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A report from ADL International Affairs

Choosing Antisemitism

Instrumentalization and Tolerance of Antisemitism
in Contemporary European Politics.



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The IA staff helps raise these international issues with the U.S. and foreign governments and works with partners around the world to provide research and analysis, programs and resources to fight antisemitism, extremism, hate crimes and cyberhate. With a seasoned staff of international affairs experts, ADL's IA division is one of the world's foremost authorities in combatting all forms of hate globally.

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Antisemitism in Contemporary European Politics.

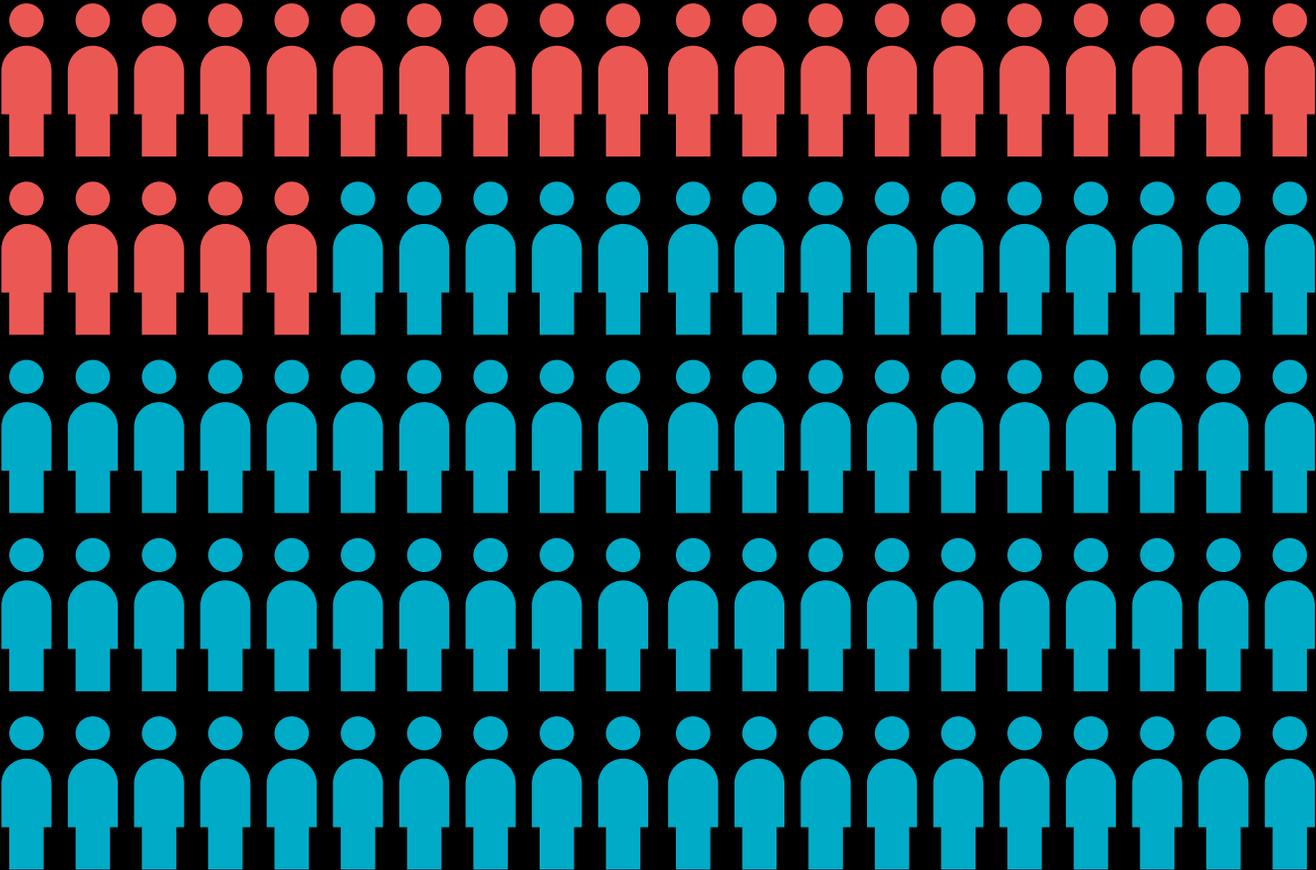


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1 in 4 Europeans harbor antisemitic attitudes



Choosing Antisemitism: Instrumentalization and Tolerance of Antisemitism in Contemporary European Politics

Overt state-sponsored antisemitism ended in Europe with the fall of the Soviet Union. Antisemitic attitudes, however, remain prevalent in Europe, and some European political actors have instrumentalized antisemitism for political gain. This report examines both the conscious use of antisemitism in European politics and the calculated tolerance of antisemitism, demonstrating that the oldest hatred remains a modern political tool.

Unlike antisemitic incidents of violence, vandalism, or insults, the political use of antisemitism does not target Jews themselves. Instead, antisemitic propaganda targets domestic or foreign audiences as a means of gaining political support. Demonstrating tolerance for antisemitism is another tactic of attracting political support. Polling data shows that these strategies have a rational basis. The 2019 ADL Global 100: An Index of Antisemitism® found that one in four Europeans polled harbored antisemitic beliefs.

Antisemitic propaganda has as its goal to energize and attract followers. Antisemitic propaganda is also used to tarnish political opponents in the eyes of a specific audience by intimating that someone is Jewish, supportive of Jewish causes or of the State of Israel. Other times, political opponents are slandered as antisemites or Nazis to diminish their reputations with specific audiences. Each of these techniques will be covered in this report, which focuses on the conscious choice of instrumentalizing or tolerating antisemitism for political gain. Antisemitic rhetoric by political actors as an indicator of bias is a much broader topic, and this report does not cover those instances.

The broad categories of the politicization of antisemitism include (1) politically motivated accusations of, or uses of, antisemitism against political opponents; (2) political appeals to antisemitic beliefs among the public, including the conspiracy theories about Jewish control of government, economy, media; and (3) tolerance of antisemitism within political movements as a strategy for increasing popular support. This list not exhaustive of the political instrumentalization of antisemitism, but this report provides illustrative examples from recent years in these broad categories.

Why is this report important? While violent antisemitic attacks receive wide publicity – and rightly so – the politicization of antisemitism can also severely impact Jewish communities. The British Jewish community provides a compelling example.

In January 2015, 11% of British Jews were considering emigrating, according to a poll by the UK's Jewish Chronicle. That survey was conducted before Jeremy Corbyn, widely regarded within the British Jewish community as an antisemite himself, was even a leadership candidate for the Labour party. In September 2018, after antisemitism had become a serious problem in the Labour party under Corbyn, the Jewish Chronicle poll found that 39% of British Jews were considering emigrating. And in an October 2019 poll by the UK's Jewish Leadership Council, just prior to the UK General Election, 47% of British Jews said they would "seriously consider" leaving the UK if Jeremy Corbyn were to win the election.

Had Jeremy Corbyn won, leading a major party widely recognized as tolerating antisemitism among its members, and had even 30% of British Jews emigrated as a result of that single event, that number of roughly 90,000 Jews would have been similar to the total of all the French Jews who left France over the past 20 years.

The sections below are select examples of the different ways in which antisemitism has been instrumentalized for political gain by various actors. The purposes and tactics vary substantially, but have the common element of politicizing antisemitism:

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- The Russian government instrumentalized antisemitism in the forms of propaganda and "false flag" operations to influence domestic and foreign public opinion in its conflict with Ukraine.
 - Polish political campaigns used overt antisemitic rhetoric during elections to win votes.
 - The Hungarian government used coded antisemitism in political campaigns against EU migration policies.
 - The UK Labour party consciously tolerated antisemitism to widen its political support from far-left radicals.
 - Ukrainian nationalists glorified World War II era fighters to promote nationalist narratives, while trivializing their involvement in the Holocaust.
 - The far-right Alternative for Germany party trivialized the Holocaust as part of their appeal to "Holocaust fatigue" among German voters.
-

Other political actors have engaged in similar acts of politicization, and their absence from this report is not indicative of any assessment. The cases below are simply the most blatant examples of the types of politicization to be highlighted.

Russian propaganda and “false flag” operations

Since Ukraine’s 2013-14 “Revolution of Dignity,” which overthrew Ukraine’s pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich, Russia has engaged in a disinformation campaign against Ukraine, which includes concocted, unfounded, or exaggerated accusations of antisemitism, intended for various audiences, including ethnic Russians in Ukraine, Western supporters of Ukraine, and the domestic Russian population.

