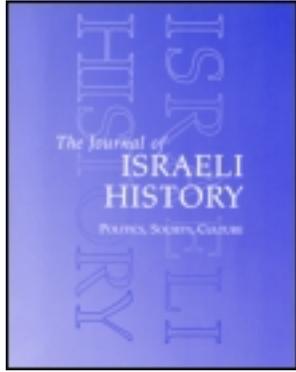


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Marcos Silber

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“Immigrants from Poland want to go back”: The politics of return migration and nation building in 1950s Israel

Marcos Silber*

Many immigrants from Poland to Israel applied to return to the Polish People’s Republic in the 1950s, but few were able to obtain the coveted permission. Neither Israel nor Poland facilitated their return and both implemented a locked-gate policy. For both countries, return migration interfered with the building of a nation-state that needed immigration by members of the nation represented by the state. From Poland’s standpoint, return migration meant a return of undesirable elements whom Poland had foresworn when it had let them leave, and who were thenceforth considered foreigners. Israel perceived it as a threat to the *aliyah* enterprise and the hope of free emigration to Israel from all East European countries. However, both countries were inclined to let non-Jewish immigrants who so desired to return to Poland. From Israel’s standpoint, these non-Jews had not become an integral part of Israeli society, while the Polish authorities apparently still considered these non-Jewish immigrants “ours” even after they renounced their Polish citizenship and moved to Israel. Their return also reinforced the nation-building process and the ingathering of the scattered nation.

Keywords: immigration; return; nation building; Poland; Israel

Introduction

An Israeli joke from 1957 tells of an incident that occurred at 2 a.m. in the Warsaw train station. A man is lying on the floor. The lower part of his body is on a blanket, but his head is on the cold, hard, dirty floor. A station employee goes over and wakes him up: “Sir, it’s 2 a.m. You have to go home.” The man replies, “I have no home.” The employee asks, “Have you just come back from Russia with the repatriation?” The man answers, “No, I’ve come back from Israel.” The employee has pity on him and agrees to let him sleep in the station. But he wonders: “You have a blanket but you’ve put it under the lower part of your body. Why don’t you put your head on it?” The man replies, “This head that was so stupid should suffer!”¹

The joke reflects both the fact that Jews returned to Poland and the attitude towards this fact. In the Israeli public discourse in the 1950s, return migration to Poland was perceived as somewhere between despicable and idiotic.² In many ways, this attitude was similar to the attitude towards any emigration from Israel and towards the return of immigrants to any country of origin. This judgment may be why historians have written so little about the return of immigrants from Israel to their countries of origin, including Poland.³ This article seeks to fill the gap somewhat. It will draw a general outline of return migration from Israel to Communist Poland and will argue that the option of returning enchanted many immigrants. It also led to cooperation between the two countries in dealing with the issue. A look at the two countries’ policies on the issue gives us a new perspective on the countries’ nation-building dilemma and points out many similarities – all too many.⁴

The authorities in both countries monitored the return of immigrants from Israel to Communist Poland and expressed their concern. In 1949, for instance, the Polish consul in

*Email: msilber@univ.haifa.ac.il

Tel Aviv, Rafał Łoc, warned the Consular Bureau in the Foreign Ministry in Warsaw of a “mass” return to Poland after one year of Israeli independence.⁵ The Polish consul in Jerusalem, Marek Thee, noted a year later that “people with [Polish] ID cards are contacting our office en masse seeking to return to Poland.”⁶ After three years of Israeli independence, Thee said in Warsaw that “thousands [!] of people are coming to him in Tel Aviv, crying and wanting to return.”⁷ At the peak of Jewish emigration from Poland to Israel in 1958, Antoni Bida, the Polish minister in Tel Aviv, said that the number of people applying to the Polish legation to return to Poland was about half the number of immigrants from Poland to Israel.⁸ The return migration even drew the attention of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers’ Party (PZPR), the ruling party in Communist Poland.⁹

The Israeli authorities, too, watched the phenomenon with concern. The issue was even discussed by the government. In December 1957, Interior Minister Israel Bar-Yehuda warned his fellow ministers that “for several weeks now, more and more ... families ... have been coming to the Interior Ministry demanding to return to Poland. ... They also announced that they would organize a demonstration with the Polish flag, because they are insisting that they be allowed to go back to Poland.”¹⁰ The Israeli authorities’ concern about return migration to Poland was manifested in the censor’s reports on letters from and to the immigrants. These reports devote a considerable amount of space to the issue, so we can assume the censors had been instructed to monitor it. “We must not discount the number of people interested in returning to Poland, sometimes even when the chances of managing here are definitely good,” the Israeli censor of mail and telegrams wrote, summing up the tone of the immigrants’ letters to relatives in Poland in the spring of 1957.¹¹ The daily Hebrew press also followed the issue of “those wishing to return to the land of Treblinka.”¹² Concern about emigration to Poland even led to demonstrations against the people who wanted to return. In 1958 there were demonstrations, sometimes violent ones, at the gates of the Polish legation in Tel Aviv, where the applicants to return were insulted. Describing the Poles as a nation of anti-Semitic wild animals, the demonstrators tried to dissuade the applicants from returning to Poland and to convince them to move to Canada or Brazil instead. Anywhere but Poland.¹³ The very suggestion of exchanging one destination country for another indicates the demonstrators’ revulsion from the idea of Jews’ returning to Poland.

These impressions can, of course, blur the accuracy of the picture. Given the huge wave of immigration from Communist Poland – 70,000 immigrants in the 1950s and a similar number in the last third of the 1940s – is it any wonder that some of them went back?¹⁴ But the question remains: What was the extent of that opposite flow? And why did this movement apparently cause more outrage and shock than a return to Canada, Brazil, or other parts of the globe? Most importantly, was there special significance to their return to Poland other than the fact that Poland was “the land of Treblinka,” the symbol of the Holocaust and the tribulations of exile? Here we will trace the phenomenon mainly as manifested in the 1950s. Presumably, there was no qualitative change in the matter until 1967. The severing of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1967 following the Six-Day War, the events of March 1968, and the de facto expulsion from Poland of almost all the remaining Jews changed the situation. Then the option of returning to Poland no longer existed.¹⁵

The extent of the return migration

The numerical data regarding the returnees are problematic. First of all, the data are incomplete. Second, as we shall see, different Israeli sources from the same period of time give different figures. The same is true of the Polish sources: different sources give different numbers for the

same phenomenon.¹⁶ A comparison of the Israeli data with the Polish data calls into question the reliability of the statistics in general.

Nevertheless, despite the problematic nature of the data, we can estimate the scope of the phenomenon. Based on the data in our possession, we can determine that the postwar return to Poland began before Israeli independence, as soon as Poland was liberated. It included some of the 7,000 war refugees, Jews and non-Jews, who found themselves in Palestine at the end of the war (having arrived mainly with the Polish General Anders' Army) and wanted to return to Poland.¹⁷ At the height of the process, from the beginning of 1948 until April of that year, 979 Jews in this group started putting their Polish passports in order – a step that would enable them to return to Poland.¹⁸ Although this does not mean that they actually went back to Poland, it does indicate some intent to return; furthermore, Poland gladly processed the paperwork and freely admitted those who wanted to return.¹⁹ Their return was part of a broader repatriation process that Poland initiated after the war to bring home its far-flung nationals, scattered around the world. Poland, having come back to life, did not put up any obstacles at this point to prospective returnees from Palestine. Anyone who so wished could return.

