
30. The return of the image of the Jew as Poland's threatening other: Polish national identity and antisemitism in the third decade after the end of communism in 1989

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POLISH NATIONAL IDENTITY AND ANTISEMITISM BETWEEN THE 1990S AND 2015: CHALLENGES, RE-EXAMINATIONS AND RE-DEFINITIONS

In my conclusions to the first English edition of *Poland's Threatening Other. The Image of the Jew from 1880 to the Present*, published in 2006, I carefully stated: "one should not ignore the persistence of the backward-looking ethno-nationalistic vision of Polishness, intolerant of multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society."¹ At that time, both as an individual and scholar of Polish-Jewish history and antisemitism, I was thrilled by the emergence of an inclusive civic vision of Polishness in the post-communist Poland. That vision emerged in 1989 and seemingly established itself more firmly in the political and cultural life of the country in the second half of the 1990s. It reached its peak in the first half of the first decade of the first millennium. The Jedwabne debate of 2000 to 2002, triggered by the slim-looking book by Jan T. Gross's *Neighbors* about the mass murder, on 10 July 1941,² of the Jewish community in Jedwabne by their Polish neighbors under the conditions of interregnum between the departure of the Soviet regime and the arrival of Nazi German regime, has been the most crucial in a series of national debates about the collective past and the model of Polishness that "Poles wish to embrace." In many ways, the Jedwabne debate constituted the key manifestation of that forward-looking, inclusive Poland built on the matrix of civic nationalism. That Poland has not been afraid of uncovering the dark pages of Polish social history of World War II and the scope of antisemitic attitudes and actions against Polish Jews before, during and after the Holocaust. That Poland was represented in the Jedwabne debate by a significant segment of Polish leading politicians, journalists and intellectuals of liberal, progressive Catholic, left-wing and secular ideological provenance. These advocates all argued that, in the name of social, moral and historical necessities, contemporary Polish society must come to terms with the dark aspects of its past in general and, in particular, with the legacies of antisemitism, both in the past and the present.³ Yet, by closely observing, during the Jedwabne debate and in the post-Jedwabne debate period, many strong right-wing conservative reactions against the process of uncovering dark aspects in Polish social history, I realized that the backward-looking ethno-nationalistic model of Polishness, in its varied shades, is a force that might carry a strong appeal in some segments of society. Therefore, I also wrote:

One cannot rule out the possibility that parties such as LPR League of Polish Families – some of whose individual members have strong links to the extreme and openly antisemitic movement

All-Polish Youth, whose ideological origins go back to interwar Poland – will become important political actors in the future . . . The backward-looking ethno-nationalistic vision of Poland has a hold on some sections of the population, particularly those who still struggle with the social and economic changes brought about by the political and economic transformation of 1989.⁴

PIS'S VISION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY AND NATIONAL HISTORY

In 2015, this backward-looking ethno-nationalistic vision of Poland fully entered the mainstream public life. This has been brought about by the victory of the conservative, right-wing center party, PiS (Law and Justice Party) in both presidential and parliamentary elections of that year. Of course, a similar shift to the right in politics has occurred in other post-communist countries in Eastern Europe, notably in Hungary, as well as beyond the region. However, one can argue that as a result of this political shift, Poland today is an example of the most extreme paradoxes amongst the post-communist countries.

On the one hand, it still showcases the most sophisticated, advanced attempts at the transformation of the memory of the Holocaust and the incorporation of the dark aspects of the national past into national history, public memory, and historical education. Progressive segments of Polish society, including local politicians, scholars, journalists, teachers from big cities and small towns, clergy representing the Open Church, and segments of younger generations, continue to be committed to opposing and educating against racism, xenophobia and antisemitism.⁵ Groups of younger generations of Poles and non-governmental organizations, such as Teatr NN – Brama Grodzka in Lublin, Pogranicze Sejny and the Forum for Dialogue, continue to be engaged in documenting, exhibiting and commemorating a local Jewish pre-1939 past and the Holocaust.⁶ These organizations also continue forging and sustaining a dialogue between Jews and Catholics and members of other religions in the country, and between Poles and Israelis and members of the worldwide Jewish Diaspora. All these activities contributing to building an inclusive, civic Polish society have crystalized during the phase of ascendant liberalism in the 1990s.

On the other hand, Poland today, under the rule of PiS, exhibits a case of disturbing regression in Polish–Jewish dialogue on both national and international levels. It represents a case of a country in which the government in its intensive efforts to suppress the dark and uncomfortable aspects of Polish social history of the twentieth century, does not hesitate to launch a systematic “zero sum war” against scholarly research into dark history of Polish relations with the Polish Jewish minority and other ethnic and cultural minorities that portray segments of Polish society as wrongdoers and perpetrators.⁷ It does not hesitate to put forward a single, biased master narrative of the social history of Poland in order to eradicate any awareness and knowledge of the dark aspects of that past from the government-controlled national institutions and social media. The heavy-handed rewriting of the social history of Polish society of the twentieth century is not only limited to painful issues pertaining to Polish–Jewish relations, especially the devastating impact of violent antisemitism on Polish Jews before, during and after the Holocaust. It also encompasses the communist period 1945–89, the first Solidarity movement of the early 1980s, and the entire history of the Third Polish Republic after the fall of communism and the establishment of democracy (1989–2015).⁸

What are the purposes of such practices? The rewriting of the national past is conducted in the name of historical policy (*polityka historyczna*) that, in the eyes of the PiS government, protects Polish nation's dignity, honor and reputation against national dishonor, indignity and the loss of international reputation.⁹ PiS's understanding of the concept of the nation follows the ethnic, collectivist model in which membership is believed to be naturally determined. Therefore, the concept of nation is limited to the ethnic Poles of Catholic origins defined as the "true" members of the Polish nation. PiS government and its core electorate tend to treat ethnic and religious minorities as the guests of that "true" ethnic Catholic Polish nation. Consequently, PiS's historical policy protects mainly the ethnic Catholic Polish collective from being dishonored by those defined as "others" within the nation and outside the nation.

An interlinked major purpose of the PiS's intensive and systematic rewriting of the national past is to create a solid long-standing future – an authoritarian democracy, based on the collectivist, ethnic model of Polishness that would not allow for any political and cultural change, debate and discourse. Of course, a rejection of debates lies in the nature of ethnic collectivist nationalism. Democracy within this type of nationalism is always authoritarian and difficult to change.¹⁰

PiS's government is not the only one in the region to draw on the collectivist ethnic, national, political and cultural traditions in order to rewrite the future along the authoritarian model of democracy. In fact, PiS government has followed in the footsteps of the authoritarian government of Victor Orbán in Hungary, which, after taking over power in 2008, has embarked on replacing the year 1989 – the year of peaceful transformation from communism, with the year 2008 as "the year zero" in the history of post-communist Hungary.¹¹ Similarly, the PiS government has been attempting to replace 1989 with 2015 as the "year zero" in the history of post-communist Poland. In both cases, the bright future of the nations relies on the "full and final" implementation of the ethnic collectivist model of nationalism that does not permit freedom of thought and the proliferation of heterodox ideas about society,¹² but, instead, is driven by exclusionary and purifying policies and practices directed at society.

HISTORICAL POLICY AND THE ISSUE OF ANTISEMITISM AFTER THE RISE TO POWER OF PIS IN 2015

These major political changes have led to the rapidly growing fears for safety amongst Poland's small, (numbering approximately 20 000 members) Jewish community that have undergone a cultural revival in the climate of political openness, inclusiveness and ascending liberal democracy of the 1990s and the early 2000s. Concerns over growing anti-Jewish sentiments and increasing acceptance of these sentiments in public life prompted Jewish organizations in Poland to request a meeting of a special Parliamentary Commission for National and Ethnic Minorities with Mariusz Błaszczak, a leading politician of PiS, who at that time held the position of Minister of Interior Affairs and Administration.¹³ The meeting took place on 25 January 2017 and focused on hateful anti-Jewish pronouncements freely circulated on social media and on the government-controlled TV (Polish public television). It also focused on the increase in the use of anti-Jewish pronouncements among young people, the most easily susceptible group within society to the

language of hate, antisemitism and racism.¹⁴ Verbally violent and vulgar occurrences on the streets, directed at individuals wearing *kippahs* (skullcaps) and the Star of David, both local Polish Jews and Jewish visitors from abroad, are another example of this post-2015 outburst of antisemitic sentiments.¹⁵

In spite of verbal reassurances about zero tolerance for antisemitism and racism voiced by PiS's chief politicians such as Prime Ministers Beata Szydło and Mateusz Morawiecki and President Andrzej Duda, one cannot fail to notice that since the takeover of the government by PiS, some PiS members who hold important public offices freely articulate antisemitic prejudices. In their speeches, interviews and on social media, they portray Jews as a powerful people constituting a threat to the Polish state, to the Polish nation and to Catholicism. For example, on 22 May 2019, in a popular RMF FM radio interview, Tadeusz Cymański, a long-standing member of the Polish parliament representing PiS party, announced:

We should not fool ourselves and pretend to be stupid. We should state clearly that this is a serious problem. Jews and Israel have a powerful influence in the world. We, as Poles cannot simply accept this and be quiet. There is no discussion about returning assets to the Jews.¹⁶

A current member of the National Council of Judiciary, an institution charged with safeguarding independence of Polish courts, Judge Jarosław Dudzicz, has been engaged in circulating different anti-Jewish tropes under the username, jorry123 on online forums. In 2015, Dudzicz wrote that: "Jews are a despicable and grubby nation, and they do not deserve anything."¹⁷ He was then a judge in a district court in Słubice, but Justice Minister Zbigniew Ziobro promoted him two years later to the position of president of the court in Gorzów Wielkopolski.