Russian President Vladimir Putin stated shortly after Yanukovich’s ouster that he was concerned by what he described as a “rampage of reactionary forces, nationalist and anti-Semitic forces” in Ukraine.¹ After Russian forces occupied the Crimea region in Ukraine and then annexed it to Russia, Putin again raised the specter of antisemitism, claiming that Kyiv was under the control of “nationalists, neo-Nazis, Russophobes and anti-Semites.”²

Russia’s characterization of Ukraine as a fascist, xenophobic and anti-Semitic state was starkly at odds with reality. While an antisemitic party, Svoboda, had a small role in the initial post-Yanukovich government, its official role and political support were short-lived. Jews were not repressed and very few genuine antisemitic incidents occurred. In fact, some of the most powerful figures in Ukrainian politics since 2014 have been Jews, including Dnipropetrovsk Regional Governor Ihor Kolomoisky (2014-2015), Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman (2016-2019) and President Volodymyr Zelensky (2019-present).

Nevertheless, Russian media outlets, which hew to government narratives, falsely reported on a rash of purported hate crimes committed by Ukrainian nationalists, painting a picture of a disintegrating society in which ethnic and religious minorities were no longer safe.

In October 2014, Russian newspapers Pravda and Izvestia reported that some 20 Jews had been savagely beaten in a series of attacks in Odessa. According to the reports, local community leader Mikhail Maiman, who described the incidents as “pure militant Nazism,” had appealed to the World Jewish Congress to intervene and defend the city’s Jews. Local Jews disputed the reports, stating that there had been no attacks. None of them had ever heard of Maiman. A spokesman for the local branch of the Chabad Jewish community said bluntly that it seemed “likely that he doesn’t exist.”³

1 Vladimir Putin press conference, March 4, 2014, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20366>

2 Associated Press, “Putin signs treaty for Crimea to join Russia,” Times of Israel, March 18, 2014, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/putin-signs-treaty-for-crimea-to-join-russia/>

3 Sam Sokol, “Reports of anti-Semitism in Odessa highlights use of Jews in wartime propaganda,” The Jerusalem Post, October 12, 2014, <https://www.jpost.com/printarticle.aspx?id=378664>

In May 2014, after The Jerusalem Post reported⁴ that a Jewish social services organization in Odessa was formulating a contingency plan to evacuate the children under its care, Russian media transformed the story into one in which the city's entire Jewish community was getting ready to flee en masse.⁵ Asked about such dubious reports of anti-Jewish violence, a spokesman for the Russian Embassy in Tel Aviv accused Ukraine of doing its "utmost to cover up extremists' attacks on ethnic and religious minorities, including Russians and Jews, and prevent their coverage in the media."⁶

In May 2015, the popular Russian newscast Vesti reported on a letter supposedly written by Rabbi Menachem Margolin of the European Jewish Association (EJA) in Brussels, which claimed that the government was suppressing Jewish communal life.⁷ The letter stated that an EJA commission sent to Ukraine had found: "cases of compulsory closures of Jewish organizations and schools [and the] revocation of licenses from newspapers published in Hebrew and Yiddish" across the country. It continued:

"There have also been registered multiple cases when uniformed people with the insignia of voluntary nationalistic battalions, participating in combat actions in eastern Ukraine, destroyed Jewish historical and cultural monuments. Unlawful calls for forced banishing of Jews are often made during mass demonstrations in big cities across the country. This outrageous revival of Nazi Germany traditions [sic] in a modern state threatens Europe and European ideals and it is of utmost importance for top European Union officials to immediately respond to the threat!"⁸

Margolin denied writing the letter, whose allegations were never substantiated.⁹

Russia appears to have also carried out "false flag" operations of antisemitic incidents to tarnish Ukraine as an antisemitic country. While it is often difficult to prove such allegations beyond a doubt, available facts indicate this conclusion.

On February 28, 2014, Rabbi Misha Kapustin found the slogan "death to the Jews" scrawled on the door of his synagogue in Simferopol, Crimea. It was flanked by swastikas and a Wolfsangel, a Nazi symbol adopted by the Social-National Assembly, a Ukrainian neo-Nazi group and a founding member of the Right Sector movement. Kapustin thought that there was something strange about the graffiti, given that the Ukrainian far-right had never

4 Sam Sokol, "Odessa Jewish community mulls emergency evacuation," The Jerusalem Post, May 5, 2014, <https://www.jpost.com/international/odessa-jewish-community-mulls-emergency-evacuation-351334>

5 Sam Sokol, "Jewish leaders dispute reports of Odessa evacuation," The Jerusalem Post, May 8, 2014, <https://www.jpost.com/jewish-world/jewish-features/russian-jewish-congress-disputes-report-of-odessa-evacuation-351603>

6 Sam Sokol, "Russia: Ukraine concealing crimes against Jews and other minorities," Jerusalem Post, November 10, 2014, <https://www.pressreader.com/israel/jerusalem-post/20141110/281685433132245>

7 <http://www.vesti.ru/videos/show/vid/645287/cid/1/#>

8 https://www.academia.edu/35984441/Margolin_letter_regarding_Ukraine

9 Sam Sokol, "Ukrainian rights group blasts Russia for faking anti-Semitic news," The Jerusalem Post, June 10, 2015, <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/ukrainian-rights-group-blasts-russia-for-faking-anti-semitic-news-405608>

managed to establish much of a foothold in Crimea. The timing was also odd, since un-uniformed Russian soldiers were then sweeping across Simferopol, taking over government buildings and raising the Russian flag. “I checked it out and I realized it was a mirror projection of the symbol of the Right Sector,” he later recalled. “That’s a little bit strange. If somebody is a Nazi he knows how to draw a swastika. It’s clear. It’s logical. If someone belongs to Right Sector he knows how to draw his symbol.”¹⁰

The Kremlin-controlled network Russia Today later produced a segment entitled “Rabbi in Crimea urges Jews to leave Ukraine, fears neo-Nazi attacks.”¹¹ The report interspersed Kapustin’s story with coverage of Svoboda’s political fortunes and attacks on Jews in Kyiv during the protests, creating an impression of a Jewish community fleeing in the face of danger. Kapustin later said that the Russians had “perverted my words.”



Russia was accused by Ukraine of conducting almost 30 other false flag operations, including a 2016 attack in which red paint and a severed pig’s head were thrown into a shrine erected on top of the grave of the Rabbi Nachman of Breslov in the Ukrainian city of Uman.¹² Other attacks were on foreign embassies and consulates and sites connected to various ethnic minorities. In 2019, the Ukrainians charged two men for these incidents and alleged that they acted on behalf of the Russian government.

Russia’s instrumentalization of antisemitism also included more blatant appeals to antisemitic stereotypes of secret Jewish control. Russian television ran programs accusing prominent Ukrainian politicians of being secret Jews,¹³ Russian trolls created a fake Ukrainian website making similar claims¹⁴ and the leaders of the Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics (the Russian-backed enclaves in eastern Ukraine) made public statements claiming that Jews were behind the revolution and had taken over the Ukrainian government.¹⁵

10 See Putin’s Hybrid War and the Jews pp. 31-34, 49-52.

11 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZrzQqY-Up2g>

12 See Vladislav Davidzon, “Shul at Breslover Rebbe’s grave desecrated with swastika-carved pig’s head,” Tablet, December 21, 2016, <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/synagogue-at-breslover-rebber-grave-in-uman-desecrated-with-swastika-carved-pigs-head> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i0EcXacF808>

13 David Fishman, “The Real Truth About Those Anti-Semitic Flyers in Donetsk,” The Forward, April 22, 2014, <https://forward.com/opinion/world/196864/the-real-truth-about-those-anti-semitic-flyers-in/>

14 Lawrence Alexander and Aric Toler, “Pro-Russian Web Network Digs Up the Dirt on Kremlin Critics,” Global Voices, August 10, 2015, <https://globalvoices.org/2015/08/10/pro-russian-web-network-digs-up-the-dirt-on-kremlin-critics/#>

15 Sam Sokol, “Top rebel leader accuses Jews of masterminding Ukrainian revolution,” The Jerusalem Post, June 22, 2015, <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/top-rebel-leader-accuses-jews-of-masterminding-ukrainian-revolution-406729>

Implications

Russia's use of anti-Semitic propaganda against Ukraine was intended to serve several purposes. It attempted to weaken support for the Ukrainian government among Russophone Ukrainians and generate support for separatism in the regions along the Russian border. Tarring the new Ukrainian government as anti-Semitic and fascist tapped into the memory of the Great Patriotic War, as World War II is known in the former Soviet Union, a potent cultural force in both countries. This propaganda helped portray Putin as a staunch defender of ethnic Russians in Russia's "near abroad," bolstering his popularity at home. Polling conducted after the takeover of Crimea indicated that his anti-fascist rhetoric had found a receptive audience.¹⁶

Another probable target for the antisemitism disinformation campaign was support for Ukraine in Washington. Since Russia's occupation of Eastern Ukraine and Crimea, providing defensive military aid to Ukraine had been debated in Washington, and preventing such aid was a Russian priority in its relations with the U.S.

