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THE AUTUMN OF BURNING SYNAGOGUES.
ONE OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF GERMANY'S INVASION
OF POLAND IN 1939

As a national community, Jews survived outside Palestine for nearly two thousand years, thanks to their monotheistic religion. When the Romans expelled them from that land after suppressing the Bar Kochba uprising in 135 AD, the followers of Judaism united around religious worship and books, from where they drew knowledge of their past and guidance on the rules they were obliged to follow. For many centuries, people who carried the knowledge of God and knew all the rituals required by religious law were surrounded with respect and protection. However, it did happen, especially in small Jewish communities, that there was nobody professionally engaged in nurturing religious worship, in which case spiritual practice allowed for the full-fledged activity of the Jewish community.¹ On the other hand, the *sine qua non* for maintaining a community was the membership of at least ten male members who had had the rite of *bar mitzvah*, i.e. admission to the community on a full basis. A prayerful gathering of these people was called a *knesija*. It could gather in any place. However, only places specifically designated for the celebration of the most important rituals of

¹ B. Mark, *Di geszichte fun jidn in Pojln* (Warsze, 1957), pp. 163–243.

Judaism could be called the house of the congregation – the *beit kneset*. The Greeks, in turn, called these buildings synagogues, and thus the Greek term, rather than its Hebrew equivalent, took root in European languages.

It was the ambition of every local Jewish community to build a synagogue the size, workmanship and wealth of the furnishings that would reflect the founders' wealth.

Before the collapse of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the eighteenth century, it was home to the largest Jewish community in the world. Since the fourteenth century, it had been protected by state officials through the will of successive Polish rulers.² The privilege of the Duke of Greater Poland from 1264 already guaranteed the Jews state protection over their houses of prayer. The Christian feudal elite not only protected Jews for hundreds of years, but it also happened that magnate families financially supported the construction of synagogues and smaller houses of prayer. The unwavering recognition by Christian theologians of the momentous role assigned to the Jews by God in the work of salvation meant that the plan and practice of exterminating the Jews did not emerge in Europe. As long as the Christian rulers decided the fate of their Jewish subjects, tolerance for Jews was a norm. The acts of expulsion in the Middle Ages in many countries on the continent cannot be put on par with the tragedy that befell the Jews between 1939 and 1945.

After the period of partitions and the turmoil of war, the borders of independent Poland took several years to form properly – from 1918 to 1922. There were 81 large and 737 small Jewish religious communities in Poland,³ most with one synagogue along with several houses of prayer. There were also cities where numerous houses of prayer existed – for instance, on the eve of the Holocaust, Warsaw and Lodz were home to 440 and 250 Jewish houses of prayer, respectively. In total, there were several thousand synagogues and houses of prayer throughout the Second Polish Republic. They served a community still the most numerous in Europe, although no longer the most numerous in the world.⁴ With the invasion of Poland by the Third

² *Ibid.*, p. 246.

³ *Polski słownik judaistyczny. Dzieje – kultura – religia – ludzie*, vol. 1, ed. by Z. Borzymińska and R. Żebrowski (Warsaw, 2003), p. 493.

⁴ On the eve of the Second World War, the largest Jewish community existed in the United States.

Reich, the whole of Polish society became the victim of an attack unprecedented in its scale and manifestations of cruelty. The blow that fell on the Jews, however, was the strongest and had the most tragic consequences. This article deals with one aspect of the drama of the time. The text aims to outline its causes and scale.

