

## **Why it matters not to refer to Nazi German camps as “Polish”**

### ***The story you won't find in the North American mainstream media***

Poland's new anti-defamation law has sparked an avalanche of alarmist commentary and harsh criticism.<sup>1</sup> Extravagant claims have been made about the scope and intent of the law as, allegedly, suppressing discussion of Second World War crimes committed by Poles. Outrageous charges, often accompanied by unbridled hysteria, are being levelled against the Polish government, which is accused of “Holocaust denial” and even anti-Semitism.

The Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee of the Knesset declared that “the Polish law is a crime and we will not allow it to happen.” Jack Rosen, President of the American Jewish Congress and chairman of the American Council for World Jewry, goes even further, claiming that Poland has put itself “in the same team as Iran and other Islamic terror states and the alt-right in the US and Holocaust deniers.”

The anti-defamation law has also released pent-up aggression against Poles. However, the North American media rarely, if ever, mentions this aspect in the tsunami of articles critical of Poland. They show no apparent concern for the many rancorous statements by prominent Jews mentioned later on. In fact, the

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<sup>1</sup> On January 26, 2018 and February 1, 2018, respectively, the Sejm (lower chamber) and Senate of the Polish Parliament passed legislation, commonly referred to as an “anti-defamation law,” which was proclaimed into law on February 6, 2019 by Poland's President. It was an amendment to the 1998 Act on the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation.

The government says the Act is supposed to target the use of phrases such as “Polish death camps” to describe Nazi facilities such as Auschwitz which were set up in Poland. However, critics say the Act is too broad in its application and vague in its definitions, and so it could be used to stifle historical debates, and as a weapon against critics of the government.

The most significant part of the 2018 amendments to the Act is article 55a, clause 1:

Whoever claims, publicly and contrary to the facts, that the Polish Nation or the Republic of Poland is responsible or co-responsible for Nazi crimes committed by the Third Reich [...] or for other felonies that constitute crimes against peace, crimes against humanity or war crimes, or whoever otherwise grossly diminishes the responsibility of the true perpetrators of said crimes – shall be liable to a fine or imprisonment for up to 3 years.

Another key clause is article 55a, clause 3, which protects artists and academics from prosecution:

No offence is committed if the criminal act specified in clauses 1 and 2 is committed in the course of one's artistic or academic activity.

North American media is in the forefront of the campaign to tarnish Poland's current government.

## **Background – A Perverse Narrative**

All the hysteria surrounding the new law serves one purpose: to draw attention away from a very real problem. The Canadian Polish Congress (CPC) has been combatting inaccurate and misleading descriptions of Nazi German camps in the media for several decades. The CPC was successful in obtaining two Ontario Press Council rulings (1988, 1992) that urged the press to be clear on the origin and operation of these camps. The CPC's longstanding involvement and experience in this area allows it to speak authoritatively.

Some context is required to understand what exactly the concerns are, and how they arose. Misleading descriptions of Nazi German camps started to appear in the North American media with increasing frequency after the 1978 TV miniseries *The Holocaust*. One of several scathing depictions of Poles in that film showed soldiers dressed in Polish military uniforms executing Jews. That was fake news. The incident didn't happen. Unlike almost everywhere else in Europe, there were no Polish military formations in the service of the Germans.

On July 2, 1979, *Time Magazine* used the description "Polish death camp Sobibor" in an article that made no mention of Germans, only Nazis. This is but one of many such cases. Over the years, it only got worse.

What triggered the CPC's decision to become active in media interventions in the 1980s was the response from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) to a Polish Canadian who objected to a broadcast that described a Nazi German death camp in a misleading manner. An executive assistant at the CBC wrote back: "Our editors here say that whether one says 'Nazi death camps in Poland' or 'Nazi death camps in occupied Poland' one cannot get away from the documented fact that the extermination camps were located in Poland. In addition, the Nazis could not have administered the camps without the help of many Polish people." (Senior officials at the CBC later dissociated themselves from this statement.)

There you have it. More fake news. Do we still need reminding that camps like Auschwitz were conceived and built by the German invaders, and were operated by thousands of German personnel brought in for that purpose? Christian Poles, like Jews, populated these camps as prisoners by the hundreds of thousands – 150,000 in Auschwitz alone. Polish political prisoners were the first large group of prisoners of Auschwitz, before it became a death camp for Jews more than two years later. Yet CBC's extensive coverage of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz made no mention of Polish prisoners at all. There was no mention of who set up Auschwitz, and why it was set up in the first place. It was simply referred to as a camp "in Poland" of unspecified origin. (The previous year

Auschwitz was described as a “Polish” camp twice in one CBC newscast.) Several Jews were interviewed for the newscast, but not one Christian Pole was featured. (The track record of CTV, the other major Canadian television network, is no better.)

But ignoring the Polish dimension of Nazi German genocide is not even the major problem. The CPC came to realize that references to Nazi German death and concentration camps as Polish were not, in some cases, simply benign geographical designations. Far too often there was an ugly accompanying narrative – expressed in various ways – that implicated Poland and the Poles collectively in the Holocaust.

Yisrael Meir Lau, then Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel, taught that “a great many Poles cooperated with the Nazis in the annihilation, G-d forbid, of the Jewish people. The six largest extermination camps were located on Polish territory. They knew that with the loss of the Jews they would suffer dearly. But it did not deter them.” Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith, accused the Polish government of “failing to halt the methodical liquidation of its Jewish population.”

Students returning from the March of the Living trips to Auschwitz and other camps gave interviews in which they stated, “At the risk of sounding prejudiced ... if it was not for the Polish people, the Holocaust would not have happened.” There was no reaction from the CBC radio host. Should we be surprised? Writing in *The Canadian Jewish News*, Rabbi Reuven P. Bulka of Ottawa, a March of the Living student chaperon, asked rhetorically: “... how can one go to Poland, to the country so steeped in anti-Semitism that it eagerly cooperated with the Nazis in the cold-blooded murder of the Jews?”

More recently, New York State Assemblyman Dov Hikind launched a website called PolandMurderedJews.com, which calls Auschwitz a “Polish death camp” and blames Poles for the crimes committed there. The problem persists and raises its ugly head time and time again precisely because it is the result of a deep-seated bias.

Reporting from Warsaw on February 13, 2019, Andrea Mitchell, NBC News Chief Foreign Affairs Correspondent, stated that the 1943 Warsaw ghetto uprising was “against the Polish and Nazi regime.” Yes, in that order, with a non-existent Polish regime taking precedence over the acknowledged architects of the Holocaust who, for some reason, are not identified by their nationality. Yet another example of U.S. mainstream media endorsing the Jewish nationalist narrative and revisionist Holocaust history.

This was followed by Israeli Foreign Minister Yisrael Katz resurrecting former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir’s scandalous remarks that Poles imbibe anti-Semitism with their mother’s milk. Clearly, Katz was playing into the

widespread, albeit not universal, appeal that such statements have among Israelis and Jews.

These examples can be multiplied. British historian Norman Davies has called this relentless campaign of defamation “one of meanest of modern historical controversies.” After having abetted this campaign over the years, the mainstream media are now pointing their fingers at Poland as the culprit for taking steps to correct this hatefest.

## **Prominent Historians Try to Correct the Narrative**

To their credit, some prominent historians spoke strongly against these defamatory allegations. Yisrael Gutman, who lived through the German occupation and was then chief historian at Yad Vashem, stated in blunt and unequivocal terms, “all accusations against the Poles that they were responsible for what is referred to as the ‘Final Solution’ are not even worth mentioning. Secondly, there is no validity at all in the contention that ... Polish attitudes were the reason for the siting of the death camps in Poland.” He went on to point out that “Poland was a completely occupied country. There was a difference in the kind of ‘occupation’ countries underwent in Europe. Each country experienced a different occupation and almost all had a certain amount of autonomy, limited and defined in various ways. This autonomy did not exist in Poland. No one asked the Poles how one should treat the Jews.”

On another occasion, Yisrael Gutman went on to say: “There was no such thing as Poles taking part in the extermination of the Jewish population. There were minor exceptions where the (Polish) ‘Blue’ police and the Jewish police took part in the expulsion and extermination of Jews.” Two points need to be addressed here: (1) the extent of the participation of these two police forces; and (2) what to call these “participants.”

Every occupied country had to maintain a local police force, as did Jewish ghettos created by the Germans. The Polish police were not a “Polish agency”; they operated under strict German orders. Prewar policemen were required to report for duty under pain of death, and desertion could result in the arrest of family members. Their primary function was performing policing duties, which over time was expanded to include enforcing curfews, collecting food and labour quotas, guarding the perimeter of ghettos. The membership of the Polish police was relatively small, under 15,000 men, or about 0.00065% of the Polish population.

Although infiltrated by the Polish underground, the Polish police force was regarded as collaborators by Polish society. A number of policemen were executed by the Polish underground as traitors, and many more were punished after the war. Yet their record cannot be cast solely in black colours. Scores of

survivor testimonies mention assistance received from Polish policemen, and a number of policemen have been recognized as Righteous by Yad Vashem.

No one recruited Polish policemen to help the Germans liquidate ghettos and hunt for Jews in the countryside, but that's what many of them were ordered to do from 1942 on. The Polish police, however, were not directly involved in the deportation operations from any of the larger ghettos. Raul Hilberg, the preeminent Holocaust historian, stated: "Of all the native police forces in occupied Eastern Europe, those of Poland were least involved in anti-Jewish actions. ... The Germans could not view them as collaborators, for in German eyes they were not even worthy of that role. They in turn could not join the Germans in major operations against Jews or Polish resistors, lest they be considered traitors by virtually every Polish onlooker. Their task in the destruction of the Jews was therefore limited."

The same cannot be said of the police forces of France or Norway, for example. In Norway, over 90 percent of the Jews who did not manage to flee across the border to Sweden were caught by the local police, handed over to the German authorities and sent to their death in Nazi German camps. Only about 40 Jews survived in hiding. So how many Norwegians actually helped Jews? Perhaps several hundred out of a population of 3 million? How often do we hear about any of this in the media? Are Norwegians as a nation accused of co-responsibility for the Holocaust?

Poland's Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki has been assailed for "escalating" matters because he mentioned Jews among those who perpetrated crimes against Jews during the Holocaust. He was even accused of equating Jewish collaborators with the Nazis, even though he mentioned Polish "perpetrators" as well. That simplistic take is reading far too much into what he said. Morawiecki's statement, which is easily available, reads in part: "Each crime must be judged individually, and no single act of wickedness should burden with responsibility entire nations, which were conquered and enslaved by Nazi Germany. ... Attempts to equate the crimes of Nazi German perpetrators with the actions of their victims – Jewish, Polish, Romani, among others – who struggled for survival should be met with resolute, outright condemnation."

Morawiecki's terse factual statement was no different than what Yisrael Gutman stated (above) and what many Jewish eyewitnesses, including Emanuel Ringelblum, the chronicler of the Warsaw ghetto, reported. The Yad Vashem website also tells us in rather blunt terms that, in the summer of 1942, the Jewish police were "made responsible for gathering Jews for deportation during the mass deportations from Warsaw to Treblinka." In the course of two months, more than 250,000 Jews were deported.