The extent of the return migration changed with the establishment of the State of Israel. Throughout the 1950s, many people applied to return to Poland but few actually went back. For instance, from April 1948 until the end of September 1949, 1,964 Jews who had or were eligible for Polish passports applied to put their passports in order so that they could return to Poland. Applications were being filed at a rate of about 100 people per month, and in the last three months the rate increased to almost 200 per month.²⁰ Shortly thereafter, in the first quarter of 1950, approximately 500 immigrants to Israel (100–150 a month) contacted the Polish consulate in Israel to put their papers in order so that they could return. Given the legal complications they faced, these were presumably people who had arrived in Israel after November 1949, when new emigration regulations requiring renunciation of Polish citizenship went into effect. Because we do not have complete data on the number of applications filed with the Polish consulate, for the two years from the establishment of the State of Israel until April 1950 we can estimate a minimum of 2,500 applications (only those filed by September 1949 and in the first quarter of 1950, i.e., those we know about with certainty), or a maximum of 5,000 (2,500 for the missing quarters, i.e. the last quarter of 1949 and the last three quarters of 1950, for which we lack information, if the monthly rate remained approximately the same). In that same period of time, roughly 30,000 people moved to Israel from Poland,²¹ meaning that the number of applications from people who wished to return was equal to between 8 and 15% of arriving immigrants. How many of them actually moved back? According to Israeli sources, from the establishment of the State until the end of 1951, only 281 people declared when leaving Israel that they intended to settle in Poland again.²² This figure is between 5 and 10% of those who applied to the Polish consulate and about 1% of total immigration from Poland during the same period of time.²³ Between 1951 and 1956, there was almost no migration between Israel and Poland in either direction. In 1952, for instance, according to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 20 people moved from Israel to Poland. From 1954 to 1955, only two people returned.²⁴ In 1956 hundreds of applications were filed by immigrants who wished to return to Communist Poland, but according to Polish sources, Poland allowed only five of them to return; the Israeli sources give a figure of 15 returnees in that year.²⁵ Thus we see an intensification of the pattern of hundreds of applications filed with the Polish consulate to return to the “homeland” and negligible numbers, just fractions of a percent, actually returning.

In the last third of the 1950s, as Jewish emigration from Poland was liberalized and more and more Polish Jews moved to Israel, the number of returnees also rose. However, the overall trend remained the same: hundreds of applications but few actual returnees. For instance, according to Polish records, between July 1957 and the beginning of December 1957, about 350 families

(i.e., 1,200 persons) applied to the Polish legation in Tel Aviv to return.²⁶ Because many of the applications were filed shortly after the immigrants arrived in Israel – sometimes just a few days after – this statistic can be compared to the number of immigrants who arrived during the same period of time. Between June and the beginning of December 1957, 10,081 immigrants moved to Israel from Poland; thus about 12% applied to the Polish legation to return.²⁷ A similar estimate of about 10% was cited at a 1957 symposium on the absorption of university-educated immigrants held by the Organization of University Graduates and attended by the leading Israeli sociologist S.N. Eisenstadt.²⁸ Despite the differences in the figures regarding actual returnees, we can see that whereas the number of returnees rose during the years of the mass migration, the percentage of applicants who actually returned remained stable, not exceeding 8%.²⁹ In other words, the pattern in which a large number of people – around 10% of the immigrants – applied to return but very few actually went back to Poland (fewer than 10% of the applicants, and fewer than 1% of all the immigrants) did not change.³⁰ Thus we can conclude that this was a statistically negligible phenomenon. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, only 665 people returned to Poland from the time of the establishment of the State until 1960 – roughly 40% of them by 1951.³¹

Of those who did not actually return to Poland, some presumably remained in Israel and integrated there. Others used Israel as a transit station and moved to other countries. Australia and Canada were popular destinations for immigrants from Poland to Israel; some tried their luck in Brazil or Argentina. The Soviet Union was also one of the destinations. There was a rumor that returning to the Soviet Union was an option because “the Russian consulate covers the travel expenses.”³²

Thus, when we look at the extent of the return migration, we see three main features: First, there was a huge disparity – 90% according to my estimate – between the number of applicants to return to Poland and the actual number of returnees. Second, the number of actual returnees was so small as to be statistically negligible. Why was the disparity so big? Third, both Poland and Israel focused obsessively and intensively on the return migration to Poland. Why did such a statistically negligible phenomenon elicit such an obsession? It seems to me that the excessive attention to a numerically negligible phenomenon indicates that its significance was not numerical.

In order to answer the questions and depict the relationship between the three features, I will divide the rest of the article into two parts. In the first part I will present the policy of Communist Poland vis-à-vis the return migration and Israel’s response to this policy; in the second I will examine the profile of the returnees.

The locked-gate policy

Repatriation of Polish citizens who had gone to Palestine during the war started immediately after the war.³³ This process, which continued until 1949, did not lead to any disputes between the two countries. Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett and Polish Consul Rafał Łoc agreed that “no difficulties would be placed in the way of war refugees who wanted to return to Poland.” This promise was kept by both sides.³⁴ Those who left Poland legally at the end of the war and came to Israel deliberately to settle there generally had Polish passports. When any of them wanted to return to Poland, they went to the consulate to extend their passports. Some would also request the consulate’s assistance in obtaining permission to leave from the Israeli authorities,³⁵ and the consulate would press Israel for such approval. The Israeli government authorities did not conceal their displeasure with the situation but nevertheless agreed to the consulate’s requests. In contrast, the Jewish Agency Immigration Department imposed formal obstacles such as insistence on repayment of immigration and absorption expenses as a condition for

permission to leave the country. The Polish consulate interpreted the Jewish Agency's bureaucratic obstacles as its way of "trying to halt the drive to return to the homeland."³⁶ Throughout the 1950s, the Jewish Agency played a role in this process.

Neither country had expected Jews who had left Poland for Israel voluntarily to want to return. Both countries wanted migration to flow in one direction, as they saw Jewish migration from Poland to Israel as a tool for the consolidation of two nation-states: the Jewish nation-state in Israel and the Socialist Polish nation-state in Poland.³⁷ Jewish emigration to Israel, especially after the establishment of the State, was perceived by the Polish authorities as the departure of elements harmful to nation building. A memorandum in late 1950 about the option of emigration to Israel describes the Polish policy regarding Jewish emigration as follows:

The government, with an eye to the welfare of the state and the needs of the national economy . . . has done its best to hinder the departure of productive elements In contrast, exit permits were issued to Zionists (especially activists), merchants, speculators, industrialists, owners of small factories, most lawyers, rabbis and members of religious communities, old people, people disabled in the war, etc.³⁸

The unanticipated flow of returnees included among these undesirable elements that Poland had renounced required a policy decision. In 1949 Warsaw started working on developing a policy that would lock the country's gates to return migration from Israel. To this end, the Polish Foreign Ministry instructed the Polish consuls in Israel to make it as hard as possible for the immigrants to return. For instance, the consulates were asked not to issue visas to immigrants wishing to return to Poland.³⁹ However, the consulates could not refuse in a sweeping fashion to renew the passports of Polish citizens who had left Poland legally.⁴⁰ Therefore, the emigration policy had to be changed. So as to not have to deal with returnees in the future, the Polish authorities made renunciation of Polish citizenship a condition for receiving permission to move to Israel. The Israeli minister in Warsaw was told: "There can't be 'an experimental trip'; every citizen should think hard about whether to leave. Once he leaves, there is no going back."⁴¹ The 27,915 immigrants who moved to Israel between late 1949 and early 1951 were thus stateless. "The new arrangement regarding nationality will spare you difficulty with returnees," Deputy Minister of Public Administration Jan Izydorczyk said in a decidedly patronizing manner to Israeli legation personnel in Warsaw. "Many of the returnees could ultimately manage if they did not have the option of returning to Poland," he added in the same patronizing tone.⁴²

This new order eliminated the immigrants' option of returning to Poland. In view of the applications to return, Z. Wolniak, the Polish consul in Jerusalem, noted that Poland viewed those applying for exit permits "as making a voluntary, resolute decision to terminate their participation in the efforts of the Polish nation and to join in the Jewish nation's efforts to build its state. Such a decision cannot be easily retracted."⁴³ As stated, it was not only the immigrants to Israel who relinquished their role in building the Polish nation; by granting the exit permits, the Polish state essentially marked these citizens as undesirable. As soon as these Jews chose to join the State of Israel, they became foreigners in the eyes of the Polish state authorities.