Russian accusations that Ukraine is an antisemitic country have also led to the politicization of debate about antisemitism within the Ukrainian Jewish community. Some leaders have claimed that raising concerns about antisemitism in Ukraine is an act of support for the Russian disinformation campaign.

Antisemitism in Polish Elections

In May 2020, almost every opinion poll showed incumbent President Andrzej Duda with a comfortable lead over his opponent, Warsaw Mayor Rafal Trzaskowski. However, during the two weeks ahead of the July 12 election, over a dozen opinion polls showed the race virtually tied.

It was in this election context, during a July 9 interview, that the leader of Poland's ruling Law and Justice party, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, accused Trzaskowski of being "without a Polish soul, a Polish heart and a Polish mind" because Trzaskowski was open to discussing the issue of restitution of Jewish property confiscated by the Nazi regime and kept by the Communist regime.¹⁷ At the same time, state TV ran claims – both as news and as commentary – that Trzaskowski would "sell out" Poland and take money from Polish families to pay "Jewish interests."¹⁸

Polling data on antisemitic beliefs in Poland explain why supporters of Duda made these accusations against Trzaskowski during the final stages of the 2020 election. According to the 2019 ADL Global 100 survey, 75 percent of Poles believe that "Jews still talk too much about what happened to them in the Holocaust" while 40% believe that "Jews have too much control over global affairs." In the 2019 survey, 48 percent of the population held anti-Semitic attitudes, the highest score in absolute terms among the 18 countries surveyed in 2019, and a significant increase from Poland's 37 percent score in 2015.¹⁹

¹⁶ Alec Luhn, "Ukraine crisis and Olympics boost Vladimir Putin's popularity in Russia," *The Guardian*, May 6, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/06/ukraine-olympics-vladimir-putin-russia-crimea>

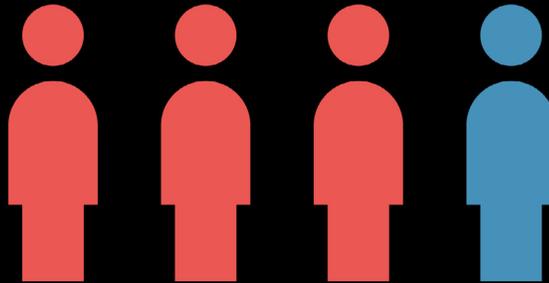
¹⁷ Jan Cienski, "Poland's presidential campaign ends on an anti-Semitic note," *Politico*, July 10, 2020, <https://www.politico.eu/article/poland-presidential-election-anti-semitism/>

¹⁸ Andrew Srulovitch, "Antisemitism and anti-LGBTQ rhetoric mar Poland's Presidential Election," *ADL.org*, July 17, 2020, <https://www.adl.org/blog/antisemitism-and-anti-lgbtq-rhetoric-mar-polands-presidential-election>

¹⁹ See <https://www.adl.org/news/press-releases/adl-global-survey-of-18-countries-finds-hardcore-anti-semitic-attitudes-remain> and <https://global100.adl.org/country/poland/2019>

Poland

According to the 2019 ADL Global 100 survey, 75 percent of Poles believe that “Jews still talk too much about what happened to them in the Holocaust” while 40% believe that “Jews have too much control over global affairs.” In the 2019 survey, 48 percent of the population held antisemitic attitudes, the highest score in absolute terms among the 18 countries surveyed in 2019, and a significant increase from Poland’s 37 percent score in 2015.



Such rhetoric proved a source of concern for many, including members of the United States Congress. On September 15, two US Senators wrote to the Polish president, stating that failing to properly combat antisemitism could harm US-Polish ties. “We are alarmed by growing anti-Semitic discourse in Poland and scapegoating of the Jewish community, which run counter to our nations’ shared values,” Senators Jacky Rosen and James Lankford wrote. “Specifically, during Poland’s 2020 presidential campaign, the Law and Justice Party and state television peddled anti-Semitic tropes and thinly veiled demagoguery.”²⁰

President Duda himself has regularly condemned antisemitism and did not have a history of making antisemitic remarks, unlike other figures affiliated with the Law and Justice party. He later seemed to acknowledge that he and his campaign had gone over the line, stating during his victory speech, also likely in reference to anti-LGBTQ rhetoric, “It was a very sharp campaign, probably too sharp at times. If anyone is offended by my words, please forgive me. And give me the chance to improve in the next five years.”²¹

²⁰ Ron Kampeas, “2 US senators warn Poland’s president on anti-Semitism and restitution,” Times of Israel, September 17, 2020, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/2-us-senators-warn-polands-president-on-anti-semitism-and-restitution/>

²¹ *ibid.*



The antisemitic rhetoric directed at Rafal Trzaskowski did not occur in a vacuum. The US, Israel, and other countries have long pressured Poland to begin returning Jewish private property.²²

Polish opposition to restitution became a key talking point for far-right politicians during the run-ups to the 2019 European and Polish parliamentary elections as well. The Confederation (Konfederacja) party united Polish extremists to contest both the 2019 European Parliament and Polish parliamentary elections, running to the right of the ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party.

22 According to the World Jewish Restitution Organization (WJRO), “Poland has no law for the restitution of confiscated private property located within its current borders” and “stands alone as the only major country in the former Soviet bloc, and member state of the European Union, without such a law.” While it has a law on communal property, according to the US State Department: “approximately half of the 5,500 Jewish communal property claims filed under a 1997 restitution law remain unresolved, and approximately half of the adjudicated claims were rejected.” <https://www.state.gov/reports/just-act-report-to-congress/>

Daniel Tilles, a history professor at the University of Krakow and political commentator, summed up the political uses of antisemitism by the Polish far-right in those elections as follows:²³

One of the more unpleasant surprises of this election season has been that it saw the most explicitly antisemitic campaign run by a major political movement in Poland for a long time. And an even more unpleasant surprise was that it worked to some extent.

The Confederation...initially struggled, with low polling figures and little media attention. This changed after it latched on to Jewish property restitution as their main campaign theme. While this is a subject that merits genuine debate, for the nationalists it was simply a vehicle to stoke antisemitism.

At an anti-restitution march in Warsaw, they chanted 'This is Poland, not Polin' – a reference to the Hebrew name for Poland and a common codeword on the far right for the idea that Jews want to take over the country. With around 10,000 attending the march, scholar Rafał Pankowski called it 'probably the biggest openly anti-Jewish street demonstration in Europe in recent years'.²⁴

One of Confederation's leading figures said that the party's main five policies were: 'We don't want Jews, homosexuals, abortion, taxes and the EU.' Another, during a televised local debate, held a yarmulke over the head of his PiS opponent, saying it was a 'symbol of PiS's rule. They kneel before the Jews, they want to sell Poland'.

This clearly rattled PiS, which was forced to respond. Yet instead of condemning the antisemitism or pointing to the dishonesty of some of the Confederation's arguments, the ruling party instead actually pandered to them. Though it did not use the same explicit language as the nationalists, it perpetuated the idea that Jews were seeking to unjustly extract huge sums of money from Poland and argued that only a PiS government could defend against this. Meanwhile the opposition largely avoided talking about the subject altogether, presumably realising there were no votes to be won (and some to be lost) in defending Jews.

²³ <https://notesfrompoland.wordpress.com/2019/05/30/five-key-takeaways-from-the-european-elections-in-poland/>

²⁴ Protesters at the Confederation-led march complained that Washington was elevating "Jewish interests" over Polish ones. One marcher asked why "we have to pay money today when nobody gives us anything," asserting that "Americans only think about Jewish and not Polish interests." "There is no such law in the world that would sanction [restitution] and the Americans want to force us to pay those damages which are simply illegitimate," another participant complained. Signs held at the rally stated that "Poland has no obligations" to restitute property to the Jews, who were described as "Holocaust hyenas." Organizers of the march called on the government to advance an "anti-447 law" and stated that they would "defend Polish soil, so that Polish children will not be homeless." See "STOP 447' march proceeds through Warsaw," PolandIn, May 11, 2019, <https://polandin.com/42588788/stop-447-march-proceeds-through-warsaw> and "Polish nationalists march to U.S. Embassy in Warsaw to protest Holocaust claims," Los Angeles Times, May 11, 2019, <https://www.latimes.com/world/la-fg-poland-nationalists-holocaust-20190511-story.html>

120 000 zł

Tyle będzie musiała zapłacić każda 4-osobowa rodzina w ramach roszczeń żydowskich!