Just over ten per cent of the former German empire belonged to the Republic between 1919 and 1922. By 1918, tens of thousands of Jews lived in this area. After the Treaty of Versailles was signed, thousands of them, not wanting to be Polish citizens, left for the Reich, with a smaller number going to the Free City of Danzig. More than a million Jews were Habsburg subjects in Galicia and were familiar with the Imperial Austro-Hungarian administration. For them, a German-speaking official, policeman or soldier was nothing new. In contrast, the approximately two million Jews who had previously been subjects of the Russian tsars and found themselves in the reborn Republic came into contact with the Germans and Austrians as occupants between 1914 and 1918, an experience that was often difficult but not fundamentally different from what the inhabitants of the occupied territories who belonged to other national and religious communities used to face. During the First World War, the German-Austrian occupants respected the right of the local population to cultivate their religion. There was no authorisation from the political or military superiors to profane houses of worship to destroy the buildings and their equipment. If synagogues were damaged or destroyed, this was due to the dynamics of military action rather than anti-Judaic prejudice. Jews continued to be protected as a community by representatives of the old regime, largely heirs to the old feudal elites. On the territory of the occupied Kingdom of Poland and the Russian Empire, in many places, the status of Jews in public institutions was even elevated – representatives of the Jewish community either became members of the representative bodies of the population for the first time, or their percentage was significantly increased. This was because the Germans and Austrians, seeking the support of the Jews, agreed that they should have representation in proportion to their numbers on civilian municipal committees set up to represent the local population in their dealings with the military occupation administration.⁵

⁵ The head of the First World War German army intelligence recommended recruiting Jews as valuable agents, as people in possession of information useful from a military point of view. See S. Lewicki, *Canaris w Madrycie* (Warsaw, 1989), p. 15. For more on the German policy towards the Jews

By contrast, the tactic of equal treatment of Jews was not present in the actions of the German occupation authorities when the Wehrmacht and Nazi special forces crossed the border into Poland on 1 September 1939. Why? The main reason was the views of Adolf Hitler and his closest associates on Judaism and Christianity. Both religions were considered harmful to the German national community. Judaism was to disappear completely from the space controlled by the Third Reich as soon as possible. According to National Socialists, Jews were shallow and unproductive. They had come out of the desert and therefore had nothing of value to offer the peoples of the north, above all, the Germans. The meanderings of Nazi reasoning led to the assertion that Jesus Christ was not born of a Jewish mother. The place of traditional Christian Churches was to be taken by the Church of the German Christians (*Deutsche Christen*). On the other hand, it was accepted that instilling a new quasi-religious belief system into German Christians would take longer and require different methods than those envisaged for Jews. As long as Adolf Hitler's geopolitical goals were not realised in the form of a superpower that the planners called the Greater Germanic Reich of the German Nation (*Das Großgermanische Reich Deutscher Nation*), German Christians were to be tolerated in their masses. Overall, though, those who openly expressed their dislike of Nazism were repressed. As far as the Jews were concerned, all their traces were to disappear from public space as quickly as possible. In the Reich, the plan was to leave only selected relics of Jewish culture to be used for future research into the question of Jewish influence on the history of Europe, including Germany. Such a radical approach resulted from the progressive evolution of German nationalist thought from the 1870s onwards. Anti-Judaist views were used as an additional justification for racist anti-Semitism. Judaism was seen as a destructive, even degenerative factor for Christianity and, through it, for the nations that embraced it.⁶

in the occupied territories of the tsarist state during the First World War see E. Zechlin, *Die deutsche Politik und die Juden im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen, 1969), p. 121; J. Nalewajko-Kulikow, "Die jiddische Schule der Erwachsenen: Warsaw Yiddish Press and German-Jewish Contacts in 1915–18," *Acta Poloniae Historica* 113 (2016), pp. 91–92.

⁶ The evolution of the German national ideology (*volksism*) towards a version characterised by strong anti-Semitism has been described, among others, by the historian of ideas George L. Mosse: *idem, Kryzys ideologii niemieckiej*, transl. T. Evert (Warsaw, 1972).

