

# MODERN ANTISEMITISM IN THE VISEGRÁD COUNTRIES

Edited by: Ildikó Barna and Anikó Félix



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**Rafal Pankowski** is an Associate Professor at Collegium Civitas in Warsaw and heads the Warsaw-based anti-racist East Europe Monitoring Centre<sup>2</sup>, which was established by the “Nigdy Wiecej” (“Never Again”) association. He has also served as deputy editor of the “Nigdy Wiecej” magazine since 1996. Pankowski holds an MA in Political Science from the University of Warsaw and a PhD and Habilitation in Sociology of Culture from the University of Warsaw’s Institute of Applied Social Sciences.

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2 <http://www.nigdywiecej.org> (accessed June 19, 2017).

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POLAND

Rafal Pankowski

## I. BACKGROUND

### **Jewish population and community**

Historically, Poland was home to a large Jewish population. In the tenth century, the first words about the existence of Poland as a country were penned by Ibrahim ibn Jacob, a Jewish merchant representing the Caliph of Cordoba. For one thousand years, the Jews contributed to the cultural, economic and political life of the country. From the thirteenth century, the Jewish community was granted a degree of legal autonomy by Polish rulers. After the Third Partition of Poland in 1795 and until 1918, the emancipation of the Jews generally followed the diverse paths of the legislative frameworks of the occupying powers (Russia, Austria and Germany). In the interwar period, Polish Jews officially enjoyed full rights as Polish citizens, but in practice they frequently suffered discrimination, especially after 1935. Before 1939, the Jewish community amounted to 10% of Poland's population. Approximately three million Polish Jews were murdered by the Nazis during the Holocaust. Sever-

al waves of emigration after World War II further diminished the Polish Jewish community. According to an official population census conducted in 2011, approximately 8,000 people declared themselves as having a Jewish identity (nationality/ethnicity). Within this group, 2,000 declared their identity as Jewish only, with the vast majority declaring their identity as both Polish and Jewish. According to the census, Poland's total population was 38.5 million. Thus, the Jews constitute only a small fraction of the country's population. No precise data are available on the socio-economic status of Jews in Poland, but it is generally accepted that they are a predominantly urban community, with high levels of secularism and assimilation into mainstream Polish culture.

### **Historical context of modern antisemitism**

Modern political antisemitism surfaced in Poland at the turn of the twentieth century, in conjunction with the rise of the ethno-nationalist "Endek" or "National Democracy" movement led by Roman Dmowski.

Antisemitism became a crucial part of the movement's ideology, and antisemitic propaganda played an important role in the construction of a nationalist political identity. Clearly, the rise of modern antisemitism was made possible by the heritage of traditional Catholic antisemitism, which had existed since the Middle Ages. The Endek movement had a mass following and sought to build a modern national identity rooted in ethnic (or ethno-religious) ties, excluding ethnic and religious minorities from the imagined national identity. When Poland regained independence in 1918, the Endek movement did not obtain power, but it enjoyed mass support during the interwar period, especially among the middle classes and the Roman Catholic clergy. The Endek tradition arguably still has a strong influence on the understanding of national identity in Poland.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the struggle against the Jews gradually became a central element of the Endek ideology, which was permeated with Jewish conspiracy theories. Dmowski opposed the as-

similation of Jews even when they converted to Christianity. In 1904, he wrote:

In the character of this race [the Jews], so many different values alien to our moral constitution and harmful to our life have accumulated that assimilation with a larger number of Jews would destroy us, replacing us with decadent elements, rather than with those young creative foundations upon which we are building the future.<sup>1</sup>

By the mid-1930s, a new, more radical generation of activists grew out of the National Democracy movement. In 1934, they formed their own group, the National-Radical Camp (Oboz Narodowo-Radykalny or ONR), which was strongly inspired by European fascist models. In the wake of the international economic crisis, the ONR included both nationalist and anti-capitalist slogans in its ideology and equated capitalism with Jewish influence. The ONR was notorious for using

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1 Roman Dmowski, *Mysli nowoczesnego Polaka* (1904), quoted in: Rafal Pankowski, *The Populist Radical Right in Poland: The Patriots* (London: Routledge, 2010), 28.

violence against Jews and political opponents. The bulk of its support came from university students. After several months, it was banned by the Polish authorities for inciting hatred, but it continued to function informally (subsequently splitting into two factions known as ONR-ABC and ONR-Falanga, which was led by Bolesław Piasecki). This extreme nationalist ideology and symbolism made a spectacular comeback among young Poles in the 2010s.

The Holocaust in Poland was perpetrated by German Nazis. This basic fact is not in dispute, but there is a debate about the role of the Polish neighbours of the Jewish victims. The attitudes of the Polish population ranged from sympathy to indifference and hostility. The role of the Polish perpetrators of wartime and postwar anti-Jewish pogroms (e.g. in Jedwabne in 1941 and Kielce in 1946) remains a subject of controversy to the present day.<sup>2</sup>

Both before and after 1939, antisemitic discourse was often inter-

twined with anti-Communist rhetoric. According to estimates, around one-fourth of the Polish Communist Party's membership was made up of Jews during the 1920s and 1930s. In practice, however, the Jewish Communists were a marginal group within the wider Jewish community in Poland. The Communist Party was illegal in Poland; it remained unpopular and was eventually dissolved by Stalin in 1937. Many of its activists were subsequently murdered by the Soviet secret police (NKVD) during the mass repressions.