#Stop447 #NieDlaRoszczeń

Nie chcesz płacić bezpodstawnych roszczeń? 26 maja głosuj na listę nr 1!

Podaj dalej

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Much of the current debate owes to longstanding controversies, attitudes, and orientations by political actors, though the ruling Law and Justice party has sought to shift the blame onto the passage of a minor piece of American legislation, the bipartisan Justice for Uncompensated Survivors Today Act of 2017 (Senate bill 447), which does no more than direct the U.S. government to issue a one-time report reviewing the relative compliance by various European states with the 2009 Terezin Declaration on Holocaust Era Assets and Related Issues.²⁵

The bill was wildly distorted and exaggerated in Warsaw, where then Foreign Minister Jacek Czaputowicz condemned it “because it wants some privileges for the Jews, for the Jewish community, but not for the Poles.”²⁶ In fact, the bill imposed no concrete U.S. penalties on Poland, did not even specifically mention Poland in the bill text, and was merely aimed at encouraging all pertinent European governments to make good on their own commitments from 2009. Even before its passage, the JUST Act was the pretext for intense antisemitic rhetoric in Poland, with magazines running front page stories with titles such as “End This Madness: Issue that could cost Poland tens of billions” and “Holocaust Industry Attacks Poland.”

²⁵ <https://wjro.org.il/our-work/international-declarations-resolutions/terezin-declaration/>

²⁶ “Trump signs Holocaust property law that has angered Poland,” Associated Press, May 12, 2018, <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-5258509,00.html>



After the JUST Act's passage, Polish nationalists rallied outside the US Embassy in Warsaw. Robert Winnicki, a leader of the Confederation party and the organizer of the protest, was quoted in news reports stating that the rally was held to oppose the "extortion of money and Polish national assets rebuilt after World War II by Polish people." He went on to say, "The Jews will not get a penny from us."²⁷

Another Confederation leader, Grzegorz Braun, framed the debate over restitution in martial terms, stating that "Jews have waged war against the Polish nation for centuries" in an effort to "turn it into a Jewish state."²⁸

On May 10, 2019, the Polish Journalists Association hosted a panel discussion, entitled, "Jewish claims and the case of Poland," with several known extremists.²⁹ The discussion was broadcast on the far-right Polish online TV channel wREALu24, which has over 230,000 subscribers on YouTube.

Among the statements made were:

- "After 1934, in the leading positions in the Nazi Party, there was nobody who had no Jewish blood in them – this is very important – starting with Hitler," said Dr. Mira Modelska-Creech, a former lecturer at Georgetown University and Warsaw University. When an audience member challenged her about Hitler being Jewish, she responded that Hitler may have been related to the Rothschild family, painted a lot of Jewish cemeteries, and only despised East European Jews.
- Former Polish ambassador Krzysztof Balinski called for a special tribunal to punish "traitors," while holding his book about purported Israeli and American control over the Polish Foreign Ministry. He said "Every word of my speech is anti-Semitic" to loud applause.

According to Daniel Tilles, while Confederation "fell narrowly below the 5% threshold" in the 2019 parliamentary election, "it was clear that their support in polls rose after they made Jewish restitution the main theme of their campaign, and it is hard to escape the conclusion that one reason why this dipped slightly in the final vote was because PiS responded by expressing its own strong opposition to Jewish restitution."³⁰

²⁷ "Polish nationalists protest outside US Embassy against Holocaust restitution," Jewish Telegraphic Agency, April 26, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/polish-nationalists-protest-outside-us-embassy-against-holocaust-restitution/>

²⁸ <https://notesfrompoland.com/2019/10/28/new-far-right-party-to-seek-legislation-opposing-lgbt-jewish-property-restitution-and-abortion/>

²⁹ <https://www.adl.org/blog/anti-semitism-in-polish-protests-against-restitution>

³⁰ <https://notesfrompoland.wordpress.com/2019/05/30/five-key-takeaways-from-the-european-elections-in-poland/>

Implications

When antisemitism became a major political topic, it severely impacted the small Jewish community in Poland. In an unprecedented statement for the Polish Jewish community, its representative body, the Union of Jewish Communities in Poland, and 23 other Polish Jewish organizations, issued an open letter³¹ about the antisemitic political discourse and its impact on them:

We, representatives of Polish Jewish organizations, express our outrage over the growing wave of intolerance, xenophobia, and anti-Semitism in Poland. Increasingly, hate speech has escaped the confines of the Internet to infiltrate the public sphere. It has found its way into newspapers and television broadcasts, including those belonging to public media outlets. We are no longer surprised when members of local councils, parliament, and other state officials contribute anti-Semitic speech to public discourse.

The number of threats and insults directed toward Poland's Jewish community is rising. While we appreciate verbal condemnations of anti-Semitism on the part of President Andrzej Duda, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, and Law and Justice party leader Jarosław Kaczyński, these politicians' words ring empty and do nothing to stop the spread of evil without strong supporting actions. On the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of the anti-Semitic events of March 1968 and 75 years after the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Polish Jews do not feel safe in Poland.

While physical antisemitic incidents, such as assaults and vandalism, remain rare in Poland, a significant number of Polish Jews said they had considered emigrating out of fear for their security as Jews. In a survey taken just a couple of months after the letter was published. According to the 2018 EU Agency for Fundamental Rights survey of Jewish communities, 38% of Polish Jews answered that they had considered emigrating, almost as high a percentage as French Jews (44%).³²

³¹ <https://warszawa.jewish.org.pl/2018/02/open-statement-of-polish-jewish-organizations-to-the-public-opinion/>

³² https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2018-experiences-and-perceptions-of-antisemitism-survey_en.pdf



Demonization of George Soros in Hungary's Immigration Debate

At the end of 2015, following the arrival in Europe of over a million migrants fleeing conflict in the Middle East, Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban accused the American Jewish financier George Soros of promoting the settlement of these migrants in Hungary. Orban called him "perhaps the strongest example of those who support anything that weakens nation states" and "everything that changes the traditional European lifestyle."³³

While Soros, a Hungarian-born billionaire and liberal philanthropist, had promoted accommodative policies for the influx of predominantly Muslim immigrants and financed groups working on behalf of asylum seekers, Orban's decision to target an American Jew rather than European Union officials with authority over EU immigration policy raises questions.

33 Andras Gergely, "Orban Accuses Soros of Stoking Refugee Wave to Weaken Europe," Bloomberg, October 30, 2015, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-10-30/orban-accuses-soros-of-stoking-refugee-wave-to-weak-en-europe>



The most convincing answer is that the campaign was premised on the receptiveness to antisemitic stereotypes in the Hungarian public. In ADL's 2019 Global 100 survey in Hungary, 25 percent of Hungarians believed that "Jews want to weaken our national culture by supporting more immigrants coming to our country."³⁴

The government of Hungary's ruling nationalist Fidesz party has run several political campaigns against EU immigration policy and they have all focused on George Soros. While explicit antisemitic tropes have largely been absent from this messaging, antisemitic codes have been featured instead.