In March 2019, in the news kiosk inside the Polish parliament in the capital, an issue of a radical right-wing weekly *Tylko Polska* (Only Poland) was on sale, with a headline on a first page, "How to recognize a Jew" based on their last names, personality traits and facial features. The article was accompanied with images of Jan Tomasz Gross and Jacek Leociak, two scholars representing a critical history writing of the Holocaust, as examples of treacherous Poles and Jews.¹⁸

Another major disturbing manifestation of the current outburst of antisemitism in public life one can observe among some representatives of the Catholic Church, belonging to the formation of the Closed Church. This is especially troubling since the Catholic Church is an institution that is still recognized as a moral authority in Polish society. Some of the anti-Jewish tropes, disseminated in sermons, lectures and on social media, by members of both lower and higher clergy, are rooted in the medieval church teaching and have been condemned by the official teaching of the Catholic Church since the Synod of Vatican II in 1963. For example, Tadeusz Guz, Reverend and Professor of Catholic University in Lublin, a well-known university named after the late Pope John Paul II, speaks in his lectures, easily accessible on YouTube, about Jews as a people allegedly practicing ritual murder. Guz, like Father Tadeusz Rydzyk of the "imperium of Radio Maryja" in Toruń, disseminates anti-Jewish tropes as historical truth. Representatives of the Open Church such as the liberal Catholic milieu of the *Więź* journal have condemned Guz's anti-Judaism.¹⁹ However, Guz has received support for his anti-Jewish stance from various circles of supporters of the Closed Church, including the recently established

radical Catholic groups such as an online *Pobudka* (Wake Up Call) created, in 2015, by the conservative Catholic journalist Grzegorz Braun. In his response, Braun accused the *Więź* circle of spreading lies against Rev. Prof. Guz.

Under such circumstances, it is not difficult to infer a positive correlation between the anti-Judaic and anti-Jewish teaching by the Closed Church's clergy and the proliferation of anti-Jewish slogans in social media and anti-Jewish graffiti on the buildings belonging to the Jewish material heritage in Poland. For example, a graffiti that carried a message "the Jews eat children" was placed on the wall in the newly rededicated Jewish cemetery in Tarnów in Southern Poland, a month after the cemetery's rededication in June 2019. Nevertheless, members of the local community of Tarnów cleaned the antisemitic graffiti from the cemetery wall, in a spontaneous act, the next day after its appearance, demonstrating that they do not agree with the Closed Church's teaching about the Jews.²⁰

Another disturbing phenomenon is the publicly open verbalization of anti-Jewish stereotypes amongst some members of the bona fide academic community such as Professor Jacek Bartyzel of the University of Mikołaj Kopernik in Toruń. In February 2019, Bartyzel, a veteran member of anti-communist opposition of the 1980s, put a post on Facebook in which he called for punishment of those ethnic Poles, who according to him were allegedly anti-Polish. In the same post, Bartyzel called the Jews "a snake tribe filled with arrogance, poison and anger" and accused them of being ungrateful and hateful towards the Poles."

Bartyzel's employer, the University of Mikołaj Kopernik, on the recommendation of Rector Professor Andrzej Tretyn, had informed a prosecutor office in Toruń about a possibility of a crime committed by Bartyzel under Polish law, which forbids inciting hatred on the grounds of national, ethnic, racial, or religious differences. However, the prosecutor office did not find Bartyzel's Facebook post antisemitic and discontinued the legal investigation on 18 June 2019.²¹

What is the contemporary antisemitic repertoire in post-communist Poland? Does this antisemitism have new qualities? And who are the chief disseminators of it? A close look at the proliferation of anti-Jewish statements and sentiments reveals that most of the "catchy," potent antisemitic tropes in contemporary Poland belong to the old-new antisemitic ethno-nationalistic repertoire, going back to the late nineteenth century and the first three decades of the twentieth century. Of course, on online forums of radical Polish ethno-nationalistic organizations and groups, one can also come across expressions of the Holocaust denial and what is known in the scholarly literature as the "new antisemitism" portraying Israel as "a Nazi colonial state." However, the outright Holocaust denial, historically rooted in traditional right-wing ideology, has been imported from the West. Similarly, "new antisemitism," rooted in the left-wing ideologies, has also been imported from the West.²²

In the core antisemitic Polish ethno-nationalistic imagery, the Jew remains fundamentally the enemy that represents everything that stands in opposition to "true Polishness": "the Jew is an anti-Pole" and "Jewish values, traditions and culture represent everything that is defined as anti-Polish."²³ That is the legacy of modern Polish nation-building based on the matrix of ethnic collectivist nationalism. Within this matrix the Jew has been the anti-model of true Polishness from the outset. As a result, the image of the Jew as Poland's Threatening Other has penetrated national consciousness in such a way that

anti-Jewish references appear to be “natural” and are a constant source of inspiration to the ethno-nationalistic parties and milieus and resonate among segments of society.

Given the process of the strengthening of the Closed Church over the last decade and the simultaneous decline of the Open Church with the passing away of its chief outspoken representatives such as Father Stanisław Musiał and Archbishop Józef Życiński, one can also see re-emergence of traditional anti-Judaic beliefs such as the abovementioned ritual murder and a claim of Jews committing deicide. But these medieval anti-Judaic beliefs are, as a rule, connected to the modern, central ethno-nationalistic trope of the Jews as the harmful agent to Poland. That connection shows not only the powerful ethno-nationalistic traditions within some segments of the Catholic Church in Poland today, but also a clear theological and moral distance of these segments of the Catholic Church from the teaching of Vatican II and the teaching of the current Pope Francis whose papacy began in 2013. In spite of frequent recalling of the name of the Polish Pope, the late John Paul II, the Closed Church in Poland acts against his teachings on ecumenism and the importance of Christian–Jewish dialogue. The chief authorities of that Church have also refused to take a definite stance on the eradication of pedophilia and sexual scandals within its ranks.

The acquiescence of the PiS government to the participation in the mainstream political and public life of radical exclusivist ethno-nationalistic organizations such as National Revival of Poland (Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski, NOP), National Radical Camp (Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny, ONR), All-Polish Youth and its co-founded National Movement (Ruch Narodowy) among others, has been conducive to the post-2015 outburst, in the public sphere, of the core antisemitic tropes of the Jew as the Threatening Other to Poland. These organizations have not condemned and dissociated themselves from their pre-1939 antisemitic ideological heritage. But, in the post-2015 period, they have been empowered by receiving a platform in the major annual national celebrations of Poland's Day of Independence on 11 November to celebrate the reinstatement of sovereignty after the end of World War I in 1918.²⁴ Furthermore, some leading members of these organizations have been offered important positions in the PiS government and other national institutions. For example, Adam Andruszkiewicz, a former leader of the All-Polish Youth and a former member of the nationalistic faction of the parliamentary club Kukiz'15, has been appointed Vice-Minister of Digitalization in 2018.²⁵

Given the PiS's open acceptance of radical ethno-nationalistic parties and their leaders in politics, and ethno-nationalistic sentiments within the PiS, it is not surprising that, once again, one can easily come across slogans about Jews as the “ungrateful people who want to harm Poland, Poles and Catholicism.” Once again, one can find statements that “Jews are to blame for spoiling the good name of Poland and blackening the country's international reputation”; that Jews have too much control in Polish politics, culture and social media. In the current political climate, once again, the complexes of national inferiority and national superiority are awakened to fight the alleged powerful Jewish conspiracy that aims “to destroy Poles” or “make the Poles insignificant.” Once again, the theme of Judeo-communism is being evoked to claim that “Poles were foremost the victims of the Jews.”²⁶ In the post-Jedwabne debate period, the authors usually employ the concept of Judeo-communism as a powerful strategy to put an end to the ongoing scholarly historical debates about the scope of the complicity of individual Poles and groups of Poles in the killings of Jewish fugitives during the Holocaust and during the eruption of anti-Jewish

violence in the early post-Holocaust period 1945–47.²⁷ This is conducted in the name of what these authors understand as, “defending a good name of Poland.”