While justifications are now advanced to try to exonerate the 2,000 Jewish policemen involved, Jews who witnessed those events have written scathingly

about their role and their brutal behaviour. Does calling them “participants” rather “perpetrators” change anything? Moreover, it ignores the larger context. The average person will ask, how were the Germans able to accomplish this? Someone must have assisted them. The fallout from being silent or unclear about such matters is that the blame inevitably shifts onto someone else: “the Poles” become responsible.

There is one other point that must be mentioned. It was the Polish underground that first brought news of the Holocaust to the Polish government exiled in London. The Polish government in turn informed an incredulous world and voiced its strongest possible condemnation of this horrendous crime. Historian Walter Laqueur’s book *The Terrible Secret: The Suppression of the Truth About Hitler’s ‘Final Solution’*, merits reminding:

The Polish underground played a pivotal role in the transmission of the news [of the Holocaust] to the West. ... Most of the information about the Nazi policy of extermination reached Jewish circles abroad through the Polish underground. ...

The Polish case is very briefly that they did what they could, usually at great risk and in difficult conditions. If the news about the mass murders was not believed abroad this was not the fault of the Poles. It was, at least in part, the fault of the Polish Jews who, in the beginning, refused to believe it; it was also the responsibility of the Jewish leaders abroad who were initially quite sceptical. ...

The Polish Government was the first to alarm the Allied governments and world public opinion but it was accused of exaggeration. Even after it had been accepted in London and Washington that the information about the mass slaughter was correct, the British and US governments showed much concern that it should not be given too much publicity.

Nothing was done to stop the genocide.

## **False Claims and Escalating Rancour**

All to no avail. Fast forward to 2018. The recent statements made by Yair Lapid, a prominent Israeli centrist politician with no family connection to Poland, are a textbook example of the convergence of the various canards that are out there. In a series of tweets Lapid proclaimed, “I utterly condemn the new Polish law which tries to deny Polish complicity in the Holocaust. It was conceived in Germany but hundreds of thousands of Jews were murdered without ever meeting a German soldier. There were Polish death camps and no law can ever change that.” To which he added a personal note: “I am a son of a Holocaust survivor. My grandmother was murdered in Poland by Germans and Poles.”

Both Lapid’s grandmothers, it turns out, survived the war: one in Budapest, the other in Palestine. Lapid later clarified what he meant. “My father’s grandmother, Hermione, was arrested by the Germans in Serbia. She was sent to Auschwitz,

where she was murdered in the gas chambers. Why did she make that long journey to her death? Why were most of the camps set up in Poland? The Germans knew that at least some of the local population would cooperate.”

Yair Lapid’s message couldn’t have been any clearer: Poles are co-responsible for the Holocaust, including the death camps themselves. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance has condemned the notion of Polish responsibility for the death camps as “Holocaust distortion,” which includes “Attempts to blur the responsibility for the establishment of concentration and death camps devised and operated by Nazi Germany by putting blame on other nations or ethnic groups.” (Internet: <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/working-definition-holocaust-denial-and-distortion>) Calling it “distortion” in Lapid’s case is really an understatement, since he goes much further than that. The notion that hundreds of thousands of Jews were murdered without ever meeting a German soldier is sheer fantasy.

Not to be outdone Jack Rosen, President of the American Jewish Congress, assured that Yad Vashem “makes clear that without the complicity, whether direct or indirect, of ordinary Poles, the Nazi extermination of three million Polish Jews would not have been possible. The term ‘Polish death camps’ may not be technically correct, but the vast majority of Nazi death camps in Europe were built on Polish soil.” (*Haaretz*, February 25, 2018) As we shall see, Yad Vashem made no such charge. Afterwards, Rosen upped the ante and went so far to allege, “not only that the [Polish] government did not defend beleaguered Jews, but in many cases was an active partner in their destruction on an industrial level.” (*Jerusalem Post*, July 16, 2018) How – one has to wonder – can an organization like this have a Holocaust confabulator at its helm?

Unfortunately, such statements are endemic among well-educated members of the Israeli government and Jewish anti-defamation organizations. Gideon Meir, an Israeli diplomat stated: “The Germans wouldn’t have built the camps in Poland without the corporation [sic] of the polish [sic] people.” (November 25, 2019, Internet: <https://wpolityce.pl/polityka/474503-byly-ambasador-izraela-klamie-ws-polakow>) Dr. David Rakowski, a member of the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Senate, stated: “The Poles’ complicity in the mass murders of European Jewry easily allowed the Nazis to operate concentration and death camps because of the rampant anti-Semitism of the majority of the Polish population at the time.” (National Post, November 16, 2019)

Symptomatically, a number of Jews blitzed an Auschwitz State Museum social media site with tweets after Chancellor Angela Merkel’s visit on December 6, 2019, in which she spoke unequivocally of German responsibility for Auschwitz. (“We must remember the crimes that were committed here and name them clearly,” Merkel said during a ceremony also attended by the Polish prime minister, Mateusz Morawiecki. “I feel deep shame given the barbaric crimes that were committed here by Germans,” she added.) Howard Lowy accused the

Museum of hiding Poles' responsibility for the Holocaust when talking about the Auschwitz camp: "I have noticed @AuschwitzMuseum is always careful to lay specific blame on 'German Nazis.' It's a reflection of the official Polish government line that Poles, themselves, were not responsible. This disturbs me as the relative of many Auschwitz victims and survivors." WoMen Fight AntiSemitism, a U.S.-based Zionist organization, seconded Lowy, accusing the Museum of being a front for Polish revisionism, which downplays the country's role in operating the infamous death camp: "Yes, absolutely. And Poles were not complicit in any activity re #Auschwitz. You can smoke, drink, mediate, fornicate, masticate, masturbate & flagellate till the lunatics go home and your sham, of an account will still be forging untruths and #Holocaust denial. Polish propaganda." McKay Smith, a US Department of Justice attorney, got into the fray, going so far as to publicly and privately threaten a Museum employee on Twitter. Afterwards, he deleted one of his bizarre tweets where he accused the Museum of siding with Holocaust deniers." ("I will come after you': US Department of Justice attorney threatens Auschwitz Museum for 'blocking Jewish women on Twitter and harassing his followers'," December 14, 2019, Internet: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7793591/US-Department-Justice-attorney-threatens-Auschwitz-Museum-blocking-Jewish-woman-Twitter.html>; "US Department of Justice lawyer 'threatened Auschwitz Museum employee'," December 21, 2019, Internet: <https://polandin.com/45889898/us-department-of-justice-lawyer-threatened-auschwitz-museum-employee>)

Some rabbis also felt the need to join these "debates" with their insights and teachings. Rabbi Zev Friedman, the dean of two Jewish religious high schools in New York State wrote unabashedly: "Many [Jews] believe that the major killing camps were specifically located in Poland – because it was fertile ground for antisemitism, and it was thought that the murder of Jews would be readily accepted there." (*The Algemeiner*, February 25, 2018) The good rabbi called for a Jewish economic and travel boycott of Poland.

Rabbi Menachem Levine, from an Orthodox synagogue in San Jose, California, also railed relentlessly against Poland and the Poles in the *Washington Times* (February 20, 2018):

Yad Vashem makes it clear that it was Poles who made the Nazi Holocaust in Poland possible. Without the cooperation of the local citizenry, sometimes passively observing and many times enthusiastically supportive, a program of mass murder would have been impossible. ...

Nearly all of the death camps in occupied Europe were built in Poland. There were no crematoria or gas chambers in occupied France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Greece, Bulgaria, Luxembourg, Norway, Denmark, Czechoslovakia or any other nation invaded by Nazi troops. Auschwitz, Birkenau, Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor, Treblinka and others were built in Poland. Why?

The answer is that the Nazis knew that Poland had been anti-Semitic for centuries and the Germans were convinced that the Poles would not

protest against death camps for Jews on their soil. As history shows, they were correct. ...

Poland ... both allowed and assisted in the Holocaust.

It is important to note that those making these false and inflammatory claims are not on the fringes of society – they are respected public and community figures. Yair Lapid stands a good chance of becoming Israel's next prime minister. These views have entered into the mainstream. While surely not universal, such views are widespread. Unfortunately, they are far too frequent to be ignored or simply dismissed as inconsequential. There is no shortage of forums that welcome them.

Just when one might have thought that a measure of restraint was in order, on his trip to Poland to accompany March of the Living, Israeli President Reuven Rivlin inflamed relations with Poland again with his obscene remarks that tried to shift the blame for the death camps and the Holocaust itself onto Poland and the Poles (as reported in *Haaretz* and the *Jerusalem Post*): “The country of Poland allowed the implementation of the horrific genocidal ideology of Hitler. ... Not for nothing we describe the death camps as the camps of Nazis and their helpers ... we cannot deny the fact that Poland and Poles lent a hand to the annihilation” of Jews.

Rivlin's message was not lost on impressionable young Jews who bore posters proclaiming “This is a Polish concentration camp.” The organizers of the March did nothing to stop this or to distance themselves from it. The photos were published in Ynet News.com shamelessly, without any adverse comment.

<https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-5230368,00.html>



Arguably, remarks like those made by Lapid and Rivlin are every bit as reprehensible as Holocaust denial, which is punishable by imprisonment in 16 European countries and Israel. Yet, incredibly, no one suffers any consequences for voicing them. The lack of an immediate and firm reaction is both troubling and puzzling. Where is the media outcry? Why is no one called to task? Compare this to the reaction to Prime Minister Morawiecki's use of just one word. Why the double standard?

American neo-conservatives also felt the need to endorse Lapid's brand of historical "correctness" (read: "fiction"). An April 3, 2018 editorial in the Washington-based *Weekly Standard* that trashed Poland's new law also claimed that "Polish Jews were rounded up and sent to death camps in the 1930s with the help of a sizeable number of Polish elites." Apart from the total nonsense of that contention, those esteemed editors don't even know the most basic facts about the Nazi German death camps: they did not start operation until December 1941. Sadly, that is the level of discourse the coverage of Poland's anti-defamation law has resulted in. Elite publicists evidently believe the veracity of William Styron's 1979 novel, *Sophie's Choice*, in which a fictitious Fascist professor at Kraków's prestigious Jagiellonian University, one Zbigniew Bieganski, is credited with authoring a pamphlet advocating the extermination of the Jews that allegedly inspired the Final Solution.

## **Muted Response of Holocaust Educational Institutions**

To its credit, Yad Vashem has disowned or distanced itself from the most outrageous claims, though not nearly in strong enough terms. After all, some of these outspoken teachers point to Yad Vashem as their inspiration. In its Position Paper on Recent Holocaust-Related Polish Legislation (February 15, 2018), Yad Vashem stated:

One issue is the opposition to calling the concentration and death camps in Poland in World War II "Polish" camps. This is a justified and obvious demand: These were German camps on occupied Polish soil. No serious academician, politician or government objects to this Polish demand. Certainly, the State of Israel and its representatives have repeatedly, and for many years, expressed support for this position, including in relevant international forums. For example, in 2006 Yad Vashem worked with Polish authorities to ensure that UNESCO's official terminology to describe the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp would express its status as a German concentration and extermination camp.

We note that there could be no act of "the Polish State" on Polish soil during the War, because Poland was occupied and terrorized by a foreign power. There was an underground anti-German political and military presence, that of course could not act as an open government. The Polish government-in-exile had only limited control over the underground.

Contrary to many other countries under Nazi rule during WW II, there was no Polish collaborationist government exercising political collaboration with Nazi Germany.