In 2018, during an election campaign, Orban stated that Hungarians were "fighting an enemy that is different from us. Not open but hiding; not straightforward but crafty; not honest but base; not national but international; does not believe in working but speculates with money; does not have its own homeland but feels it owns the whole world."³⁵

Although the individual words are not inherently antisemitic, such language is deeply dangerous and has a long history of antisemitic associations of Jewish nefariousness, of Jews with money and commerce, and allegations that Jews place their transnational ethnic affiliations ahead of the interests of their non-Jewish neighbors. Antisemites frequently use the term "globalist" as a code word for Jews.³⁶

³⁴ <https://www.adl.org/news/press-releases/adl-global-survey-of-18-countries-finds-hardcore-anti-semitic-attitudes-remain>

³⁵ "Hungarian prime minister Orban attacks 'enemy' who 'speculates with money' in election rally speech," JTA, March 16, 2018, <https://www.jta.org/2018/03/16/politics/hungarian-prime-minister-orban-attacks-enemy-speculates-money-election-rally-speech>

³⁶ <https://www.adl.org/resources/reports/quantifying-hate-a-year-of-anti-semitism-on-twitter#globalist-as-code-word-for-jew>

The Hungarian government's anti-Soros campaign included posters and billboards with a smirking George Soros and the slogan, "Don't let Soros have the last laugh." Many of these advertisements were subsequently defaced with anti-Semitic graffiti.³⁷

In one potentially connected incident, a group of neo-Nazis attempted to burn down a Jewish center in Budapest which had previously been targeted with "Stop Soros" flyers.³⁸

Implications

Federation of the Hungarian Jewish Communities (MAZSIHISZ) president Andras Heisler told the media that the campaign's goal was not antisemitic, but had the potential to stir up anti-Jewish sentiments among Hungarians.³⁹

"It was possible to launch in Hungary a total propaganda campaign, whose language and visual tools revived in our minds the bad memories of the past. One can argue about the intent of the campaign but it became unacceptable for me for one thing: the Jews of Hungary started to live in fear. And a responsible Jewish leader cannot keep silent about that. Neither can a responsible head of government."⁴⁰

As noted above, ADL's 2019 Global 100 survey in Hungary found that 25 percent of Hungarians believed that "Jews want to weaken our national culture by supporting more immigrants coming to our country."⁴¹ Whether this worrying statistic is the result of Hungary's anti-Soros propaganda or the reason the Hungarian government chose to demonize George Soros, it demonstrates the power of politicizing antisemitism.

In Hungary, like in Poland, physical antisemitic incidents are rare but the percentage of Jews considering emigrating out of fear for their security as Jews is relatively high. The 2018 EU Agency for Fundamental Rights survey of Jewish communities found that 40% of Hungarian Jews had considered emigrating, again almost as high a percentage as French Jews (44%) who suffer far greater physical acts of antisemitism.

³⁷ Nick Thorpe, "Hungary vilifies financier Soros with crude poster campaign," BBC, July 10, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-40554844>

³⁸ "Neo-Nazis try to torch Jewish center in Budapest, activists say," The Times of Israel, October 24, 2019, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/neo-nazis-try-to-torch-jewish-center-in-budapest-activists-say/>

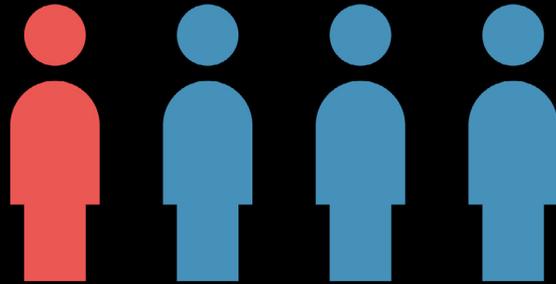
³⁹ "Hungary Jews warn Orban over anti-Semitism in anti-Soros campaign," Times of Israel, https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/hungary-jews-warn-orban-over-anti-semitism-in-anti-soros-campaign/

⁴⁰ Raphael Ahren, "Decrying 'betrayal,' Hungary Jews say Netanyahu ignoring them," The Times of Israel, July 20, 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/decrying-netanyahu-betrayal-hungary-jews-say-pm-ignoring-them/>

⁴¹ <https://www.adl.org/news/press-releases/adl-global-survey-of-18-countries-finds-hardcore-anti-semitic-attitudes-remain>

Hungary

In ADL's 2019 Global 100 survey in Hungary, 25 percent of Hungarians believed that **"Jews want to weaken our national culture by supporting more immigrants coming to our country."**



Jeremy Corbyn's UK Labour party and tolerance of antisemitism

Far-left parties often claim to be in a vanguard of the fight against racism, but sometimes tolerate antisemitic views not just for ideological reasons but for political reasons – to broaden their support even at the expense of allowing bigots within their party.

While racism should be anathema on the left, antisemitism appears in the guise of criticism of Israel, anti-Zionism and anti-capitalism, where the latter invokes stereotypes of Jews and money, often as rapacious global bankers, like in the Freedom for Humanity mural, for which UK Labour party leader Jeremy Corbyn expressed approval.⁴²

Corbyn's Labour party provides the clearest example of how antisemitic rhetoric surrounding Israel and Zionism and other forms of antisemitism were tolerated within a major political party to accommodate a radical component of the party.

In 2015, Jeremy Corbyn, a perennial backbencher on the fringe of Labour politics, swept into the party's leadership on the strength of an influx of new members, many of whom supported his radical views.⁴³ An analysis of his 2015 leadership election found: "Anti-capitalist values also appeared to be a feature of the new members, as was disenchantment with politics as usual and a yearning for a new style of politics. However, incentives like ideology mattered too. Post-2015 recruits who had previously belonged to the Labour Party and who rejoined it were more left wing."⁴⁴

Corbyn's base in the enlarged Labour party was at odds with the more centrist-liberalism which had made the Labour Party the longtime home of the majority of British Jews, and many of Corbyn's supporters were found to hold anti-Semitic views of one sort or another.⁴⁵ Corbyn's record when it came to Israel and Jewish issues was already known to be problematic and did not change during his tenure.

42 Heather Stewart, "Corbyn in antisemitism row after backing artist behind 'offensive' mural," The Guardian, March 23, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/mar/23/corbyn-criticised-after-backing-artist-behind-antisemitic-mural>

43 A 2015 rule change significantly relaxed criteria for party membership and allowed more people to join as voting party members.

44 "Oh Jeremy Corbyn! Why did Labour Party membership soar after the 2015 general election?" Paul Whiteley et al., The British Journal of Politics and International Relations, December 27, 2018, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1369148118815408>

45 Ilanit Chernick, "Poll: 67% of Jeremy Corbyn supporters hold at least one antisemitic view," December 3, 2019, The Jerusalem Post, <https://www.jpost.com/international/67-percent-of-jeremy-corbyn-supporters-hold-at-least-one-antisemitic-view-poll-609653>

During his years as a Labour MP Corbyn had been involved in several incidents of great concern to the Jewish community:

- In 2009, Corbyn publicly stated that it was his pleasure and honor to host an event in parliament where our friends from Hezbollah will be speaking” and that he had “also invited our friends from Hamas to come and speak as well.”⁴⁶
- In 2011, during an appearance on Iranian propaganda network Press TV, Corbyn accused British state broadcaster BBC of having “a bias towards saying that Israel is a democracy in the Middle East, Israel has a right to exist, Israel has its security concerns.”⁴⁷
- Also in 2011, Corbyn authored the forward to a book, which included claims that Jews control global finance and trafficking in conspiracy theories regarding the Rothschild family.⁴⁸
- In 2012, he defended a graffiti artist who had painted the Freedom for Humanity mural that featured stereotypically Jewish-looking bankers playing monopoly on the backs of the oppressed masses.⁴⁹
- In 2013, Corbyn, speaking at a Palestinian Return Centre event, stated that Zionists, despite “having lived in this country for a very long time, probably all their lives, don’t understand English irony.” This comment was interpreted by many as implying that Jewish citizens were not truly British.⁵⁰
- In 2014, Corbyn attended a wreath laying ceremony in Tunis at a cemetery connected to the Palestine Liberation Organization which contained memorials to the perpetrators of the 1972 Munich Olympics attack in which 11 Israelis were murdered.⁵¹

As David Hirsch, Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Goldsmiths University in London, commented, Corbyn’s 2015 victory was:

“...significant as an indicator of the progress of [his] kind of anti-imperialism from the fringes to the centre stage. Characteristics that were at one time confined to the margins of the left now make a clear claim to be considered characteristics of the mainstream left. Nothing about Corbyn’s record put off his supporters - not his history of support for antisemitic movements, for example; not his habit of defending antisemitic individuals or his work for [Iranian propaganda network] Press TV; not his support for the IRA; not his encouragement to those fighting against British forces; not his support for Hamas and Hezbollah. None of this constituted an obstacle to supporting his leadership bid.”⁵²

46 Vince Chadwick, “Jeremy Corbyn regrets calling Hamas ‘friends,’” July 4, 2016, <https://www.politico.eu/article/laibour-party-leader-jeremy-corbyn-regrets-calling-hamas-friends-hezbollah-anti-semitism/>

47 “Footage emerges of Corbyn saying BBC ‘biased’ toward ‘Israel’s right to exist,’” August 8, 2018, The Times of Israel, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/footage-emerges-of-corbyn-saying-bbc-biased-toward-israels-right-to-exist/>