CONTEMPORARY POLISH ANTISEMITISM IN A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Characteristically, the anti-Jewish tropes are not static, but have showed a remarkable ability to be cleverly adapted and repackaged to suit particular political, social and cultural needs of their ethno-nationalistic advocates from 1880s till the present. Thirty years after the fall of communism and in spite of the re-emergence and development of inclusive civic Polishness in post-communist society, anti-Jewish tropes from the collectivist ethnic repertoire have been proving dynamic and versatile and capable of awakening powerful emotions among their believers and followers. One can argue that, in “the global post-truth era,” these anti-Jewish tropes could be especially highly influential and dangerous because they proliferate and mutate “without an end” on all social media, and thus, reaching sections of society who might not necessarily have the intellectual skills and historical knowledge to dismiss them as false and as hateful lies. Of course, this development is not only limited to Poland and the post-communist Europe. In the growing anti-liberal and anti-democratic cultures on both sides of the Atlantic,²⁸ we can see the global rise of antisemitism. This development is characterized by “geographical and ideological travels” of different strands of antisemitism of both left-wing and right-wing provenance, and their fusion and mutual feeding on each other. These global antisemitic connections and mutations require an urgent thorough examination through comparative lenses.

Another line of a scholarly inquiry can be a careful study of the contemporary fusion of “global antisemitic tropes” with specific antisemitic historical traditions within different nations. In the Polish case, in the twenty-first century, the exclusivist ethno-nationalistic repertoire of the enemies of their vision of Polishness has been expanding to what are perceived as current threats, such as gender-queer studies, multiculturalism and the LGBT community. But these “new enemies” are often linked to the core traditional enemy, the Jew, who is viewed as responsible for their emergence, as the following title of a 2019 book (Figure 30.1), written by Katarzyna Treter-Sierpińska, illustrates: *Żydzi, gender, multikulti: czyli oszustwo i szajba* (Jews, Gender, Multiculturalism: Meaning Deceit and Madness).²⁹

In August of 2019, a 15-year-old, Jakub Baryła, propagated the connection between LGBT and the Jews in a private radical Catholic television station wRealu.24. Instantly, he became a social media sensation and a “hero” of radical Catholic, ethno-nationalistic circles for his action of attempting to stop, with a cross and a rosary, an LGBT Pride March in Płock on 12 August 2019. In an interview of 13 August 2019, accessible on YouTube, Baryła accused “left-wing parties and the Jews for spreading the LGBT ideology.” He also “accused the Jews for wanting to make Polin out of Poland, for wanting to rob Poland, and for brainwashing children in Polish schools, so the children would not be able to think for themselves.”³⁰ Baryła also blamed socialists, including the national hero, “Marshal J. Piłsudski for committing a murder of hundred thousands of Poles.” One might consider his YouTube interview as an oddity not worth paying attention to, if not for the fact that 48 802 people viewed it within one month. The news about this young

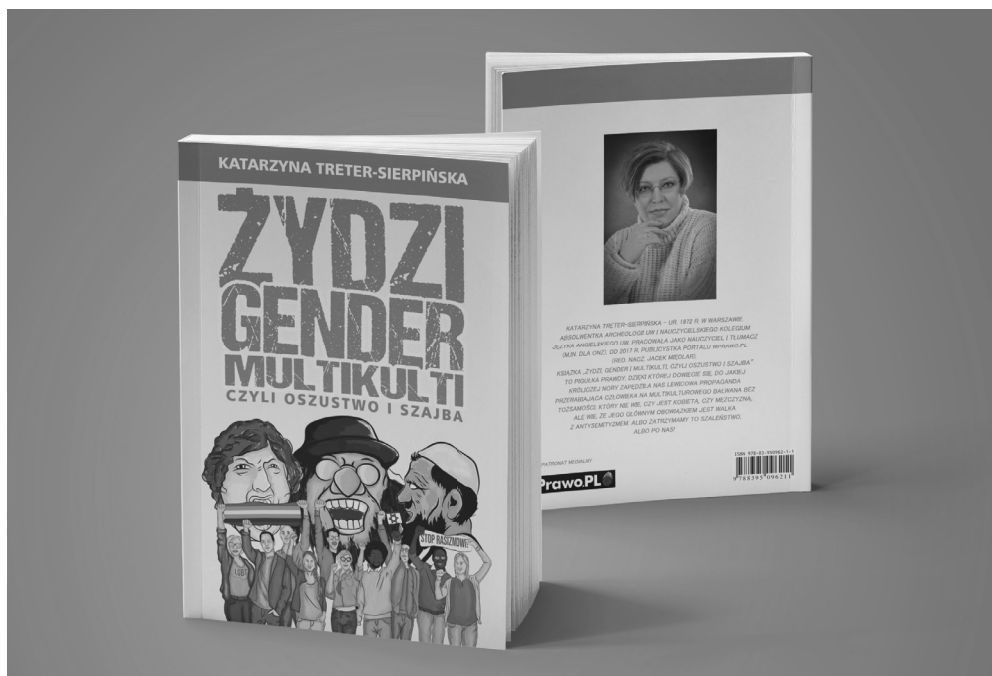


Figure 30.1 Book cover, *Żydzi, gender, multikulti: czyli oszustwo i szajba*, by Katarzyna Treter-Sierpińska (2019)

man even reached international social media in the USA. Some conservative right-wing Catholic Americans who read the news left comments on online forums, in which they also praised him as a hero fighting the “Judeo-globalist homosexual menace.”³¹ This is an illustration of how, in the global Internet-driven world, vicious antisemitic tropes uttered in one national context travel geographically and receive support in a different national context. But this type of antisemitic propaganda that accuses the Jews of being responsible for all avant-garde political, social, cultural and economic trends that appear to constitute a threat to the status quo, is not different from the late nineteenth-century antisemitic perception of the Jews as the creators and agents of opposing ideologies of socialism and communism on the one hand, and capitalism on the other. It was during the late 1880s that the under-developed ethnic Polish middle class, a chief advocate of the exclusivist ethno-nationalistic vision of Polishness, embarked on creating a modern political vision in which Jews as creators of socialism, communism and secularism were understood as a major threat to Polishness. Other exclusivist collectivist ethno-nationalistic and conservative movements in both Eastern and Western Europe of that era also saw in the Jew the inventor and carrier of communism, socialism, capitalism and secularism.³² In addition, the Jew came to personify Western liberalism and individualism, traditions that the collectivist ethno-nationalists were also fearful of and rejected. That collectivist ethnic vision became a political force shaping modern Polish history. From the outset it has stood in clear, strong opposition to building a modern Polish nation on the matrix of inclusive civic nationalism.

In the third decade after the fall of communism, the Jews are also accused of being one of the causes behind troubling global events such as Europe's recent Middle Eastern and North African refugee crisis. For example, in November 2015 in Wrocław during an anti-refugee demonstration organized by the radical ethno-nationalistic organization ONR, Piotr Rybak burned an effigy of an orthodox Jew – a scene that became infamous and condemned in Polish liberal and Western media.³³ However, for committing this act of inciting ethnic and racial hatred, Rybak received a shockingly lenient sentence of three months' imprisonment, instead of the original sentence of ten months. An appeal court approved the lenient sentence and ordered the Wrocław court to reconsider Rybak's request to serve the penalty under house arrest. On 27 January 2019, during the International Holocaust Remembrance Day, Rybak and 45 other radical right-wing activists gathered in front of the former Auschwitz death camp in Oświęcim, shouting "Time to fight Jewry and free Poland from Jews." "We are the true owners of this state."³⁴ He was not imprisoned for organizing a demonstration that clearly aimed to oppose and disrupt the commemoration of the destruction of European Jews. His antisemitic activities went unpunished.

However, today, we cannot simply consider Rybak as an isolated case of an individual holding and expressing radical anti-Jewish convictions, who could be ignored as belonging to the fringes of society. In the post-truth and Internet-driven reality in which we live, individuals such as Rybak or the former Catholic priest, Jacek Międlar, a chief editor of the radical ethno-nationalistic and antisemitic website *wprawo.pl*, have been given a voice on social media that allows them to disseminate anti-Jewish tropes in a powerful hateful manner, to wider circles of Poles, young and old, in Poland and abroad.³⁵ The activities of Rybak and others alike show that in the anti-liberal and authoritarian climate, dissemination of the language of antisemitism and the language of hate towards ethnic and cultural minorities can be done without fear of legal repercussions and moral condemnation by society.