Already in the second half of the nineteenth century, the ideologues of Volkism negated the ability of the people of Jewish origin to act positively for the German nation and state. Such thinking also affected those who belonged to one of the Christian Churches in the first or subsequent generation. Under National Socialism – a bloodthirsty variety of German nationalism – when judging who was a Jew and who was not, the benchmark was whether a person and his ancestors belonged to a Jewish religious community.⁷ This was a fixed point to which party or state officials and functionaries could relate. Paradoxically, such a system made it possible to consider both a militant atheist of Jewish nationality and an orthodox rabbi or Hasidic tzaddik as an enemy. Thus, both the offices of left-wing or liberal political organisations and houses of worship became targets. Since Judaism was recognised as a carrier of dangerous values, it was assumed that institutions and places where its essence was explored and disseminated should cease to function.

Speaking at the NSDAP Congress on 12 September 1938, Alfred Rosenberg presented a paper entitled *Bolshevism – the Invention and Work of the Jews*. In it, he attributed the evils he attributed to the Jews to their faith:

This characteristic of parasites, who, knowing no creative work, live on the blood and juices of other organisms, is a peculiar characteristic of the Jewish people and even has its interpretation in the prescriptions of its faith. The Jewish Talmud, which has moulded the Jewish soul for centuries, reveals its being to the eyes of even a superficial researcher. According to the principle of the Talmud, one who wishes to possess wisdom must devote himself to financial transactions. For they are the basis of the Torah (Old Testament) and an ever-beating source (Baba, Batra F 173 b.). In another place, the Talmud mentions a great rabbi who, walking among the grain, stroked its ears: “Rush higher up,” he whispered. – The interests of money, however, will always be worth more than you” (Jebamoth F 63 a.). The Talmud goes on to explain the proper meaning of the commandment: “Thou shalt not steal” and states that God only forbids stealing from people as such (Sanhedrin 86 a.). Another provision states: Canaan recommended four

⁷ In the first regulation to the Reich Citizenship Law, in par. 2 we read: “Als volljüdisch gilt ein Großelternteil ohne weiteres, wenn er der jüdischen Religionsgemeinschaft angehört hat”; *Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal*, vol. 27 (Nürnberg, 1948), p. 214.

things to its sons: “Love one another, love robbery, love promiscuity, and do not speak the truth” (Pesachim F 113).

The perfect conclusion to the moral-political testament of this parasitic theory is a religious prescription: “If you must necessarily go to war, avoid the first line, keep at the end to return as soon as possible. Combine your forces with those who are fortunate” (Pesachim F 113 a).

Anyone who has become acquainted with the immutable Jewish soul – for it was not the Talmud that formed the Jews, but the Jews who created the Talmud – will easily recognise the immensely destructive impact that the Jews are causing with their actions in the economic, political and cultural fields. All that we have experienced in recent years and in recent decades, which has had the characteristics of cultural decay, economic corruption and political spin – the Jewish rules of faith justify all this, even when the Jews speak of their assimilation. In its general outline and worldly significance, Bolshevism is the last consequence of the Jewish attack on the culture and politics of the European states.⁸

The words of this pseudo-theological analysis, which was an amalgam of anti-Judaism and racist anti-Semitism, were uttered three months before the *Kristallnacht* pogrom, when on 9/10 November 1938, Nazi militias attacked the premises of Jewish institutions and businesses belonging to people of the Jewish faith, causing mass destruction and vandalism of Jewish houses of worship. On the other hand, the theories put forward by Rosenberg had already been propounded for many years, not only by him but also by Julius Streicher, Joseph Goebbels and other Nazis responsible for shaping the consciousness of their compatriots. Speaking to young people on 22 June 1935 and on many other occasions, Streicher claimed that Jesus Christ had pointed at the Devil as the father of the Jewish people. The propagandist denied the Jews the right to speak of themselves as the chosen people. He pointed out that when they accept baptism, they do so only to enslave other nations more effectively. He promoted the theory of a separate ‘God of the Jews’ (*Gott der Juden*), who is not a God of love, but a God of hatred. Evil was also to be the essence of the message of the Talmud. This content was included, among other

⁸ Quoted in *Gazeta Lwowska*, 23–24 November 1941.

things, as a rhyme in a lavishly illustrated brochure for young readers from 1936, incorporated as a supplement to Streicher's propaganda weekly *Der Stürmer*.⁹ The newspaper, whose pages were filled with anti-Semitic texts, was published from 1935 onwards in editions of 600,000 copies, and its impact was increased by the presentation of the paper in thousands of showcases set up in widely accessible public places.¹⁰ It should be added that the publisher, Streicher, was responsible for the arson at the Nuremberg synagogue on 10 August 1938 and that he supported the nationwide anti-Jewish pogrom of November of that year.

