

As Antisemitic ‘Protocols’ Are Distributed on Streets of Warsaw, Polish Government Snubs Visiting Israeli Delegation

Ben Cohen
May 13, 2019

the **algemeiner**

The growing political hysteria in Poland over the prospect of restituting individual Jewish property stolen during World War II reached new heights on Monday, as an official Israeli delegation arrived in the country to discover that the Polish government was refusing to meet with it.

The Algemeiner understands that the Israelis had already arrived in Warsaw when the Polish Foreign Ministry announced on Monday that it had “decided to cancel the visit of Israeli officials after the Israeli side made last-minute changes in the composition of the delegation, suggesting that the talks would primarily focus on the issues related to property restitution.”

According to the liberal Polish news outlet Gazeta Wyborcza, the Polish government objected to the presence in the delegation of Dan Haezrachi, the head of the Israeli Foreign Ministry’s department dealing with Holocaust property restitution. Commented the paper, “The Polish Foreign Ministry’s message in this matter was rather sharp and unambiguous by diplomatic standards.”

The latest escalation by Poland in its long-festering row with Israel and world Jewish organizations over responsibility for the fate of three million Polish Jews during the Nazi Holocaust came just two days after an angry, openly antisemitic demonstration in Warsaw by ultranationalists opposed to restitution.

Police put the number of demonstrators at 10,000, while organizers estimated that 20,000 marched through Warsaw to the US embassy in the Polish capital on Saturday. Ostensibly focused on the 2017 Justice for Uncompensated Survivors Today (JUST) Act passed by the US Congress — which mandates the State Department to report on “the national laws and enforceable policies” regarding restitution of nations impacted by the Holocaust — the march quickly degenerated into antisemitic chants, among them, “This is Poland, not Polin,” a reference to the Hebrew word for Poland.

One sign on the march echoed the language of the anti-Zionist boycott campaign against Israel in western countries, with its denunciation of the JUST legislation as a “Zionist Act.” Some marchers were also seen distributing copies of the notorious antisemitic fabrication, “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion.”

Rafal Pankowski — the director of Poland’s leading anti-racist group, “Never Again” Association — told The Algemeiner on Monday that the present dispute had to be seen in the context of a broader political campaign that emphasized Polish national rights and consciously equated Polish and Jewish suffering under the Nazi occupation.

“The issue of restitution has served as a pretext for the Polish far-right to whip up an antisemitic hysteria,” Pankowski said. “It became a big theme in the European Parliament election campaign, which has been tainted by xenophobia and hate speech, especially through propaganda channels on YouTube.”

Pankowski added that opposition to restitution was “also a fruit of the wave of antisemitism in Polish media and politics during the controversy around the 2018 Institute of National Remembrance Act,” which effectively criminalized public discussion of Polish collusion with the Nazis.

“Unfortunately, we are still witnessing the repercussions of that,” Pankowski said.

Poland is the only member state of the European Union not to have passed legislation restituting the property of individual Holocaust victims and their descendants. The US has also urged Poland to act on the issue. During a visit to Warsaw in March, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stated that the US appreciated “the importance of resolving outstanding issues of the past.”

Said Pompeo at the time: “I urge my Polish colleagues to move forward with comprehensive private property restitution legislation for those who lost property during the Holocaust era.”

But Monday’s events suggested that the Polish government was moving in the opposite direction, as approvingly noted by far-right politicians.

In an interview with the popular — and deeply antisemitic — Catholic broadcaster Radio Maryja on Monday, one right-wing parliamentarian expressed strong approval of the “Polish government’s decision to cancel the visit of the Israeli delegation.”

Tomasz Rzymkowski — an MP from the right-wing nationalist Kukiz ’15 bloc in the Polish Parliament — added that the Polish government now had to move beyond “declarations of non-acceptance for the claims of Jewish communities from the United States or Israel to specific legal solutions that will protect us against such demands in the future.”

Other publications have carried more explicit declarations of antisemitism. For example, the current edition of the weekly *Najwyższy Czas* features an interview with another well-known far-right figure, Grzegorz Braun, in which he opined about “the war which the Jews are waging against the Polish nation.”

“The Jews started this war centuries ago,” Braun said. “In fact they have always conducted it against the Poles and against the whole Christian world.”

<https://www.algemeiner.com/2019/05/13/as-antisemitic-protocols-are-distributed-on-streets-of-warsaw-polish-government-snubs-visiting-israeli-delegation/?fbclid=IwAR1eyGP8cR7uYxTavPm9hPNdLB9NERd4ovukImrCCDEqgBuX88ZnZssyHm4>