From Israel's perspective, too, a return to Poland was undesirable. First of all, like any emigration from Israel, return migration to Poland was in the wrong direction. But a return to Poland had additional significance. In late 1949, Poland was the only East European country with a significant number of Jews that still permitted emigration to Israel. Return migration to Poland was seen as a threat to continued immigration by Polish Jews to Israel, since a flood of reports on the hardships suffered by the newcomers and on the failure of their absorption could presumably put a stop to the influx of immigrants. "The few returnees are slandering the country," said Israel Barzilai, the Israeli minister in Warsaw. He asked Foreign Minister Sharett to "take action to prepare tools and means needed for absorption."⁴⁴ What Barzilai was asking for was positive discrimination in favor of immigrants from Poland to help them integrate in

Israel. The aim was partly to reduce the number of returnees. Given how the press in Poland was making use of reports on failures of immigrant absorption, Sharett expressed his concern that the Polish state was playing a double game with Israel: “on the one hand permitting *aliyah* [Jewish immigration to Israel] in principle and in practice but on the other hand ensuring that there are in fact few immigrants.”⁴⁵ Return migration to Poland was thought liable to interfere with the immigration to Israel of the remaining Jews of Poland, both because it might genuinely deter Jews from moving to Israel and because it might be used by a weapon by the Polish authorities in their campaign against emigrationist trends among Polish Jewry. Hence the return to Poland had to be stopped.

But the return migration was not only a threat to the dream of putting an end to the Jewish exile in Poland. To Sharett, Barzilai, and many others, successful absorption of the Polish immigrants could lead other East European countries to allow emigration to Israel. Shmuel Eliashiv, director of the Eastern Europe Division in the Israeli Foreign Ministry and later Israeli minister to the USSR, wrote to Sharett that “if, Heaven forbid, we fail [with respect to immigration from Poland], it may cause severe harm to our struggle for immigration from other countries as well. From this standpoint, it is essential to pay special attention to the immigrants from Poland.”⁴⁶ Sharett adopted this view; when he asked the government to support positive discrimination on behalf of the Polish immigrants, he argued that the successful absorption of Polish Jewry “could serve as a precedent for other East European countries from which immigration is currently prohibited.”⁴⁷ The reference was mainly to Romania and Hungary, which had just locked their gates to Jewish emigration to Israel, but there is no doubt that he hoped the Soviet Union would start allowing Jews to move to Israel as well.⁴⁸ In his opinion and that of many others, the dream of putting an end to the Jewish exile in Eastern Europe depended on the successful absorption of Polish Jewry. A failure of absorption, as manifested most strongly by return migration, could seal the gates of Poland and put an end to the hope of immigration by the rest of East European Jewry.⁴⁹

Between 1951 and 1956, Poland banned Jewish emigration to Israel, but it did not change its policy regarding returnees and kept its gates locked to them. The Jews who knocked on the doors of the Polish consulate had become bargaining chips in the dispute between Poland and Israel over freedom of emigration from Poland. The issue was raised at numerous meetings on the diplomatic front throughout the first half of the 1950s. As in a fixed ritual, the Israeli side requested, demanded, insisted that Poland allow family reunification (the pretext for Jewish emigration to Israel) and the Polish side cited the immigrants’ desire to return to Poland as proof that there was no need to open the country’s gates and that Israel was incapable of absorbing the immigrants. The desire to return was said to be proof that there was no need for permission for family reunification, since the immigrants wanted to leave Israel in order to reunite with their relatives in Poland.⁵⁰ The ritual also included a fixed reply from the Israeli side: that the descriptions of the return migration were exaggerated, and that those immigrants who wanted to return simply missed their relatives in Poland.⁵¹ In other words, the requests were not evidence of a failure of absorption (Israel’s responsibility), but an effect of the ban on emigration to Israel (i.e., Poland’s responsibility). Needless to say, neither side wanted Poland to let the Jews back in. The Polish government had a policy of not letting Jews in or out: the country’s gates were closed to people who wished to leave but they were also closed to those who had left voluntarily (to Poland’s delight) and now wished to return.

For instance, when Consul Wolniak told the Israeli press in late 1952 of ten people who had demanded that the consulate allow them to return to Poland (even though it had been stated publicly that “the immigrants will not be permitted to return to Poland”), the Eastern Europe Division cabled information to the legation in Warsaw so that the latter could refute Wolniak’s remarks. The ten were not ten, the cable said, but only two. “They are middle-aged people who

were not getting enough support from their relatives.” Israel maintained that the state was not responsible, and that these were exceptional social cases. The story did not end there; the Foreign Ministry asked the Jewish Agency Absorption Department to give the two immigrants special assistance with work and housing.⁵² The message the Ministry was trying to convey was that the existence of people who wanted to return did not prove the failure of absorption.

Various people in Poland who were opposed to Jewish emigration to Israel published information on the immigrants’ requests to return. In the first half of the 1950s, for instance, the Polish consul passed on such information to the Hebrew press as a means of explaining the Polish policy of not allowing emigration.⁵³ In Poland, too, such information was published with a similar purpose. The first time the *Folks shtime*, the Yiddish-language organ of the PZPR, printed an Israeli story in the original Hebrew was in January 1957, when it copied verbatim Shimon Samet’s article “Immigrants from Poland Want to Return,” which had appeared in *Ha’aretz*. The article was also translated into Yiddish. Not a single comment was added; there was no need.⁵⁴ For the same reason the Israeli Foreign Ministry took a negative view of any published mention of the immigrants’ desire to return to Poland, since this, the Ministry believed, would jeopardize *aliyah*. In the last third of the 1950s, when Polish policy changed again and looked favorably upon Jewish emigration to Israel, Polish diplomats proposed that the Israeli Foreign Ministry hinder the Israeli press from printing information about the returnees.⁵⁵ According to them, this information was liable to be used as a weapon by the “Mirskis and Zachariaszes,” i.e., the Jewish Communists active among Polish Jewry who were opposed to emigration by Jews.

From a legal standpoint, the immigrants who arrived in Israel in the last third of the 1950s – a large wave of immigration known in Israel as the “Gomułka *aliyah*” – were in a different position from their predecessors. Beginning in 1957, people could emigrate with their Polish passports if they so wished.⁵⁶ Theoretically, this meant that they could return to Poland – but only theoretically, because in order to keep the country’s gates locked to returnees from Israel, Poland took advantage of a legal loophole. By accepting Israeli citizenship, which was granted automatically to all immigrants (unless they explicitly refused it), they de facto renounced their Polish citizenship. Consequently, before processing any immigrant’s application to return to Poland, the Polish consulate in Tel Aviv demanded that the applicant bring confirmation from the Israeli authorities that he or she was not an Israeli citizen.⁵⁷ When the immigrants discovered that their Israeli citizenship would prevent them from taking advantage of their Polish citizenship to return to Poland, some of them decided to renounce their Israeli citizenship, but the Polish Foreign Ministry announced that this would not restore their Polish citizenship.⁵⁸ The resulting legal situation pleased the Israeli Foreign Ministry, which according to a circular from the Politburo and Secretariat of the PZPR Central Committee informed the Polish authorities that “Israel does not want large-scale return migration to Poland.”⁵⁹

The new arrangement put the would-be returnees in a hopeless situation: without citizenship their applications would not be processed. Some came up with the bright idea of entering Poland as tourists, but this made the Polish legation very suspicious of Israeli tourists. Applicants for tourist visas underwent special investigations after which they might not receive the desired visas if they were suspected of wanting to move back to Poland.⁶⁰ It should be noted that some people in the legation were disgusted with this arrangement, which they described as immoral; they proposed recognizing the right of many of the immigrants to Polish citizenship and greatly liberalizing the policy on returnees, while practically keeping the Polish gates locked to emigration. Perhaps dealing with people who had unquestionably met with hardships and genuinely wanted to return to Poland elicited empathy among the staff of the Polish legation in Tel Aviv, who wanted a drastic change in policy – a mass return to Poland and a decrease in immigration to Israel.⁶¹ However, the policy was not changed. Jan Słowikowski, the Polish chargé d’affaires in Israel, explained to an Israeli reporter that it was very hard to determine

which applicants were entitled to visas, since in most cases it was not clear whether applicants to return to Poland had been Polish citizens previously; if they had valid citizenship, whether they had received their Polish passports legally; if they were citizens and had received passports legally, whether they had not undermined their rights as citizens by renouncing their citizenship, either deliberately when they moved to Israel before the late 1950s or inadvertently by accepting Israeli citizenship; and if they had not undermined their citizenship, whether they had fulfilled the conditions of citizenship in all their minute details. The reporter summed up his “powerful impression from the conversation” as follows: “Poland has no desire to take back the Jews who wish to return there.”⁶² My impression from the archival material is the same.