48 “Corbyn found to have written foreword for book claiming Jews control banks,” May 1, 2019, The Times of Israel, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/corbyn-found-to-have-written-foreword-for-book-claiming-jews-control-banks/>

49 Heather Stewart, “Corbyn in antisemitism row after backing artist behind ‘offensive’ mural,” March 23, 2018, The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/mar/23/corbyn-criticised-after-backing-artist-behind-antisemitic-mural>

50 Daniel Sugarman, “Jeremy Corbyn: ‘Zionists’ have ‘no sense of English irony despite having lived here all their lives,’” August 23, 2018, The Jewish Chronicle, <https://www.thejc.com/news/uk/jeremy-corbyn-zionists-have-no-sense-of-english-irony-1.468795>

51 “Jeremy Corbyn wreath row explained,” August 15, 2018, BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-45196409>

52 Hirsh, D. (2018). Contemporary left antisemitism. London: Routledge.



Corbyn had strong political incentives to downplay the issue of antisemitism in the party. He needed not to alienate his radical base by punishing the offenders among them, and he needed to maintain Labour's image as an anti-racist party, a reputation which would be sullied by admitting to the truth of accusations of antisemitism. This effort to downplay antisemitism was complicated by the increasingly frequent news reports of antisemitic behavior by party members as well as continuing allegations of efforts by senior party officials to provide cover for said members by intervening in internal party disciplinary tribunals.

In 2019 the Labour Against Antisemitism advocacy group provided the UK's Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) with a report containing what it said were "over 15,000 screenshots taken from hundreds of Labour members 'and officials' promoting anti-Semitic views."⁵³

A report provided to the EHRC by the Jewish Labour Movement in 2019 noted incidents of Jewish members being harassed at party meetings where they were called "Zio scum," told "Hitler was right" and informed that there was an "over-representation of Jews in the capitalist ruling class that gives the Israel-Zionist lobby its power."⁵⁴

⁵³ <https://www.facebook.com/labouragainstAS/posts/641220669653232>

⁵⁴ "Document lists 9 instances of anti-Semitism by Corbyn among thousands in Labour," December 5, 2019, The Times of Israel, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/document-lists-9-instances-of-anti-semitism-by-corbyn-among-thousands-in-labour/>

The climate within the party deteriorated to the point that multiple Jewish MPs felt compelled to quit, both to protest the party's tolerance of antisemitism and as a direct result of personal harassment they had suffered. Those who left described Labour as "institutionally anti-Semitic."⁵⁵ Joan Ryan, a former Labour MP who is not Jewish but has advocated strongly for Israel, had been subject to intense abuse due to her positions. According to a December 2019 report:

***"She received several death threats. Dead rats were placed in front of her doorstep twice. And a letter slipped under the door of her House of Commons office, likely by someone who had regular access to the corridors where parliamentarians' private offices are located, called her a 'Jew whore' who should be 'shoved back in the oven.'"*⁵⁶**

Labour candidates have used terms like "Shylock,"⁵⁷ and posted images online showing blood dripping off an Israeli flag bearing the slogan "Moses must be proud of you."⁵⁸ One MP even posted a video claiming the existence of an "Israel-British-Swiss-Rothschilds crime syndicate" on social media.⁵⁹ One member was suspended from the party for calling "for a march to a synagogue to protest disciplinary action against another member accused of spreading anti-Semitic conspiracy theories."⁶⁰

While action was taken in some incidents, Labour under Corbyn fundamentally failed to challenge the growing antisemitism in its ranks,⁶¹ declining to sanction racist members and actively obstructing efforts to reveal the full scope of the problem. Subsequent leaks by Labour insiders revealed that, under Corbyn, party leaders routinely interfered in disciplinary proceedings against members accused of antisemitism.⁶² These actions and inactions comprise a conscious tolerance for antisemitism for political aims.

A subsequent report by the British government's Equality and Human Rights Commission found that the Labour Party had committed "unlawful acts of harassment and discrimination," engaged in "political interference in

⁵⁵ "MP says UK Labour is 'institutionally anti-Semitic' as 7 lawmakers quit party," February 18, 2019, The Times of Israel, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/mp-says-uks-labour-institutionally-anti-semitic-as-7-lawmakers-quit-party/>

⁵⁶ Raphael Ahren, "Ex-Labour MP who got rats on doorstep says now's time to tackle anti-Semitism," December 16, 2019, The Times of Israel, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/ex-labour-mp-who-got-rats-on-doorstep-says-nows-time-to-tackle-anti-semitism/>

⁵⁷ "UK Labour candidate quits for 'Shylock' comments," November 8, 2019, The Times of Israel, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/uk-labour-candidate-quits-for-shylock-comments/>

⁵⁸ Stuart Winer, "UK Labour party shortlists for Parliament two members reported for anti-Semitism," October 23, 2019, The Times of Israel, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/uk-labour-party-shortlists-for-parliament-two-members-reported-for-anti-semitism/>

⁵⁹ "Senior UK Labour MP apologizes for posting 'anti-Semitic conspiracy' video," July 29, 2019, The Times of Israel, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/senior-uk-labour-mp-apologizes-for-posting-anti-semitic-conspiracy/>

⁶⁰ Cnaan Liphshiz, "Labour Suspends Member for Call to March to British Synagogue," April 30, 2019, Haaretz, <https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/europe/labour-suspends-member-for-call-to-march-to-british-synagogue-1.7185170>

⁶¹ The party actually scheduled a gathering to discuss anti-Semitism allegations on a Saturday, effectively precluding the attendance of Orthodox Jews. Daniel Sugarman, "Anger as Labour conference set to debate changes to antisemitism complaints process - on Shabbat," September 18, 2019, The Jewish Chronicle, <https://www.thejc.com/news/uk/anger-as-labour-conference-set-to-debate-changes-to-antisemitism-complaints-on-shabbat-1.488850>

⁶² Gabriel Pogrud, "Top Corbyn aide 'took control of Labour anti-semitism complaints,'" July 14, 2019, The Times of London, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/top-corbyn-aide-took-control-of-labour-anti-semitism-complaints-mwk2wxckp>. Also see "Top Labour figures 'interfered' in anti-Semitism disputes," July 10, 2019, BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-48929244>



Caption: Freedom for Humanity mural, for which UK Labour party leader Jeremy Corbyn expressed approval.

antisemitism complaints,” and failed to “provide adequate training to those handling antisemitism complaints,” among other issues.⁶³

The EHRC’s “analysis points to a culture within the Party which, at best, did not do enough to prevent antisemitism and, at worst, could be seen to accept it,” the government watchdog wrote in a report issued in October 2020, leading to Corbyn’s suspension from the party.

Several Labour MPs listed Labour’s tolerance of antisemitism as a major factor in Labour’s loss in the December 2019 general election.⁶⁴

⁶³ <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/our-work/news/investigation-antisemitism-labour-party-finds-unlawful-acts-discrimination-and>

⁶⁴ “Corbyn, antisemitism and Brexit: Labour MPs on why they lost,” The Guardian, December 17, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/dec/17/corbyn-antisemitism-and-brexit-labour-mps-on-why-they-lost>



Implications

As the party's ranks swelled, incidents of anti-Semitic rhetoric and harassment by these new members steadily rose. According to the Community Security Trust, the British Jewish community's antisemitism watchdog, Corbyn supporters were tied to a massive surge in online hate, including numerous examples of "hateful language [being used] to attack Jewish Labour MPs or other people who raise concerns about antisemitism" and "claim[s] that any mention of antisemitism is part of a conspiracy to 'smear' Corbyn and Labour."⁶⁵

According to the CST, "2019 was the fourth year in a row to see a record incident total and continue[d] an ongoing trend of rising numbers of antisemitic hate incidents in this country." That year, the organization "recorded 224 antisemitic incidents in which the offender or offenders, or the abuse they expressed, were related to the Labour Party, or in which antisemitism was expressed in the context of arguments about alleged antisemitism in the Labour Party. This [was] an increase from the 148 incidents of this kind recorded by CST in 2018."⁶⁶

As noted in the introduction, survey data demonstrated the deep sense of insecurity that would have accompanied a Corbyn victory in the December 2019 election. Almost half of the British Jewish community said they would consider emigrating if Jeremy Corbyn became Prime Minister, an increase from just 11% of British Jews who had considered emigrating before Jeremy Corbyn's rise in the Labour Party.