What is also striking about the contemporary spate of antisemitism is not only the explosion of the old/new repertoire of anti-Jewish tropes of the exclusivist ethno-nationalistic type, but also the old/new type ethno-nationalistic justifications for and rationalization of antisemitism as "a national defense against a Jewish aggressor." For example, reading a text by a conservative Catholic journalist, Jan Bodakowski, representing the *prawo.pl* website that supports John Paul II's European Centre of Assistance to Families, one has an impression of reading works authored by Roman Dmowski, the founding father of modern Polish exclusivist ethno-nationalism, from the first decade of the twenty century. Echoing Dmowski, 110 years later, Bodakowski claims that:

Jews do not see that their anti-Polish position, constant attacks on Poland, slander of Poland and Poles on the international arena, lack of appreciation of philosemitism (liking of Jews) within PiS, and baseless and surreal financial demands against Poland, are all responsible for the aversion of Poles towards Jews. This aversion is a natural and healthy response of a Polish victim against aggression on the part of Jews. If Jews would have behaved correctly with honesty and respect towards Poles, the aversion of Poles to Jews would disappear.³⁶

Of course, I do not argue that the current manifestations of anti-Jewish tropes are a confirmation of an inbred, incurable and permanent hatred of Jews by Poles throughout the modern era. The infamous saying of Israel Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's that

Poles “imbibe antisemitism with their mother’s milk,” repeated in February 2019 by the Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs Yisrael Katz,³⁷ should be morally condemned and rejected as a historical fact. Instead, that false saying should be viewed as an emotionally charged accusation voiced by descendants of those Jews of Polish origin who had suffered personally or whose family members were killed, denounced, and physically and verbally abused by individual Poles or groups of Poles amongst civilians or right-wing military units, before, during and in the aftermath of the Holocaust.

THE MATRIX OF POLISH ETHNO-NATIONALISM OF EXCLUSIVIST ETHNIC TYPE OF THE 1880s AND CONTEMPORARY ANTISEMITISM AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

However, what I argue is that the matrix of Polish nationalism of exclusivist ethnic type that crystallized in the first half of the nineteenth century and fully developed and sharpened in the second half of the nineteenth century, has not freed itself from anti-Jewish imagery at any juncture in the history of modern Polish nation-state in the pre-1918 and post-1918–39 independence phases, through the devastating occupation of the Polish state by two totalitarian regimes, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union during World War II, 1939–45, the communist era, 1945–89, and the post-communist period, 1989 to the present. One of the most persistent living legacies of the matrix of exclusivist collectivist ethno-nationalism is the antisemitic conviction that the “Jew is the anti-Pole,” and as such constitutes the central Threatening Other to the national collective.

What is interesting, is that during the post-communist period some of the leading right-wing ethno-nationalistic spokespersons have allegedly called for uprooting antisemitism from radical ethno-nationalistic parties. A good example of this position is the stance of a well-known journalist Rafał Ziemkiewicz, who sees in the pre-1939 *Endecja* of Roman Dmowski the chief ideology for building modern Polish identity in the twenty-first century.³⁸ In his commentary of 3 December 2011, published in the center-right *Rzeczpospolita*, he called for an eradication of antisemitism from contemporary organizations that have their roots in the pre-1939 *Endecja*. However, at the same time, Ziemkiewicz insisted that *Endecja* was not ideologically antisemitic.³⁹ Instead, he argued that the pre-war *Endecja*’s antisemitism was purely based on rivalry over economic resources and professional opportunities with Polish Jews, and was free from racism. He also claimed that contemporary voices that stress the role of ideological antisemitism in *Endecja*’s program are exaggerated. Ziemkiewicz’s stance can be seen as a skillful and subtle apology for antisemitism within *Endecja*’s ideology, its policies and practices during the interwar period. In the light of a massive published scholarly literature about antisemitism within *Endecja* and its offshoot organizations and still ongoing research on the damaging impact of antisemitic pronouncements and actions against Polish Jews and on Polish–Jewish relations, this apologetic position cannot defend itself.⁴⁰

Of course, I would be negligent if I failed to mention that some politicians with an exclusivist ethno-nationalist past such as Michał Tomasz Kamiński, a former member of the radical National Revival of Poland, (NOP) and Roman Giertych, a former chairman of anti-EU League of Polish Families, have transformed themselves politically and moved away from their radical ethno-nationalistic heritage during the last decade. But these

persons' ideological transformation has been based on an individual decision, rather than a collective one.

How can one explain the potency and persistence of the anti-Jewish tropes within the exclusivist ethno-nationalistic repertoire? The anti-Jewish tropes had constituted an intrinsic part of the core exclusivist ethno-nationalistic ideology between 1880s and 1945, and had also been central to the formation of ethno-nationalistic communism in Poland after 1945 that had reached its peak during the so-called Zionist/anti-Jewish purge of 1968. In the ethno-nationalistic-communist version of the late 1970s and the early 1980s, they were employed as a weapon to fight the first Solidarity movement of the 1980s by warning Poles about the Jewish origins of the anti-communist movement and their leaders. In the post-communist era, anti-Jewish tropes continue to be applied in fighting political opponents, especially those representing liberal democracy and left-wing ideologies, as well as progressive segments of the Catholic Church that oppose the Closed Church. They continue to be employed to mobilize varied sections of society, especially the impressionable youth. Appealing to patriotism and spreading fears about "true Poles losing their own country" and about "the war against Polish values and Catholic culture" can be potent in today's world of global uncertainties over climate, economy and culture.

ANTI-JEWISH TROPES AND THEIR CURRENT USES

In the exclusivist ethno-nationalistic ideology, anti-Jewish tropes are difficult if not impossible to reshape, recodify, condemn and deconstruct because historically they have played essential roles in a wide range of political, social and cultural practices such as a social mobilization in times of economic and political crisis and the stigmatization of political, ideological and cultural enemies of all kinds. As a rule, these enemies have not had any connection to real Jews but naming them "a Jew" has meant that they do not belong to the collective and that they cannot be trusted. For that reason, one should not be surprised to observe that in contemporary politics, the most radical groups and individuals on the political right such as Stanisław Michałkiewicz and Janusz Korwin-Mikke, founders and leaders of Unia Polityki Realnej (The Union of Real Politics) make ridiculous accusations that the current PiS government itself represents Jewish interests, and not Polish, and that, in fact, is responsible for "building Judeo-Polonia run by Jews and for the Jews" in the state.⁴¹ Similar strategies were used by radical ethno-nationalists against Marshall Józef Piłsudski in the post-independence period 1918–35, and also against the center-right Sanacja government after the death of Piłsudski in 1935.

In the current culture war in Poland, anti-Jewish tropes are also utilized in the process of purification of the allegedly impure, contaminated ethnic/Catholic Polish nation – the ideal – from the alien threatening elements that today also encompass the LGBT community, gender-queer studies and feminism, and refugees from the Middle East and North Africa. The process of the purification of the core ethnic Polish nation from within from all the "anti-Polish threats in social, cultural and economic life" has taken on an intensive and all-encompassing shape because of PiS's major aspiration of building a post-communist Polish society anew since 2015. Concerning their vision and reasoning, this practice is not different from Endecja's intensive attempts at the purification of the Polish nation in the post-independence phase, 1918–39.⁴²

One of the most morally and intellectually disturbing uses of anti-Jewish tropes within the exclusionary right-wing ethno-nationalistic circles, in contemporary Poland and beyond, is directed against the memorialization of the Holocaust. The current memorialization of the Holocaust, which crystalized in the early 1990s, has been characterized by two key aspects: a culture of apology for the crimes against Jews and a development of a critical approach towards one's national history in relation to the treatment of Jewish communities before, during and after the Holocaust. That memorialization of the Holocaust had arrived in Poland and other Eastern European countries in the 1990s after the fall of communism. Undermining the memorialization of the Holocaust in Poland, of course, goes back to the communist period, especially to the 1960s when the ethno-nationalistic-communist faction, known as the Partisans, in the Polish government began to advocate what is known as "the competition over victimhood in World War II – that ethnic Poles suffered more than the Jews who perished in the Holocaust." The late 1960s was a period in which the Partisans faction within the government fully utilized a skewed, hegemonic narrative of the solidarity of the majority of the Polish nation with the Jews during the Holocaust. The Partisans also fully developed an antisemitic image of an "ungrateful Jew," who spoils the reputation of Poland abroad and tarnishes its good name, instead of being grateful for all the help he had received from ethnic Poles during the Holocaust.

