

The Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland After the Holocaust

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Only about 300,000 Polish Jews remained: some 25,000 had survived on Polish soil; another 30,000 had returned from concentration camps and forced-labor facilities; and the rest were repatriated from the Soviet Union. About 250,000 passed through Poland (whether illegally, semi-legally, or legally) at one point or another, and the other 50,000 remained in the country.

The Central Committee of Polish Jews (a loose coalition of Jewish representatives of the PPR - the Polish Communist Party - who sought to rebuild Polish Jewish life in Poland, and representatives of the Zionists, whose goal was to settle in Palestine) along with regional committees, established economic organizations, supply depots, productivity centers in Upper Silesia, and credit institutions. They were also active in culture and education, establishing 33 elementary schools, four high schools, nine “Tarbut” schools, twenty kindergartens, two theatres (in Lodz and Wroclaw), libraries, professional courses, a daily paper (“Dos Neie Lebn”), a publishing house for Yiddish literature, historical committees (in Lodz, Krakow, Bialystok and Katowice), and over thirty party-ideological journals, nearly all of them affiliated with various currents in the Zionist movement.

At the same time the Jews in Poland engaged in political activity. For the most part this bore the imprint of the Pioneer-Zionist youth movements, which set up a large number of “kibbutzim”, or collectives, as a means to facilitate the absorption and organization of the wandering Jews who planned to leave Poland and as educational centers in anticipation of their Aliyah. The kibbutzim provided Jewish refugees with a home, professional training, and a motivating ideal. All told, this framework incorporated some 20-25,000 people.

Source: Gutman, Yisrael and Saf, Avital (eds.), *She'arit Hapleta 1944-1948, Rehabilitation and Political Struggle, Proceedings of the Sixth Yad Vashem International Historical Conference*, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, 1990, p. 254.