additional examples of Jews reclaiming their property in scores of localities throughout Poland see the following memoirs and accounts: Oscar Pinkus, *A Choice of Masks* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1969), 6, 23, 75 (Łosice); J. Berglas and Sh. Yahalomi (Diamant), eds., *Sefer Strizhuv ve-ha-seviva* (Tel Aviv: Former Residents of Strzyzow in Israel and Diaspora, 1969), 255ff. (Strzyżów); D. Shtokfish, ed., *Sefer Drohiczyn* (Tel Aviv: n.p., 1969), 42ff. (English section) (Drohiczyn); Stanisław Zabierowski, *Rzeszowskie pod okupacją hitlerowską* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1975), 189–90 (Kolbuszowa); Isaiah Trunk, *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution: Collective and Individual Behavior in Extremis* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 142 (Zarszyn near Sanok); *Sefer zikaron le-kehilat Mielec: Sipur hashmadat ha-kehila ha-yehudit* (New York: Mielec Yizkor Book Committee, 1979), 43ff., translated as *Remembering Mielec: The Destruction of the Jewish Community*, Internet: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/mielec/Mielec.html>> (Mielec); Julius L. Baker and Jacob L. Baker, *Yedwabne History and Memorial Book* (Jerusalem and New York: Yedwabner Societies in Israel and in the United States, 1980), 98 (Goniądz); Michael Korenblit and Kathleen Janger, *Until We Meet Again: A True Story of Love and War, Separation and Reunion* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1983), 286 (Hrubieszów); Goldberg, *The Undeclared*, 204, 211–15, 220–21 (Lublin and vicinity, Kraków); Interview with Molly Muschkies (Angenicki) and Ruth Webber (Muschkies) Ruth, dated April 25, 1985, Internet: <[http://www.holocaustcenter.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=235](http://www.holocaustcenter.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=235)> (Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski); Samuel P. Oliner, *Restless Memories: Recollections of the Holocaust Years* (Berkeley, California: Judah L. Magnes Museum, 1986), 182 (Gorlice); ; Henry Orenstein, *I Shall Live: Surviving Against All Odds, 1939–1945* (New York: Beaufort Books, 1987), 260 (Hrubieszów); Edith Weigand, *Out of the Fury: The Incredible Odyssey of Eliezer Urbach* (Denver: Zhera Publications, 1987), 111 (Skoczów); Rachel Leizeron, *My Story* (Melbourne: n.p., 1990), 89 (Szczuczyn); Interview with Sheila Peretz Etons, April 30, 1990, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (Chelm); Alexander Bronowski, *They Were Few* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 42 (Lublin); Arnold Geier, *Heroes of the*