However, today, a broader sinister attack – a culture war against the contemporary wave of the memorialization of the Holocaust has been taking place. This culture war is rooted in the rejection of the Western model of memorialization of the Holocaust as a fundamental event in European history of the twentieth century,⁴³ as well as in a skillful manipulation and exploitation of that Western model of commemoration. It is a disturbing phenomenon for two reasons. First, it reveals that the exclusivist ethno-nationalistic interpretations and explanations of the history of World War II and the Holocaust have departed from the European frames of commemorating the pivotal events of the twentieth century.⁴⁴ Second, it indicates that the future memorialization of the Holocaust based on the Western model of the 1990s might be in danger, as the new antisemitic master narratives about the Holocaust freely circulate in mainstream public media, public debates and historical education.⁴⁵ This is not only an alarming situation in the case of Poland, but also in other post-communist countries in which the local radical ethno-nationalists have embarked on similar strategies of reworking their national history of World War II and the Holocaust in order to emphasize their own victimhood and "collective innocence" with regard to the treatment of their respective Jewish minorities.⁴⁶ The proliferation of antisemitic narratives undermining the memorialization of the Holocaust is not only a serious problem for post-communist Europe, but also for the West, as antisemitic tropes claiming that "Jews exaggerate the number of victims of the Holocaust," that "the Jews created and manipulate the Holocaust" and that "the Jews/Israel are conducting the Holocaust of Palestinians," embedded in the ideologies of the radical left and radical right, permeate not only popular cultures and social medias, but are also freely expressed by some members of academia, politicians, pundits and TV personalities.⁴⁷

In the Polish case, the culture war against the memorialization of the Holocaust has been launched in social media, in popular and scholarly history books and right-wing conservative press such as *Historia do Rzeczy*, *Uwazam ze*, *Wsieci*, and *Fronda*. In that war, anti-Jewish tropes are employed as a strategy to weave a hegemonic, master

narrative of the Holocaust in which the Jewish victims themselves are blamed for the destruction of European Jewry. Anti-Jewish tropes are utilized to explain and interpret the destruction of Polish Jews in a way that Jewish victims are portrayed in a bad light as perpetrators of their own people's murder and selfish people who did not care about their own collective, in contrast to the ethnic Poles who demonstrated collective solidarity during World War II. This is conducted by sinister manipulations and misuses of Jewish sources and secondary scholarly Holocaust literature produced in the West. Here are some illustrations of anti-Jewish tropes from one of the lectures on Polish–Jewish relations by Ewa Kurek, today one of the most radical right-wing historians and recognized Holocaust distorter:⁴⁸ “the Jew as a perpetrator, responsible for the suffering of his own people in the German-occupied Poland,” “the Jew who built the ghettos during the Holocaust to separate himself from the Poles,” “the Jewish parent, who in contrast to the Polish parent, did not want to save but suffocated his children,” and “the Jew, who in contrast to the Pole, only cared about his own life during World War II as he acted according to two Jewish laws, so he did not defend his children and his parents and other members of his community.”⁴⁹

There is no doubt that, in the case of the writings of Ewa Kurek and others alike, the anti-Jewish repertoire is specifically employed in the current ongoing “zero sum war” against the Polish school of critical history writing about the Holocaust. That school focuses on the historical reconstruction, through the lenses of micro-history and regional studies, of the ways in which individuals and segments of Polish society mistreated the Jewish fugitives during the Holocaust.⁵⁰ Another example of a skillful use of anti-Jewish imageries to discredit the Polish critical school of history writing is the writing of Paweł Lisicki, the editor-in-chief of the conservative weekly *Do Rzeczy*. In September 2016, Lisicki presented main fruits of his new book *Krew na naszych rękach?* (Blood on Our Hands?) in an article under the same title.⁵¹ The article and the book are a direct critical response to Jan Tomasz Gross's short, sharp and controversial interview published in the German newspaper *Die Welt* “about Poles killing more Jews than Germans during World War II.”⁵² Contradicting Gross, Lisicki claims that it was only a small group outside the healthy fabric of Polish society that was involved in the killings of Jewish fugitives. But Lisicki does not limit his critique to Gross's works. In fact, the critique of Gross serves him as a first step towards undermining the memorialization of the Holocaust as a foundational event in European history. Lisicki launches an attack on what he calls “the Holocaust religion” that, according to him, is the dominant model of remembering the Holocaust in the West, including the memorialization by Christian churches. In Lisicki's eyes, “the Holocaust religion” is characterized by four dogmas that are responsible for a total distortion of the histories of Poles and other European nations during World War II. These four dogmas lead to the unjust accusation of Poles collectively for the crimes of the Holocaust. The first dogma is of a unique nature of the European destruction of Jews that according to the author undermines the suffering of other victims; the second dogma is about the innocence of Jews as though other victims of totalitarian systems were not equal with Jews; the third dogma is of the participation of the entire humanity in the process; and the fourth dogma is that of the religious Christian roots of antisemitism. Lisicki interprets them as unjust and false.

THE “POLISH HOLOCAUST LAWS” AND PiS’S VISION OF NATIONAL HONOR AND PRIDE

The widely reported rifts between Poland and Israel and Jewish diaspora over the “Polish Holocaust Laws” were marked by an increasing spate of anti-Jewish tropes on social media throughout the first half of 2018, portraying the Jews as the enemy of Poland. The “Polish Holocaust Laws,” which aim at prosecuting anyone who uses the false expression of “Polish concentration camps” and accuses the Polish collective for complicity in the Holocaust, were first stipulated in September 2016 by Zbigniew Ziobro, Minister of Justice and general prosecutor. The laws, including the most controversial Article 55a with the stipulations concerning criminal prosecution, but also the exemption of scholarship and arts from criminal prosecution, were approved by the Polish parliament on 26 January 2018 in the midst of national and international protests.⁵³ Provisions of Article 55a were repealed on 27 July 2018, but the controversies over the laws continue, since under the new amendments, one can be subject to the civil courts for undermining the reputation of the Polish nation, including scholars and artists.⁵⁴ In the eyes of the authors of these laws, their fundamental role has been to protect Polish reputation and guard Polish honor. Reputation and honor are still strongly valued in Polish national history and in the debates about national collective identity. However, the concepts of national reputation and honor, on which these “Polish Holocaust Laws” are based, carry a specific semantic meaning, representing the ethno-nationalistic interpretation of these values, according to which Polish national victimhood and suffering are sacred and cannot be questioned under any circumstances. Thus, questioning of Polish national martyrdom and heroism, especially in the context of World War II, is viewed as an act of dishonoring and insulting Poland and the Polish collective. PiS’s understanding of national reputation and honor, however, stands in a sharp contrast to the semantic meaning of these values as expressed in the civic version of Polishness. In the latter version, critical debates about dark aspects of one’s nation’s past are viewed as fundamental to Polish patriotism: as actions serving Polish honor and preserving Polish reputation.⁵⁵ Thus, one can argue that the “Polish Holocaust Laws” guard historical interpretations of the “ideal, glorious national past” rather than historical truth. In that “ideal glorious national past,” there is no room for narratives about antisemitic violence and its devastating impact on Polish Jews and also on those ethnic Catholic Poles, whom we can call, genuine selfless rescuers of Jews, who for their rescue action were stigmatized as traitors of Poland and violently mistreated by their co-citizens during and after the Holocaust.⁵⁶ This is not only a problem of memory laws in Poland, but also in other post-communist countries.⁵⁷

THE OUTBURST OF CONTEMPORARY ANTISEMITISM AND POLISH JEWS’ HEIRLESS PROPERTY RESTITUTION

The protracted, long-standing and unresolved discussions about Polish Jews’ heirless property restitutions between the Polish government and the World Jewish Restitution organizations, reached a new crisis in the spring of 2018 when the American President Donald Trump signed Act S.477 on 9 May 2018, known as the Justice for Uncompensated Survivors Today (JUST) Act.⁵⁸ Poland is the only country in Europe that has not passed

legislation to compensate former owners for assets seized in the upheavals of twentieth-century European history. Since the end of the communist period in 1989, none of the Polish governments have offered to resolve the issue, even in symbolic terms. In May 2019, the current Polish Prime Minister, Mateusz Morawiecki, compared the restitution to Jews as akin to the posthumous Nazi victory and emphasized that Poland was the greatest victim of the war.⁵⁹ The enacting of Act S.477 has triggered the most vicious antisemitic campaign among the radical right-wing ethno-nationalistic parties and movements under the banner of the *Konfederacja* (Confederation), which also claims that “Jews rule over the PiS government.” In public protests organized by *Konfederacja* in Poland and the USA, one could register phrases such as “This is Poland, not Polin,” and the depiction of the United States as “Usrael,” a state that is, in the eyes of *Konfederacja*, controlled by the Jewish state, Israel. The anti-Jewish trope of “the Jew as the calculating, Threatening Other seeking to rule and destroy Poland” was also fully utilized in the *Konfederacja*’s demonstrations.⁶⁰ One can suggest that in the *Konfederacja*’s spate of hate language, one might also detect the influence of thinking and reasoning about ownership rooted in the pre-1939 *Endecja*’s notion about Poles as the rightful, true owners of Poland who had been unjustly robbed by Jews.