The Nazis' acts of aggression against Jewish houses of worship are not shown in the context of the fight against the Jewish religion. We do not encounter this theme in descriptions of *Kristallnacht*. SA militiamen were ordered to set fire to all synagogues in the Reich.¹¹ But authors of historical studies do not bother to explain why these very buildings were to disappear from the German landscape completely.¹² According to information that came to the head of the Security Police within hours, 191 synagogues were set on fire, and another 76 were utterly demolished. In addition, 11 other types of buildings and cemetery chapels belonging to synagogue communities were set on fire, and three were destroyed.¹³

When one reads descriptions of actions such as setting fire to synagogues located in densely built-up quarters of German towns and cities, the question arises as to what factors unleashed this rage. Why would the inhabitants, most of whom were not Jews and some of which were Nazis, endanger their own property in this way? The conclusion is that, like with communism, where ownership of means of production was seen as the root cause of evil, so in Nazism, the core of the hatred

⁹ *Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal*, vol. 38 (Nürnberg, 1949), pp. 110–114, 124, 127.

¹⁰ *Das Urteil von Nürnberg 1946*, introd. L. Gruchmann (München, 1977), pp. 194, 206.

¹¹ The orders issued to the SA brigade commanders imposed on them the duty to blow up and burn down all synagogues in the area under their authority so that neighbouring buildings belonging to Aryans were not damaged. The operations were to be carried out in civilian clothes. See *Trial of the Major War Criminals*, vol. 27, pp. 487–490.

¹² H. Eschwege, *Die Synagoge in der deutschen Geschichte* (Dresden, 1980), p. 171; R. Hilberg, *Zagłada Żydów europejskich*, vol. 1, transl. J. Giebułtowski (Warsaw, 2014), pp. 38–41; L. Poliakov, *Historia antysemityzmu*, vol. 2: *Epoka nauki*, transl. by A. Rasińska-Bóbr and O. Hedemann (Cracow, 2008), p. 426.

¹³ *Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal*, vol. 32 (Nürnberg, 1948), p. 2.

for Jews was hostility towards their religion, and thus also towards the institutions that were its carriers.

In my opinion, the reference to the German *Kristallnacht* is salient, for it was then that the Nazis crossed the Rubicon. The anti-Semitic theories developed in Germany over some 70 years previously were not followed by cumulative acts of aggression against the objects of Jewish religious worship. Those who had already participated in such acts once in November 1938 and on their soil displayed no reluctance to carry the embers of destruction beyond the borders of the Reich.

In the history of Polish Jews, there was no time when any Polish state authority would carry out a large-scale action of closing or even destroying synagogues and smaller houses of prayer. This only became a reality after the German aggression of 1 September 1939. By 5 October of that year, the Germans had established their authority over 48% of the Polish territory, inhabited by some 70% of Polish Jews, i.e. approximately 2.2 million people. Based on Hitler's decree of 8 October 1939, the occupied territories were divided into areas that varied in status. Vistula Pomerania and Greater Poland became external districts of the Reich as the Reich District of Danzig-West Prussia (Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreussen) and the Reich District of Wartheland (Reichsgau Wartheland). On the other hand, part of northern Mazovia was incorporated into the province of East Prussia (Provinz Ostpreussen) and the areas of Polish Upper Silesia into the province of Silesia (Provinz Schlesien). From the remaining areas, the General Governorate (German: Generalgouvernement, Polish: Generalne Gubernatorstwo, GG) was formed.¹⁴ Before the war, some 582,000 Jews lived in regions later incorporated into the Reich.¹⁵ However, this number gradually decreased as a result of the migration movements.