After World War II, the stereotype of "Jewish Communism" became even stronger, despite the fact that Jewish Communists constituted a very small part of the postwar Communist leadership and generally did not identify themselves as Jews. Throughout the postwar years, the official propaganda emphasized ethnic homogeneity and the lack of significant minorities as a major achievement of the Communist regime. Symbolically, a group of activists of the prewar ONR-Falanga, led

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<sup>2</sup> The main contribution to the debate can be found in Jan T. Gross's ground-breaking books: *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz* (New York: Random House, 2006); and *Golden Harvest*, co-authored with Irena Grudzińska-Gross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

by Bolesław Piasecki, was allowed to reorganize legally in the form of the PAX Association, which combined nationalism and Catholicism with Socialist rhetoric. For decades, PAX had its own representatives in Poland's Communist-dominated parliament. Nevertheless, during the first two decades of Communist rule, cases of officially sanctioned, overt antisemitism were relatively rare.

In the latter half of the 1960s, antisemitic rhetoric disguised as anti-Zionism became increasingly common. The antisemitic campaign reached its peak in the wake of Israel's victory in the 1967 Six-Day War. At this time, Israel's success was viewed with some sympathy in certain sectors of Polish society, but the authorities reacted with hostility to any displays of solidarity with Israel. At the same time, a new democratically-minded student movement emerged in Poland, supported by dissident intellectuals such as Jacek Kuron, Karol Modzelewski, Leszek Kolakowski, Zygmunt Bauman, Włodzimierz Brus and others. The violent crushing of the democratic movement by the authorities in March 1968 was accompanied by

aggressive anti-Zionist government propaganda that highlighted the "cosmopolitan" background of the student activists, pointing to their family connections with the Jewish Communists of the Stalinist period. Government-controlled newspapers listed the Jewish-sounding names of the dissidents and stressed their "unpatriotic" outlook.

In particular, the Jewish-Communist family background of the eighteen-year-old student leader Adam Michnik was frequently exploited in the propaganda. Such attacks on Michnik were repeated during the ensuing decades and continue to this day. At present, they feature prominently in the discourse of the Polish extreme right. Since 1989, Michnik has been the editor-in-chief of the country's main liberal newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza*. He is regarded as one of the founding fathers of Polish liberal democracy, which makes him a frequent target of hatred among nationalist populists. Another activist in the student movement of the late 1960s, Jan Gross, later became the author of ground-breaking books on antisemitism in Poland.

In the Communist propaganda of

the late 1960s, the term “Zionism” simply served as shorthand for being Jewish or sympathizing with Jews. The “Zionists” (i.e. Jews) were presented as a united group working for the benefit of Israel and the United States. They were simultaneously accused of “cosmopolitanism” and “nationalism”. As a part of the repressive measures that followed the student unrest, hundreds of students were expelled from universities, while professors who were seen as sympathizers of the student movement were sacked. In 1968–1969, approximately 15,000–20,000 Jews were forced to leave Poland amid an atmosphere of intimidation. Roughly 25% of them settled in Israel. Many of the rhetorical themes developed and popularized during the 1968 anti-Zionist campaign have been in circulation ever since, including during the post-1989 period.

### **Opinion polls on antisemitism**

Numerous sociological studies on antisemitism and Polish attitudes

towards Jews and Israel have been conducted in recent decades. Due to the different methodologies – and differing ideological perspectives – of the researchers, the results tend to differ considerably. Writing in 2011, Professor Antoni Sułek of the Institute of Sociology at Warsaw University ascertained that there was generally a small (or diminishing) range of antisemitic attitudes in Poland. As an example, he quoted the results of a survey conducted by the TNS OBOP polling institute in 2002 and 2010. Those surveyed were asked to name groups with “too much influence on the country’s affairs”. Jews were named by a marginal percentage of the respondents (0.8% in 2002 and 1.7% in 2010).<sup>3</sup>

However, a different picture emerges from the research of Professor Ireneusz Krzemiński, also of the Institute of Sociology at Warsaw University, who conducted a series of surveys beginning in 1992. These surveys demonstrate the relative persistence of certain antisemitic attitudes. Elements of “tradition-

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3 Antoni Sułek, “Władza Żydów a władza stereotypu,” *Otwarta Rzeczpospolita*, February 11, 2011, <http://www.otwarta.org/prof-antoni-sulek-wladza-zydow-i-wladza-stereotypu> (accessed January 15, 2017).

al” (i.e. religiously motivated) antisemitism were shared by 11.5% of those surveyed in 1992, 11.6% in 2002 and 8% in 2012, while elements of “modern” (i.e. ideological) antisemitism were shared by 17% of respondents in 1992, 27% in 2002 and 20% in 2012. According to Krzemiński, there is a strong correlation between a high level of religious practice and both types of antisemitism in certain sectors of Polish society.<sup>4</sup>