The locked-gate policy takes on special significance if we put it in the context of two concurrent phenomena: first, the policy of other Eastern Bloc countries regarding return migration from Israel; and second, repatriation to Poland throughout the period surveyed here. It turns out that the disparity between the number of people who wanted to return from Israel to their country of origin and the number of actual returnees did not exist everywhere in the Eastern Bloc. For instance, in the mid-1950s Romania permitted free return migration.⁶³ The number of returnees to Hungary in the second half of the 1950s suggests that Hungarian policy regarding returnees from Israel was generous.⁶⁴ As for the Polish repatriation policy, Poland, like Israel, viewed the return of its nationals to their homeland as a central ethos in its national conception and a major tool for nation building. Poland applied its repatriation policy to two million Poles who were outside the country’s borders. For instance, in the second repatriation (1956–59), about a quarter of a million Poles – including thousands of Jews – returned from the Soviet territories. Poland geared up to absorb them and did not weed out returnees.⁶⁵ The Jewish repatriates from the USSR had the same status as Polish war refugees in Israel, regarding whom Poland had an open-door policy.

Moreover, the refusal to accept would-be returnees from Israel was raised in the same breath as Poland’s difficulties in bringing back Poles from the Soviet Union. Słowikowski explained in the Israeli Foreign Ministry that “Poland’s policy is not to let those who left return, [since] . . . Poland is facing a difficult problem of absorbing repatriates . . . and cannot add to the already great difficulties.”⁶⁶ In other words, while Poland was denying the option of returning to its former Jewish citizens who had moved to Israel, it was giving prewar Polish citizens who were still in the USSR (Jews and Poles alike) the right to return. The immigrants in Israel had become foreigners in the eyes of the state they had left and to which they wished to return, which they regarded as their home. Although they wanted to go back home, the home no longer wanted them.

It turns out that Israel and Poland saw eye to eye on the locked-gate policy regarding return migration to Poland. Both countries perceived return migration as being opposed to the desired overall direction of migration and as interfering with the process of ingathering their scattered nationals and building a productive, homogeneous, and monolithic nation. Israel had difficulty acknowledging its failure to absorb members of the Jewish people in the Jewish homeland lest reports of this interfere with the immigration process and put to the test the opening of the Eastern Bloc to emigration by all of East European Jewry to Israel. The Polish authorities, for their part, did not want back elements who were already viewed as foreign to the vision of building the Polish state.

A crack in the gate: the returnees

If the policy was to lock the gates, who were the people who did receive the coveted permission to return? As stated, the vast majority of applicants were turned down. According to my estimate presented above, the rejection rate was around 90%. Applications submitted shortly after immigration to Israel were rejected out of hand, as were applications filed on the grounds of

initial absorption difficulties in Israel, applications from people with no occupation, and finally, applications from people with occupations held in disdain by the Communist government.⁶⁷ Applications that cited “the superiority of Communism over capitalism” were treated with a large grain of salt; after all, these people were “deserters”!⁶⁸ The Polish authorities viewed many of the complaints of immigrants who wished to return antagonistically.

The Polish minister in Israel stated that the legation nevertheless approved applications in “certain egregious cases.”⁶⁹ The Polish chargé d’affaires told an Israeli journalist that “extremely justified” cases of holders of valid Polish passports would be approved.⁷⁰ Who were those “egregious” or “extremely justified” cases? Who received the coveted permission to return to Poland? Reports by the Israeli censor of mail let us listen indirectly, though in a problematic manner, to the voices of immigrants who could be qualified as “extremely justified cases.” A letter from Tel Aviv in the summer of 1957 says, “I will be going to the consulate in the next few days and asking them to pay our travel expenses . . . I haven’t received anything yet from Comrade Gomułka. Have you written to him?”⁷¹ Presumably, if Władysław Gomułka, head of the Polish Communist Party, was interceding, the writer did not have to go through the exhausting, discouraging, and usually disappointing procedures at the Polish legation in Tel Aviv. On the other hand, the case of Gomułka’s friends in Israel was certainly uncommon – so rare, in fact, that the censor saw fit to note it. A similar case was found by the censor in a letter from Dr. W.,⁷² a senior physician and department director in a Polish hospital who wrote from Tel Aviv in the spring of 1957 to a colleague, Dr. G., in Warsaw:

I hope to be able to return in the autumn. Until the situation becomes clear, I have serious doubts as to whether my colleague, Dr. [H.], will keep his promise regarding the return of my department. I will go back to Poland under the following conditions: (1) if I can be sure of regaining my previous status as promised to me by hospital [Z]; (2) if I get an apartment, because it is very hard to get one in Warsaw; (3) a promise to send my books, personal objects, and car back to Poland because I do not have the money to do this. When the time comes, Minister Bandarski [Health Minister Rajmund Barański] will no doubt help me and I will ask you to be in touch with him. I will write to you from here in the same spirit.⁷³

According to a circular sent out to members of the Central Committee of the Polish Communist Party, two categories of people were supposed to be allowed to return to Poland from Israel. The first were cases like those described above, in which party or government officials interceded on an applicant’s behalf. In other words, these were people whom the high echelons cared enough about to get involved in approving their applications. The second category consisted of mixed (Jewish and non-Jewish) families. According to a source in the Polish Foreign Ministry, permits were issued “first and foremost to mixed families.” For instance, 82 of the 350 families that applied to return in the second half of 1957, i.e., approximately one-fourth, were mixed.⁷⁴ In that same year, 4% of immigrants from Poland to Israel were Christians. In other words, the proportion of non-Jews among those who received permits to return was many times higher than among all the immigrants.⁷⁵ Data for that year, provided to the press by the Israeli Interior Ministry, indicate that 65% of people who emigrated or intended to emigrate from Israel during that period of time were members of mixed families.⁷⁶ According to a report to the Polish Foreign Ministry from the Polish chargé d’affaires in 1960, all applications that were processed by the Polish legation were from mixed families.⁷⁷