An analysis of the situation of the Jewish communities in the incorporated areas and in the GG reveals basic regularities in the treatment of Jews and

¹⁴ There were 10,568,000 Polish citizens living in the annexed areas on the eve of war, and 10,610,000 in the GG; H. Roos, *Geschichte der polnischen Nation 1916–1960* (Stuttgart, 1961), p. 173.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 178. As the historian wrote, “43.9 thousand square kilometres and 4.5 million inhabitants were incorporated into the Reich in the Wartheland District, 21.2 and 1.5 in the Danzig–West Prussia District, 10.6 and 2.6 into the Upper Silesia District, and 16.2 and 1.0 into the province of East Prussia.” In total, some 92,000 square kilometres and 9.6 million people were annexed into the Reich from the pre-war Polish lands; J. Deresiewicz, *Okupacja niemiecka na ziemiach polskich włączonych do Rzeszy (1939–1945)* (Poznan, 1950), p. XVI.

their private and communal property. Throughout the area occupied by the German army, they were killed, individually and in groups, and experienced humiliation, physical violence, robbery and expulsion. Houses of worship were attacked, as they were places that helped integrate the religious community. They were profaned, vandalised, set on fire and demolished using various means, including by explosives. The drive to remove synagogues and houses of prayer from public spaces was particularly intense in the areas incorporated into the Reich. I have analysed the fate of Jewish religious buildings in the 183 towns located there.

To date, no sources have been published to show that there was a single document regulating the treatment of Jewish houses of prayer on Polish territory. The descriptions of the activities in individual localities lead to the conclusion that, both during the occupation of the area and in the first months of the German administration, whether military or civilian, decisions remained in the hands of the local German military commanders, functionaries or officials. One of the most anti-Jewish Nazis was Udo von Woysch, who in September 1939 commanded a Special Operations Group sent to the Silesian Voivodeship, where it committed crimes against Poles and Jews and was responsible, among other things, for burning down the synagogue at Będzin.¹⁶

The buildings of former synagogues, which had already ceased to perform their original religious functions before the war, were generally left in peace. A diametrically different approach was taken towards active houses of prayer. Between September and November 1939, between 15 and 30% of the synagogues in the areas annexed to the Reich were burnt down. Buildings in the centre of a village were set on fire, as in November 1938 in Germany, also exposing neighbouring buildings to fire. It has not been established to what extent the dynamics of these actions were influenced by Hitler's decree of 7 October 1939, which appointed Heinrich Himmler – the head of the SS and police in the Reich – as the Reich Commissioner for the Strengthening of German Nationhood (*Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums*).

¹⁶ A. Namysło, *Po drugiej stronie był również człowiek. Mieszkańcy przedwojennego województwa śląskiego z pomocą Żydom w okresie II wojny światowej* (Katowice–Warsaw, 2021), p. 48.

Around 25% of the buildings were demolished in various ways without first being set on fire. In total, more than 50% of them were destroyed, mainly between 1939 and 1941. This happened both when the military administration exercised power in the area and after the civil administration took over. The demolitions were very often carried out by the hands of Jews who still resided in their hometowns.

The fate of one-eighth of the synagogues and houses of prayer could not be determined. The others were used as warehouses, garages and stables or were left abandoned.

I cannot determine whether the Nazis, even the decision-makers at the county, *Regierungsbezirk* or provincial level, realised that Jews could perform their religious duties without synagogues.

The destruction or closure of houses of worship was one of the many harassments to which Jews were subjected from the beginning of the German occupation. On the other hand, these were undoubtedly actions that they had not encountered on such a scale in the entire history of their existence in Polish lands. They fell victim to them because one of the components of Nazi anti-Semitism was a hatred of the Jewish and Christian religions.