Yet another picture is presented by the Polish Prejudice Survey, which was conducted by Warsaw University’s Faculty of Psychology in 2013. The authors of this survey note a revival in both traditional and modern forms of antisemitism. For example, 22% of those surveyed answered “yes” to the question “Are contemporary Jews to blame for the death of Christ?” In the same poll, a record 67% of respondents confirmed their belief in the statement: “The Jews are trying to impose their influence in the world”, while 44% agreed

that “The Jews rule the world”.<sup>5</sup> These results are supplemented by an additional report on attitudes towards Israel published by the same institute. According to this survey, 7% of informants held a “strongly negative” opinion about contemporary Israel, and 42% held a “rather negative” opinion. At the other end of the spectrum, 4% held a “strongly positive” opinion about Israel, and 47% held a “rather positive” opinion. According to the research, antisemitic views are frequently correlated with anti-Israel opinions. In other words, those who hold antisemitic views are inclined to express negative opinions about Israel.<sup>6</sup>

According to the results of the Anti-Defamation League’s 2015 global survey, Poland’s antisemitism index (the percentage of adults in the country who answered “probably true” in response to a majority of the antisemitic stereotypes presented to them) was estimated at 45%.<sup>7</sup> The percentage of those answering “probably true” in response to specific stereo-

4 Ireneusz Krzemiński, “Dmowski i antysemityzm narodowo-katolicki,” *Nigdy Więcej*, no. 22 (2016): 93–98.

5 Paweł Wronski, “Coraz więcej Polaków wierzy, że Żydzi porywali dzieci,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, January 18, 2014.

6 Dominika Bulska and Mikołaj Winiewski, *Postawy antyizraelskie a antysemityzm w Polsce. Raport na podstawie Polskiego Sondażu Uprzedzeń* (Warsaw: Centrum Badań nad Uprzedzeniami, 2013).

7 See <http://global100.adl.org/#country/poland/2014> (accessed January 15, 2017).

typical statements was as follows:

- “Jews are more loyal to Israel than to [this country/the countries they live in]” - 57%
- “Jews have too much power in the business world” - 57%
- “Jews have too much power in international financial markets” - 55%
- “Jews still talk too much about what happened to them in the Holocaust” - 62%
- “Jews don’t care what happens to anyone but their own kind” - 45%
- “Jews have too much control over global affairs” - 42%
- “Jews have too much control over the United States government” - 30%
- “Jews think they are better than other people” - 39%
- “Jews have too much control over the global media” - 35%
- “Jews are responsible for most of the world’s wars” - 16%
- “People hate Jews because of the way Jews behave” - 33%

In conclusion, it seems clear that, although the results of the various sociological surveys differ significantly, they illustrate the presence of antisemitic attitudes in Poland despite the very small size of the Jewish community.

### **Legislative background**

On the subject of antisemitism (and other forms of incitement), the Polish legislative framework is similar to that of most European countries. Article 13 of the Polish Constitution states that political parties and other organizations whose programmes are based upon totalitarian methods and the modes of activity of nazism, fascism and communism, as well as those whose programmes or activities sanction racial or national hatred, shall be prohibited. Article 35 gives national and ethnic minorities the right to establish educational and cultural institutions and institutions designed to protect religious identity. Article 32 prohibits discrimination for any reason. Under Article 196 of the Polish Penal Code, anyone found guilty of intentionally offending religious feelings by profaning an object or place of

worship is liable to a fine, a restriction of liberty or imprisonment for a maximum of two years. Under Article 256, anyone found guilty of promoting a fascist or other totalitarian system of state or of inciting hatred based on national, ethnic, racial or religious differences, or for reason of the lack of any religious denomination, is liable to a fine, a restriction of liberty or imprisonment for a maximum of two years. Under Article 257, anyone found guilty of publicly insulting a group or a particular person because of their national, ethnic, racial or religious affiliation, or because of the lack of any religious denomination, is liable to a fine, a restriction of liberty or imprisonment for a maximum of three years.

Although these legal provisions generally seem sufficient, over the years representatives of minority communities (including the Jewish community) and civil society groups have pointed to a discrepancy between the letter of the law and the everyday practices of various institutions. This discrepancy has resulted in the inadequate implementation of the legal provisions against hate speech. A lack of political will

has often been noted, such as Poland's failure to ratify the Council of Europe's Convention on Cybercrime and its Additional Protocol concerning the criminalization of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature committed through computer systems until 2015 despite signing them in 2003, and even then only after years of campaigning and lobbying by the "Never Again" association. To date, the implementation of legal norms regarding online hate speech has been particularly lax.

### **Governmental relations with Israel**

Diplomatic relations between Poland and Israel were severed in 1967 and officially restored in 1990. Since then, cooperation at state level has progressed in the political, economic and military fields. For example, bilateral intergovernmental consultations involving several ministers from both countries took place in Israel in November 2016. In 2007, the then Israeli ambassador to Poland, David Peleg, was outspoken in his condemnation of the antisemitism promoted by Radio Maryja, calling

on the Catholic church and the Polish state institutions to intervene.<sup>8</sup>

## II. ANTISEMITISM: ACTORS AND MANIFESTATIONS

### Actors

#### *Method of selection*

Poland is a large country with a population of about 38 million and, traditionally, a plethora of political groups of all shades. The nationalist and antisemitic groups, in particular, have a tendency to split and multiply, and antisemitism is rife within some sectors of Polish society and politics, especially on the Far Right. It is therefore impossible to provide an exhaustive list of the many actors that engage in some form of antisemitism in Poland. As a result, the following selection is somewhat arbitrary, but we have tried to include several actors that are significant on account of their social and political influence and/or their tendency to represent characteristic, and often long-standing, models of antisemitic discourse and activity.

Some of these models are similar to the models of antisemitic discourse and activity in other countries, while others are specific to Poland.