The mixed families tended to be made up of non-Jewish women married to Jewish men. For instance, the 23,307 immigrants who arrived in Israel in the first half of 1957 included 674 non-Jews (3%), 595 of whom (88%) were non-Jewish women, almost all married to Jewish men.⁷⁸ Some of them came with their husbands without second thoughts, wanting to keep the family together no matter what. Some decided to move to Israel in order to spare their children from hearing anti-Semitic remarks; others were women who had bound their fate to that of their

husbands during the war, undergone the tribulations of the war, and decided to join their husbands in their new lives.⁷⁹ These women set aside the fact that they were not Jewish and sometimes even set aside their faith and decided to continue binding their fate to that of their Jewish husbands, this time in Israel. Some decided to come because they identified with the Jewish side of the family or for many other reasons. Israeli diplomats fought for this group's eligibility to move to Israel because the Poles were reluctant to consider them an integral part of the population emigrating to Israel.⁸⁰ Although the number of mixed families was small,⁸¹ they caused some discomfort for the Israeli authorities who handled their immigration. In 1949, for instance, the Israeli minister in Warsaw, Israel Barzilai, was instructed not to hinder the immigration of non-Jewish wives and their children, but nevertheless to keep track of it and report to the Immigration Ministry.⁸² The numbers – which rose in the last third of the 1950s even though, as we have seen, they remained fairly low – led to monitoring the entry of non-Jewish immigrants into Israel and their proportion among the immigrants in general. Nevertheless, in view of rumors about obstacles imposed by the immigration officer in the Israeli legation in Warsaw, the director of the Eastern Europe Division in the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Yaakov Shimoni, reported to the Israeli minister in Warsaw that “the government’s approach is to permit immigration even by mixed couples selectively and after a meticulous examination and clarification.”⁸³ On the one hand, these immigrants were admitted and attempts were made to integrate them in the Jewish population, but on the other hand they were considered strangers and even, sometimes, aliens in the public debates over their integration and about how their nationality should be recorded.⁸⁴ A picturesque expression of this duality is found slightly later, in 1964, when the percentage of mixed families had increased further. Then the immigration officer in the Israel Embassy in Warsaw wrote in undiplomatic language:

I get the impression that ... the Poles have turned on the tap regarding members of mixed families ... And these are actually families with lots of kids. It turns out that Polish women ... [have] more [children] than the tender Jewish women, who make do with one child (or an heir [*kaddish*] and a spare). For now we are taking this in good spirits, but what will happen if, Heaven forbid, the wheel turns and the percentage of mixed families exceeds the percentage of kosher ones?⁸⁵

A comparison of the number of actual returnees with the number of non-Jews or mixed families that moved to Israel shows clearly that the vast majority of non-Jewish immigrants did not return to Poland. Some managed to integrate in Israel and were assimilated into Israeli Jewish society; some even converted to Judaism. Others moved to a third country.⁸⁶ The issue of the non-Jewish immigrants came up in full force when these immigrants, especially the women, sought to return to Poland. Their distress met with empathy from the Polish authorities. For instance, Labor and Social Welfare Minister Stanisław Zawadzki told the Israeli minister:

I have received heartrending letters from Polish women in Israel who have been abandoned by their Jewish husbands. It is clear to me that they were not necessarily abandoned because they are Polish, and certainly there are Jewish women who are abandoned by their husbands. But this husband is the only link connecting [the women] with the new Jewish and Israeli context. With the severing of this link they are uprooted and cut off from everything.⁸⁷

The reports by the Polish consulate in Tel Aviv and the Israel Embassy in Warsaw noted that non-Jewish immigrants to Israel, like members of mixed families, had a hard life in Israel – suffering insults, ostracism, and harassment – and were therefore applying to return.⁸⁸

It seems that some of the non-Jewish women who moved to Israel experienced a strengthening of the Christian or Polish elements in their identity. According to reports by the Israeli censor of mail, the non-Jewish immigrants tended “to discover their Christianity” after contending with the social difficulties of absorption.⁸⁹ We see from this comment that even though not being Jewish did not prevent them from moving to Israel, it did interfere with

absorption for some of them. Excerpts from a letter quoted by the censor point out the ethnification process that non-Jewish immigrants underwent. These excerpts contain very harsh, furious language. Presumably, the censor chose these because of the extreme language and they are not representative. But despite the problem of their being taken out of context, without details about the writers and their experiences, it seems to me that these excerpts illustrate a radical pole on a social continuum in the Polish ethnification process that some of the non-Jewish immigrants underwent as they became more and more “Polish” and even anti-Semitic in Israel. One woman in Tel Aviv wrote to her father in Poland:

We went to church in Jaffa. This afternoon Adam will be going to Lod, where a lot of Poles live. Imagine, Adam is proving to be very active in Catholic affairs. I am pleased because it's better late than never. After coming he realized that in his heart he is a strong Catholic. Now we are both more attached than ever to our homeland [i.e., Poland].⁹⁰

The hostility of the people around them and the insulting label *goy* is described by the writer as follows: “There was a boycott of Poles because of an anti-Catholic trend. Just as in Poland the word *żyd* was derogatory, here the same problem exists with the word *goy*.” The insults flung at her and her husband as “goyim” or “Poles” she hurls back at the Jews: “Here I think Adam has finished once and for all with his fondness for the Jews. Today he is the biggest anti-Semite there is. He had to come here to understand what it means to be a Jew.”⁹¹ Beyond the fury we can sense disappointment and pain caused by their failure to integrate. It seems that some non-Jews who had been willing to give up the non-Jewish element of their identity when they decided to go to Israel experienced that element becoming stronger in Israel. If their immigration to Israel is evidence of indistinctness in the ethnic boundaries of Jewish society or a belief that they could join Jewish society and that social mechanisms would lead to assimilation, the ethnification of this sub-group of immigrants shows that there were limits to the blurring of the boundaries.

According to Polish reports, non-Jewish women wrote to party leaders and government officials in Poland, telling them horror stories about discrimination in order to obtain permission to return to Poland.⁹² The Polish legation in Tel Aviv was sympathetic and asked the Israeli Foreign Ministry to facilitate the departure of the non-Jewish immigrants (especially women), whose citizenship status in Poland was no different from that of the other immigrants to Israel; this included settling debts to the Jewish Agency. The Foreign Ministry cooperated in letting them go.⁹³ Israel did not put any obstacles in the way of non-Jewish immigrants or mixed families that wanted to return to Poland. Poland, too, was willing to take back these people who, like other immigrants, had ceased to be citizens. The situation was summed up well by the journalist K. Shabtai of *Davar*: “There is no real emigration to Poland, with the exception of the mixed families.”⁹⁴ As far as Shabtai was concerned, the emigration of the non-Jews was unimportant. It was no proof of the failure of absorption, and certainly was no threat. On the contrary, their return facilitated nation building. The disparity between their national and civic affinities had made them a problematic group in that they were simultaneously both “ours” and “not ours,” foreigners. The partial return of the non-Jews helped, in the words of Bruno Latour, to “purify” the world into essences, and in our case into pure national categories (despite the fact that this was impossible because of the complexity of the social reality).⁹⁵ We see a clear trend in which the Jewish immigrants remained outside Poland, while some of the non-Jews would go back home to Poland.

In Israel, returning to Poland was regarded as an act of stupidity at the very least, as we saw at the beginning of the article, if not outright suicide. The author Anda Amir quoted a letter from an acquaintance who had gone back to Poland. The woman wrote: “I brought everything with me from Israel when I came back here. I forgot only one thing there: a rope.”⁹⁶ Indeed, the fate of the returnees was a bitter one. First of all, the rule was that the entire cost of returning to the “homeland” had to be covered by the returnees themselves.⁹⁷ The average cost of the journey to

Poland for a family of four, in addition to debts to the institutions that had financed their immigration to Israel, came to \$2,000, a hefty sum for an immigrant family that may have become impoverished in Israel.⁹⁸ The returnees were not considered repatriates, so they were not eligible for the special privileges granted under Polish law to returnees to their homeland, like those returning from Russia at the very same time. They were therefore ineligible for financial support, help with housing, or even job referrals.⁹⁹ There were reports that the returnees were not being sent to Warsaw or other attractive destinations in Poland.¹⁰⁰ They were catalogued as unreliable. It was recommended, for instance, that party institutions not accept their opinions as evidence or recommendations, even if they used to be party members.¹⁰¹ The party would not let them forget that they had flirted, so to speak, with Zionism. Some were even monitored at times by the Polish security police for the crime of “Jewish nationalism.”¹⁰² Even though when they returned they confirmed their connection to the Polish homeland, the latter was suspicious of them and held their previous misdeeds against them forever.

