



## “VWI invites Katharina Friedla”

Wednesday, 16 March 2022, 3:00 pm  
1010 Vienna, Rabensteig 3, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor

**Kamil KIJEK**

### THE LAST POLISH SHTETL?

**THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF DZIERŻONIÓW, THE JEWISH WORLD, THE COLD WAR AND COMMUNISM (1945-1950)**



By using and discussing archival, photographic, and other materials from various archival repositories in Poland, the United States, Great Britain, Germany and Israel, I will present the story of one remarkable community of Polish Jews in former German Lower Silesia located in the nowadays Polish town of Reichenbach/Dzierżoniów. In July 1946, almost 50% of the town’s inhabitants were Jewish making it quite unique in the post-Holocaust landscape of this part of Europe. My main goal is to show how a micro-historical approach can provide new perspectives on the problems of Polish Jewish post-Holocaust history

and on crucial aspects of Jewish global politics during the years 1945-1950. Additionally, this approach can help to avoid some of the pitfalls and teleological tendencies in recent studies on the aftermath of the Holocaust. I argue, that in the aftermath of the Holocaust many Polish Jews as well as their Western, especially American, counterparts felt that Poland was to be considered more than a mere cemetery of destroyed Jewish civilization. During the years 1945-1950, the Polish Jewish Lower Silesian community in general, and the Dzierżoniów community in particular, were at the center of Jewish transnational discussions regarding the new future of Polish Jewry after the Holocaust. It was in fact not the 1946 Kielce pogrom, but the intensification of the Cold War as well as the installment of the so-called Stalinist political regime in Poland which brought an end to such faith and the belief in the possibility of a revived existence of Jewish national life in post-Holocaust Poland.

### Commented by Katharina Friedla

**Kamil Kijek** is Assistant Professor at the Taube Department of Jewish Studies at the University of Wrocław. He has been a Prins Foundation postdoctoral Fellow at the Center for Jewish History in New York and a Sosland Family Fellow at the Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington DC. During his doctoral studies he has held various fellowships in Israel, Germany, and the United Kingdom. His research interests include Central-East European Jewish History at the end of the 19th and in the 20th century as well as social and cultural theory.

**Katharina Friedla** is a historian specializing in East European and Jewish History with a major focus on nationalism and identity politics, culture, state ideology, and forced migrations. She holds a PhD from the Department of History at the University of Basel and has published several books and articles on Jews in Germany, Poland, and the USSR, before, during and in the aftermath of the Second World War. Recently, she edited the book *Polish Jews in the Soviet Union (1939–1959): History and Memory of Deportation, Exile and Survival*, together with Markus Nesselrodt.

Photo: Members of the Ha Shomer ha Tzair-youth movement during Worker’s Day celebrations in Dzierżoniów on 1 May 1947, Archive of the Institute of Jewish Studies, University of Wrocław.

Please register by noon on 15 March 2022 under [anmeldung@vwi.ac.at](mailto:anmeldung@vwi.ac.at) and bring a valid photo-ID! The 2G+ rules (fully vaccinated or recovered and additionally PCR-tested within the past 48 hours) as well as the FFP2 mask-rules apply at this event.