Table 1. Synagogues on Polish Territory that were Incorporated into the Reich in October 1939

Reich District	Area in sq. km	Total population in millions	Number of Jews in thousands	Number of locations	Synagogues burnt down	Synagogues dismantled or blown up	Buildings that survived the war	Undetermined condition in 1945
Danzig–West Prussia	21,200	1.5	8	31	9	12	5	5
East Prussia	16,200	1	80	20	5	6	8	1
Wartheland	43,900	4	400	100	22	27	37	14
Upper Silesia	10,600	2.6	80	32	13	8	10	1
Total	91,900	9.1	568	183	49	53	60	21

Source: *Own calculations*

Table 2. Synagogues on Polish Territory Incorporated into the Reich in October 1939

Location	The fate of houses of worship
Reich District of Danzig–West Prussia	
Brodnica	Burnt down on 29 September 1939; the ruins were dismantled during the war.
Bydgoszcz	Set on fire in October 1939; the walls were dismantled in January 1940.
Chełmno	Blown up in 1939.
Chełmża	Dismantled during the war.
Chojnice	Destroyed in the autumn of 1939.
Fordon	Converted into a cinema hall.
Dobrzyń nad Drwęcą	Synagogues dismantled in October and November 1939.
Dobrzyń nad Wisłą	Burnt down on 24 September 1939.
Grudziądz	One dismantled during the war; the main synagogue was devastated in 1939 and destroyed during the fighting in 1945.
Kartuzy	Burnt down on the day the Wehrmacht entered the town in 1939.
Koronowo	The building was sold in May 1938 to a Polish association and was used during the war as a warehouse.
Kościerzyna	Dismantled in 1939.
Lidzbark	Dismantled during the war.
Lipno	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
Lubicz	?
Nakło nad Notecią	Burnt down.
Nieszawa	Burnt down in 1939.
Starogard Gdański	Turned into a jail; later it became a warehouse.
Puck	Destroyed during the war.
Rypin	Burnt down on 27 September 1939.
Sępólno Krajeńskie	The building was dismantled in 1940.
Skępe	Probably burnt down in late 1941 or early 1942.
Solec Kujawski	?
Świecie	Burnt down in September 1939.
Tczew	Dismantled in 1939.

Location	The fate of houses of worship
Torun	Dismantled between November 1939 and February 1940.
Tuchola	Dismantled in 1939.
Wejherowo	Devastated and dismantled during the war.
Wąbrzeźno	Dismantled in the autumn of 1939.
Wyrzysk	Devastated in 1939, it was used as a jail.
East Prussia District	
Chorzele	Dismantled during the war.
Ciechanów	In 1939 it was turned into a garage, and in 1942 the building was dismantled.
Działdowo	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
Maków Mazowiecki	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
Mława	Burnt down in 1939.
Nasielsk	Devastated in 1939; the walls were dismantled after the war.
Nowe Miasto Lubawskie	Dismantled between 1939 and 1943.
Nowy Dwór Mazowiecki	Bombarded in September 1939; the ruins were dismantled in 1941.
Ostrołęka	Burnt down towards the end of September 1939.
Płock	Devastated in September 1939; turned into a garage; the building survived the war.
Płońsk	Ruined during the war; dismantled in 1956.
Przasnysz	Destroyed in 1939.
Pułtusk	Devastated in September 1939; turned into a warehouse; the building survived the war.
Raciąż	Devastated in 1939, it was converted into a food warehouse.
Serock	Dismantled during the war.
Sierpc	Set on fire on the night of 28/29 September 1939, it burnt to the ground.
Strzegów	Devastated; the building survived the war.
Wyszogród	Dismantled in 1939.
Zakroczym	Burnt down in 1939.
Żuromin	Burnt down in 1939.
Wartheland	