Concluding comments

Although many immigrants from Poland applied to return to the Polish People’s Republic, few were able to obtain the coveted permission. For both countries, return migration interfered with the building of a nation-state that needed immigration by members of the nation represented by the state. In addition, from Poland’s standpoint return migration meant a return of undesirable elements whom Poland had forsworn when it had let them leave, and who were thenceforth considered foreigners. Israel perceived it as a threat to the *aliyah* enterprise and the hope of free emigration to Israel from all East European countries. Neither Israel nor Poland facilitated their return. Thus, the difficulty in obtaining permission to return to Poland was consistent with both Israeli and Polish policy. Both countries saw the Jewish immigrants as belonging to Israel alone, although they were inclined to let non-Jewish immigrants who so desired to return to Poland. From Israel’s standpoint, these non-Jews had not become an integral part of Israeli society. The Polish authorities were very aware of their suffering (especially that of the women). In a sense, it seems, Poland still considered these non-Jewish immigrants “ours” even after they renounced their Polish citizenship and moved to Israel. Their return also reinforced the nation-building process and the ingathering of the scattered nation. The locked-gate policy vis-à-vis Jewish immigrants to Israel and the opening of the gate a crack to non-Jewish immigrants helped both countries purify the categories of “ours” and “not ours” – those appropriate for the particular society and those not wanted in it. It also helped further the creation of homogeneous societies in which nationality took precedence over citizenship.

The return migration to Poland reveals two main similarities in the evolution of the Jewish and Polish national movements. These similarities remained even after the Jewish population of Poland decreased and the Jewish national movement succeeded in creating a Jewish nation-state in Israel.¹⁰³ The first is the attitude towards “return” and “repatriation” – the ingathering of the far-flung nation as the desired direction of migration, as a tool in achieving the national objectives of the state and strengthening it. We see this especially in the preference given to the nationality represented by the state in immigration policy and its implementation as a means of building the Israeli and Polish states. The second concerns the tension and relations between nationality and citizenship, a tension that existed both in the Polish as well as in the Israeli frames. The question of return to Poland points to the boundaries of the preferred ethnos; and in this context the issue of flexibility and the limitations of including ethnic minorities in the ethno-national whole emerge clearly. It seems that the principle of ethnic preference in immigration policy had varying margins. The policy (of both countries) of bringing non-Jewish immigrants to Israel but also monitoring them indicates the importance of ethno-national identity as a criterion

for full inclusion or full or partial exclusion, but it also shows that the boundaries of the ethno-national collective were much more flexible and fluid than people tend to think. Nevertheless, the issue of the actual return of non-Jewish immigrants demonstrates the limits to the fluidity. It seems that, in any case, the complicated interrelations between the nation-building process of the Jewish, Israeli, and Polish nations and states did not end with the disappearance of the Jewish minority from the Polish landscape.

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Notes

1. K. Shabtai, "Yeridah le-Polin: Mamash o urva parah?" (Emigration to Poland: Truth or myth?), *Davar*, 8 November 1957, 2.
2. Katriel Katz to Eastern Europe Division, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hereafter EED), 29 May 1958, Israel State Archives (hereafter ISA) 130.09/3118/4.
3. For the issue of return migration during the pre-State period, see Kaniel, "Meimadei ha-yeridah"; Alroey, *Imigrantim*, 208–28; and Margalit, "Ha-yeridah meha-aretz." Although Sarna's groundbreaking article "The Myth of No Return," does not discuss the return of immigrants from Palestine to their countries of origin, it does begin a discussion on Jewish return migration. See also Weiss, "Homeland as Shelter or as Refuge?" On return migration from Israel to Germany, see Mendel, "The Policy for the Past." Return migration from Israel has been studied primarily from a demographic perspective; see, e.g., DellaPergola, "Aliyah, yeridah," 225–56; Jacobsen and Bronson, "Emigration from Israel." The issue of return migration to Poland has been discussed mainly in the context of the Fourth *Aliyah*, two decades before the establishment of the State of Israel. See especially Barlas, "Ha-alimah," 426–427; Giladi, *Ha-Yishuv*, 39–40, 179–81, 229.
4. Connections between the situation in Israel after independence and Polish political traditions are noted by Weiss in "Ha-golem ve-yotzro."
5. Łoc to the Consular Bureau in the Foreign Ministry in Warsaw, 30 May 1949, Archiwum Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych (Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Warsaw (hereafter AMSZ), z-11 w-15 t-279.
6. Coded cable from Marek Thee in Jerusalem to Sluczański, 13 April 1950, AMSZ, Dep. 6-77 w-24 t-238.
7. Laron to EED, 20 November 1951, ISA, 130.11/2508/3.
8. Katriel Katz to EED, 29 May 1958, ISA, 130.09/3118/4.
9. Letter to members of the Politburo and Secretariat of the Komitet Centralny Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej (Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party) (hereafter KC PZPR), 31 December 1957, Archiwum Akt Nowych (Archive of New Records), Warsaw (hereafter AAN), PZPR V-59.
10. Minutes of Israeli government meeting no. 11, 1957/58, vol. 38, 8 December 1957, p. 38, ISA.
11. See, e.g., report on correspondence with Poland, 19 May–15 June 1957, Central Zionist Archive, Jerusalem (hereafter CZA), S6/6034. Israel censored incoming and outgoing mail, especially correspondence with Eastern European countries, and prepared separate periodic reports on each country. The monitoring of correspondence between residents of Israel and residents of Poland was sometimes known as "Operational Mail P"; that with Hungary was known as "Project H." and so forth. These reports seem to have been passed on to various recipients, including the Jewish Agency. Despite a letter from the head of the Security Service asking that the reports be "return[ed] . . . to us

within a month,” some of them were not returned and are therefore accessible to the public today. See letter from the head of the Security Service to Shragai, Jewish Agency Immigration Department, 13 August 1957, CZA, S6/6033. Attempts to obtain the original reports from the IDF Archives were to no avail. I do not know when this systematic monitoring started and ended. My sense is that it started in the last third of the 1950s, in or around 1957, and was related primarily to the scope of immigration from Poland. On this subject, see “Survey of Correspondence of Polish Immigrants, Operational Mail P,” 14 June 1957, CZA, S6/6033.