⁶⁵ "Labour antisemitism 'fuelled by social media posts done in Jeremy Corbyn's name', says CST," August 4, 2019, The Jewish Chronicle, <https://www.thejc.com/news/uk/labour-antisemitism-fuelled-by-social-media-posts-done-in-jeremy-corbyn-s-name-says-cst-1.487099>

⁶⁶ <https://cst.org.uk/news/blog/2020/02/06/antisemitic-incidents-report-2019>

Holocaust Trivialization and Nationalist Narratives

Holocaust trivialization is a form of antisemitism and some political actors engage in it to boost their narrative of national greatness. Two primary variations on this theme include (1) glorification of nationalist heroes while downplaying their Holocaust-related actions and (2) downplaying the importance of the Holocaust in national history. Ukrainian nationalists provide examples of the first version and Germany's Alternative for Germany party (AfD) has engaged in the second type. These two cases are illustrative examples, and both phenomena can be found among nationalist parties elsewhere in Europe.

Trivialization of the Holocaust through the glorification of historical figures – despite their Holocaust activities – is a frequent phenomenon in Ukraine. Many of these figures are considered national heroes for fighting against the Soviet Army, sometimes as part of the German war effort, sometimes alongside the Nazis, and sometimes independently, while still murdering Jews.

In 2015, Ukraine adopted a series of bills known collectively as the Decommunization Laws. The laws elevated members of World War Two-era militias that fought against the Soviet Union to the status of national heroes. This new national memory policy led to the renaming of streets and the erection of statues across the country in honor of 20th century Ukrainian nationalist fighters. Many of these figures were members of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), whose manifesto called on its members to “liquidate undesirable Poles, Muscovites, and Jews,” and its military offshoot the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). Led by Stepan Bandera and Roman Shukhevych respectively, these groups collaborated with the Nazis and were responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of Jews and ethnic Poles.⁶⁷

Ukrainian nationalist politicians and political parties have glorified OUN/UPA figures as heroes of Ukraine. The ultra-nationalist Svoboda party organizes torch-lit marches each year on January 1 to celebrate the birthday of Stepan Bandera.⁶⁸ The 2017 march featured demonstrators chanting “Juden Raus!” (“Jews out!”).⁶⁹ Eduard Dolinsky of the Ukrainian Jewish Committee has documented statues of OUN/UPA figures for whom there is direct evidence of active participation in the murder of Jews, such as Stepan Lynnik⁷⁰, Oleska Demsky⁷¹, Martin Mizerniy⁷², Oleksa Babiy⁷³, Vasyl Brynsky⁷⁴, and others

⁶⁷ Samuel Sokol & Anna Kupinska, “Ukraine’s little known memory war,” July 26, 2018, Open Democracy, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/ukraines-little-known-memory-war/> and Sam Sokol (2017): Babi Yar as a Symbol of Holocaust Distortion in Post- Maidan Ukraine, Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs, DOI: 10.1080/23739770.2017.1315694

⁶⁸ <https://www.itv.com/news/2020-01-01/thousands-of-far-right-ukrainians-honour-nazi-linked-nationalist-stepan-bandera-in-march-through-kyiv>

⁶⁹ <https://www.jta.org/2017/01/03/global/ukrainian-marchers-in-kiev-chant-jews-out>

⁷⁰ <https://twitter.com/edolinsky/status/1331576225089859584>

⁷¹ <https://twitter.com/edolinsky/status/1330462298629169152>

⁷² <https://twitter.com/edolinsky/status/1329369980668956674>

⁷³ <https://twitter.com/edolinsky/status/1328614212193673216>

⁷⁴ <https://twitter.com/edolinsky/status/1288359883318927360>

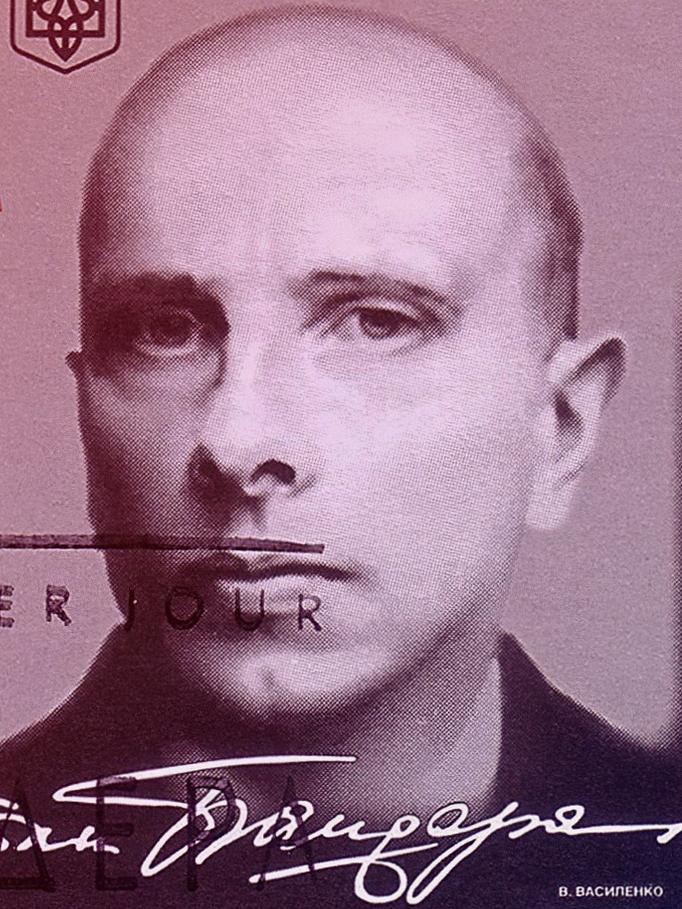
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100 років від дня народження
СТЕПАН БАНДЕРА 1909 1959

Україна
UKRAINA 2009



ПЕРШИЙ ДЕНЬ ПРОЄКТІВ ВІД ДНЯ НАРОДЖЕННЯ
01.01.2009

Васильченко
Б. ВАСИЛЧЕНКО

Васильченко
В. ВАСИЛЧЕНКО

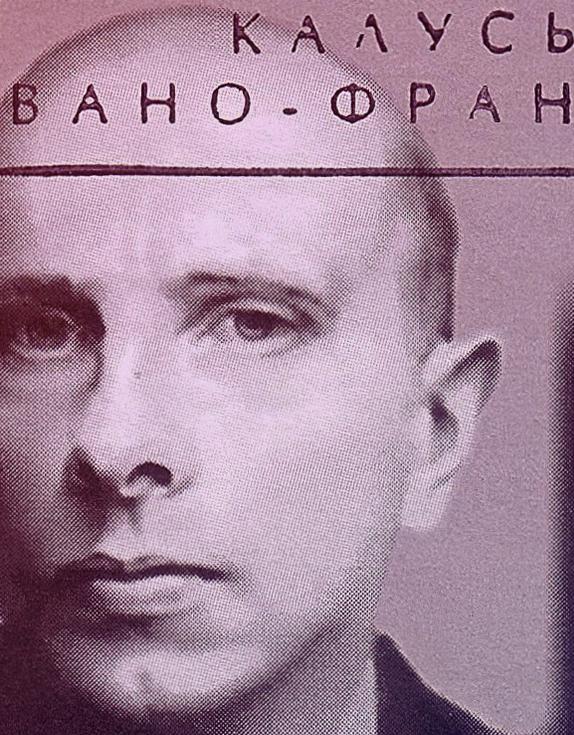
1909 1959

С. СТЕПАН БАНДЕРА
КАЛУСЬКИЙ РАЙОН
ВАНО-ФРАНКІВСЬКА ОБЛ.

Україна
UKRAINA 2009



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100 років від дня народження
СТЕПАН БАНДЕРА 1909 1959

Україна
UKRAINA 2009



Васильченко

Васильченко

Implications

The glorification of Ukrainian nationalist fighters who also murdered Jews during the Holocaust is perhaps the most significant antisemitism issue among Ukrainian Jews. Glorification of antisemitic murderers by nationalists sends a message to Ukrainian Jews that they are not true Ukrainians.

In 2016, twenty Ukrainian Jewish organizations denounced the honoring of OUN/UPA leaders as a form of Holocaust denial that erases “from our shared history the tragic pages connected with the anti-Semitic activities.”⁷⁵

Glorification of these historical figures also insults the memory of Holocaust victims, an affront to Jews everywhere, and has played a role in Ukraine’s relations with Israel.