Location	The fate of houses of worship
Aleksandrów Łódzki	Burnt down on 11 September 1939; the walls were blown up.
Barcin	Devastated in 1939 and used as a jail; thereafter used as an orphanage; the building survived the war.
Bełchatów	Devastated; the building survived the war.
Błaszki	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
Brześć Kujawski	Burnt down in 1939.
Brzeziny	Burnt down on 9 September 1939; the walls were blown up in 1940.
Burzenin	A brick building unfinished before the war.
Chełmno	Blown up in 1939.
Chodecz	A building dismantled in 1939.
Chodzież	Dismantled in 1941.
Ciechocinek-Służew	?
Czarnków	Dismantled in late 1939 and early 1940.
Dąbie	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
Działoszyn	?
Gębice	Devastated in 1939?
Gniezno	Dismantled in 1940.
Golina	?
Gostynin	Burnt down in 1939; the walls were still standing in February 1940.
Gostyń	Dismantled in 1940.
Grabów	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
Grodzisk Wielkopolski	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
Inowrocław	Dismantled in 1939.
Izbica Kujawska	Devastated in 1939; destroyed in 1943; the walls were dismantled after 1945.
Jarocin	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
Kalisz	Devastated in 1939; the building was dismantled in 1940.
Kcynia	Burnt down on the night of 16/17 September 1939.
Kępno	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
Kielczygłów	Devastated in 1939?
Kleczew	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.

Location	The fate of houses of worship
KłECKO	On 24 September 1939, Germans burnt down the buildings of two synagogues.
KŁODAWA	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
KOŁO	The larger synagogue burnt down on 20 September 1939; the smaller one was turned into a resettlement point.
KONIN	Devastated in October 1939; turned into a warehouse; the building survived the war.
KONSTANTYNÓW	Destroyed during the war.
KOŚCIAN	The Jewish community was dissolved in 1922.
KOŹMIN WIELKOPOLSKI	?
KROŚNIEWICE	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
KROTOSZYN	Destroyed in 1939; the ruins were dismantled after 1945.
KUTNO	Dismantled in 1942.
LESZNO	Devastated in October 1939; turned into a warehouse; the building survived the war.
LUBIEN KRAJEWSKI	Burnt down on 16 September 1939.
LUBRANIEC	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
LUTOMIERSK	Devastated in 1939?
LUTUTÓW	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
ŁABISZYN	Dismantled during the war.
ŁASK	Devastated in 1939; turned into a horse slaughterhouse; the building survived the war.
ŁĘCZYCA	Plundered in September 1939; burnt down in 1940; the walls were dismantled before 1943.
ŁOBŻENICA	?
ŁODZ	Two hundred and fifty synagogues and houses of worship devastated in 1939.
MIASTECZKO KRAJEŃSKIE	Dismantled in 1940.
MIĘDZYCHÓD	Since 1924 the building was in Polish hands; devastated in 1939, it survived the war.
MOGILNO	Blown up together with the faithful inside on 18 September 1939.
MROCHA	The building had no religious function on 31 August 1939.
OBORNIKI	Dismantled between 1940 and 1943.
ODOLANÓW	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
OŚIĘCINY	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.

Location	The fate of houses of worship
Ostrów Wielkopolski	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war. It was turned into a warehouse.
Ostrzeszów	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
Ozorków	Burnt down in 1939.
Pabianice	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
Pakość	?
Piątek	?
Piotrków Kujawski	Burnt down in September 1939; the walls were dismantled.
Poddębice	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
Poznań	Seven synagogues were devastated in 1939; one building was turned into an indoor swimming pool; the others were destroyed during the fighting for the city in 1945.
Praszka	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
Przedecz	?
Pyzdry	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
Radziejów Kujawski	Burnt down on 8 November 1939.
Rawicz	The building was converted into a church before 1 September 1939; it was dismantled in April 1941.
Rychwał	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
Ryczywół	The interior devastated after 1 September 1939; the building survived the war.
Sanniki	?
Sieradz	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
Słupca	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
Sompolno	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
Stawiszyn	?
Stryków	Burnt down in December 1939; the walls were blown up in the autumn of 1941.
Strzelno	Demolished in 1939.
Szadek	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
Szamotuły	Dismantled in October 1939.
Szczerców	It was burnt down as a result of fights for the city in September 1939.
Strzelno	Dismantled in 1939 or 1940.