*Holocaust* (Miami: Londonbooks, 1993), 219 (Skarżysko); Sara Rose, *My Lost World: A Survivor's Tale* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1993), 289 (Kraków); Peretz Hochman, *Daring to Live* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense Publishing House, 1994), 222 (Warsaw); Ryszard Juskiewicz, *Losy Żydów mławskich w okresie II-ej wojny światowej* (Mława: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Ziemi Mławskiej, 1994), 144 (Mława, with incidents of property claim irregularities); William Kornbluth, *Sentenced to Remember: My Legacy of Life in Pre-1939 Poland and Sixty-Eight Months of Nazi Occupation* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1994), 147 (Tarnów); Elinor J. 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Zoltak, *My Silent Pledge: A Journey of Struggle, Survival and Remembrance* (Toronto: MiroLand, 2013), 167 (a town near Białystok and properties in Siemiatycze); Carolyn Gammon and Israel Unger, *The Unwritten Diary of Israel Unger* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2013), 168, 185, 187–88 (Tarnów, Ryglice—a 1945 court document for the return of the property was witnessed by a Catholic priest); Anna Kołacińska-Gałazka, ed., *Dzieci Holocaustu mówią...*, vol. 5 (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie “Dzieci Holocaustu” w Polsce, 2013), 288 (Tarnów); Grabowski and Libionka, *Klucze i kasa*, 330 (Nowy Targ), 331–32 (Kraków), 335 (Nowy Targ), 379 (Warsaw), 510 (Szczepieszyn), 534 (Krynica), 536 (Nisko), 556–58 (Szczepieszyn), 562 (Szczepieszyn), 564 (Gorajec), 565 (Gorajec, Szczepieszyn), 569 (Zamość, Szczepieszyn), 586 (Kalisz), 587 (Radom), 591–92 (Kalisz); Żaryn and Sudoł, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 359 (Gołcza near Miechów); Hera, *Polacy ratujący Żydów*, 397 (Siedlce); Wierzbieniec and Rączy, *Righteous Among Nations: The Scope and Forms of Help to Jews in East Central Europe During Occupation by the Third Reich*, 59 (Myślenice); Michał Kalisz and Elżbieta Rączy, *Dzieje społeczności żydowskiej powiatu gorlickiego podczas okupacji niemieckiej 1939–1945* (Rzeszów: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej–Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, Oddział w Rzeszowie, 2015), 66 n.17 (Stróżówka near Gorlice), 76 n. 44 (Staszkówka near Gorlice), 89 (Moszczenica near Gorlice); Anetta Głowacka-Penczyńska, Tomasz Kawski, and Witold Mędykowski, *The First to Be Destroyed: The Jewish Community of Kleczew and the Beginning of the Final Solution* (Brighton, Massachusetts: Academic Studies Press, 2015), 466–67 (Kleczew); Molly Applebaum, *Buried Words: The Diary of Molly Applebaum* (Toronto: Azrieli Foundation, 2017), 81–82 (Dąbrowa Tarnowska); Andrzej Nowak-Arczewski, *Zmiłuj się nad nami* (Warsaw: Prószyński i S-ka, 2017) (several properties in Klimontów); Testimony of Louis Kaye, May 9, 1983, Voice/Vision Holocaust Survivor Oral History Archive, University of Michigan at Dearborn, Internet: <<http://holocaust.umd.umich.edu/kaye/>> (Włoszczowa); Testimony of Rose Pilkowitz, Holocaust Memorial Center, Farmington Hills, Michigan, Internet: <<http://www.holocaustcenter.org/page.aspx?pid=697>> (Częstochowa); Testimony of Yurek Kirshenbaum, Virtual Shtetl, Internet: <<http://www.sztetl.org.pl/en/article/czestochowa/16,accounts-memories/13755,yurek-kirshenbaum-born-in-1929-in-czestochowa-about-his-and-his-family-life/?action=viewtable>> (Częstochowa); Bochenek Family, Yad Vashem Righteous Database, Internet: <<http://db.yadvashem.org/righteous>> (Lubiczko near Gręboszów); Polch Family, Yad Vashem Righteous Database, Internet: <<http://db.yadvashem.org/righteous/family.html?language=en&itemId=5722955>> (Frysztak); Sobolewski Family, Yad Vashem Righteous Database, Internet: <<http://db.yadvashem.org/righteous/family.html?language=en&itemId=6824523>> (Brańsk). The Yad Vahem Archives

which belies the notion that Jews were prevented from or were fearful of reclaiming their property through normal channels. Throughout Poland, a great many Poles came forward as witnesses on behalf of Jews in property claims filed by Jewish survivors. In fact, the requirements to prove relationship to deceased property owners were so lax that multiple and rival claims were plentiful. Violent conflicts with Poles over the return of property were rather rare. They were far less frequent than the thousands of uneventful private sales by Jews of their reclaimed properties to Poles. The former were clearly the exception, the latter the norm. The notion advanced by Jan Gross that Poles were anti-Semitic and murderous towards Jews because of their repressed guilt for having acquired Jewish property is, in fact, refuted by Jewish testimonies themselves. As scholar Monika Rice remarks,

Another surprising finding is that the question of appropriated Jewish property, often indicated as one of the reasons why the Polish population was hostile to the returning survivors, is almost never mentioned in Jewish testimonies after the war.<sup>6</sup>

A number of Jews were involved in fraudulent real estate scams, that is, misappropriation of property to which they were not rightfully entitled.<sup>7</sup> Many Jewish properties were heavily indebted with loans and tax