Unfortunately, Yad Vashem's current statement lacks the clarity and forcefulness of Yisrael Gutman's pronouncements – set out above – when he was that institution's chief historian. Moreover, Yad Vashem compromised itself when it was revealed, during the heated polemics, that one of its exhibits showed a photograph of guards surrounding the Łódź ghetto who were misidentified as "Polish police." It is trite knowledge that there were no Polish policemen in that part of occupied Poland, which was incorporated directly into the Reich. The guards outside the ghetto were German, and the police inside that ghetto were Jewish. Why this blurring, if not shifting, of responsibility for the crimes of the Holocaust?

After much media lashing of Poland's efforts to correct this false information, with some outlets even accusing Poles again of Holocaust denial, near the end of Yad Vashem announced that it had changed the caption by removing the reference to Polish policemen. "Our historians checked, and following their recommendation, we corrected it," their spokesperson said. *Haaretz* reported that this was done following "Polish pressure." Hardly. Surely, a leading Holocaust research and education centre should insist in historical accuracy.

Characteristic of the level of knowledge and mindless rhetoric of critics of Poland, a group of 50 U.S. Congressmen, spearheaded by Ro Khanna and David N. Cicilline, cited the Polish protest against this exhibit – and not the malicious exhibit itself! – as an example of "state-sponsored Holocaust denial and anti-Semitism," and claimed that Poland had passed a law "glorifying Nazi collaborators and denying the Holocaust." In their public letter to the Department of State, they went on to demand a "strong response" from the U.S. government.

There is also a surprising lack of clarity regarding the consequences Poles faced for helping Jews. Yad Vashem considers all Righteous Gentiles as having "risked their lives." It thus ignores the immensely disparate treatment rescuers faced in various countries. In occupied Poland, any form of help, as well as not reporting a Jewish fugitive to the authorities, was punishable by death. This was not an idle threat. At least 800 Poles, often entire families, were killed by the Germans for helping Jews.

In many countries, such as Italy, Denmark, France, and even Germany itself, there was no punishment for helping Jews. In the Netherlands, sheltering Jews could result in a short prison term of up to three months, but in practice nothing happened in many cases when rescuers were caught or denounced. These significant differences get blurred when we simply talk about risking one's life.

István Deák, a prominent U.S. historian, made this very point years ago, but it merits repeating:

The penalty for assisting or even trading with a Jew in German-occupied Poland was death, a fact that makes all comparisons between wartime Polish-Jewish relations and, say, Danish-Jewish relations blatantly unfair. Yet such comparisons are made again and again in Western histories – and virtually always to the detriment of the Poles, with scarce notice taken of the 50,000 to 100,000 Jews said to have been saved by the efforts of Poles to hide or otherwise help them ... one must not ignore the crucial differences between wartime conditions in Eastern and Western Europe.

The Yad Vashem count of 7,850 Righteous Poles (as of January 1, 2018 and growing) is but the tip of the iceberg. Historian Gunnar Paulsson, the author an important monograph, *Secret City: the Hidden Jews of Warsaw, 1940–1945*, estimated that there were 27,000 Jews hiding in Warsaw. These Jewish fugitives relied on about 50–60,000 people who provided hiding places and another 20–30,000 who provided other forms of help. Helpers outnumbered hunters by about 20 or 30 to one. Paulsson compares conditions in Warsaw favourably with those in the Netherlands.

Historian Władysław Bartoszewski, who was a member of the wartime Council for Aid to Jews and became an honorary citizen of Israel, has estimated the number of Polish helpers to be in the range of 300,000. (There were some 24 million Christian Poles in 1939, at least 2 million of whom perished during the war and 3 million were deported or imprisoned.)

While no one can be excused for harming Jews, and regrettably there were many such cases, honest survivors who were rescued by Poles have gone on record to state: “I do not accuse anyone that they did not hide or help a Jew. We cannot demand from others to sacrifice their lives. One has no right to demand such risks.” A Polish Jew who often put this question to Jewish survivors stated, “The answer was always the same and it is mine too. I do not know if I would have endangered my life to save a Christian.” Roman Frister, a prominent Israeli journalist, wrote even more starkly: “Would I have behaved any differently? I knew the answer to that, too. I wouldn’t have lifted a finger. Everyone was equally intimidated.” How often do we encounter this kind of sensitivity among writers today who did not live through those times? Who are they to judge?

Historian Yisrael Gutman, a Warsaw ghetto fighter and Auschwitz prisoner, stated:

Sometimes I hear Jews accusing the Poles of deliberately not helping them even though they could have done so. Such observations are expressions of pain, which eclipse a sensible attitude. More could certainly have been done to save Jews, but the Poles in the conditions of the occupation could not fundamentally have changed the fate of the Jews. ... I shall permit myself to say more – there is no moral imperative which demands that a

normal mortal should risk his life and that of his family to save his neighbour. Are we capable of imagining the agony of fear of an individual, a family who selflessly and voluntarily, only due to an inner human impulse, bring into their home someone threatened with death?

Only in Poland did the Germans impose such draconian punishments (i.e., death) for helping Jews. Yet despite that, Poles constitute the largest number of “Righteous.” ... I too, at first, accepted these negative stereotypes as truth: Collaborators, blackmailers, neighbours who wouldn’t help. That’s what was said in all articles, in books. But when Yad Vashem published its *Encyclopedia of the Righteous* – of which I was the editor – I was forced to examine this again through the stories told by Jews who were saved. I don’t change my opinions readily, but these testimonies brought about a diametrical change in opinion. ... Gradually, they (i.e., Israelis) are learning about this. It enables them to see Poles as real people, made of flesh and blood. The same as Jews. In the archives of Yad Vashem I found testimonies of such deeds, deeds that I myself would not be able to do. And that disturbs my peace. It was a trial, a test of one’s humanity. Would we pass this test if placed in that situation? All of us – both Jews and Poles – we are only human. We are not saints. Yes, there were blackmailers in Poland. There were also heroes. People like Irena Sendler, of whom you may be very proud.

No-one in Poland defends the crimes of individual Poles committed against Jews, and non-Jews, during the Second World War. However, as Peter Hayes and other historians have pointed out, the vast majority of Poles had nothing to do with such crimes. Jan Grabowski’s claim that Poles were responsible for the death of some 200,000 Jews has been effectively challenged by Polish historians because it is not based on actual scholarly research. As such, it is essentially worthless, yet it is repeated by the media as fact. A recent in-depth analysis (“Another Look at Polish-Jewish Relations in Dąbrowa Tarnowska County”) has revealed that Grabowski’s statistical research for his book, *Hunt for the Jews*, regarding a small rural county, is also unreliable.

What is painfully evident from the outpouring of hateful statements about Poland and the Poles is that institutions like Yad Vashem and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum have a lot more work to do to accomplish their mission of educating the public about this dimension of the Holocaust.

### **What the Polish law says – and what it doesn’t say**

The purpose of Poland’s new anti-defamation law is not to whitewash Polish history or to shut down debate, as is alleged. The law should be read for what it says, and not be read into beyond recognition. The law cannot intend to accomplish something that, on its face, it cannot do.

The law is directed specifically at the following false claims: blaming Poland and the Poles *as a nation* for Nazi German war crimes and crimes against humanity

such as death camps and the Holocaust, *contrary to the facts*. That is the plain meaning of the law.

The law does not prevent anyone from writing or speaking about the actions of individual Poles or even specific groups of Poles during the Holocaust. Batya Ungar-Sargon, the opinion editor of the Jewish American journal *Forward*, made that very point in response to Ronen Bergman's audacious attack on Poland's Prime Minister Morawiecki, whom he called "a liar." "The thing is, Bergman had not understood the law correctly," Ungar-Sargon stated. "Bergman may discuss the individual Poles and even the group of Poles who betrayed his family with impunity."

Furthermore, the law explicitly excludes scholarly and artistic activity from its scope. Historians have nothing to worry about. Indeed, there has been a proliferation of publications and films in Poland dealing with problematic matters over the past thirty years. Despite all the shrill and gloomy rhetoric, they'll continue to appear with generous subsidies from the state.

Since only crackpots and unbridled bigots – such bluntness is surely justified in this case – allege Polish responsibility for Nazi German death camps or accuse Poland, then a non-existent state, of responsibility for the Holocaust, the one true bone of contention is whether *collective* responsibility for the Holocaust should be assigned to the Poles.

To do so would violate the principles the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance adopted when it set out what "anti-Semitism" entails:

- Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group

Why should Poles be subjected to a different standard than Jews?

Moreover, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance also labels as "anti-Semitism" any serious manipulation surrounding the facts of the Holocaust, including shifting the blame from the perpetrators onto others:

- Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust; denying the fact, scope, mechanisms of the genocide (Holocaust) of the Jewish people and who carried it out.

Poland's new anti-defamation law penalizes anyone "who otherwise grossly reduces the responsibility of the actual perpetrators of said crimes." It is thus not unlike Israel's Denial of Holocaust (Prohibition) Law, passed by the Knesset on July 8, 1986, which provides:

A person who, in writing or by word of mouth, publishes any statement denying or diminishing the proportions of acts committed in the period of the Nazi regime, which are crimes against the Jewish people or crimes against humanity, with intent to defend the perpetrators of those acts or to

express sympathy or identification with them, shall be liable to imprisonment for a term of five years.

Under the Israeli law, someone who questions Jan Grabowski's claim that Poles killed 200,000 Jews – repeated as gospel in the media – with the intention of defending Poles could, conceivably, be charged, convicted and imprisoned for five years for diminishing the proportions of acts committed against Jews. The defence of scholarly activity would not be available. Yet that potential application of the Israeli law has not given rise to any concern in the debate on Poland's anti-defamation law.

## **Conclusion**

Two courageous Israeli academics, Efraim Podoksik and Michael Kochin, penned a bold op-ed for the *Jerusalem Post* (on February 9, 2018), "For Poland's and our truth," where they stated, "It is repugnant to assign to an entire people the collective moral responsibility for the crimes of individuals committed without legitimate authority. Such reassignment of blame serves only those who wish to blur the distinction between the guilty and innocent, and thus taint the latter because of crimes of the former."

We full agree. Any discussion about Poland's anti-defamation law should start by trying to understand what the Poles' strongly felt concerns are and why they feel that way and examine carefully the background and the facts, rather than assigning devious motives based on one's own preconceptions and spewing extravagant allegations.

## **TEXT OF POLAND'S NEW ANTI-DEFAMATION LAW**

The proposed law modifies a previous law relating to the Institute of National Remembrance (namely, the Act of 18 December 1998 on the – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation (Dz.U. 1998 nr 155 poz. 1016)).

According to a communiqué of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, an example of such misattribution is the use of expressions such as “Polish death camps”.

The communiqué further states:

The amended act provides for a penalty, in precisely defined [circumstance]s, for the purpose of preventing intentional defamation of Poland. The final determination of a specific case will rest with the courts.

The provisions of the amended act [shall] not limit freedom of research, discussion of history, or artistic activity.