In the early 2000s, during the period in which inclusive civic nationalism had reached its peak, progressive inclusive references to members of Polish Jewish community, such as “Polish Jews,” “our Polish co-citizens,” “our co-patriots,” began to feature in the mainstream political vocabulary, public discourse and historical education. However, in the post-2015 period, they have been exchanged for the emotionally “cold” and exclusionary semantic phrase, “the Jews,” as the collectivist, ethnic nationalism has won the upper hand over politics and increased its influence over culture, education and public life in general.

IS THE ERADICATION OF THE ANTI-JEWISH TROPES POSSIBLE?

Today, we can only express a hope that perhaps one day in the future, the deconstruction of the anti-Jewish tropes of the exclusivist ethno-nationalistic provenance will be possible. But that deconstruction could only happen when anti-Jewish tropes are challenged systematically, day by day, in all areas of Polish politics and culture, public memory, and historical education both on local and national levels. An important cultural precondition for the deconstruction of the myth of the Jew as Poland’s Threatening Other is providing Poles with a nuanced set of narratives of their collective past in such a way that would see themselves both as people with positive aspects of their collective history that they can be proud of, as well as people whose history has also been punctured by dark aspects of their national past in relation to the Jews and members of other ethnic, national and cultural communities. Achieving this delicate balance might not be possible if the current and future debates about Polishness are framed between two extreme poles – between the false concept of “a healthy Polish society without any blemishes” and an equally skewed concept of “a completely unhealthy Polish society.” The challenging process of the deconstruction of anti-Jewish tropes could only happen under the conditions in which the inclusive, civic model of Polish national identity would firmly re-establish

itself as a dominant and lasting one for many decades. Another prerequisite is the internal transformation of ethno-nationalistic matrix of Polishness, and the eradication of its anti-Jewish heritage from within. However, this might require a new “year zero” in the history of Polish ethnic nationalism in the twenty-first century.

NOTES

1. Michlic (2006), p. 279.
2. See Gross (2001). Published in Polish as Jan T. Gross, *Sąsiedzi: Historia zagłady żydowskiego miasteczka* (Pogranicze, 2000).
3. On the memory of the Holocaust in post-communist Poland between 1989 and 2010, see, for example, Michlic and Melchior (2013); and Michlic (2016) in Pakier and Wawrzyniak, pp. 115–30.
4. Michlic (2006), p. 279.
5. See, for example, the call of four mayors of Warsaw, Poznań, Gdańsk and Białystok of June 2018, “Apel prezydentów miast: zero tolerancji dla rasizmu, antysemityzmu, i innych form nienawiści” [The call of mayors of cities: zero tolerance for racism, antisemitism and other forms of hate], published in *Więź*, 28 June 2018, <http://wiesz.com.pl/2018/06/28/apel-prezydentow-miast-zero-tolerancji-dla-rasizmu-antysemityzmu-i-innych-form-nienawisci/> (accessed 1 September 2019).
6. On the memory activism in the area of Polish–Jewish relations and the memorialization of the Holocaust, see Holc (2018).
7. On strategies of eradicating and suppressing the dark history of Polish–Jewish relations in the post-2015 PiS era, see Michlic (2017), pp. 296–301.
8. On contested positions of the current historical policy of PiS, see Jan Kubik, “Polityka historyczna nie zadziała” [Historical policy will not work], *Kultura Liberalna*, 26 July 2016, <http://kulturaliberalna.pl/2016/07/26/jan-kubik-wywiad-adam-puchejda-polityka-historyczna> (accessed 4 June 2017); see also Stobiecki (2018).
9. For critical studies of the first phase of *polityka historyczna* during the first PiS government period (2005–07) and its impact on the Polish state and Polish historical culture, see Smolar (2008) in Kosiewski; Tokarska-Bakir (2008); and Wolff-Powęska (2007).
10. On ethnic collectivist nationalism and its nature, see the illuminating work by Liah Greenfeld (2019), pp. 85–90.
11. On the efforts of Victor Orbán’s authoritarian government to replace the liberal democracy of 1989 with the illiberal vision of 2008, see Holly Case (2017, 13 June), “Now who’s living truth?” *Eurozine*, <https://www.eurozine.com/nov-whos-living-in-truth/> (accessed 15 September 2019).
12. Greenfeld (2019), p. 87.
13. See the minutes of 25 January 2017 of the Meeting of the Parliamentary Commission for National and Ethnic Minorities, No. 31, <http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/zapisy8.nsf/0/D5627F9D31ED84ABC12580BF004EDF82/%24File/0148908.pdf> (accessed 1 September 2019).
14. For the detailed results of quantitative studies of antisemitism in Polish society in 2009, 2013 and 2017, see the reports of the Center for Research on Prejudice at Warsaw University, <http://cbu.psychologia.pl/pl/projekty> (accessed August 2019); and Winiewski et al. (2017).
15. See, for example, Okun (an American traveler to Poland), “Confronting antisemitism in Poland today: a memoir,” *Libertarianism*, 29 January, 2019, <https://www.libertarianism.org/columns/confronting-antisemitism-in-poland-today-memoir> (accessed 1 September 2019).
16. RMF FM radio interview with Tadeusz Cymański of 22 May 2019. Cited in Jakub Szymczak, “Żydzi mają potężne wpływy na świecie”. Jowialny wujek Cymański ‘nie udaje Greka’. Obraża dwa narody” [“Jews have a huge influence over the world”. A jolly uncle Cymański is not “playing possum”. He abuses two nations]. *Oko.press*, <https://oko.press/zydzi-maja-poteczne-wplywy-na-swiecie-jowialny-wujek-cymanski-nie-udaje-greka-obraza-dwa-narody/> (accessed 12 September 2019).
17. The antisemitic pronouncements of Judge Jarosław Dudzicz were condemned by the Israeli Embassy in Warsaw and reported in the Israeli press on 13 September 2019: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/polish-judge-called-jews-a-despicable-filthy-nation-in-online-forum/> (accessed 14 September 2019). On the antisemitic utterances by Jarosław Dudzicz, see a short report, “Sędzia Dudzicz miał pisać o Żydach: parszywy, podły naród. Rzecznik KRS: Zdziwienie i niesmak” [Judge Dudzicz was writing about the Jews: a grubby and despicable nation. The spokesman for the National Registry of Courts KRS is surprised and disgusted]. *Gazeta.pl*, 12 September 2019, <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/7,114883,25185818,sedzia-dudzicz-mial-pisac-o-zydach-parszywy-narod-podly-narod.html?fbclid=IwAR>

