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Since the Second World War the interaction between Poles and Jews has taken place in a number of different arenas. In the first place, a fairly substantial Jewish community did emerge in post-war Poland, numbering at its height nearly 300,000. It proved very difficult to maintain its viability given the memory of the Holocaust, the persistence of anti-Semitism and the impact of communist politics. As a result it suffered constant hemorrhaging with waves of emigration intensifying particularly after the Kielce pogrom in July 1946, in 1956–1957, and in the aftermath of the 'anti-Zionist' campaign of 1968. The end of communism has led to a revival of Jewish life in Poland and today there are perhaps some 30,000 people connected in some way with Jewish life. Throughout the post-war period Jews from Poland have played an important role both in the investigation of the Polish-Jewish past and in the evolution of Polish-Jewish relations.

Polish Jews were an important element in the *Yishuv* (the Jewish settlement in Palestine) from the beginnings of modern Zionism, and their numbers increased after the Second World War and the establishment of the state. Many had played

an important role both in Jewish politics and in Jewish scholarship in Poland, and they continued to do so in Israel. The Second World War saw the emergence of the United States as the centre of the largest Jewish community of the Diaspora, a community in which Jews from the lands of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth were a very significant element. The country was also the home of a very large Polonia (ethnic Polish immigrant community). The United States thus became an important area for Polish-Jewish interaction, as did Canada, where many of the same conditions had developed. The exiled Polish communities in England and France, whose members remained in the West after 1945, also played an important role in the evolution of both Polish politics and Polish-Jewish relations.

If one is to understand the evolution of Polish--Jewish relations in the post-war period, developments in all these areas and the interaction between them have to be taken into account. After 1945 Poles and Jews (insofar as these are mutually exclusive categories) have been divided, above all, by their diametrically opposed and incompatible views of a shared but divisive past. The experiences

of the war and the imposition on Poland of an unpopular and unrepresentative communist dictatorship gave a new lease of life to the 'romantic' view of Polish history which saw Poland as the 'Christ of nations,' a country of heroes and martyrs which had unstintingly sacrificed itself for Western values and whose efforts had never been appreciated or understood by the materialistic West. In this history, Jews figured in a largely negative way. Pre-partition Poland-Lithuania had been a 'land without stakes', a country committed to religious toleration which had given the Jews shelter when they had been persecuted elsewhere. The Jews had not appreciated this hospitality – they had always remained a people apart, with their own language and culture and little sense of loyalty to Poland. For the most part they had been better off than most Poles and had always been ready to profit at the expense of the latter. In the modern period this was exemplified by the way they had prevented the formation of a 'native' middle class and by their refusal to support Polish aspirations in the East at the end of the First World War. They had sought foreign intervention to guarantee them special protection in

the interwar period and had been a key element in the anti-national communist movement.

At the outbreak of the Second World War Jews had welcomed the Red Army when it treacherously invaded eastern Poland and had collaborated on a large scale with the Soviet occupiers. Under Nazi occupation, Poles had suffered more than any other nation. They had refused to collaborate and their large-scale resistance had led to tremendous suffering, culminating in the German destruction of Warsaw. They were not implicated in the mass murder of Jews on Polish soil – on the contrary, many Poles lost their lives trying to save Jews. Jews nevertheless played a prominent role in the communist regime after 1944 and in its security apparatus. In the West, Jews have shown little awareness of the complexities of the Polish situation and have constantly blackened the name of Poland.

Not surprisingly this view of the Polish past was not shared by most Jews. Their image of Poland was shaped partly by their memories of Polish behavior before, during and after the war and, more particularly, by the views expressed by Polish-Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. More than ninety per cent of Poland's three and a half

million Jews perished during the Second World War, and those who survived had, for the most part, bitter memories. They remembered the anti-Jewish violence which had accompanied the establishment of Polish independence and the intensification of anti-Semitism after the death of Piłsudski in 1935. They believed that most of their Polish fellow-citizens had been indifferent to the fate of the Jews under Nazi rule and that a significant minority had denounced Jews to the Nazis or participated in anti-Jewish violence, those who fell into these categories far outnumbering the small number of rescuers. They were shocked by the persistence of anti-Semitism as exemplified in the anti-Jewish violence after 1944 and the 'anti-Zionist' purge of 1968, and regarded the attempt to stigmatize the Jews for the behavior of a small number of communists of Jewish origin as an anti-Semitic reflex and an attempt at imposing collective responsibility on the Jews.