About responsibility for Nazi crimes, two additions to Article 55:

Article 55a:

1. [Anyone] who, in public and against the facts, ascribes to the Polish Nation or to the Polish State, responsibility or co-responsibility for Nazi crimes committed by the Third Reich, [as] defined in Article 6 of the Charter of the International Military Tribunal, Annex to the Agreement for the prosecution and punishment of the major war criminals of the European Axis, signed in London on August 8, 1945 [...], or for other offences which are crimes against peace [or] humanity or [that are] war crimes, or who otherwise grossly reduces the responsibility of the actual perpetrators of said crimes, is subject to a fine or [to] imprisonment for up to 3 years. The judgment shall be made public.
2. If a perpetrator of the act referred to in paragraph 1 has acted unintentionally, [such person] shall be subject to a fine or community sentence [(pl)].
3. No offense referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2 shall have been committed if the act was performed as part of artistic or scholarly activity.

The Institute of National Remembrance has itself come under attack in recent years for promoting a “nationalist” agenda. However, the facts don’t quite add up. While publishing books and holding conferences about the 1946 Kielce pogrom, the Institute has published nothing about the 1944 massacre of Polish civilians in Koniuchy, a crime of similar magnitude carried out by Soviet and Jewish partisans. Moreover, the investigation of that crime, unlike the speedy investigation of Jedwabne, has been stalled for 17 years. The Institute has also produced nothing about the crimes committed by the Ukrainian, Belorussian and Jewish minorities against ethnic Poles in Eastern Poland in September 1939. This list of shortcomings of the Institute’s inattentiveness to the “nationalist” agenda is by no means exhaustive.



## **From a Statement Issued by Yad Vashem**

January 27, 2018

“There is no doubt that the term "Polish death camps" is a historical misrepresentation! The extermination camps were set up in Nazi-occupied Poland in order to murder the Jewish people within the framework of the ‘Final Solution.’”

### **German Chancellor Angela Merkel**

“Without directly interfering in the legislation in Poland, I would like to say the following very clearly as German chancellor: We as Germans are responsible for what happened during the Holocaust, the Shoah, under National Socialism (Nazism).”

### **Germany's Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel**

“There is not the slightest doubt as to who was responsible for the extermination camps, operated them and murdered millions of European Jews there: namely Germans. This organized mass murder was committed by our country and by no one else. Individual collaborators do not change that.”

Poland “can be sure that any form of falsification of history, like the term ‘Polish concentration camps,’ will be unequivocally rejected and strongly condemned by us. This organized mass murder was carried out by our country and no one else.”

## **Joint Declaration Between the Prime Ministers of the State of Israel and the Republic of Poland**

Released June 27, 2018

WARSAW, Poland, June 27, 2018 /PRNewswire/ -- The Polish National Foundation applauds the historic joint declaration released today by Prime Ministers Benjamin Netanyahu and Mateusz Morawiecki. The full text is printed below:

"Over the last thirty years, the contacts between our countries and societies have been based on a well-grounded trust and understanding. Israel and Poland are devoted, long-term friends and partners, cooperating closely with each other in the international arena, but also as regards the memory and education of the Holocaust. This cooperation has been permeated by a spirit of mutual respect for the identity and historical sensitivity, including the most tragic periods of our history.

"Following the conversation between Prime Ministers Netanyahu and Morawiecki, Israel welcomes the decision taken by the Polish government to establish the official Polish group dedicated to the dialogue with its Israeli partners on historical issues relating to the Holocaust. It is obvious that the Holocaust was an unprecedented crime, committed by Nazi Germany against the Jewish nation, including all Poles of Jewish origin. Poland has always expressed the highest understanding of the significance of the Holocaust as the most tragic part of the Jewish national experience.

"We believe that there is a common responsibility to conduct free research, to promote understanding and to preserve the memory of the history of the Holocaust. We have always agreed that the term "Polish concentration/death camps" is blatantly erroneous and diminishes the responsibility of Germans for establishing those camps.

"The wartime Polish Government-in-Exile attempted to stop this Nazi activity by trying to raise awareness among the Western allies to the systematic murder of the Polish Jews.

"We acknowledge and condemn every single case of cruelty against Jews perpetrated by Poles during the World War II.

"We are honored to remember heroic acts of numerous Poles, especially the Righteous Among the Nations, who risked their lives to save Jewish people.

"We reject the actions aimed at blaming Poland or the Polish nation as a whole for the atrocities committed by the Nazis and their collaborators of different nations. Unfortunately, the sad fact is that some people – regardless of their origin, religion or worldview – revealed their darkest side at that time. We acknowledge the fact that structures of the Polish underground State supervised by the Polish Government-in-Exile created a mechanism of systematic help and support to Jewish people, and its courts sentenced Poles for collaborating with the German occupation authorities, including for denouncing Jews.

"We support free and open historical expression and research on all aspects of the Holocaust so that it can be conducted without any fear of legal obstacles, including but not limited to students, teachers, researchers, journalists and – with all certainty the survivors and their families – who will not be subject to any legal charges for using the right to free speech and academic freedom with reference to the Holocaust. No law can and will change that.

"Both governments vehemently condemn all forms of anti-Semitism, and express their commitment to oppose any of its manifestations. Both governments also express their rejection of anti-Polonism and other negative national stereotypes. The governments of Poland and Israel call for a return to civil and respectful dialogue in the public discourse."

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The Joint Declaration came under fire from various Jewish organizations and individuals as, allegedly, whitewashing Poland and the Poles. Marek Magierowski, Poland's Ambassador to Israel, exposed the double-standard inherent in such criticism by bringing to the fore the following compelling comparison.

Jerusalem Post  
February 26, 2019

**My Grandmothers, The War Survivors**  
by Marek Magierowski

On the final note, let me quote the German chancellor Konrad Adenauer and the historic declaration he made in the Bundestag on September 27th, 1951: "The overwhelming majority of the German people abominated the crimes committed against the Jews and did not participate in them.... There were many among the German people who showed their readiness to help their fellow Jewish citizens at their own peril."

The statement was painstakingly negotiated and finally agreed to by both the German and Israeli governments.

Let us see what would happen if I replaced the word "German" with "Polish" in the aforementioned sentences: "The overwhelming majority of the Polish people abominated the crimes committed against the Jews and did not participate in them.... There were many among the Polish people who showed their readiness to help their fellow Jewish citizens at their own peril."

This paragraph is now strikingly similar to one of the passages of the joint declaration of Prime Ministers Mateusz Morawiecki and Benjamin Netanyahu, signed in June 2018. I wonder why, in this specific context, the absolution of the "German people" is acceptable, whereas any mention of the "Poles helping Jews" provokes immediate uproar.

## Poland's Misunderstood Holocaust Law

*My government wants to ban accusations of Polish wartime complicity for the sake of honoring history.*

**BY MATEUSZ MORAWIECKI, PRIME MINISTER OF POLAND**

MARCH 19, 2018

World War II altered not only the fate of nations but also that of millions of families in Europe. From the viewpoint of Poland, it was the end of a multicultural, multiethnic world that had flourished for more than seven centuries. The borders of prewar Poland in the east included cities such as Nowogrodek, Rowne, and Stanislawow.

Nowogrodek was the birthplace of Adam Mickiewicz, one of the greatest ever Polish poets, who was personally involved in the process of creating a Jewish legion as part of his efforts to fight for Polish independence in the 19th century. Rowne was the birthplace of the mother of Israeli author Amos Oz, whose novel *A Tale of Love and Darkness* inspired actress Natalie Portman to make a brilliant movie about Israel's difficult beginnings seen through the lens of a family of Polish Jews. As for Stanislawow, it is a place close to my heart. My mother's family comes from this city, which is now called Ivano-Frankivsk and lies within Ukrainian borders.

The world my mother knew ended when Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia invaded Poland in 1939. In Stanislawow, my close family rescued Jews; the same happened in the city of Nawarzyce on my father's side. I grew up surrounded by these stories. They taught me that in the darkest hour Polish-Jewish bonds proved to be stronger than the unimaginable brutality of the Nazi German occupation.

This is the background for understanding my government's recently adopted bill dealing with the falsification of Polish history. It has a very simple aim: to protect the truth about World War II and about those who were truly responsible for it. It penalizes public accusations against Poland, contrary to all facts, of responsibility or complicity in Nazi German crimes. Attributing complicity in the Holocaust to Poland blurs the responsibility of Nazi Germany.

During World War II, Poland experienced a German- and Soviet-orchestrated genocide in which more than 6 million Polish citizens perished, half of whom were Polish Jews. Poland never created a government that collaborated with the Third Reich and never formed an SS division.

Instead, when the Holocaust started, Poland's government in exile endeavored to make the world hear about the tragedy of the Polish Jews and to convince the Allies to undertake appropriate action. The Polish Underground State not only created an organized platform to help Jews called the Polish Council to Aid Jews, known by its code name Zegota, but also punished by death those who helped Germans in murdering Jews. Meanwhile, the Home Army, the largest underground force in occupied Europe — 400,000 people strong, including members of my family — resisted the occupation. Graves of these brave Polish soldiers can be found in Siberia, Iraq, North Africa, Monte Cassino, France, the Netherlands, Germany, and Poland.

And even as the Nazi Germans made it punishable by death to hide or assist Jews, many Polish families engaged in this noble, and indeed heroic, enterprise. Hans Frank, the de facto ruler of Nazi-occupied Poland, once admitted that if he were required to print posters about every seven Poles who were killed, there would not have been enough wood in Poland to make paper necessary to produce them.

Having said all that, we must also remember that there were individual cases of Poles who collaborated with the Nazi Germans, as well as those who murdered Jews and other innocent people. This fact has never been denied in Poland and is acknowledged in our educational system. We must bear in mind, however, that each of these heinous crimes should be judged individually and that individual acts of wickedness should not burden with responsibility the entire nation, which was conquered and enslaved by Nazi Germany.

Only about 300,000 Polish Jews survived the war. This constituted as little as 10 percent of the prewar Polish Jewish population. Each one of those lost innocent lives was a tragedy, and the destruction of a nation on such a scale is heartbreaking. But those who did survive, in almost every case, depended on some sort of help from the Poles. Those Polish Jews who encountered Nazi Germans did not have any chance to survive.

In the 16th century, a famous Krakow-based rabbi, Moses Isserles, called Poland *aparadis Judaeorum*, a “paradise for Jews” — four centuries later, this paradise, in a tragic twist of fate, became the place where Nazi Germany built Auschwitz and Treblinka.

Using a phrase such as “Polish death camps” is a disgrace not only to Poland but also to the victims of Adolf Hitler’s state. Our bill has never been intended to deny the right of people who survived the Holocaust to speak about their personal tragedies or to limit any kind of freedom of research or artistic freedom.

But the truth remains that Poland decided to fight against Hitler and the Holocaust. Those individuals who disobeyed the orders of the Polish government in exile, and contributed to the Jewish tragedy, were criminals and should be condemned.

Not only Israel but Poland, too, is morally obliged to protect the memory of the Holocaust. We wish to be partners in these efforts, and no misunderstanding should ever lead to any conflict between our nations. We should never forget that the Holocaust was one of the greatest tragedies in the history of Poland.

Today, Poland is committed to the renewed flourishing of Jewish life in our country. The culture of Polish Jews is an inseparable element of our Polish heritage, of which we are deeply proud.

Pope John Paul II believed that anti-Semitism was a great sin and stood firmly against it. The Polish government is faithful to his teaching. At the same time, as someone who survived the war in occupied Poland, he stood strongly against blaming the country for complicity in Nazi German crimes and underlined the role that Poles played in rescuing the Jews while they were under brutal occupation.

Soon there will no longer be eyewitnesses to Nazi German crimes. It is our collective moral duty to transmit the lessons — and warnings — to our children.