Israeli President Reuven Rivlin spoke at the Ukrainian parliament in 2016 and noted that “members of the OUN ... carried out pogroms and massacres against the Jews and in many cases handed them over to the Germans.” The head of the Radical party, Oleh Lyashko, afterwards demanded an apology.⁷⁶

More recently, in January 2020, the Israeli government raised the issue again: “Individuals responsible for the murder of Jews in the Holocaust and in pogroms, as well as antisemitic ideologists of the Ukrainian National movement have recently been subject of public glorification in Ukraine. In response to this, and to the publicity in the Ukrainian press, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs expresses its condemnation of these phenomena and emphasizes the following: Preserving the memory of the Holocaust and the battle against antisemitism – including the glorification of antisemites and murderers of Jews - are not an internal matter of any country.”⁷⁷

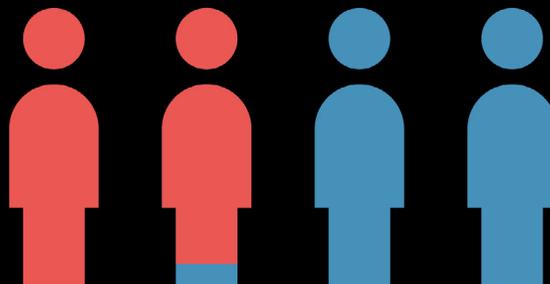
75 <https://www.jta.org/2016/08/16/global/ukraines-honoring-of-war-criminals-leaves-its-jews-uneasy-and-divided>

76 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327201442_Israeli-Ukrainian_Relations_after_'the_Euromaidan_Revolution'_-the_Holocaust_and_the_New_Ukrainian_Identity_in_the_Context_of_the_European_Aspirations_of_Ukraine

77 <https://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2020/Pages/MFA-condemns-public-glorification-of-individuals-responsible-for-the-murder-of-Jews-and-antisemitic-ideologists-in-Ukraine-.aspx>

Germany

There is a significant minority of Germans with whom the AfD message resonates. ADL's Global 100 surveys in 2014, 2015 and 2019 found an average of 48% of Germans agreed with the statement "Jews still talk too much about what happened to them in the Holocaust."



Germany's AfD and "Holocaust fatigue"

In Germany, a country which prides itself on the efforts it has made in coming to terms with its crimes against Jews, Holocaust trivialization primarily comes in the form of rejection of the dominant politics of memory which the far-right characterizes as shameful for the German people. Minimization of the scope and importance of the Holocaust is an integral component of efforts to promote an unabashedly nationalist ethos.

In contemporary Germany, the Alternative for Germany party (AfD) is the highest profile such actor. While a fringe movement just a few years ago, in 2017 the AfD rose to prominence when it won dozens of seats in national elections, becoming the third largest faction in the German parliament.

While the AfD's popularity is not premised on Holocaust trivialization alone, some of its leaders have made Holocaust trivialization a political tool to try to use to their benefit, appealing to a section of the German population that resents discussion of the Holocaust.

There is a significant minority of Germans with whom the AfD message resonates. ADL's Global 100 surveys in 2014, 2015 and 2019 found an average of 48% of Germans agreed with the statement "Jews still talk too much about what happened to them in the Holocaust."⁷⁸ According to a January 2020 poll of 2,052 Germans conducted by YouGov, 22% of Germans believe that "Holocaust remembrance is given too much weight." Another poll, conducted by Infratest, found that 37% of Germans said "it was time to cease browbeating."⁷⁹

⁷⁸ <https://global100.adl.org/country/germany/2019>

⁷⁹ Toby Axelrod, "1 in 5 Germans think the Holocaust gets too much attention, surveys find," Jewish Telegraphic Agency, January 26, 2020, <https://www.jta.org/2020/01/26/global/1-in-5-germans-think-the-holocaust-gets-too-much-attention-surveys-find>

From the party's beginning, several AfD leaders have minimized the genocide's importance in Germany's history and deplored Germany's culture of remembrance. In June 2018, Alexander Gauland, a national party leader, stated at a party conference that "Hitler and the Nazis are just bird shit in more than 1,000 years of successful German history," and Germans "have a glorious history [that] lasted longer than the damn 12 years."⁸⁰

In January 2017, Björn Höcke, a party leader in Thuringia, called the Berlin Holocaust memorial a "monument of shame," drawing condemnations from Jewish groups and politicians from across the spectrum.⁸¹



Implications

The rise of AfD has shaken the Jewish community in Germany. Josef Schuster, president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, stated that right-wing extremism was the "greatest danger" to Jews in Germany and noted, «In my view, the AfD is much more closely interwoven with right-wing extremism than it appears." He added that "[t]he party incites fears and promotes a climate of exclusion of minorities."⁸²

Such criticism by Jewish leaders has even led to threats. Charlotte Knobloch, a former president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, reported receiving numerous threats after publicly speaking out against the AfD. She noted that she had "received coarse verbal abuse, threats and insults by email and telephone almost by the minute."

⁸⁰ "AfD's Gauland plays down Nazi era as a 'bird shit' in German history," June 2, 2018, Deutsche Welle, <https://www.dw.com/en/afds-gauland-plays-down-nazi-era-as-a-bird-shit-in-german-history/a-44055213>

⁸¹ "Local AfD leader's Holocaust remarks prompt outrage," Deutsche Welle, January 18, 2017, <https://www.dw.com/en/local-afd-leaders-holocaust-remarks-prompt-outrage/a-37173729>

⁸² <https://www.dw.com/en/germanys-jewish-council-warns-against-afds-right-wing-extremism/a-50067299>

Conclusions

Antisemitism did not disappear in Europe with the last antisemitic regime, the Soviet Union. In fact, it remains a political factor in many parts of Europe. In some political contexts, antisemitism continues to be actively instrumentalized. In others, it is passively but deliberately tolerated. In both cases, antisemitism is being politicized instead of rejected outright as beyond the pale of legitimate politics.

In some instances, such as Poland's elections and Hungary's immigration debate, antisemitism seems to have been an effective political tool. With Corbyn's Labour party, however, antisemitism may have led to political failure. Corbyn won the party's leadership with a radical agenda and tolerance for antisemitism, but the same factors may have lost him the Prime Minister's office.

The UK provides the best example of the risk and potential severe consequences of antisemitism in politics, even in democratic regimes. An antisemite became the leader of a major party and created a welcome space for antisemitism. Had he become Prime Minister, the British Jewish community would have been suffered a major blow with unprecedented emigration linked to that event. That outcome was avoided, in part, because enough of the British electorate rejected Corbyn's antisemitism, which was exposed in public campaigns by many organizations and individuals.

The impact of politicized antisemitism can be seen on other Jewish communities as well. In Poland and Hungary, despite the extreme rarity of antisemitic assaults, over a third of Jews surveyed in 2018 by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights reported that they had considered emigrating.⁸³

It may be too much to wish that antisemitism never appear in politics, but it must not be too much to ask that any appearance be denounced.

83 "Experiences and perceptions of antisemitism. Second survey on discrimination and hate crime against Jews in the EU," EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, December 2018.

https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2018-experiences-and-perceptions-of-antisemitism-survey_en.pdf

The best defense against the politicization of antisemitism is vigilance and voice. Denouncing the instrumentalization of antisemitism, whether active or passive, imposes a political cost on the actor using antisemitism. If the voices of condemnation are loud enough and consistent, those who use or tolerate antisemitism may change their calculations of its political utility. If the perceived costs to them outweigh the expected benefits, they may even change their decisions and stop politicizing antisemitism. If they persist in using or tolerating antisemitism, loud denunciations could rally voters to punish them at the ballot box.

All can play a role:

-
- Governments should put any political use of antisemitism by another government on their bilateral agenda as an issue of utmost concern.
 - Government agencies which report on antisemitism should pay particular attention to the instrumentalization of antisemitism and tolerance of antisemitism in politics.
 - Political actors should ensure their parties do not engage in these activities.
 - NGOs which monitor antisemitism should highlight the politicization of antisemitism as a category of special importance.
 - Voters should reject antisemitism as unacceptable and fundamentally anti-democratic.
-

High-profile European elections with Jewish candidates have occurred without antisemitism. Most recently, antisemitic political attacks were noticeably absent from the 2019 Ukrainian presidential election, won by President Volodymyr Zelenskiy who openly identifies as Jewish. In 2013, Czech Deputy Prime Minister Jan Fischer, who also openly identified as Jewish, ran a close race for the Czech presidency without a hint of antisemitism during the campaign.

Such politics without antisemitism should be the goal of all who value liberal democracy, regardless of political preferences, and it should be incumbent on all to work towards that goal.

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