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contain many more examples of property reclaimed by their Jewish owners. A number of Jews transferred their property to their Polish rescuers out of gratitude before emigrating from Poland. See, for example, Gutman and Bender, *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations*, vol. 4: *Poland*, Part 1, 185 (Lubaczów), 191 (Sieniawa), 200 (Kalisz), 282 (Białystok). According to Mark Verstandig, who served as a legal counsellor with the Ministry of Security, comprehensive legislation for the restitution of private property which had been confiscated by the Nazis (this was for the most part Jewish property), was blocked by Mieczysław Mietkowski, the deputy minister, who was himself Jewish. See Verstandig, *I Rest My Case*, 218. Disrespect for property rights, especially property belonging to “reactionaries”, “bourgeois” and other class enemies, was encouraged by the Communist regime. However, Poles did rush to take over abandoned Jewish properties. In Biała Rawska, abandoned Jewish homes remained empty throughout the war, and it was only with the encouragement of the Communist regime that they were occupied by the local poor. See Stanisławczyk, *Czterdzieści twardych*, 59. In the 1960s the government of Poland paid \$40 million to the United States government as settlement for property claims of Polish Jews who had immigrated to the United States. Notwithstanding the payment of \$177,000 to the Theological Seminary Yeshivath Chachmey in Michigan in 1964 as compensation for a yeshiva building in Lublin taken over by the state, the Jewish community in Poland advanced a further claim on that same property and secured its return in kind in 2001. When word of the double indemnity got out, the leaders of the Jewish community openly opposed the idea of returning the property and pressed on the Polish authorities to sanction this injustice. See “Jesziwa podwójnie zwrócona,” *Kurier Lubelski*, September 5, 2008. Another example of unjust enrichment at the expense of the Poles was the return in 2002, to the Jewish community in Poznań, of communal properties which, before the war, were indebted to the municipality and state for several times in excess of their value. See Wojciech Wybranowski, “Oddali z nawiązką,” *Nasz Dziennik*, August 28, 2002. There have also been bogus property and compensation claims made by private individuals (Jews) in recent years.

<sup>6</sup> Monika Rice, *“What! Still Alive?!”: Jewish Survivors in Poland and Israel Remember Homecoming* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2017), 77.

<sup>7</sup> There were frequent cases of individual and groups of Jews misappropriating Jewish property by making fraudulent claims as alleged “lawful heirs” of the deceased owners. Polish courts increasingly became aware of these scams. The Central Committee of Jews in Poland also had grave concerns but was powerless to stop this abuse. See Grabowski and Libionka, *Klucze i kasa*, 528, 532, 536–37, 595–600. In the Białystok region, there was even a Jewish mafia-like ring working closely with Jews in the Security Office (Samuel Faber or Farber, Eliaasz Trokenheim) that fraudulently “reclaimed” scores of Jewish properties belonging to deceased Jews (in Białystok, Łomża, Jedwabne, and elsewhere), sold them to Poles, and divided the profits among the ring members. See Jerzy Kułak, “Szaleniec i inni,” *Karta* (Warsaw), no. 15 (1995): 121–22; Krzysztof Persak, “Akta postępowań cywilnych z lat 1947–1949 w sprawach dotyczących zmarłych żydowskich mieszkańców Jedwabnego,” in Machcewicz and Persak, *Wokół Jedwabnego*, 379–87; Jerzy Kułak, “Faber i S-ka—krótka historia pewnego przekrętu,” *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, no. 6

arrears when the war broke out in 1939, and these charges were never paid off.<sup>8</sup> Some Jews who came into the possession of property of other Jews or Poles did not want to return it to the rightful owners after the war.<sup>9</sup> However, such information does not fit the portrayal of Polish-Jewish relations then or now, and the Communist authorities even censored a newspaper report about the return to Poland—from Palestine—of 435 Jews in 1946.<sup>10</sup> Nor is it keeping with the myth that Poles made fortunes—both during and after the war—by misappropriating Jewish property.

Nonetheless, the immediate postwar period was the optimal time for most Jewish survivors and their heirs to reclaim property, especially since Jewish survivors received no compensation from the Germans at that time. The drawback was that property values were low (often the houses were destroyed) so most Jews didn't bother. Not surprisingly, some Jews claim that buying property from Jews was itself theft because the price of property was deflated. However, if the purchase of property in those times was as lucrative as this claim implies, Jews would have been scooping up properties rather than selling them off. The reality was quite different. There was enormous uncertainty about the status of private property at the time. The Communist regime had little regard for private property, especially large estates and industrial and commercial property. A large portion of Jewish-owned buildings had been destroyed during the war throughout Poland, notably in Warsaw, which was reduced to rubble. (Such uncleared property had