#### *Political parties, civic associations and other groups*

##### Kukiz'15

Kukiz'15 is a populist political movement created and led by Pawel Kukiz, a former rock singer, who became a politician in 2015. In May 2015, Kukiz ran for the Polish presidency as an independent candidate and came third with more than three million votes (20.8%). In the parliamentary elections of October 2015, Kukiz'15 received more than 1.3 million votes (8.8% of the national vote) and won forty-two seats in the Polish parliament. Since the elections, however, six MPs have left the movement. Kukiz'15 is composed of several sub-groups, including the far-right nationalist "Endecja" association, which was established in May 2016 and lays claim to the heritage of the historic Endek movement. The

Endecja group within Kukiz'15 consists of seven MPs. Since its creation in 2015, Kukiz'15 has been moving in a radical right direction. It has launched a major "Stop refugees!" campaign and has collected signatures in support of a Hungarian-style referendum on closing Poland's borders to refugees. The campaign employs strong anti-migrant and Islamophobic rhetoric. The Kukiz movement has tried to establish itself as the main right-wing populist opposition to the current conservative-nationalist government of the Law and Justice (PiS) party. However, it has supported the PiS in several key votes aimed at dismantling the liberal-democratic constitutional order. At the same time, it has viciously attacked the liberal and left-wing opposition. For example, in a December 2015 radio broadcast, Pawel Kukiz alleged that the mass demonstrations in defence of democracy were "sponsored from the pocket of a Jewish banker". He later explained that this offensive comment was aimed at George Soros. The Union of Jewish Religious

Communities in Poland claimed that Kukiz's remark was antisemitic and demanded a firm response from President Andrzej Duda and Prime Minister Beata Szydło, which did not materialize. The head of the Union of Jewish Religious Communities, Lesław Piszewski, noted that Kukiz's comments set a worrying precedent: "For the first time since [Poland's] democratic elections in 1989, a politician in parliament, who has run for the presidency, has used such obvious antisemitic rhetoric."<sup>9</sup>

### National-Radical Camp

The National-Radical Camp (Oboz Narodowo-Radykalny or ONR) is the contemporary incarnation of the fascist ONR originally established in 1934. The modern-day ONR was created as a predominantly skinhead youth group in the early 2000s. Its extremist symbolism came complete with uniforms and fascist salutes. In 2009, the regional court in Opole banned the ONR association in Brzeg for promoting fascism. Nevertheless, the ONR has continued

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9 "Jewish Community Accuses Prominent Polish Politician of Anti-Semitism," Radio Poland, December 22, 2015, <http://www.thenews.pl/1/9/Artykul/234028,Jewish-community-accuses-prominent-Polish-politician-of-anti-Semitism> (accessed January 15, 2017).

its activities and today comprises a national network of branches that enjoys considerable support within a certain section of Poland's younger generation. In recent years, the ONR has been particularly active in organizing street marches in various Polish cities, often in cooperation with the All-Polish Youth (Młodzież Wszechpolska or MW). For example, on 18 November 2015, members of the ONR and the MW held a racist demonstration against refugees in Poland in front of Wrocław City Hall. At the end of the demonstration, Piotr Rybak (a former collaborator of Paweł Kukiz) burnt an effigy of a Jew that was decorated with a skullcap, sidelocks and an EU flag. To the applause of the event's other participants, Rybak shouted: "I'm not going to be told by any German, Jew or American that Islam has any good intentions towards Christianity." The police did not intervene, but the Prosecutor's Office received a crime report from the mayor of Wrocław, Rafał Dutkiewicz, among others. In November 2016, Rybak was sentenced to ten months in prison. In December 2016, the public prosecutor appealed against

the sentence, complaining it was too harsh.<sup>10</sup> On 16 April 2016, ONR members marched through the city centre of Białystok, which was a multicultural and predominantly Jewish town until the Holocaust and has experienced numerous neo-Nazi incidents in recent years. The demonstrators chanted "Zionists will be hanging from the trees instead of leaves", as well as other radical nationalist and xenophobic slogans. Polish priest Jacek Międlar, who is known for his support of far-right nationalist movements, held a holy mass for the ONR members and addressed them with the following words: "The oppressors, together with the dazed, passive Jewish mob, will try to bring you down to your knees, drag you around, grind you down and spit you out because you are an inconvenience." He also called for "zero tolerance for the Jewish cowardice." An investigation was launched into the abovementioned events, but the public prosecutor did not bring any charges.

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10 Description of the incident from "Never Again" association sources.

## All-Polish Youth

The All-Polish Youth (Młodzież Wszechpolska or MW) movement was recreated in 1989 and continues the tradition of the antisemitic youth organization of the same name that was active in the 1920s and 1930s. It is appropriate to remember that the MW, like the ONR, was responsible for numerous attacks on Jewish students in the interwar period. In 1998, Grzegorz Sielatycki, a leading member of the MW in Gdansk in the 1990s and 2000s, wrote as follows in the pages of the movement's magazine *Walka (The Struggle)*:

The pollution of our own culture by alien elements is dangerous. Why do they include Jewish authors such as Julian Tuwim, Bruno Schulz, Bolesław Lesmian, Tadeusz Peiper, Roman Brandstaetter, Andrzej Szczypiorski or many others under the label of Polish culture in Polish textbooks? Why do they consider Jewish literature in the Polish language as ours?

