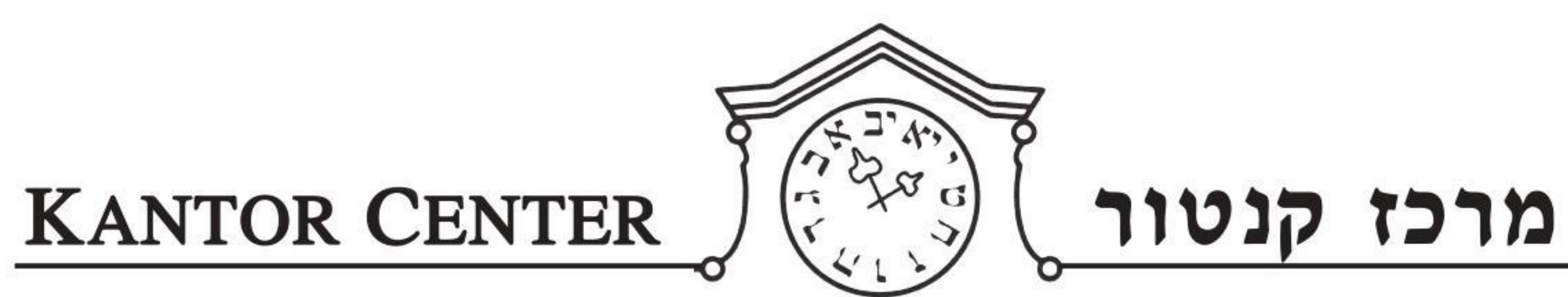




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UNIVERSITY תל אביב

The Lester and Sally Entin
Faculty of Humanities



For the Study of Contemporary European Jewry | לחקר יהדות אירופה בימינו

Moshe Kantor Database for the Study of
Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism

Antisemitism Worldwide
- 2018 -

General Analysis

The Program for the Study of Jews in Arab Lands

The Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of
Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism



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Poland / Rafal Pankowski

Examples of antisemitic discourse in Poland in 2018

In 2018, Poland experienced a wave of antisemitic discourse in the media and politics on a scale which had not been observed in many years. Numerous antisemitic statements were related to the controversies around the history of the Polish-Jewish relations during the Holocaust, including the controversial law on the Institute of National Memory enacted by the Polish Parliament in late January and early February. For example, on February 5, the extreme nationalist and neo-fascist groups, such as Ruch Narodowy (Nationalist Movement) and Oboz Narodowo-Radykalny (National-Radical Camp), conducted a demonstration outside the Polish president's palace with antisemitic slogans such as "Enough of Jewish lies!"

During the first half of 2018 in particular, hundreds of antisemitic statements appeared in the Polish media (including the state-controlled media), many of them expressed by mainstream figures such as members of Parliament. Many of the instances of antisemitic speech appeared in the public sphere soon after the passage of the controversial law. For example, on January 27, a popular commentator on Polish state TV, Rafal Ziemkiewicz, wrote on Twitter: "For many years I convinced people that we must support Israel. Today, because of a few stupid and greedy scabs, I feel like an idiot," employing an extreme term historically used in antisemitic discourse in Poland: *parchy* (scabs). Despite using extreme antisemitic language, Ziemkiewicz was not disciplined or punished and he repeated the offensive term in subsequent media appearances. Later, on April 15, Ziemkiewicz noted he had been mentioned in the Kantor Center's report and tweeted: "I consider it as my professional success to be on a list of antisemites."

Some of the statements by mainstream figures bordered on Holocaust revisionism or Holocaust trivialization. For example, Jacek Zalek, a deputy chairman of the parliamentary faction of the ruling party said in a TV interview that if the Poles are held responsible for the 1941 Jedwabne pogrom, "one might conclude that, since the Jewish police were ... responsible for leading Jews to the gas chambers, the Jews prepared the Holocaust for themselves."