12. Shabtai, “Yeridah le-Polin.” Other references to the subject in the press are discussed below.
13. Katriel Katz to EED, 29 May 1958, ISA, 130.09/3118/4. See also S. Leibowitz to the director of EED, 12 September 1958, ISA, 508/8.
14. See Oren, “Retzifut u-tmurot,” 34; Stankowski, “Nowe spojrzenie,” 114, 116, 121, 130. Iglicka’s estimate of 60,000 Jewish immigrants to Palestine/Israel between 1945 and 1960 is unfounded (*Poland’s Post-War Dynamic*, 17).
15. On the severing of relations between the two countries, see Stankowski, “Zerwanie stosunków dyplomatycznych,” 355–73. Bożena Szajnok devotes a chapter to the severing of relations and Israel’s role in the events of 1968 in her book on diplomatic relations between Poland and Israel, *Z historii i Moskwę w tle*, 394–456. It should be noted that the events of March 1968 have received a great deal of scholarly attention and many primary sources have been published. See especially Eisler, *Polski rok 1968*, esp. 116–40. See also a collection of articles on the subject: Kula et al., eds., *Marzec 1968*, especially Krzemiński’s article “Antysemityzm, socjalizm i ‘nowa świadomość’,” 261–83.
16. On the problems with the Polish statistics and the contradictions between them and other sources, see, e.g., Iglicka, *Poland’s Post-War Dynamic*, 15.
17. Kersten, *Repatriacja ludności*, 167, 230; Pilch and Zgornik, “Emigracja,” 490.
18. Stankowski, “Nowe spojrzenie,” 112.
19. See letter from Łoc (Tel Aviv) to Consular Bureau (Warsaw), 30 May 1949, AMSZ, z-11 w-15 t-279.
20. Stankowski, “Nowe spojrzenie,” 112.
21. Oren, “Retzifut u-tmurot,” 138.
22. *Yarhon Statisti le-Yisrael* (Israeli Monthly Bulletin of Statistics), 10, pt. 1 (1959): 87. We do not know how many emigrants did not mention their intent to move to Poland or how many said they intended to go there but actually went elsewhere.
23. For the sake of comparison, the rate of return from the USA to Eastern Europe during the era of massive Jewish immigration, according to Sarna (“The Myth of No Return”), was 15%–20% by 1900, in contrast to 5.2% in 1908–25.
24. *Yarhon Statisti le-Yisrael* 10, pt. 1 (1959): 87.
25. Memo from Sluczanski on emigration to Israel, 26 February 1957, AMSZ, z-12 w-14 t-344. According to Israel’s Central Bureau of Statistics, 15 people moved from Israel to Poland in 1956. See *Yarhon Statisti le-Yisrael* 10, pt. 1 (1959): 87.
26. Circular to members of the Politburo, 31 December 1957, AAN PZPR V-59; Szajnok, *Z historii i Moskwę w tle*, 295–96.
27. The immigration data are taken from the following documents: statistical table of immigration, 1 July 1956–31 October 1957, appended to a letter from Victor Reshef to EED, 6 November 1957, CZA, S6/6035; Y. Rubin to Duvdevani, 3 December 1957, *ibid.*; Reshef to Consular Department, 2 January 1958, CZA, S6/6036.
28. “Polish immigrants are terribly disappointed, although at the legation in Warsaw they were promised all sorts of good things” (*Ha-Boker*, 18 October 1957).
29. The Israeli figures in various sources regarding actual emigration to Poland in 1957 range from just 45 to 96 people; see Ami Leonov to B. Duvdevani, 20 December 1957, CZA, S6/6035. In his article in *Davar*, “Yeridah le-Polin,” Shabtai quotes an Interior Ministry source as saying that in a period of nine months, 48 people emigrated from Israel. Although there are discrepancies, the overall picture is the same. The Polish minister cited a higher figure – “80 families” – but even this number does not change the overall picture. See Katriel Katz to EED, 11 March 1958, ISA 130.09/3118/6.
30. The pattern may have changed somewhat in the 1960s, when the Polish legation approved more applications to return. For instance, in 1960 it processed 150 requests to return to Poland, i.e., about 3% of the 5,172 immigrants who moved to Israel in that year. See Dov Sattath to Rehavam Amir, Israeli minister in Warsaw, 30 December 1960, ISA, Foreign Ministry files, 3336/50. The number of immigrants to Israel is based on “Ha-yehudim be-Polin” (Jews in Poland), Yad Tabenkin Archives,

- Ramat Efal (hereafter YTA), group 15, box 32, file 5. Stankowski's figures are slightly different: he cites 5,183 immigrants to Israel in that year ("Nowe spojrzenie," 130). Due to the partial liberalization, slightly fewer than half of the applicants, 70 people, actually returned to Poland. See *Kovetz statisti*, 96.
31. *Kovetz statisti*, 96. The data do not include 1953, since we do not have any data for that year. Presumably, the 1953 data are similar to those for 1954, i.e., no returnees. It should be kept in mind that 1953 was both the height of Stalinism in Poland and a low point in Israeli-Polish relations.
 32. Department of Censorship of Mail and Telegrams, "Survey of Correspondence of Polish Immigrants," 30 August 1957, and "Survey of Correspondence of Polish Immigrants, Operational Mail P," 11 July 1957, CZA, S6/6034; Shimon Samet, "Olim mi-Polin rotzim lashuv" (Immigrants from Poland want to go back), *Ha'aretz*, 9 January 1953, 4.
 33. The literature on the postwar repatriation to Poland is extensive. See especially Kersten, *Repatriacja ludności polskiej* (for the repatriation from Israel, see 167–68). Important findings in Kersten's book were published previously in her article "International Migrations." See also Pilch and Zgornik, "Emigracja."
 34. Łoc (Tel Aviv) to Consular Bureau (Warsaw), 30 May 1949, AMSZ, z-11 w-15 t-279. The date of the Sharett-Łoc meeting is unknown, but it was almost certainly around the time of the establishment of the State, since Łoc wrote in May 1949 that "last year, at a meeting with Foreign Minister Shertok, the Consul General was promised that no difficulties would be placed in the way of war refugees who wanted to return to Poland."
 35. Łoc (Tel Aviv) to Consular Bureau (Warsaw), 30 May 1949, "Information on People Who Want to Return to Poland," AMSZ, z-11 w-15 t-279.
 36. *Ibid.*
 37. On emigration of national minorities (mainly Germans, Ukrainians, Belorussians, and Jews) from Poland, whether voluntary or forced, as a way of consolidating a new Polish national society, see Iglicka, *Poland's Post-War Dynamic*, 15–22. See also Kersten, "Forced Migration," 75–86. The special status of Jewish migration from and to Poland and the forces that shaped it in the 1950s are an important issue that still awaits extensive, in-depth research.
 38. See memo, "The Option of Emigrating to Israel: Survey of the Situation as of 20 October 1950," AAN KC PZPR 237-5-98.
 39. Barzilai to Sharett, 9 August 1949, ISA, 130.43/5556/9.
 40. Approximately 24,000 Jews left Poland legally for Palestine/Israel between 1947 and September 1949; see Stankowski, "Nowe spojrzenie," 114.
 41. Barzilai to Sharett, 9 August 1949, ISA, 130.43/5556/9.
 42. P. Dagan (Warsaw) to Foreign Ministry (Tel Aviv), 18 August 1949, ISA, 130.11/2502/10.
 43. EED to Israeli legation, 18 November 1952, ISA, 130.11/2502/11.
 44. Barzilai to Sharett, 20 September 1949, ISA, 130.02/2457/18.
 45. Foreign Minister Sharett (Tel Aviv) to members of the government (Tel Aviv), 19 September 1949, ISA, 93.43/5556/9. See also stenographic record of government meeting no. 38, 1948/49, 20 September 1949, ISA.
 46. Cable from Eliashiv to Sharett, 14 September 1949, ISA, 130.09/2306/4.
 47. Foreign Minister Sharett (Tel Aviv) to members of the government (Tel Aviv), 19 September 1949, ISA, 93.43/5556/9; stenographic record of government meeting no. 38, 1948/49, 20 September 1949, ISA.
 48. Stenographic record of government meeting no. 38, 1948/49, 20 September 1949, ISA. The proposal of positive discrimination on behalf of Polish Jewry was rejected due to a great deal of opposition, partly from Golda Meir and Ben-Gurion, who refused to have any part in such discrimination. It should be noted that Ben-Gurion initially agreed with Yitzhak Gruenbaum that Polish immigrants should be given special attention, and even a special budget. Later he decided that this would be a mistake. He wrote to Gruenbaum that "we must not discriminate in any way between immigrants, and there are no grounds for giving Polish immigrants any advantage. Whoever doesn't want to come shouldn't come. Immigrants to Israel are not doing Israel a favor, and we must not spend on one immigrant what we can spend on two" (Ben-Gurion to Gruenbaum, 28 March 1950, ISA, 130.43/5556/9). Sharett was also persuaded that it would be wrong to institute a policy of discrimination in favor of Polish immigrants. See Sharett to Barzilai, 12 October 1949, Ha-Shomer ha-Tza'ir Archives, Givat Haviva, I. Barzilai files, 15.95, box 2, file 4.
 49. Hacohen, *Olim bi-se'arah*, 62–63.
 50. Kubovy to Ministry in Tel Aviv, 12 October 1951, ISA, 130.09/2306/4.