## Recognition of Rampant Anti-Polish Sentiments

<http://thenews.pl/1/10/Artykul/365083.Work-needed-to-reduce-antiPolish-sentiment-Israeli-ambassador>

RADIO POLAND  
24.05.2018

### **Work needed to reduce anti-Polish sentiment: Israeli ambassador**

Work is needed to reduce anti-Polish sentiment in Israel and elsewhere, Israel's ambassador in Warsaw has said amid a recent strain in relations over an anti-defamation law.

A crisis triggered by the new Polish anti-defamation law has caused severe tensions between Jews and Poles, Anna Azari said, as cited by Poland's onet.pl online news service.

But she indicated in an interview with onet.pl that the law, although it has generated negativity, has not harmed the fundamentals of Polish-Israeli relations.

She signalled that the bedrock of bilateral ties remained intact, onet.pl reported.

Polish-Israeli ties became strained when the [Polish parliament earlier this year passed legislation](#) that could see a jail term imposed on anyone who accuses Poland of being complicit in Nazi German crimes during World War II.

Azari told onet.pl that opinions expressed in the Israeli press amid the spat have varied, "some being good, others being bad."

But overall "the crisis has unleashed demons, and not only in Poland," Azari said.

"We need to work to reduce anti-Semitism, but work is also needed for there to be less anti-Polish sentiment," she said.

"Anti-Polonism occurs not only in Israel, but also in Jewish circles outside Israel," she said, as quoted by onet.pl.

Ties built by people, not laws

When asked about a new US law on monitoring compensation for Holocaust survivors, Azari said she was not sure whether "relations can at all be built through laws."

"Relations should be built between countries and peoples, not by means of laws," she said, as quoted by onet.pl.

US President Donald Trump earlier this month signed the Justice for Uncompensated Survivors Today (JUST) Act. Under the law, the US State Department will report to Congress on what steps countries in Europe have taken to compensate Holocaust survivors and their heirs for property seized under Nazi German occupation and communism.

Polish Foreign Minister Jacek Czaputowicz has said that the law, which was previously adopted by the US Senate and Congress, is [unfair and "does not offer any legal instruments."](#)

Innovation team-ups

Azari also told onet.pl that her embassy was working with nongovernmental organisations in Poland to develop "cooperation between companies and people."

She cited team-ups in sectors such as "innovation and start-up" where she said "Israel has something to show off," onet.pl reported.

On June 13, a special "innovation train" will embark on a trip from Warsaw to the southern city of Kraków for almost three hours of debates and lectures on innovation in a joint project with Poland's Ministry of Enterprise and Technology, Azari told onet.pl. "Cooperation between Israeli and Polish IT companies is growing," onet.pl quoted Azari as saying.

The Jerusalem Post

February 9, 2018

## FOR POLAND'S AND OUR TRUTH

By Efraim Podoksik and Michael Kochin

***It is repugnant to assign to an entire people the collective moral responsibility for the crimes of individuals committed without legitimate authority.***

In recent days, a number of senior politicians published statements directed against Poland and its people in the context of Poland's alleged responsibility for the atrocities of the Holocaust. A bill is being advanced in the Knesset as a reaction to the legislation in Poland. In this situation, we feel obliged to distance ourselves from these irresponsible statements and put the historical record in order.

In World War II, the Polish nation fell victim to foreign aggression. For the fourth time in its history, Poland suffered division and foreign occupation, the cruelest of all. The Polish state was abolished and the Polish nation decapitated as its elite were systematically exterminated.

The Nazi ideology considered Poles to be a racially inferior people. During that period, millions of Poles lost their lives.

Yet, the Polish people never succumbed to the aggression, bravely fighting against the invasion and rebelling against the occupation. No Nazi puppet government was formed. The only legitimate representative of the Polish people was the Government of the Republic of Poland in exile – which acted to alert the world at a very early stage regarding the ongoing extermination of the Jews by Nazi Germany.

As in almost every area occupied by the Nazis, there were individuals who, from malice or avarice or fear, collaborated with the occupying power. Some of those collaborators assisted in the genocide against the Jewish people. These collaborators included both Polish Jews and Polish gentiles. Totalitarian oppression makes some ordinary men and women into heroes, but it also makes some into scoundrels and weaklings.

It is repugnant to assign to an entire people the collective moral responsibility for the crimes of individuals committed without legitimate authority. Such reassignment of blame serves only those who wish to blur the distinction between the guilty and innocent, and thus taint the latter because of crimes of the former.

For the last 30 years, after regaining full independence, Poland has developed a vibrant democracy. Like every democratic country, it conducts robust debates on a variety of issues. Naturally, there is a broad range of views about the propriety and wisdom regarding one or another piece of legislation. But it is not our task, as citizens of a fellow democratic state, to intervene in this debate or to teach another free country lessons in democracy.

The strong friendship between Israel and Poland in recent decades has been a good example of what the relationship between two democratic peoples should look like. We

should not allow unwarranted political opportunism to damage this friendship.

*Efraim Podoksik is a senior lecturer at the Department of Political Science of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.*

*Michael Kochin is a professor at the School of Political Science, Government and International Affairs of Tel Aviv University.*

<https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-blaming-poland-for-the-holocaust-is-unjustified-1.5788474>

**Haaretz**

February 4, 2018

Moshe Arens

## **Blaming Poland for the Holocaust Is Unjustified**

There is one crucial difference between Poland and the other nations of Europe that came under German occupation

The law passed by the Polish parliament, which calls for punishment of anyone blaming the Polish people for Nazi crimes, has stirred a debate about Poland's role during the Holocaust. The debate is colored by the memory of the rampant anti-Semitism that existed in Poland before World War II, the widespread anti-Semitism that continued in Poland throughout the war, and the continuation of anti-Semitic outbreaks after the war when it was discovered that not all of Poland's Jews had been exterminated during the Holocaust.

Yet it is important to differentiate between the behavior of individual Poles or groups of Poles and the actions of the Polish government-in-exile in London and the Home Army (AK) during the war.

The Polish government, which governed until the defeat of the Polish Army, and the government-in-exile which operated from London thereafter, not only did not collaborate with the Germans, but were engaged in fighting them until the end of the war.

The Home Army, under orders from the Polish government, was in contact with ZOB, a Jewish underground organization led by Mordechai Anielewicz in the Warsaw Ghetto and provided it with a limited quantity of pistols. A member of another Polish underground group delivered weapons and instructed ZZW fighters, the other Jewish underground organization in the ghetto, led by Pawel Frenkiel.

Polish socialist underground and the People's Army (AL) undertook a local action in support of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. As a matter of fact, Poles were the only ones to provide any assistance at all to the Warsaw Ghetto fighters. The Allied Powers, the U.S., Britain, and the Soviet Union, just ignored the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.

The German government, fully supported by the German people, perpetrated the Holocaust. In exterminating Europe's Jews, Germany was aided by the Romanian government. When in June, 1941 the Romanian army joined Germany in attacking the Soviet Union, the Romanian government ordered its army to wreak destruction on the Jewish population in the areas it occupied, including Odessa. It is estimated that the Romanians were responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Jews.

After the defeat of the French army, France's government collaborated with the Germans by sending their Jews to the death camps. So did the puppet Slovakian government and the Hungarian one.

Organized groups of people living in some of the areas that came under German control, actively and enthusiastically participated in the extermination of entire local Jewish communities. These were the Lithuanians, Latvians, and Ukrainians. Lithuanian and Latvian units under orders from the Germans in the Warsaw Ghetto forced Jews from their homes and herded them to the railroad sidings for transportation to Treblinka, during the months of the great deportations in the summer and fall of 1942. They were assisted by the "Jewish Police" under orders from the Germans.

Individual Poles reported Jews who tried to pass as Poles to the Germans, and surviving outside the walls of the ghetto was very hazardous because of such informants. In the Warsaw Ghetto, a Polish police (the "blue police") under German orders also assisted in keeping order and bringing Jews to the railroad cars that took them to Treblinka. [This statement is not accurate – see the

note below.] But the Polish government and the Polish underground armies did not collaborate with the Germans during the war. They fought the Germans.

That is the difference between Poland and the nations of Europe that came under German occupation. That may be the reason for the sensitivity of the present Polish government when it hears Poland accused of complicity in the Holocaust. These accusations are not justified. However, the law passed in the Polish parliament, making it illegal to cast any blame on Poles for the crimes committed during the Holocaust, is too far reaching and endangers free discussion and research about what happened on Polish soil during the Holocaust. It needs to be revised.

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**Note:** The Polish police was not directly involved in the Great Deportation in the summer of 1942. In addition to German SS and police units, the Germans employed Ukrainian, Latvian and Lithuanian policemen. The Jewish police – some 2,000 in number – played a pivotal role in that operation, as they were charged with task of rounding up at least 250,000 Jews. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's *Holocaust Encyclopedia* conceals that important information:

<https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005413>

Compare with the following article found on the Yad Vashem website:

<http://www.yadvashem.org/holocaust/this-month/july/1942-5.html>

“The Jewish police ... in the summer of 1942, were made responsible for gathering Jews for deportation during the mass deportations from Warsaw to Treblinka.”

<http://www.jpost.com/Diaspora/Setting-history-straight-Poland-resisted-Nazis-540092>

## The Jerusalem Post

January 29, 2018

### SETTING HISTORY STRAIGHT – POLAND RESISTED NAZIS

By Seth J. Frantzman

***Historical truths are a good start, and the truth is that Poland was one of the countries that sent large numbers of men and women to resist the Nazis.***

On September 1, 1940, a year after Nazi Germany invaded Poland, the German-appointed governor of Warsaw District renamed Pilsudski Square as “Adolf Hitler Platz.”

Eleven-year-old Julian Kulski wrote in his diary about that day: “A great wooden frame now covers the statue of Prince Poniatoski. No patriotic Pole attended the ceremony.” Poniatoski had been a famous Polish leader and close ally of Napoleon. Covering up his image and renaming the square was an attempt by Germany to erase Poland.

Today, Poland and Israel are involved in an angry controversy over a law that could punish those who claim Poland was responsible for Nazi crimes. “I strongly oppose it, one cannot change history and the Holocaust cannot be denied,” Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a statement. President Reuven Rivlin, Yair Lapid and others have harshly condemned the law.

However, Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki pointed out that “Auschwitz-Birkenau is not a Polish name and *Arbeit Macht Frei* is not a Polish phrase,” referencing the German phrase that “Work makes freedom” written above the entrance to the death camp.

The two sides seem to be talking past each other. Poland is not denying the Holocaust through a law designed to punish those who describe the death camps as Polish. The proposed law may be misguided and a bad way to go about dealing with history, but **Poland is right: It is not responsible for the Holocaust and the Polish people resisted Nazism valiantly, more so than many other countries that ran to collaborate.**

The Polish resistance was active from the early days of the Nazi occupation. Julian Kulski, who published his diary in 1979 and then again in 2014 as *The Color of Courage*, recalls how in May of 1940, slogans against the Germans began appearing by “*Polska Walczaca*” (Fighting Poland). German propaganda signs were torn down and burned by individual citizens. The Polish resistance was so spontaneous and unexpected that, Kulski wrote, Germans put up posters “calling on Polish people to stop killing the Germans.”