The language cannot be a decisive argument that determines the national character of a literature and the aspirations of Jewish writers do not determine it either. Their psyche determines it, and it reveals the Jewish character of the literature they produce. The Jewish psyche is crippled, sick, degenerate and abnormal.<sup>11</sup>

Since 2010, the MW, together with the ONR, has organized an annual Independence Day march in Warsaw on 11 November. It has arguably become the largest far-right gathering in contemporary Europe, if not the world. According to estimates, it attracted between 50,000 and 100,000 participants in 2016. The bulk of the marchers are mobilized by formal and informal football fan networks (Polish football fan culture has been largely hijacked by far-right nationalists). In recent years, the gathering has attracted growing interest from foreign extremists. Numerous representatives of the Hungarian extreme-right Jobbik party are highly visible on the

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11 Quoted in Rafal Pankowski, *The Populist Radical Right in Poland: The Patriots* (London: Routledge, 2010), 116.

streets of Warsaw every year. They are joined by extreme-right delegations from other countries, including Slovakia, Sweden, France, Spain, Croatia and many others. One of the keynote speeches in 2016 was delivered by Roberto Fiore, the convicted terrorist and leader of the neo-fascist Forza Nuova. In 2015, the official slogan of the march was “Poland for the Poles, the Poles for Poland.” As it happens, “Poland for the Poles” was the main antisemitic slogan of the interwar period. During the march, several far-right extremists interrupted a news report being filmed by Polsat News, with one of them shouting “F\*\*\* the Jews” to the camera. In 2016, chants such as “Hit the Jewish scum with the hammer and the sickle” were heard at the march, alongside anti-migrant, anti-Muslim and other xenophobic slogans.

### National Movement

The National Movement (Ruch Narodowy or RN) is a far-right political party born out of the cooperation between MW and ONR activists in 2014. In October 2015, ten members and sympathizers of the RN were elected to the Polish par-

liament after cooperating with the Kukiz’15 movement. As a result of subsequent disagreements, the majority of them left the RN and joined the newly founded “Endecja” association in 2016. As of January 2017, party leader Robert Winnicki (a former chairman of the MW) is the only remaining MP representing the RN. The RN is closely allied with Jobbik and other foreign extreme-right groups. For example, on 10 November 2016, Winnicki hosted leaders of Our Slovakia (Milan Mazurek) and Forza Nuova (Roberto Fiore) in the Polish parliament. On 21 July 2016, he made a speech in parliament protesting against “the history policy ordered by Jewish groups with claims on Poland”. His speech was interrupted several times by cheers of support from members of the ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party.

### National Rebirth of Poland

National Rebirth of Poland (Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski or NOP) is the radical neo-fascist party associated with the International Third Position and the European National Front. The NOP’s annual Independence Day march in Wroclaw at-

tracts between 5,000 and 10,000 participants, including fans of the Slask Wroclaw football club, led by Roman Zielinski (author of the notorious book *How I Fell in Love with Adolf Hitler*). It is also particularly active among the Polish community in the United Kingdom, where it cooperates with the neo-Nazi National Action. For example, on 4 July 2014, the NOP England Division participated in an anti-Jewish rally in Whitehall, London. The NOP is renowned for its open endorsement of Holocaust denial since the late 1990s, including the active promotion of David Irving's writings. It is also particularly outspoken in its violently hostile attitude towards Israel and often uses the slogan "Bombs against Israel now!"

### Stanislaw Michalkiewicz

Stanislaw Michalkiewicz is a regular commentator on Radio Maryja and TV Trwam who is notorious for his vicious antisemitism. For example, in a TV Trwam broadcast on 20 April 2013, Michalkiewicz made the following antisemitic statement:

The Israeli government and other organizations involved in the Holocaust industry are hoping to cadge another 65 million dollars from us. ... The Foreign Office, dominated by the team put together by the late Bronisław Geremek, is continuing to use Communist tactics against Polish emigrants; it prevents any attempts at founding a Polish lobby in the countries of settlement. It is, in terms of national interest, simply unbelievable!<sup>12</sup>

Encouraged by TV Trwam presenter Robert Knap, Michalkiewicz elaborated: "In terms of the interests of this particular ethnic group, which makes its presence in the Foreign Office visible – I'm talking about the Jewish lobby – it is understandable, in particular in the case of a conflict of interest between the Polish and Jewish nations." The same programme was broadcast on Radio Maryja on 22 April 2013. On 5 October 2016, Michalkiewicz read one of his columns on air, stating: "The Jewish circles in Poland are

tasked with providing the European Commission with as much proof as possible that democracy and the rule of law in our unhappy country is threatened by the fascist regime.” On 20 October 2016, he said: “Today the mischievous Jews understand what it is about and they have transformed themselves into liberals.” On 23 November 2016, Radio Maryja aired Michalkiewicz’s weekly broadcast, in which he alleged that “the Jewish lobby in Poland demonstrates its racial solidarity with the Ukrainian oligarchs.” In December 2016, Michalkiewicz toured Polish churches and cultural centres in the United States, delivering lectures based on his anti-Jewish conspiracy theories.

### Leszek Bubel

Leszek Bubel is a publisher of rabidly antisemitic publications and was a member of parliament for the Polish Party of Beer Lovers in the early 1990s. In the early 2000s, he was involved with the populist Self-Defence (Samoobrona) movement and eventually founded his own Polish National Party (Polska Partia Narodowa or PPN). His publications are

sold in mainstream distribution outlets and focus on lists of real and alleged Jews who are active in Polish political and cultural life. Bubel’s fake lists are a good example of the phenomenon known as the “Judaization of the opponent” in Polish public life.