Pawel Kukiz MP, the leader of the third largest political group in the Polish parliament said in another TV program: "Making Poles co-responsible for the Holocaust is a moral and ethical Holocaust against the Poles. (...) Maybe the Jews have a crisis, a moral crisis, since they accuse the Poles of participation in such crimes." Another MP, Marek Jakubiak accused Jews of collaborating with the Soviet Union: "On September 17, 1939, we were attacked by our eternal enemy, Soviet Russia. The Jews welcomed them with flowers. I'm asking where the Jews were when 500,000 Poles were murdered in front of their eyes and 2 million Poles were put on the death trains to Siberia. I'm asking if there was even a single Pole saved by Jews in a situation like that. (...) I want to say that the Poles also suffered a Holocaust, which was not less than the Jewish Holocaust." In the same vein, Ireneusz Zyska MP claimed on state TV: "Let us remember that there was also a Holocaust against the Polish people. The Jews and Israel have no monopoly on the word 'Holocaust'."

A well-known MP, Krystyna Pawłowicz, referred to alleged Jewish crimes against the Poles and associated them with Israel, by posting on her Facebook page: “The Holocaust against the Poles continued after World War II. ISRAEL, are these JEWS guilty of crimes against the Poles?” The comment was accompanied by a list of Stalinist-era Communist officials of Jewish background.

Andrzej Zybertowicz, an adviser to President Andrzej Duda, gave an interview to *Polska Times* (the Polish edition of the British *Times*) under the headline: “Anti-Polonism in Israel results from the feeling of shame at the passivity of the Jews during the Holocaust. It’s a form of compensation.” In the interview, Zybertowicz strongly linked the Holocaust with current conflicts in the Middle East: “The brutal treatment of the Palestinians and the Hezbollah by the Israelis is also a form of the compensation. (...) Earlier they experienced the trauma of humiliation and now—perhaps in line with their tradition of chutzpa—they are making up for it.”

Zybertowicz criticized the behaviour of the Jews during World War II and repeated some antisemitic stereotypes: “Many Jews engaged in denunciation and collaboration during the war. (...) I wonder if this political and symbolic attack of Israel on Poland and Poles is not, apart from all else, a smokescreen against remembering how they behaved in the face of the Holocaust—they were passive, they collaborated, and the Jewish elites from the East Coast of the USA, having learned from the Poles about what was going on in the concentration camps, behaved passively (...). But as a Pole, I don’t agree to Israel conducting its own reckoning with history at the expense of our country. (...) In this dispute one can see clearly that Israelis are fighting to keep a monopoly on the Holocaust. The ‘religion’ of the Holocaust has become a symbolic shield for that country, which is used by Israel to create for itself a special position in many places in the world—a shield meant to protect Israel against any criticism. And now Israel is afraid that Poland’s IPN law will break its monopoly on the Holocaust?”

MP Kornel Morawiecki, another well-known politician, and the father of the current PM, said in an interview on March 22: “Do you know who chased the Jews into the Warsaw Ghetto? The Germans, you think? No. The Jews themselves went because they were told that there would be an enclave that they would not have to deal with those nasty Poles.”

Some politicians also blamed the Jews themselves for the new wave of hostility against them in Poland. For example, Beata Mazurek, a deputy speaker of the Polish parliament and the official spokesperson of the ruling party, approvingly tweeted a quote from Father Henryk Zielinski, a Catholic priest who said on state TV: “What the Israeli ambassador has done [by criticizing the Polish history legislation – R.P.] makes it difficult for me to look at Jews with friendship and sympathy.” MP Iwona Arent said in a TV discussion on February 3: “If there is now a wave of antisemitism, or a different perspective on the Jews, then one must say it is the fault of the Jews themselves.”

The alleged danger posed by the Jewish lobby in the US was stressed by then Vice-President of the European Parliament Ryszard Czarnecki who stated on February 3: “The circles of American Jews have often been even more aggressive [toward Poland] than the Jewish circles in Israel. But I am a Polish politician and I have Polish duties.”

Polish state radio commentator Piotr Niztor suggested on air that Polish citizens who share Israel's criticism of the Polish history legislation should consider relinquishing their citizenship. "If somebody acts as a spokesman for Israeli interests, maybe they should think about giving up their Polish citizenship and accepting Israeli citizenship."

Many more examples of antisemitic discourse can be given. Although the controversial legislation was (partly) annulled in June 2018, the resurgence of antisemitic stereotypes in the Polish public space cannot be denied.