This history is often forgotten in our memory of the Holocaust. It’s not surprising. A few posters being put up and torn down pales in comparison to millions of Jews sent to death camps. But the posters were part of a much larger resistance. It was a resistance that also opposed the German crimes against Jews in Poland. “Today’s information bulletin carries the underground announcement that any participation by Poles in anti-Jewish actions is traitorous and will be punishable by death,” Kulski wrote on March 6, 1941.

Poland was subjected to the most vicious policies of the Nazi German regime. According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, between 1939 and 1945 at least 1.9 million non-Jewish Poles were murdered. In addition, up to 1.5 million Polish citizens were sent to Germany for slave labor. This is in addition to the three million Jewish Polish citizens murdered in the Holocaust. The destruction wrought on Poland was also extreme, with Warsaw razed to the ground in 1944 during the Polish Home Army uprising. The Warsaw Ghetto had already been destroyed during the 1943 uprising.

**Poland is right to be angry when it is made to appear that Poles were somehow**

**responsible for the Shoah.** Unlike most other countries occupied by Germany during the war, Poland did not provide a ready recruitment base for Nazi collaboration. For instance, the Waffen-SS recruited local units in Albania, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Latvia, Norway, Romania, Sweden and other countries. It didn't find recruits among Poles. According to a 1993 letter from the War Crimes Office in Ludwigsburg, an office that had collected material relating to Nazi war crimes in West Germany, "There was no Waffen-SS unit similar to the Latvian, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, etc. divisions that would have consisted solely of Polish volunteers." This account is published in Tadeusz Piotrowski's *Poland's Holocaust: Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918-1947*.

I recall reading *Maus*, the graphic novel by Art Spiegelman that shows Jews, illustrated as mice, being sent to their deaths. Poles are depicted as pigs in the novel. The novel's Jewish main character fights the Germans with the Polish army and is later sent to a series of concentration and death camps. *Maus* made me feel that Poland was somehow responsible for the Holocaust, or at least that many Poles collaborated in it. It was only years later, reading books like Kulski's that I realized, in fact, the opposite was true. Poland and Poles were major victims, alongside Jews. It's not a surprise that *Maus* encountered protests in Poland because the author depicted Poles as pigs. The German Nazis were depicted as cats.

History has an odd way of giving us the sense that Poles collaborated with Nazism, while whitewashing the real collaboration in Western Europe. We are often taught that Denmark saved the Jews. However it is often forgotten that an estimated 6,000 Danes volunteered for Nazi collaborationist units, including SS units like the SS Division Wiking and SS Division Nordland.

There were 40,000 Nazi volunteers in Belgium, according to George Stein's 1984 book *The Waffen SS*. And the Germans found willing collaborators in many other countries as well, where they had no problem staffing local units. In France, they had an entire regime under the Vichy government willing to help expel Jews and do their bidding. Almost everywhere in Europe, except for among some groups such as Serbs and Poles, there was distinct collaboration. By contrast, in most Western countries there was almost no resistance to Nazism. Compared to the Polish Home Army, which had hundreds of thousands of recruits to resist the Nazis, other resistance movements had trouble finding a handful of volunteers.

Charles Kaiser, who wrote a book on a family in the French Resistance, wrote for CNN in 2015: "Most Frenchmen were neither collaborators nor resisters; they just kept their heads down and tried to get enough to eat." He writes that French resisters were often seen as fanatics by their own countrymen.

In Poland, however, the resisters were not seen as fanatics, but as nationalists and the norm. Individual Poles may have collaborated and after the Holocaust in 1946 there was the infamous and despicable Kielce pogrom, but the record in Poland is one of resistance to Nazism.

**The Holocaust is too often used today as a political tool and rhetorical device.** Not only is it invoked almost everyday in Israeli political discussions, but its memory is abused throughout Europe and elsewhere. It is universalized or overly particularized, warped, and its victims forgotten. It serves political agendas.

Poland's decision to want to legislate how the Holocaust can be discussed is misguided. However, equally misguided is the anger directed at Poland and the distortion of history regarding Polish resistance. Yad Vashem, in a statement, said that the Polish law is "liable to blur the historical truths regarding the assistance the Germans received from the Polish population during the Holocaust."

Historical truths are a good start and the truth is that Poland was one of the countries that sent large numbers of men and women to resist the Nazis. If this whole controversy should have one effect, it should not be for chest-beating Israeli politicians to attack Poland but rather to look into this history and perhaps learn from it. One can oppose the Polish law and give thanks to the Polish people who stood against the Nazi menace in Europe's darkest hour. In that hour, in 1940,

when too many were welcoming the Germans quietly, the Poles were tearing down Nazi propaganda and storing weapons for the next round.

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<https://medium.com/@sethfrantzman/dispute-over-polish-law-feeds-anti-polish-hysteria-in-israel-and-online-b29bb796596c>

**The Jerusalem Post**  
February 2, 2018

## **Dispute over Polish law feeds anti-Polish hysteria in Israel and online**

By SETH J. FRANTZMAN

A dispute over a Polish law that would punish those who claim Poland was responsible for the Holocaust has led to an outpouring of hysterical anti-Polish bashing online. On January 30th I looked on Facebook and someone had shared an article about how the Polish President said something which seemed reasonable. He had insisted that while individuals committed “wicked actions” against Jews, there was no institutionalized role by the Polish state in the Shoah.

The rage on social media against the remarks were extraordinary. “Tell that to my grandparents” wrote one woman. “Tell it to my father, uncle and aunts.” Another suggested “boycott Poland.” Another woman posted a meme that says “Polish Death Camps,” claiming Poland was home to pogroms and anti-semitism and told the Polish state to apologize for the Holocaust. “Tell that to my mother’s aunt, uncle and cousins. Poland gave them a free all-expenses paid trip..... TO AUSCHWITZ,” a man wrote. “No people were more brutal.”

{Screenshot of anti-Polish comments on social media}

As the Polish law progresses the rage has grown. Some have taken joy at offending Poles online, repeating the term “Polish death camps” just to show that they can use “free speech” ostensibly protesting the Polish law. But the rage and anger is deeper than just manifestations of provocation. I wrote an article about it, but since then I have given it more thought as the comments keep flowing in.

Uri Avnery, the famed Israeli journalist, sent around an article on the subject on February 2nd. He wrote about a visit to Poland years ago about a visit to Warsaw with Rachel Avnery. “After coming home, Rachel happened to enter a clothes shop and hear the female owner talking with a customer in Polish. Still full of her discovery, Rachel asked the owner: ‘Did you know that the Nazis also killed a million and half non-Jewish Poles?’ The woman answered “Not enough!” Rachel was amazed. So was I.”

The story shows the degree of hatred for Poland and Poles that exists among some Israelis and some Jews. It is based on stereotypes, generalizations and memories from the 1930s. That the anger is pouring out again is simply because it has been hiding just beneath the surface for years. Deborah Lipstadt wrote in 2007 about the enduring myth “the Poles were worse than the Nazis.” She noted “Many people, Jews primarily among them, believe the balderdash that the Germans put the death camps in Poland because the Poles would be happy to see the Jews killed. They ignore the fact that to the Germans Auschwitz was German territory and was to be the site of a major German settlement.”

{One of many comments on Facebook (Screenshot) “ The poles were worse than Hitler.”}

She also recalls, "One person, who is well-informed and well read, found this notion of Polish non-complicity hard to grasp. Weren't they guards at Auschwitz? No, I said. Well weren't they part of the *Einsatzgruppen*, the mobile killing units? Wrong again."

Yet this false history remains. Its real pedigree could be claims made in the 1930s that Poland was preparing to exterminate Jews. In 1936 the Soviet politician Karl Radek made this claim. "What Poland is preparing for her Jewish population will exceed the cruelty of the German manifold," Radek said according to the JTA. "He declared that while the Jews were treated worse in Poland than in Germany, the world knew less about it." He also claims it would be difficult for Poles to commit the "utter annihilation" of 3,500,000 Jews."

In Israel even senior politicians such as Yair Lapid have continued to spread the claim that the death camps were built in Poland because the "Germans knew that at least some of the local population would cooperate." There is no evidence to support this claim. Most camps were actually built in German-run areas, not in Polish areas. As Lipstadt points out, the number of camps related to the size of the local population in Poland, where more than 3 million Jews lived. The camps were constructed and run by the Nazis.

However there is still much to the anti-Polish hysteria that must be challenged. Here is a list of some of the major issues.

### **The was no Polish state that could collaborate with Germany because Germany had invaded and occupied Poland**

A map published by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum shows the way Germany annexed most of Poland and administered it during the Holocaust. So there was no "Poland" that could work with the Nazis. The Polish government in exile actually helped bring information about the death camps to Jewish leaders outside Poland. The Polish nation resisted the Nazis in 1939 and continued to resist.

### **3 million non-Jewish Polish people were murdered by the Nazis**

Often forgotten in the claims of Polish collaboration is that Poles were the victims of Nazism alongside Polish Jews. They were one of the countries brutally suppressed by the Germans. An estimated 3 million non-Jewish Poles were murdered and up to 1.5 million sent as forced labor slave to Nazi Germany.

### **Text of part of the Polish law:**

#### **An Amendment to the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation**

About responsibility for Nazi crimes, two additions to Article 55:

Article 55a:

1. [Anyone] who, in public and against the facts, ascribes to the Polish Nation or to the Polish State, responsibility or co-responsibility for Nazi crimes committed by the Third Reich, [as] defined in Article 6 of the *Charter of the International Military Tribunal*, Annex to the Agreement for the prosecution and punishment of the major war criminals of the European Axis, signed in London on August 8, 1945 [...], or for other offences which are crimes against peace [or] humanity or [that are] war crimes, or who otherwise grossly reduces the responsibility of the actual perpetrators of said crimes, is subject to a fine or [to] imprisonment for up to 3 years. The judgment shall be made public.
2. If a perpetrator of the act referred to in paragraph 1 has acted unintentionally, [such person] shall be subject to a fine or community sentence [(pl)].
3. No offense referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2 shall have been committed if the act was performed as part of artistic or scholarly activity.

### **The Polish law should be read in full**

The text of the Polish law doesn't criminalize all critique of Poles during the Holocaust. It specifies "contrary to facts" as a part of the law. The law of course is the wrong way to legislate "facts," but nevertheless it should be read.

### **Poland had one of the largest resistance movements in Europe to Nazism**

Unlike in many countries that actively collaborated or had a local government allied with the Nazis, such as Croatia, France or Italy, Poland always resisted Nazism. Up to 500,000 people joined the resistance. Germany razed Warsaw during the 1944 uprising. Many Poles were sent to concentration camps alongside Jews. In addition there are more Polish Righteous Among the Nations than any other nation in Europe. That means many thousands risked their lives saving Jews. In one case I heard about from a friend a Polish family sheltered Jews and the Jews passed themselves off as Christians with forged papers. Later, during the Polish uprising of 1944 this Polish family and the Jews they were helping were all shipped to a concentration camp. They were all labelled "Christians" by the German Nazis. This shows how people not only helped save Jews, but suffered alongside them.