51. Laron to EED, 20 November 1951, ISA, 130.11/2508/3. See also, e.g., cable from Niv to Ministry in Tel Aviv, 31 March 1951, ISA, 130.09/2306/4; Kubovy to Ministry in Tel Aviv, 18 July 1951 and 20 September 1951, *ibid.*
52. EED to Israeli Legation, 18 November 1952, ISA 130.11/2502/11.
53. *Ibid.*
54. See cable from Katriel Katz to EED, 20 January 1957, ISA, 130.09/2306/12; Samet, "Olim mi- Polin rotzim lashuv."
55. Dov Sattath to legation in Warsaw, 20 January 1957, ISA, 130.09/3118/4. See also cable from Eshel to K. Katz, 22 December 1957, ISA, 130.09/3118/18. On the approach of Jewish communists in Poland about the return of immigrants from Israel see: Szajnok, *Z historii i Moskwę w tle*, 281.
56. Memo from Sluczański on emigration to Israel, 26 February 1957, AMSZ, z-12 w-14 t-344, doc. 245.236/8.
57. Circular to members of the Politburo and Secretariat of the KC PZPR, 31 December 1957, AAN PZPR V-59, 249/21. Cf. cable from EED to the legation in Warsaw, 11 October 1957, ISA, 130.09.2306/9.
58. Cable from Sobierajski to Bida regarding citizenship, 28 March 1958, AMSZ Dep. 6-77 w-60 t. 858.
59. See n. 57 above.
60. L.A. Allon to the director of EED, 8 November 1959, ISA, Foreign Ministry files, 508/6.
61. Appendix 1, "The Polish-Israeli Problem," written by the Polish legation in Tel Aviv and appended to a letter from M. Stradowski (Foreign Ministry, Warsaw) to A. Sław (KC PZPR), 22 January 1959, AAN.KC PZPR 237/XIV-149: "We sent to Poland thousands of applications to return. We propose that we be summoned to Warsaw in this regard in order to discuss and reach agreement on a more positive attitude by the Polish government towards the applications [to return] of (1) mixed families; (2) families who left a wife or husband in Poland together with the children; (3) people who have the right to regard themselves as citizens of the country in which they were born (a moral right that does not expire, cannot be forfeited, and is recognized in practice in international relations); (4) people who have done exemplary work or have excelled in the wars of liberation, in the workers' movement, in building socialism."
62. Department of Censorship of Mail and Telegrams, "Survey of Correspondence of Polish Immigrants," 11 October 1957, CZA, S6/6035.
63. Memo from Sluczański on emigration to Israel, 26 February 1957, AMSZ, z-12 w-14 t-344. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, 1,151 people moved to Romania between 1948 and 1958, half of them in 1956. See *Yarhon Statisti le-Yisrael* 10, pt. 1 (1959): 87.
64. *Kovetz statisti*, 96. The table combines the number of returnees to Hungary and Czechoslovakia (migration between Israel and Czechoslovakia in the 1950s was negligible).
65. Kersten, "International Migrations."
66. Dov Sattath to Israeli legation, Warsaw, 20 January 1957, ISA 130.09/3118/4.
67. *Ibid.* circular to members of the Politburo, 31 December 1957, AAN PZPR V-59.
68. Katriel Katz to EED, 29 May 1958, ISA, 130.09/3118/4.
69. *Ibid.*
70. Samet, "Olim mi-Polin rotzim lashuv."
71. Department of Censorship of Mail and Telegrams, "Survey of Correspondence of Polish Immigrants," 30 August 1957, CZA, S6/6034.
72. For reasons of privacy I am not writing the full names of the people in question or details of a personal nature.
73. Report on mail to and from Poland, 19 May–15 June 1957, CZA, S6/6034.
74. Circular to members of the Politburo, 31 December 1957, AAN PZPR V-59.
75. Ami Leonov to B. Duvdevani, 20 December 1957, CZA, S6/6035.
76. Department of Censorship of Mail and Telegrams, "Survey of Correspondence of Polish Immigrants," 11 October 1957, CZA, S6/6035.
77. Dov Sattath to Rehavam Amir, Israeli minister in Warsaw, 30 December 1960, ISA, Foreign Ministry files, 3336/50. The number of immigrants to Israel is based on: "Ha-yehudim be-Polin," YTA, group 15, box 32, file 5; Stankowski's figures are slightly different: he cites 5,183 immigrants to Israel in that year ("Nowe spojrzanie," 130).
78. Ami Leonov to B. Duvdevani, 20 December 1957, CZA, S6/6035. The calculation of the number of immigrants is based on "Ha-yehudim be-Polin," YTA, group 15, box 32, file 5, doc. 9.
79. Katriel Katz to EED, 9 July 1957, ISA, 130.09/3118/6; "Conversation between Minister I. Barzilai and Minister Zawadzki, Sivan 24, 5710 (9 June 1950)," Warsaw, 13 June 1950, ISA, 93.07/507/10.

See also report by Yitzhak Ben-Ari, head of the General Investigation Department, National Headquarters, 17 January 1951, ISA, 130.11/2508/6.

80. "Conversation between Minister I. Barzilai and Minister Zawadzki, Sivan 24, 5710 (9 June 1950)," Warsaw, 13 June 1950, ISA, 93.07/507/10.
81. A total of 1,067 families in 1957 (Ami Leonov to B. Duvdevani, 20 December 1957, CZA, S6/6035). In that year immigration from Poland totaled 31,619 ("Ha-yehudim be-Polin," YTA, group 15, box 32, file 5, doc. 9).
82. Hacothen, *Olim bi-se'arah*, 47.
83. Shimoni to K. Katz, 7 May 1958, ISA, 130.09/2307/1.
84. Due to the number of non-Jews among the Gomulka *aliyah*, a bitter public debate ensued regarding who is a Jew; this debate led to the introduction of specific rules as to who could be registered as a Jew and under what conditions. See Zeldin, "Ha-aliyah ha-lo-yehudit."
85. Israel [Shaham?] to Zvi Netzer, YTA, group 15, box 53, file 1, doc. 12.
86. Zeldin, "Ha-aliyah ha-lo-yehudit."
87. "Conversation between Minister I. Barzilai and Minister Zawadzki, Sivan 24, 5710 (9 June 1950)," Warsaw, 13 June 1950, ISA, 93.07/507/10. Cf. conversation between Barzilai and Zawadzki, 13 May 1950, *ibid.*
88. Memo from Sluczański on his conversation with Laron, the counselor at the Israel Embassy, on 24 October 1951, Presidium of the Council of Ministers, 25 October 1951; K. Katz to Shimoni, 8 May 1958, ISA, 130.09/3118/18; "Ha-yehudim be-Polin," YTA, group 15, box 32, file 5.
89. Department of Censorship of Mail and Telegrams, "Survey of Correspondence of Polish Immigrants," 30 August 1957, CZA, S6/6034.
90. *Ibid.*
91. *Ibid.*
92. Cable from Eshel to K. Katz, 22 December 1957, ISA, 130.09/3118/18.
93. *Ibid.*
94. Shabtai, "Yeridah le-Polin."
95. Latour, *Laboratory Life*.
96. Cited in Shabtai, "Yeridah le-Polin."
97. Memo from Sluczański on emigration to Israel, 26 February 1957, AMSZ, z-12 w-14 t-344.
98. Circular to members of the Politburo, 31 December 1957, AAN PZPR V-59.
99. *Ibid.*
100. Shabtai, "Yeridah le-Polin."
101. Circular to members of the Politburo, 31 December 1957, AAN PZPR V-59.
102. As in the case of the famous poet Anatol Stern; see Shore, *Caviar and Ashes*, 263.
103. See Weiss, "Ha-golem ve-yotzro." Weiss proposes that the context of Polish politics between the two world wars can explain the development of the Law of Return.

Notes on contributor

Marcos Silber is a Lecturer in the Department of Jewish History at the University of Haifa. He is the author of articles on Jewish politics and culture in Poland and Lithuania during the first half of the twentieth century. His book *Nationalism, Autonomism and Equality: The Autonomistic Efforts in Poland during World War I* will be published by the Institute for the History of Polish Jewry at the Diaspora Research Center, Tel Aviv University in 2010. He is currently preparing, with Szymon Rudnicki, a volume of selected documents on Israeli-Polish Relations (1945-1967).

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