- 233CM1FLmoGHVPYfcrYdpRxKL7LQcIerKrtBIDszVpV6esy6PilqVUQU#a=362&c=159&s=BoxNewsLink (accessed 2 September 2019).
18. See the condemnatory reaction of the Polish political opposition to the circulation of the antisemitic weekly *Tylko Polska* (Only Poland) in the kiosk inside the Polish parliament, <https://polskatimes.pl/jak-rozpoznać-żydka-tygodnik-tylko-polska-z-antysemickimi-artykulami-w-sejmowym-kiosku-jest-reakcja-kancelarii-sejmu/ar/13962536> (accessed 9 September 2019).
 19. See Rev. Prof. Tadeusz Guz, “Faktu żydowskich mordów rytualnych nie da się wyznać” [The fact of Jewish ritual murder cannot be denied], a 40-minute lecture available on YouTube with 88 756 likes on 9 September 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4Ww3arZe94> (accessed 29 August 2019), but no longer available. Apparently, 3608 individuals signed an online antisemitic petition in defense of Rev. Prof. Tadeusz Guz on the website titled CitizenGO: <https://www.citizen.go.org/pl/166776-zlosc-zydowska-przeciw-bogu-i-kaplanom-podpisz-w-obronie-ksprof-tadeusza-guza> (accessed 9 September 2019). See also another letter in defense of Rev. Prof. Tadeusz Guz: Grzegorz Braun, “Słowo w obronie ks. prof. Tadeusza Guza – podpisz list otwarty na stronie” [A word in defense of Rev. Prof. Tadeusz Guz] at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yK5ngOsSfC4> (accessed 9 September 2019). For condemnations of the teaching of Rev. Prof. Tadeusz Guz, by the Polish Council of Jews and Christians of 13 November 2018, see the protest, “Ksiądz profesor wykląda o żydowskich mordach rytualnych. List Polskiej Rady Chrześcijan i Żydów” [Rev. Prof. is lecturing about Jewish ritual murder. A letter from the Polish Council of Christian and Jews], of 13 November 2018, published in *Więź* on 16 November 2018, <http://wiesz.com.pl/2018/11/16/ksiadz-profesor-wyklada-o-zydowskich-mordach-rytualnych-list-polskiej-rady-chrzciscijan-i-zydow> (accessed 29 August 2019).
 20. Katarzyna Markusz, “Historic Jewish cemetery in Poland vandalized a month after rededication,” *The Times of Israel*, 22 July 2019, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/historic-jewish-cemetery-in-poland-vandalized-a-month-after-rededication/> (accessed 29 August 2019).
 21. For the discussion of Jacek Bartyzel’s legal case, see, Adam Leszczyński, “Bartyzel: Żydzi to ‘zmijowe plemię pełne jadu’.” Prokuratura: to dozwolona krytyka i komentarz do aktualnych wydarzeń” [Bartyzel states: Jews are a snake tribe filled with poison. Prosecutor says: this is an acceptable critique and a commentary on current affairs], 20 June 2019, *Oko.press*, <https://oko.press/bartyzel-zydzi-to-zmijowe-plemie-pelne-jadu-prokuratura-to-dozwolona-krytyka-i-komentarz-do-aktualnych-wydarzen/> (accessed 8 August 2019). Bartyzel removed the antisemitic comment from his Facebook page.
 22. On new complex developments of antisemitism, including Holocaust denial, Holocaust fatigue and new antisemitism in the twenty-first century, see, for example, Birenbaum (2008) and Rosenfeld (2015).
 23. Similar interpretations about the central role of the antisemitic tropes of the Jew as the Threatening Other to Poland and the Jew as standing in opposition to everything Polish have been made by Krzywiac (2017), pp. 9–19; Cała (2012), especially the introduction and conclusions; and Ledder (2014), pp. 48–95.
 24. For the coverage of the radical ethno-nationalistic organizations marches in Warsaw to celebrate Poland’s Day of Independence of 11 November, see Matthew Day, “Nationalist protesters disrupt Poland Independence Day events,” CNN, 12 November 2017, <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/11/12/europe/poland-warsaw-nationalist-march/index.html> (accessed 8 September 2019); and Megan Specia, “Nationalist march dominates Poland’s Independence Day,” *The New York Times*, 11 November 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/11/world/europe/poland-nationalist-march.html> (accessed 8 September 2019).
 25. See the report on the appointment of Adam Andruszkiewicz to the position of Vice-Minister of Digitalization in the Polish government: “Narodowiec, wszechpolak, zafascynowany Orbánem. Nowy wiceminister Andruszkiewicz” [A nationalist All-Polish, fascinated by Orbán. New Deputy Minister Andruszkiewicz], *TVN24.pl*, 2 January 2019 (accessed 4 September 2019).
 26. See, for example, the writings of Aldona Zaorska, a chief editor of a monthly *Zakazana Historia* (Forbidden History) created in 2013, “Jak Żydzi mordowali Polaków. Bezplatna lekcja historii, dedykowana antypolonitom” [How Jews murdered Poles. Free of charge history lesson for anti-Poles], *Warszawska Gazeta*, No. 8, 22 February 2019, pp. 32–3. The circulation of *Warszawska Gazeta* numbers 1 000 000 copies. The article can also be found on the radical right-wing website Salon24, at <https://www.salon24.pl/u/konfederat1000/965766,jak-zydzi-mordowali-polakow-bezplatna-lekcja-historii-dedykowana-antypolonitom-aldona-zaorska> (accessed 5 September 2019).
 27. See, for example, Marcin Halaś, “Kroniki tygodniowe: ziarna i plewy” [Weekly chronicles: the wheat and the chaff], *Warszawska Gazeta*, No. 8, 22 February 2019, p. 4.
 28. On the growth of antisemitic incidents in the USA, see the podcast by Jonathan Sarna, “The rise of antisemitism in the USA,” at https://soundcloud.com/valleybeitmidrash/the-rise-of-anti-semitism-in-america?fbclid=IwAR26y2nMUGOXEUQp2wwDDnF7nJ_iW_ArtKdN44Au9r3018XOfByYz2mhbs (accessed 24 September 2019).
 29. The author, Katarzyna Treter-Sierpińska, born in 1972, presents herself as a former student of archeology and a translator and teacher of English at the English-language college at the University of Warsaw

- and a publicist for *wpravo.pl*: <https://sklep-wpravo.pl/pl/p/Zydzi%2C-gender%2C-multikulti%2C-czyli-oszustwo-i-szajba-K.-Treter-Sierpinska/130> (accessed 9 September 2019).
30. See the interview with Jakub Baryła on YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t9E6FSTQ3AM> (accessed 9 September 2019).
 31. See some responses such as “God bless this young man standing against the Judeo-globalist homosexual menace invading his nation” (by Jenny Katona) to the blog of Michael W. Chapman, Catholic Polish Teen, Christian Cross Held High, Defies LGBT Pride March, *CNS News*, 13 August 2019, <https://www.cnsnews.com/blog/michael-w-chapman/catholic-polish-teen-christian-cross-held-high-defies-lgbt-parade> (accessed 18 August 2019).
 32. One can trace the origins of these types of anti-Jewish sentiments to the Romantic period of the first half of the nineteenth century, during which the German philosophers were the first to create the collectivist ethnic vision of modern nation-building for Germany. That vision became a political force shaping German history during the rise of modern political nationalism in the late nineteenth century and took on the shape of murderous national socialism in the post-World War I period. On romantic roots of ethnic collectivist nationalism, see Greenfeld (2019), pp. 100–105.
 33. After the demonstration in Wrocław of November 2015 that caused a shock and condemnation worldwide, Piotr Robak announced that he would take Jewish leaders of the Wrocław community to court for calling him an antisemite. See, for example, a concise report, “Pole who burned effigy of Jew will sue those who called him antisemitic,” *Jewish News*, 8 September 2017, <https://jewishnews.timesofisrael.com/pole-who-burned-effigy-jew-to-sue-those-who-called-him-anti-semitic/> (accessed 7 September 2019).
 34. For the detailed report about Rybak’s antisemitic manifestation in front of the Auschwitz Concentration and Death Complex on 27 January 2019, see Dominika Sitnicka, “‘Antysemicki sabat pod samym Obozem’. Policja i urzędnicy byli obojętni – relacja kontrmanifestantów” [“Anti-Semitic Sabbath just outside the Camp’. Police and officials were indifferent – the account of counter-demonstrators,” *OKO.press*, 28 January 2019, <https://oko.press/antysemicki-sabat-pod-samym-oboziem-policja-i-urzednicy-byli-obojetni-relacja-kontrmanifestantow/> (accessed 7 September 2019); and by the same author, “Znieważenie Pomnika Zagłady i nielegalna manifestacja. Muzeum Auschwitz złoży zawiadomienie do prokuratury” [Insult at the Monument of Destruction and an illegal demonstration. The Auschwitz Museum is going to notify a prosecutor]. *OKO.press*, 29 January 2019, <https://oko.press/zniewazenie-pomnika-zaglady-i-nielegalna-manifestacja-muzeum-auschwitz-zlozy-zawiadomienie-do-prokuratury/> (accessed 7 September 2019).
 35. On the chief prosecutor’s leniency towards Rybak and Międlar’s antisemitic activities and the dangers to the Polish state caused by this unprecedented legal situation, see, for example, Jarosław Makowski, “Polska. Dobry kraj dla nacjonalistów i antysemitów” [Poland. A good country for nationalists and antisemites], *Newsweek*, 9 September 2017, <https://www.newsweek.pl/opinie/polska-dobry-kraj-dla-nacjonalistow-i-antysemitow/5qjctv9> (accessed 7 September 2019).
 36. Jan Bodakowski, “Dla groteskowej opozycji problemem jest rzekomy straszny antysemityzm w Polsce,” *Prawy.pl*, 14 December 2018, <https://prawy.pl/100323-dla-groteskowej-opozycji-problemem-jest-rzekomy-straszny-antysemityzm-w-polsce/> (accessed 22 July 2019).
 37. The condemnatory reactions against the infamous statement of Yisrael Katz, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Israel, also came from the small Polish-Jewish community. See, for example, the news report by Toi Staff and Agencies, “Polish Jewish leaders say Katz Holocaust comments ‘damage’ their community,” *The Times of Israel*, 18 February 2019, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/polish-jewish-leaders-say-katz-holocaust-comments-damage-their-community/> (accessed 5 September 2019).
 38. Rafał Ziemkiewicz, “Antysemici, wón z prawicy” [Anti-Semites, get away from the right-wing movement], a commentary published in *Rzeczpospolita*, 3 December 2011, <https://www.rp.pl/artykul/764045-Antysemici--won-z-prawicy.html> (accessed 5 September 2019).
 39. See Dawid Wildstein’s critical article about Rafał Ziemkiewicz’s apologetics over Endecja’s antisemitism during his book launch in Szczecin in January 2013, reported in Łukasz Głombicki, “Antysemityzm? Wildstein krytykuje Ziemkiewicza za ostre słowa. Na FB burza” [Anti-Semitism? Wildstein criticizes Ziemkiewicz for his sharp words. A storm on the FB], *TOKFM*, 15 January 2013, http://www.tokfm.pl/Tokfm/1,103085,13223078,Antysemityzm__Wildstein_krytykuje_Ziemkiewicza_za.html (accessed 5 September 2019).
 40. The literature on antisemitism within Endecja and its offshoot radical organizations is vast and is still growing. Among the most recent important studies see, for example, Krzywiec (2017), pp. 9–19 and Cała (2012).
 41. See, for example, a short video report by Superstacja, 19 January 2019 on the impact on some impoverished members of Polish society of extreme radical antisemitic propaganda promoting an idea that Poland today is ruled by Jews, “POLSKĄ RZĄDZĄ ŻYDZI?” [JEWS RULE OVER POLAND], <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J6GAOuEHnk4> (accessed 9 September 2019).