### **So why the skewed history?**

The Holocaust is often taught without sufficient reference to which countries collaborated and resisted. Increasingly it is also universalized and the Nazis are portrayed as not German Nazis, but rather a general "evil." The education tends to emphasize individual Jewish stories, which is a good thing, but it often ignores what was happening around the people who are highlighted. In this sense the experience of Anne Frank and Elie Wiesel is somehow made to seem the "same" without reference to the hows and whys. This is because sometimes it seems more convenient than mentioning the tens of thousands who volunteered for the SS in Austria, Belgium, Netherlands and the thousands who did so in Denmark, Norway and elsewhere. But this means countries like Poland that did not welcome Hitler or join the SS are not given sufficient credit. There is a historical difference between collaborationist countries, and those that resisted. Poland resisted. That doesn't mean there are no Poles who harmed Jews or that there was not anti-semitism in Poland. Much of the anger directed at Poland relates to memories about the period before and after. But there is no reason to lump that in with the Shoah and reduce the German Nazi responsibility.

In addition the family stories people have and the lingering anger and stereotypes against Poland are perpetuated. Eventually history becomes myth and myth becomes fact. This twisting of history allows people to make the outlandish claim that "Poles were worse than Nazis" or "Poland was worse than Hitler." It turns history on its head. But this is easy to do when Holocaust education doesn't both to differentiate between Hungary, Croatia, Poland, Latvia and France.

### **Lasting anger**

It appears many wounds from the Holocaust have not healed. That is reasonable. But what is unreasonable is the number of people spreading false history against Poland. This is because of a skewed attempt to whitewash Germany's record because Germany has supposedly taken responsibility, and portray Poland as the "problem" for "denying." But this warped sense flips history on its head. Poland is right to want the real history to be told and the story of Polish resistance and suffering under Nazism. Unfortunately too few people want to listen to the larger story.

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**Tweets from the same author, who is shocked at all the anti-Polish hatred he is observing in Israel:**

Over the last few days there has been an extreme outpouring of hatred in Israel and on social media against Poland over a law about the Holocaust; what's strange is that the comments aren't against the law, just hatred and blame for Poland and Poles  
<https://twitter.com/sfrantzman/status/958597069282926592>

And what's even more strange is the constant claim that the death camps were built in Poland are somehow the fault of Poland rather than the German Nazi occupying regime  
<https://twitter.com/sfrantzman/status/958597141315903489>

Yet the bizarre thing is to blame Poland, which was a victim of Nazism and claim Germany built camps there because of the local people; Israel's Lapid wrote at TOI  
<https://twitter.com/sfrantzman/status/958597173603655680>

It's all the more surprising because in other countries in the 1940s there were active collaborationist governments such as Vichy in France or Ustache in Croatia. Yet anger and hatred is reserved for Poland, not just about the law; but deep antipathy  
<https://twitter.com/sfrantzman/status/958597178947198976>

Is this because of bad education about the Shoah? Or is it about something deeper, anger that has sat quietly and is bursting forth with the law as a symbol of a larger issue?  
<https://twitter.com/sfrantzman/status/958597182080409608>

I find it difficult to believe if there was a similar law in Croatia or Hungary or elsewhere that there would be the same level of anger.  
<https://twitter.com/sfrantzman/status/958597185125396482>

## **POLISH TOURISTS ATTACKED IN ISRAEL**

On Sunday, January 28, 2018, a man approached a group of Polish tourists who were relaxing on the beach in Eilat. At first, the Poles thought that he wanted to offer them a guided tour to Jerusalem. Later, however, when the man learned that the tourists were Poles, he was in a rage. He started shouting words like "fucking Poles," "fucking your president," "a good Pole is a dead Pole." He kicked sand with stones in the direction of the Poles. The beach was not crowded, about a dozen people, but nobody reacted to the aggression. The man encouraged others who were present at the time of the incident to attack Polish tourists. When he left, the tourists returned to the hotel. They decided not to call the police.

## **POLISH EMBASSY IN TEL AVIV STORMED, THEN VANDALIZED**

Protestors stormed the Polish Embassy in Tel Aviv on February 8, 2018 to protest Poland's new Holocaust law. The demonstration was organized by the Yad Ha'azar Foundation, which runs a home for Holocaust survivors.

Swastikas and profanities were sprayed on the entrance to Poland's embassy in Tel Aviv on Sunday, February 18, 2018. The graffiti included anti-Polish slogans like "Polish same shit," "Polish shit" and "Polish shit murderer go fuck yourselves."

## **U.S. ONLINE "POLISH HOLOCAUST" CAMPAIGN**

The Ruderman Family Foundation released a video showing people saying over and over "Polish Holocaust" in defiance of the controversial legislation, and demanding that the United States suspend its ties with Poland. This story was reported on February 21, 2018. The video has been removed from YouTube because of its highly offensive content.

## Uri Avnery's Column

### "Not Enough!"

03/02/18

MANY YEARS ago, right after the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, I was asked to write a book about the events. Rachel took the photos, I wrote the text. The book, which appeared only in Hebrew, was called "Lenin Does Not Live Here Anymore".

When we visited Warsaw, we were astonished by the many places in the city with metal plates announcing "(Name) was executed by the Germans at this spot". Until then we had no idea that the Polish resistance had opposed the Nazis so fiercely.

After coming home, Rachel happened to enter a clothes shop and hear the female owner talking with a customer in Polish. Still full of her discovery, Rachel asked the owner: "Did you know that the Nazis also killed a million and half non-Jewish Poles?"

The woman answered "Not enough!"

Rachel was amazed. So was I.

We knew, of course, that many Polish Jews did not like the Polish people, but we were not aware of the intensity of this hatred.

THIS HATRED reappeared in full force this week.

The Polish parliament decreed that anyone who uses the words "Polish extermination camps" is committing a crime punishable by three years in prison. The right description, according to the Poles, is "Nazi extermination camps in Poland".

The rectification is quite correct. But in Israel, a storm broke out. What?! The Poles deny the Holocaust? Do they deny that many Poles helped the Nazis to catch and kill the Jews?

That is what many Israelis believe. Quite wrongly, of course. Poland never made peace with the Nazis, unlike several other European countries. The Polish government fled to France and then to Britain, from where they directed the Polish resistance. Actually, there were two Polish underground organizations, a national and a communist one. Both fought the Nazis and paid a heavy price.

If I am not mistaken, it was the Polish government in exile which transmitted to the Zionist leadership the first reliable information about the extermination camps.

Were there Polish collaborators with the Nazis? Of course there were, like in every occupied country. Without making any comparison, there are lots and lots of Palestinian collaborators in today's occupied territories.

The main non-German helpers in the extermination camps were Ukrainians, whose hatred for Russia led them to sympathize with the Nazis. That and their own deep-seated anti-Semitism, stemming from the time when the Ukraine belonged to Poland and Jews administered the estates for the Polish owners.

The Nazis did not really make a serious effort to gain Polish or Ukrainian cooperation. Hitler's secret plan was to exterminate or enslave all the Slavs too, right after the Jews, in order to create more Lebensraum for the German nation.

YET IT took less than 10 years from the end of the Holocaust for Israel to sign an agreement with the German state, while the hatred for Poland continues unabated.

Why?

Nobody ever asks the most obvious question: how come so many Jews, millions of them, came to live in Poland in the first place?

Centuries ago, when the Jews were driven out of Germany and other North-European countries, where did they go? Which European countries opened their gates for them?

Well, at the time Poland was the most open, even the most tolerant country in Europe. Fleeing Jews were welcomed and found a new home. The king had a Jewish mistress. An entire Jewish town grew up near Krakow, the center of Polish culture.

Honest disclosure: While my father's forefathers had come to Germany from the west, my mother's forebears had come from Krakow. My father, who had enjoyed a classical education, always insisted that our forefathers had come to the Rhineland with Julius Caesar (no evidence available), but my mother had to admit that her grandfather had come from Krakow, which before World War I was a part of Austria.

THAT POLISH-JEWISH Spring passed. What remained was the reality of a huge Jewish minority in Poland.

A minority that is radically different from the majority is always a problem. The Jews were different from the Poles in religion and culture, they spoke a different language (Yiddish). And there were lots and lots of them. Many millions.

So it was almost inevitable that between the two groups there sprang up a mutual distaste, which turned into mutual hatred. There were some pogroms. However, it seems that in modern Poland Jews lived in comparative comfort. They were organized politically and set up coalitions with non-Jewish minorities.

Masses of Polish Jews tried to emigrate to Germany. The German Jews, who despised them, put them on ships and sent them to the United States, where they prospered.

The classic German Jewish poet Heinrich Heine wrote a poem that goes like this (my own unauthorized translation): "Krapulinsky and Washlapsky, / Poles from the Polackei / Fought for freedom / Against Muscovite tyranny. // Fought with valor and with luck / finally managed to escape to Paris / Because to live, like to die, / For the Fatherland is sweet."

And further on, drunk in a Paris bar, one comforts the other: "Not yet is Poland lost, / Our women give birth, / Our virgins do so, too. / They will give us heroes!"

After the advent of Hitler, when German Jews started to arrive in Palestine, they found Polish Jews who had arrived there before, like Dovid Grün (David Ben-Gurion) from Plonsk. The German Jews were received by them with contempt and ridicule.

Polish anti-Semites were seen by the Zionists as natural allies in their effort to push the Jews towards Palestine. One episode, known only to a few: in 1939, a number of leaders of the Irgun underground in Palestine (to which I then belonged) had a brilliant idea: start an armed insurrection against the British rulers and set up the Jewish State.

Looking for assistance, and especially arms, they turned towards the anti-Semitic officers of the Polish army. The Irgun offer was simple: we shall help you to get rid of your Jews. You train them and provide them with arms, we put them on ships to Palestine.

The Polish general staff liked the idea, and training of young Irgun members in Poland actually started. The outbreak of World War II put an end to this adventure.

IT IS this convoluted relationship of many centuries that is now finding its expression in the Polish-Israeli clash of the last few days.

Many Israelis have been taught to believe that the Holocaust was a joint German-Polish enterprise, and that the ovens of Auschwitz were operated by Poles. After all, wasn't Auschwitz in Poland?

Was it an accident that practically all extermination camps were on Polish soil? (Actually it was an ideal location for the Nazis, especially after their invasion of the USSR. The Jews were there.)

I DON'T believe that this exposition of facts will help. The sentiments are too deeply entrenched. But what the hell.

<http://zope.gush-shalom.org/home/en/about/1177150070>

**Uri Avnery - peace activist, journalist, writer**

- founding member, Gush Shalom (peace bloc), independent peace movement (1993)
- former publisher and editor-in-chief, Haolam Hazeh news magazine (1950-1990)
- former member of the Knesset (three terms: 1965-1969, 1969-1973, 1979-1981)
- founding member, Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace (1975)

**AWARDS:**

The alternative Nobel prize (Right Livelihood Award), awarded by international jury, to "Gush Shalom, Uri and Rachel Avnery", Stockholm 7.12.01.

Carl von Ossietzky Prize (Oldenburg, Germany), 4.5.02

Lev Kopelev Prize (Cologne, Germany), together with Sari Nusseibeh, 16.11.03.

Leibowitz Prize for life achievement, awarded by Yesh Gvul, the soldier's peace movement, January 30, 2012.

"Lifetime Achievement Prize", awarded by the Tel Aviv Journalists' Association, Eilat, November 11, 2013.