Location	The fate of houses of worship
Szubin	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
Śrem	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
Środa Wielkopolska	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
Trzemeszno	Burnt down in 1939.
Turek	The building was set on fire on 22 September 1939, but the fire was extinguished to prevent the neighbouring buildings from being affected; it survived the war.
Warka	Burnt down in September 1939.
Wągrowiec	Devastated in 1939; the building was dismantled in 1940.
Widawa	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
Wieluń	Destroyed on 1 September 1939 as a result of a bombing raid.
Wieruszów	Burnt down in early September 1939.
Włocławek	Burnt down in October 1939; the walls were dismantled in 1940.
Wolsztyn	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
Września	Used as a jail in the autumn of 1939; blown up in 1940.
Wysoka	?
Zagórów	Burnt down in September 1939.
Zduńska Wola	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
Zelów	The wooden synagogue was destroyed; the brick one was turned into a warehouse; its building survived the war.
Zgierz	The synagogue was set on fire on 10 September 1939 and burnt to the ground during the second attack on 27 October 1940.
Złoczew	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
Żnin	Burnt down in late November/early December 1939.
Żychlin	Devastated in 1939; the building was used as a warehouse; it survived the war.
Upper Silesia District	
Andrychów	Burnt down on 24 September 1939; the ruins were dismantled in 1940.
Będzin	Burnt down on 8 September 1939.
Biała	Burnt down on 14 September 1939.
Bielsko	Destroyed on 13 September 1939.
Bieruń	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.

Location	The fate of houses of worship
Brzeszcze	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
Chorzów	Burnt down in the autumn of 1939; the ruins were dismantled in 1940.
Chrzanów	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
Cieszyn	Burnt down on 13 September 1939.
Dziedzice	Devastated in 1939.
Jaworzno	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
Katowice	Burnt down on 8 September 1939; the ruins were dismantled after 1945.
Kłobuck	Devastated in 1939 and turned into a stable; the building survived the war.
Krzepice	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
Libiąż	Devastated in 1939.
Lubliniec	Burnt down in 1939.
Milówka	Destroyed during the war.
Mysłowice	Burnt down in September 1939.
Oświęcim	Burnt down on the night of 29/30 November 1939; the ruins were demolished in 1941.
Ruda Śląska-Wirek	Burnt down on 3 or 4 September 1939; the walls were blown up in 1940.
Rybnik	Burnt down at the beginning of 1940.
Skoczów	Dismantled in 1939.
Sosnowiec	Three synagogues burnt down on 9 September 1939.
Sucha Beskidzka	Devastated in 1939, the building was dismantled in 1940 or 1941.
Tarnowskie Góry	Burnt down in 1939; the ruins were removed in 1943.
Trzebnica	Devastated in 1939; the building survived the war.
Ustronie	Burnt down on 15 September 1939.
Wadowice	Blown up in October 1939.
Wodzisław	Devastated in 1939; the building was used as a warehouse; it survived the war.
Zawiercie	The interior was devastated; the building survived the war.
Zator	Destroyed in 1939.
Żywiec	Dismantled during the war.

Source: *Own calculations*

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SUMMARY

The article deals with the mass destruction of Jewish houses of worship by the German aggressors in the Polish territories incorporated into the Reich in October 1939. In the course of several months, they disappeared from over fifty per cent of the locations in the area in question. The author links this activity of the German occupants with the widespread hatred of the Mosaic religion among the Nazis.

KEYWORDS

Jews • Germans • synagogues • war