### Grzegorz Braun

Grzegorz Braun is a documentary film maker and far-right activist. In 2015, he ran for the Polish presidency on an openly antisemitic and anti-democratic (monarchist) platform, polling less than 1% of the vote. During the electoral campaign, Braun warned against Poland becoming “a German-Russian condominium under Jewish management”. In September 2016, he was shortlisted as one of the top three candidates for the post of chairman of Polish state television by the PiS-dominated National Media Council, although the job eventually went to former PiS MP Jacek Kurski.

## Media

### Radio Maryja

Radio Maryja, the nationalist-Catholic radio station run by the Redemptorist Order, has been the single most powerful disseminator of antisemitic rhetoric for the past twenty-five years, as documented in numerous reports by the “Never Again” association, the Anti-Defamation League, the Council of Europe and other organizations. According to the US State Department report on global antisemitism that was delivered to Congress in 2008: “Radio Maryja is one of Europe’s most blatantly anti-Semitic media venues.” Radio Maryja’s founder, Father Tadeusz Rydzyk, routinely refers to Polish state television as “TELAVision”, suggesting that it is dominated by Jews. During a religious ceremony broadcast on Radio Maryja on 3 September 2016, Father Rydzyk reprimanded the faithful for their misbehaviour, exclaiming: “This is not a synagogue!”

### TV Trwam and Nasz Dziennik

TV Trwam and *Nasz Dziennik* are Radio Maryja’s associated media outlets, comprising a TV channel and a daily newspaper that follow the same editorial line. The network of organizations around Radio Maryja reportedly received approximately \$7.5 million in Polish state funds in 2016.

### Gazeta Warszawska

*Gazeta Warszawska* goes by the same name as an historical ultra-conservative and antisemitic newspaper that dates back to 1774. Today, it is a radical nationalist weekly newspaper, published by Polish-American businessman Piotr Bachurski, that follows a particularly hostile anti-Jewish line. For example, in August 2016, in a long article devoted to the recent visit of an Anti-Defamation League delegation to Poland, it alleged that “the ADL in America stands for total destruction: decriminalization of sodomy and abortion and the promotion of racial diversity.” It also warned that “the idea of basing Polish security on an alliance with American Jews

is an illusion because they won't care for Polish interests if Putin guarantees Israel's interests in the Middle East."<sup>13</sup>

## **Manifestations of modern antisemitism**

### ***Secondary antisemitism: Holocaust denial, relativization and trivialization***

Outright Holocaust denial is rare in Poland, not least because the Nazi Holocaust took place on Polish territory. Nevertheless, Holocaust denial appeared on the right-wing extremist scene in the 1990s. In 1999, a court in Opole declared that Dr Dariusz Ratajczak, a researcher at the University of Opole, had infringed the law against Holocaust denial in his book *Dangerous Topics* but that the crime was socially harmless. Leszek Bubel issued a paperback edition of the book, which was widely distributed by the state-owned company Ruch. Ratajczak and two other historians defended Holocaust denial in a Radio Maryja broadcast in January 2000, after which the University of Opole dismissed Ratajczak from

his academic post. Upon his death due to alcohol poisoning in 2010, he again became an icon of the radical wing of the Polish Far Right.

In a more general sense, debates about collective (national) memory and identity in the context of World War II have often led to a radical polarization of views and have been used as a platform for the promotion of antisemitic stereotypes. Ireneusz Krzeminski points to two frequently competing national narratives (Polish and Jewish), both claiming supreme martyrdom or vying with each other in terms of their degree of suffering. The field of history and national memory is arguably the main area in which antisemitic stereotypes are employed in the contemporary Polish public discourse.

In this context, the denial of Polish responsibility for the 1941 Jedwabne pogrom is part of a recurring phenomenon. For example, in a television interview in July 2016, Polish education minister Anna Zalewska claimed that "Jedwabne is a historical fact that has led to many misunderstandings and very biased

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13 Krzysztof Balinski, "I ty zostaniesz antysemitą," *Gazeta Warszawska*, August 28, 2016.

opinions.” The journalist responded by saying: “Poles burned Jews in a barn.” “That’s your opinion,” retorted Zalewska, adding that Jan Gross’s award-winning book on the Jedwabne pogrom was “full of lies”. On the subject of the 1946 Kielce pogrom, she claimed that the perpetrators “were not quite Polish”.<sup>14</sup>

In addition, two government ministers publicly alluded to the conspiracy theories espoused in the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and, when challenged about it by the national and international media, stopped short of condemning the infamous document as an antisemitic forgery.<sup>15</sup>

## Conspiratorial antisemitism

Conspiracy theories about Jewish influence occasionally surface in the Polish public discourse. Radio Maryja’s Stanislaw Michalkiewicz (see above) is arguably the most prolific author of such theories. Ameri-

can-Hungarian millionaire George Soros is frequently identified as a central figure in the international conspiracy against the Polish nationalist right, despite the fact that Soros’s involvement in Polish affairs through the Stefan Batory Foundation, which he established in 1987, has decreased significantly over the past decade. Tellingly, Piotr Rybak, who set the aforementioned effigy of an Orthodox Jew on fire in Wroclaw in November 2015, explained his actions as being directed against Soros. The effigy was said to represent Soros as the author of a secret plan to bring Muslim refugees into Europe. On a more general level, this incident can be interpreted as showing that antisemitism remains the paradigmatic form of xenophobia in Poland. The Jew is a common and deeply rooted symbol of “the Other” in Polish culture, and hence even anti-Muslim demonstrations end up being accompanied by anti-Jewish symbolism.