42. On the purification of the Polish nation from within during the short post-independence phase, 1918–39, see Michlic (2006), pp. 96–103.
43. On the Holocaust as a fundamental event in European political cultures, see, for example, Diner (2003), pp. 36–44; and Karlsson (2003), p. 18.
44. According to the historian Timothy Snyder, the current PiS vision of World War II is in “an implicit alliance with Russian memory politics.” See Timothy Snyder, “Poland vs. history,” *The New York Review of Books*, 3 May 2016, <https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2016/05/03/poland-vs-history-museum-gdansk/> (accessed 15 September 2019).
45. For a systematic study of the developments of the Western model of memorialization of the Holocaust in post-communist Europe between the 1980s and 2010, see Himka and Michlic (2013).
46. On the problem of whitewashing the Holocaust in post-communist Europe in the post-2015 period, see Rozett (2019).
47. On the problem of undermining the memorialization of the Holocaust in Western Europe, see, for example, the engaging book by Frederic Raphael (2015), pp. 140–55.
48. Barbara Finkelstein, “Why was historian who blames Jews for complicity with Nazis considered for humanitarian prize?,” *Forward*, 16 April 2018, <https://forward.com/yiddish/398754/why-was-historian-who-blames-jews-for-complicity-with-nazis-considered-for/> (accessed 15 September 2019); and Armin Rosen, “How Ewa Kurek, the favorite historian of the Polish far right, promotes her distorted account of the Holocaust,” *Tablet*, 3 May 2018, <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/ewa-kurek-favorite-historian-of-the-polish-far-right> (accessed 15 September 2019).
49. Ewa Kurek’s lecture on Polish–Jewish relations, of 15 June 2019, in the Museum of Coins and Medals named after John Paul II in Częstochowa, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q5t2Q-EPzcQ> (accessed 1 September 2019). Ewa Kurek is also an author of a new book (2018) about the Jedwabne pogrom of 10 July 1941, *Jedwabne. Anatomia kłamstwa. Biała księga cenzury i bezprawia rządów 2001–2017 wobec badań historycznych* [Jedwabne. An Anatomy of Lies. The White Book of Censorship and Unlawfulness of the Governments 2001–2017]. Kurek is a supporter of the radical ethno-nationalistic party Konfederacja (Confederation).
50. The latest examples of the critical history writings through the lenses of micro-history and regional studies are Engelking and Grabowski (2010). “*Żydów łamiących prawo należy karać śmiercią!*” “*Przestępczość Żydów w Warszawie 1939–1942* [Night Without an End: The Fate of Jews in Selected Counties of Occupied Poland]. Warsaw: Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów; idem, eds., (2018). *Dalej jest noc: losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski* [Night without End: The Fate of Jews in Selected Counties of Occupied Poland] Warsaw: Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów; and Grabowski Jan, (2020). Na posterunku: Udział polskiej policji granatowej i kryminalnej w Zagładzie Żydów [At the police station: The participation of the Blue and criminal police in the Holocaust] (Warsaw, Wydawnictwo Czarne).
51. See Lisicki (2016), *Krew na naszych rękach?* [Blood on our hands?], <http://dorzeczy.pl/id/10276/Krew-na-naszach-rekach-premiera-nowej-ksiazki-Pawla-Lisickiego.html> (accessed 7 June 2017).
52. Jan Tomasz Gross, “Welche Schuld könnte die Polen treffen?” *Die Welt*, 15 September 2015, <https://www.welt.de/debatte/article146443861/Welche-Schuld-koennte-die-Polen-treffen.html> (accessed 10 August 2019).
53. See, for example, the critical voice of the lawyer and philosopher Jan Woleński, “Nowela ustawy o IPN jest nieprecyzyjna i niedbale zredagowana” [The amendment of the act on the IPN is imprecise and sloppily edited], *Polityka*, 5 February 2018, <https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/kraj/1736766,1,nowela-ustawy-o-ipn-jest-nieprecyzyjna-iniedbale-zredagowana.read> (accessed 25 June 2018).
54. *Ustawa z dnia 27 czerwca 2018 r. o zmianie ustawy o Instytucie Pamięci Narodowej – Komisji Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu oraz ustawy o odpowiedzialności podmiotów zbiorowych za czyny zabronione pod groźbą kary* [Act of 27 June 2018 on changes of the act on the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation and of the act on the responsibility of collective entities for acts prohibited under penalty], [orka.sejm.gov.pl/opinie8.nsf/nazwa/2663_u/\\$file/2663_u.pdf](http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/opinie8.nsf/nazwa/2663_u/$file/2663_u.pdf) (accessed 25 August 2018).
55. See, for example, Michnik (2019).
56. On the stigmatization of genuine selfless rescuers within their local communities, see, for example, Michlic (2011, 2015).
57. On the dilemmas of memory laws in both liberal societies and authoritarian states and the issues of whitewashing past crimes by memory laws, see Kuposov (2018).
58. See, for example, the report, Vanessa Gera and Monika Scisłowska, “Trump signs Holocaust property law that has angered Poland,” *AP News*, 10 May 2018, <https://www.apnews.com/a96444a4f11a44b0907ef610dd6121f5> (accessed 15 September 2019). See also a statement of 10 May 2018, by a Polish-American community protesting about Act. 477, <https://stopacthr1226.org/statement-on-president-trumps-decision-to-sign-act-s-447/> (accessed 15 September 2019).

59. For Jewish reactions in the country and abroad to the Mateusz Morawiecki's statement on the restitution of Jewish property as akin to posthumous Nazi victory, see, for example, Tovah Lazaroff and Hagay Hacoheh, "Polish PM: restitution to Jews akin to posthumous Nazi victory," *The Jerusalem Post*, 20 May 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Polish-prime-minister-equates-returning-Jewish-property-to-Nazi-victory-590112> (accessed 15 September 2019); and Katarzyna Markusz, "Jewish group warns that Polish debate over property claims has turned antisemitic," *The Jerusalem Post*, 24 May 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/Diaspora/Jewish-group-warns-Polish-debate-over-property-claims-turned-antisemitic-590559> (accessed 20 September 2019).
60. The demonstrations of the Konfederacja were reported worldwide; see, for example, James Shotter, "Polish nationalists protest at law on restitution of Jewish property," *Financial Times*, 12 May 2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/c47fcb02-749d-11e9-bbad-7c18c0ea0201> (accessed 15 September 2019). See also, Anna Mierzyńska, "Żydzi i USA największymi wrogami dla polskich radykałów. Antyamerykańska narracja problemem PiS" [Jews and the United States the chief enemies of the Polish radicals. Anti-American narrative as a problem for PiS], *OKO.press*, 25 April 2019, <https://oko.press/zydzi-i-usa-najwiekszymi-wrogami-dla-polskich-radykalow-antyamerykanska-narracja-problemem-pis/> (accessed 15 September 2019).

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