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(June 2002): 80–83; Anna Pyżewska, “Losy ludności żydowskiej w województwie białostockim w latach 1944–1949—wybrane problemy,” in Wijaczka and Miernik, *Z przeszłości Żydów polskich*, 289–91. A returnee to Kraków recalled: “To prove title, one had to obtain a death certificate and then a court order ... It was sufficient to find somebody who could state that he had witnessed somebody’s death in the ghetto, a concentration camp, or other place of murder. For a small fee many were ready to sign such statements, no matter whether they were truthful or not ... Sometimes the presumed dead ... unexpectedly came back ... By then it was too late.” See Henryk Vogler, *Autoportret z pamięci*, Part 3: *Dojrzałość* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1981), 7. Even Jewish communal property was restored to the Jewish community and sold, or simply sold privately. For example, the Jewish community sold the synagogue property in Zabłudów for the sum of 130,000 zlotys. A copy of the authorization for this transaction issued by the Voivodship Association of Jewish Communities can be viewed in the Internet at <[www.tiac.net/users/bartman/zabludow/datner%20document](http://www.tiac.net/users/bartman/zabludow/datner%20document)>. Shiye Goldberg states: “I met a Jew from Levarrow [Lubartów] who was engaged in selling synagogues, now abandoned.” See Goldberg, *The Undefeated*, 227. In Warsaw, a Jewish criminal ring operated in cahoots with the Security Office searching for gold hidden away by Jews at the start of the war. See Joanna Żelazko, “Złoto dla Bezpieki,” *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, no. 10 (October 2003): 66–67. In Częstochowa, the surviving Jews emptied the ghetto of large quantities of furniture that remained and sold it to the Poles. See the account of Leo Scher, Louisiana Holocaust Survivors, The Southern Institute for Education and Research, posted at <<http://www.tulane.edu/~so-inst/scher.html>>. A mundane example involved picking fruit and digging up vegetables from “abandoned” orchards and farms and then selling them in street markets. See Dan Porat, *The Boy: A Holocaust Story* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010), 140. An Italian historian puts a bizarre spin on this shameful episode. Ignoring the many Jewish sources and hard evidence such as the largely Jewish criminal network in Białystok, Tonini suggests—defying common sense and citing no hard evidence—that it was Poles who instigated these shenanigans and duped or corrupted Jewish survivors into taking part in them. In actual fact, it was Jews who invariably initiated and drove these transactions. See Carla Tonini, “The Jews of Poland after the Second World War: Most Recent Contributions of Polish Historiography,” *Quest: Issues in Contemporary Jewish History*, no. 1 (April 2010), Internet: <<http://www.quest-cdecjournal.it/focus.php?id=211>>.

<sup>8</sup> Grabowski and Libionka, *Klucze i kasa*, 158, 163.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Stanisławczyk, *Czterdzieści twardych*, 178, which mentions the case of a Jewish woman who did not want to return to the rightful Polish owner items looted from the latter’s home during the war. See also Hurman, *Pod osłoną nocy*, 124.

<sup>10</sup> Archiwum Akt Nowych, GUKPPI W 3, t. 1/7, k. 6: “Polska drugą ojczyzną,” *Gazeta Ludowa*, October 1, 1946. See also the testimony of Alina Fiszgrund, March–August 2005, Internet: <<http://www.centropa.org>>.

virtually no value at the time.) When Jews who had resettled in large cities such as Łódź, Wrocław and Szczecin—where they received furnished apartments by the authorities—returned to their small towns, many of them were in ruins. Returning to Biłgoraj in November 1948 to construct a communal grave for the murdered Jews, they found a town that was virtually destroyed and had the appearance of a desert.<sup>11</sup> A Jew who returned to Ciechanowiec in 1948 recalled,

All Jewish homes in the New City ... were torched to the ground. ... I encountered a similar situation in the Old City. A whole line of Jewish homes destroyed ... Not a sign was left of the synagogue or schools. All the stores and fixtures that once made up the market had disappeared.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> A. [Abraham] Kronenberg, ed., *Khurbn Bilgoraj* (Tel Aviv: n.p., 1956), Polish translation: *Zagłada Bilgoraja: Księga pamięci* (Gdańsk: Słowo/obraz.terytoria, 2009), 233.

<sup>12</sup> Avraham Spielman, "My Pain in Soviet Russia," E. Leoni, ed., *Ciechanowiec-mezoh Bialystok, sefer edut ve-zikaron* (Tel Aviv: The Ciechanovitzer Immigrant Association in Israel and the USA, 1964), 596ff.; translated as *Ciechanowiec-Bialystok District: Memorial and Records*, Internet: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Ciechanowiec/Ciechanowiec.html>>. However, this does not prevent the author from complaining that the Poles "had taken over the Jewish trade," as if commercial life was supposed to have simply ceased after the Jews had left the town. The author also noted: "Some of the Christians recognized me and outwardly acted friendly. They greeted me, tipped their hats, and even invited me to visit with them. They expressed sympathy over the loss of my family."