In a similar vein, an alleged conspir-

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14 Vanessa Gera, “Polish Official Criticized over Jewish Massacre Remarks,” AP News, July 14, 2016, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/0343e3d10bad435e8ce24d5f9e69c974/polish-official-criticized-over-jewish-massacre-remarks> (accessed January 15, 2017).

15 Don Snyder, “Two Polish Right-Wing Ministers Blasted over ‘Protocols,’” *Forward*, November 17, 2015, <http://forward.com/news/breaking-news/324904/2-polish-right-wing-ministers-blasted-over-protocols> (accessed 30 May 2017).

acy against the Polish political right was attributed to former Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski and, in particular, his US-born wife Anne Applebaum. Applebaum, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who writes for *The Washington Post* and other media, has been accused of “inspiring” numerous articles critical of the post-2015 political climate in Poland that appeared in the international media.

### **New antisemitism**

Various factors, including the “richness” of the antisemitic discourse in Poland from the late nineteenth century onwards and a lack of interest in events in the Middle East, have meant that Poland’s home-grown antisemites tend not to focus on Israel’s occupation of Palestine or other related themes characteristic of the new antisemitism that has swept the Western world. A few small radical left and anarchist groups are preoccupied with the Palestinian question and share a radically anti-Israel position (which is expressed in the low-circulation

anti-Zionist magazine *Inny Świat*), but unlike the Far Right they have little or no influence on Polish public opinion. A violently anti-Israel discourse is clearly present in the activities of antisemitic groups such as the NOP (see above), but it appears to accompany more established forms of antisemitism rather than occupying centre stage in their discursive strategy. Some leaders of the Polish nationalist right actually claim to support Israel out of hostility towards Islam and the Arab world, while retaining their anti-Jewish attitudes in the field of domestic policy and national history. In this context, a former PiS MP and leading member of the Nationalist Movement (RN), Artur Zawisza, has publicly described himself as a “pro-Israel antisemite”.<sup>16</sup>

In September 2016, Radio Maryja’s Tadeusz Rydyk was received as a guest by the Israeli ambassador to Poland, Anna Azari. In response to this highly publicized meeting, the Israeli embassy received an open letter of protest written by several highly respected figures in the Polish Jewish community, including

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16 Konrad Rękas, “Pro-izraelscy antysemita?” Portal Myśli Konserwatywnej, July 21, 2012, <http://konserwatywzm.pl/artykul/4861/pro-izraelscy-antysemita> (accessed 15 January 2017).

Konstanty Gebert, Stanislaw Krajewski and Joanna Sobolewska-Pyz. Nevertheless, contacts between the Israeli embassy and Radio Maryja continued, and embassy representatives attended ceremonies organized by Father Rydzyk. Another meeting took place on 26 November 2016 in the form of a Shabbat dinner attended by Father Rydzyk, Ambassador Azari, Director of the Zionist Organization of America Morton Klein and Deputy Speaker of the Knesset Yehiel Bar. Despite these meetings, Radio Maryja continues to broadcast antisemitic views.<sup>17</sup>

Broadly speaking, the position of the PiS in international affairs has been pro-Israel. Nevertheless, some high-profile members of the party have expressed pro-Palestinian and anti-Israel views. For example, well-known PiS MP Jolanta Szczypińska has for years headed the cross-party Polish-Palestinian Parliamentary Group, which is dominated by PiS

MPs. During the Israeli intervention in the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip in 2010, Szczypińska led a group of Polish MPs who flew to Gaza to support the Palestinian resistance in defiance of the Israeli military blockade. According to media reports, she and her colleagues were subsequently detained by the Israeli border police on their way back to Poland from Ramallah later that year. Szczypińska complained of mistreatment and stated in an interview: “Now I know how the Palestinians are feeling.”<sup>18</sup> In 2014, she wrote to a pro-Israel right-wing journalist, saying: “I feel sorry for you because it must be difficult to defend the crimes committed by the Israeli army in that occupied land for so many years.”<sup>19</sup>

Since the mid-1990s, the “Never Again” association has documented antisemitic and other xenophobic incidents taking place in Poland. What follows is a selection of re-

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17 Donald Snyder, “European Jews Alarmed by Israeli Outreach to Anti-Semitic Far Right,” *Forward*, January 18, 2017, <http://forward.com/news/world/360436/european-jews-alarmed-by-israeli-outreach-to-anti-semitic-far-right> (accessed February 17, 2017).

18 “Szczypińska o zatrzymaniu w Izraelu: to oczywiste szykany,” *TVN 24*, March 26, 2016, <http://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/szczypinska-o-zatrzymaniu-w-izraelu-to-oczywiste-szykany,129760.html> (accessed January 15, 2017).

19 Kamil Sikora, “Prawicowa kłótnia o Strefę Gazy. Janecki do Szczypińskiej: W przeciwieństwie do pani nie kupuję propagandy,” *na:Temat*, n.d., <http://natemat.pl/110589,prawicowa-klotnia-o-strefe-gazy-janecki-do-szczypinskiej-w-przeciwienstwie-do-pani-nie-kupuje-propagandy> (accessed January 15, 2017).

cent incidents involving Israeli citizens or relating to the theme of new antisemitism in other ways. It is important to point out that the following cases do not include other antisemitic incidents such as cemetery desecrations, neo-Nazi graffiti and so forth.

In September 2011, a gigantic banner with the words “Jihad Legia” was displayed in the Legia Warsaw football stadium during a Europa League game between Legia Warsaw and the Israeli football club Hapoel Tel-Aviv.

On 13 August 2013, while driving his car in the town of Tykocin, Piotr P. shouted “Poland for Poles” and made offensive gestures towards a few dozen Israeli tourists. His behaviour was reported to the police by the tour group’s security staff, and he was subsequently detained by the police. The Prosecutor’s Office in Białystok charged him with publicly insulting a group of individuals on the grounds of their nationality and religion.

On 18 August 2013, an antisemitic incident occurred in front of Warsaw’s main shopping centre, the Golden Terraces. When an Israeli

national stepped outside the shopping centre, he was approached by a man who grabbed his skullcap and threw it into a rubbish bin. The victim reported the incident to the police. Officers subsequently launched an investigation regarding the public insult of another person on religious grounds.

On 29 November 2013, unknown perpetrators painted antisemitic slogans and symbols, including “F\*\*\* Israel” and the Star of David embedded in a vulgar image, around the platform area of one of Warsaw’s railway stations. The incident was reported to the PKP Polish Railways and the graffiti was removed.

In July 2014, Bistro Tel-Aviv in Warsaw city centre was covered with graffiti proclaiming “Zionism is racism”, “Boycott Israel” and “Free Palestine”. Similar graffiti appeared on the same bistro in March 2016.

On 14 July 2014, supporters of the NOP held an antisemitic rally outside the Israeli embassy in Warsaw using the slogan “Time to bomb Israel!” During the demonstration, the nationalists handed out leaflets containing the following call: “Our

political efforts must be aimed not only at the ‘ceasefire’ or isolation of this quasi-nation at the international level, but also at its complete abolishment.”

On 27 January 2015, the seventieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, during a ceremony commemorating International Holocaust Remembrance Day on Stawna Street in Poznan, near the offices of the Union of Jewish Religious Communities in Poland, members of the Poznan Patriotic Union organized an antisemitic demonstration called “Let’s defend Poland lest it becomes another Palestine”. The organization’s leader, Bogdan Freytag, stated as follows: “There is a similarity between the circumstances of Poles and Palestinians. ... Palestinians are consistently murdered [by Jews], while Poles are being denationalized and exterminated.” Participants brandished a banner with a swastika and a Star of David with an equals sign between them, and another banner bearing the racist symbol of the Celtic cross. The police intervened, and four men were apprehended. They were subsequently charged with inciting hatred on religious grounds.

On 2 February 2015, the Dialog-Pheniben Foundation filed a report with the Warsaw district prosecutor’s office concerning a suspected unlawful act against Jews committed by a far-right activist who wrote a blog post accusing Jews of “destroying the American and European economies, causing the world crisis and striving towards eradication of the Polish nation”. He also labelled Jews “Zionist scum”, “Zionist creatures”, “Zionist bandits”, “Zionist thugs” and “Jewish media thugs”. On 27 March 2015, the district prosecutor’s office refused to launch an investigation.

In late February 2015, an Israeli journalist notified the police of antisemitic graffiti on the city’s buildings, including: “Jews to the furnace” and “Anti-Jude”. The police refused to investigate the case.

On 12 January 2017, NOP members confronted a small pro-Israel demonstration in Warsaw, chanting anti-Israel and pro-Hezbollah slogans.

### III. CONCLUSIONS

It appears that antisemitism is still a significant feature of public life in Poland, despite the very small size of the contemporary Polish Jewish community. Antisemitism is a popular and deeply rooted way of expressing hostility towards any type of otherness or social diversity. Anti-Zionist slogans were first employed by the Communist authorities in the late 1960s, resulting in a large wave of Jewish emigration from Poland. Today, anti-Israel themes are not central to the antisemitic discourse but still form a part of the discursive repertoire of extremist groups. In this context, the growing popularity of radical nationalist movements such as the ONR must be viewed with particular concern. The delegitimization of Israel and the revival of antisemitic conspiracy theories are both the result of a general rise in xenophobic attitudes in Polish society, especially among the young. These developments have been accompanied and amplified by a sharp rise in antisemitic and xenophobic comments on social media. Clearly, official support for Israel at international level is not

sufficient to offset the persistence of antisemitic discourse in domestic contexts. Compared to traditional and modern forms of antisemitism, new antisemitism (directed primarily against Israel) does not take centre stage but forms part of a broader repertoire of antisemitic and xenophobic sentiments. These sentiments have been endorsed, in particular, by a broad spectrum of far-right groups. The number of antisemitic and xenophobic manifestations has risen in recent years, especially since the start of the European refugee crisis in 2015. These two trends are perfectly illustrated by the aforementioned anti-refugee demonstration in Wroclaw in November 2015, which culminated in the burning of an effigy of a Jew. Together with the “older” forms of antisemitism, new antisemitism thus poses a serious threat as part of an even larger social and political trend.

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