"Worthy Citizen of Tel Aviv" Award, Municipality of Tel Aviv-Jaffa, May 15, 2016

## **FORWARD**

February 27, 2018

### **What Israel and Poland Are Really Fighting Over**

by Batya Ungar-Sargon

Earlier this month at the Munich Security Council, Israeli journalist Ronen Bergman caused a stir when he confronted Poland's prime minister, Mateusz Morawiecki. Poland has been grappling with the fallout of a controversial new law making it a crime to blame Poland for Nazi crimes, and in the question-and-answer session of a panel discussion, Bergman took to the microphone to offer a personal anecdote.

"Both my parents were born in Poland," Bergman said. "When the war started, they lost much of their families, because their Polish neighbors snitched to the Gestapo." Bergman's mother was able to save some members of the family, he went on, because one night she heard her Polish neighbors conspiring to give up her family to the SS.

"After the war, my mother swore that she will never speak Polish for the rest of her life, not even a single word," Bergman told Morawiecki. "If I understand correctly, after this law is legislated, I will be considered a criminal in your country for saying this." He then demanded to know the purpose of the law, to raucous applause.

The thing is, Bergman had not understood the law correctly. The law's language intentionally excludes from prosecution those who point out the actions of individual Poles during the Holocaust. As it is currently written, the law states, "Whoever accuses, publicly and against the facts, the Polish nation, or the Polish state, of being responsible or complicit in the Nazi crimes committed by the Third German Reich ... or other crimes against peace and humanity, or war crimes, or otherwise grossly diminishes the actual perpetrators thereof, shall be subject to a fine or a penalty of imprisonment of up to three years."

The law is certainly a little ambiguous. But it professes to penalize only statements that are factually inaccurate, like calling Auschwitz a "Polish death camp" or speaking of the "Polish Holocaust," which blames a nonexistent Polish government or a brutally occupied Polish people for the crimes of the Nazis. In other words, Bergman may discuss the individual Poles and even the group of Poles who betrayed his family with impunity.

Nevertheless, in a follow-up article Bergman doubled down. He wrote that after the Polish prime minister insisted (correctly) that there were no Polish death camps and no Polish concentration camps, but rather German Nazi death camps, his "eyes were filled with tears of pain and rage." For his mother, Bergman writes, the Poles were "worse than the Nazis." "From a historical perspective, I believe Mother was wrong," he explains. "Clearly, the Nazis were the ones who initiated the Holocaust, and they were the ones who built the death camps. But mother knew the Poles and this was her very personal and moral judgment of what had happened."

This distinction between historical truth and moral judgment is incredibly problematic. (Bergman did not respond to requests for comment.) And yet, both Bergman's inability to understand the danger of privileging a "moral" over a historical truth and his demand that the Polish prime minister answer for a bill that Bergman interpreted incorrectly are failures that have plagued the Israeli response overall to Poland's bill.

**In the Israeli press and among Israeli politicians, the discourse surrounding Poland's Holocaust law has been characterized by a fevered, hysterical pitch from day one.**

When the news first broke, Lahav Harkov, an Israeli reporter, wrote out the words "Polish death camps" 14 times in a tweet. Then the Simon Wiesenthal Center mulled a travel ban. And the Israeli Knesset voted to make the bill a form of Holocaust denial.

"The historical truth of the Jewish people is not for sale," Zionist Union Member of Knesset Itzik Shmuly declared.

The Polish response to these attacks was pretty disastrous. Harkov was subsequently flooded with anti-Semitic hate mail and death threats, as was anyone else criticizing the bill on Twitter. And the Polish prime minister responded to Bergman with the awful and false assertion that there were Jews among the perpetrators of the Holocaust.

The war of words then escalated. Labor Party leader Avi Gabbay said, "The blood of millions of Jews cries from the earth of Poland over the distortion of history and the escape from blame." Then Bergman went on Polish TV and repeated his statements about his mother telling him Poles are worse than Germans. Finally, there was the release — and subsequent removal — of a video by the Ruderman Family Foundation:

**Editor's note: The Forward captured the video before it was taken offline. The video clearly was produced with actors and not identifiable Jews in Poland, and is published here as a public service, so that our readers can understand the nature of this controversy.**

The video accused Poland of perpetrating a "Polish Holocaust" and had actors saying that they were willing to go to jail for talking about it. Then the actors said the phrase "Polish Holocaust" over and over and over.

The video horrified many Poles, including Polish Jews, who reached out to the foundation to ask it to take down the video.

And yet, it wasn't just fear that Polish Jews felt watching the video. It was also horror of another kind.

"I have to tell you, it killed me when I saw it," a Jewish woman who was born and lives in Poland, and asked not to be identified by name, told me. "I thought it was exactly like videos of far right-nationalists I personally felt ashamed."

\* \* \*

Poland's tiny Jewish community has had the unique distinction of being disgusted by both the Holocaust bill and the Israeli response to it, according to the Polish Jewish woman to whom I spoke. She believes the bill was a mistake, and called the Polish government's refusal to walk it back "childish."

But she told me that the Israeli press contributed to the lack of understanding and the heightening of emotions around the bill, as did Israeli politicians, whose response to the bill "was nothing to be proud of." "The reactions are just very disappointing on both sides," she said. "They are adding to this fire that's consuming regular people and it's consuming us — our sense of stability, our sense of security."

Since the bill was introduced, she has noticed an airing of troubling and even anti-Semitic views in the public sphere. And while she says that she and her fellow Polish Jews don't feel physically endangered, the bill has launched a very visible rise of anti-Semitic comments online and nasty

phone calls or emails to Jewish institutions. TV shows are now airing points of view that would have been unheard of a few years ago, she said, like false narratives about Jewish collaborators, which elide the reality of ghetto life.

Opinions considered beyond the pale for the past 25 years are now appearing on television and on the covers of magazines, like one she saw at the post office with a cover story headlined “Why Jews Have To Apologize To The Poles.”

“There were always people like this everywhere,” she said. “But they didn’t have a space in the media to speak up and now suddenly it’s there.”

And yet, despite the fear and discomfort, the woman told me that the Polish Jewish community does not feel abandoned or alone. They have allies in Polish society – many, in fact, and some of whom even support the bill while simultaneously opposing anti-Semitism. This week, for example, Polish President Andrzej Duda visited Krakow’s Jewish community center.

She, too, had complicated feelings about the bill. She opposes regulating history by law. And yet, she understood the impetus behind it.

“As a Polish Jew, I’m very attached to historical accuracy,” she explained. “Both narratives are my narrative, the Jewish narrative and the Polish narrative. As a Polish person, I care about what’s being said about my country, and as a Jew, I care.”

And when she sees the words “Polish death camps,” she is as horrified as any other Polish person.

“It hurts,” she said. “Being Polish Jews makes us alone in the sense that we are torn, we are in between.”

\* \* \*

Poland’s history during World War II is complex. True, the Nazis orchestrated the Holocaust. And yet, the work of Jan Gross and Jan Grabowski has shown that ordinary Christian Poles did participate in killing Jews, sometimes even of their own initiative. Anti-Semitism pervaded large parts of Polish society in the prewar era, and in some sectors it intensified during the war, says Amos Bitzan, a historian of modern European Jewish history at the University of Madison, Wisconsin. “This anti-Semitism, even if not genocidal, hindered efforts to save the lives of Jews, especially in combination with the mix of opportunism, desperate need, and fear that Nazi terror produced in Poland,” Bitzan told me.

And yet, Poles also suffered terribly under the Nazi occupation of their country, Bitzan says. Nazi rule in the parts of Poland annexed to Germany destroyed Polish society, not only through the genocide of 3 million Polish Jews, but also with policies aimed at Christian Poles, like the targeted murder of elites, food deprivation, forced labor and harsh reprisals against resistance.

This history is much less well known than the Holocaust. As Bitzan put it, “I can only imagine how painful it must be to face a world that is largely ignorant of this suffering, which resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands.” Still, he thinks the bill is a terrible idea, “totally counterproductive in terms of correcting this knowledge gap.”

It has already had a chilling effect on discourse; some of the Jews I contacted did not want to speak, even off the record, for fear of government reprisals, a shocking thing for a Jew to fear in 2018. Others have noted the connection between the bill and the rising nationalism in Poland. Perhaps most important, using state power to penalize speech is an infraction of civil liberties. But this is not the reason that so many Israelis opposed it. In fact, Israel has its own laws against

Holocaust denial. It's these laws that, in the wake of the Polish bill, Israeli Knesset members are now proposing to expand to include a five-year jail sentence for anyone denying or minimizing the role of Nazi collaborators, including Poles.

In fact, it is on the grounds that the Polish Holocaust bill constitutes Holocaust denial that Israelis, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, have opposed it.

In other words, the tension between Israel and Poland over this bill is a not a legal one but a *narrative* one. It is a tension over who is allowed to regulate the terms of speech about the Holocaust. Israel insists that it alone gets to ratify laws around Holocaust discourse, whereas Poland is insisting on its right to dictate the rules of engagement regarding its own past.

It's in this sense that there's an irony to the Israeli response to Poland's Holocaust bill. As Jews, we are uniquely positioned to understand how critical it is that one's national experience of the WWII is validated. By and large, we have succeeded at making Holocaust denial unacceptable in respected discourse, and the truth about the Holocaust is one we have successfully transmitted. Not so the Poles, whose fate has been to hear Jews privilege "moral" over historical judgment. In fact, one can easily imagine an alternate world in which Israel, and Jews more generally, understood what Poland was trying to achieve with its bill, and made helpful suggestions about how to take control of the historical narrative, as we Jews have done so effectively. Instead, the Israeli response has been fevered opposition to Poland's bill, and an insistence that only the Jewish state may decide what one may or may not say about the role Poles did and did not play in the Holocaust.

Understanding and compassion is what's needed going forward, rather than Israeli hysterics and Polish nationalism. Perhaps both can learn from us American Jews, who have managed to make Holocaust denial unacceptable through social — rather than state — pressure.

*Batya Ungar-Sargon is the opinion editor of the Forward*

<https://forward.com/opinion/395452/what-israel-and-poland-are-really-fighting-over/>

## The American Conservative

### The Injuries Done to Poland

That country's censorship law has attracted much criticism. But it's important to understand why the Poles feel the need for it in the first place.

By BEN SEXSMITH • February 27, 2018

One can be too naive about the “marketplace of ideas.” The power of rhetoric and the cognitive limits of our species ensure that there are no flawless means of finding let alone promoting truths. Still, I think it’s accurate to say the most damage to the reputation of the crank historian and Holocaust denier David Irving was done not by his prosecution and imprisonment in Austria but by the careful, devastating deconstruction of his work by genuine scholars.

On a practical as well as moral level, then, I disagree with prohibitions of historical ideas, from the ban on Holocaust denial that exists throughout most of continental Europe to the law against assertions of national complicity in the Holocaust that’s soon to take effect in Poland. Questions should be asked and answered without fear of punishment, and falsehoods should be contradicted, not prohibited. And while as a foreigner I accept the right of the Polish people to allow and prohibit whatever speech they like, I think it is misguided. Poland is strong enough to bear, and respond to, accusations against its national history. When, for example, Barack Obama lazily referred to “Polish death camps” in 2012, the then-president sent a letter of apology.

Nonetheless, one should be empathetic enough to appreciate the pain Poles feel when they are lumped in with the Nazis. Poland, after all, lost millions to Hitlerian oppression. *Generalplan Ost* aimed to eliminate the Polish people, and men, women, and children died in brutal massacres. At the time of the Warsaw Uprising, for example, tens of thousands of Polish civilians were butchered in the Wola district. As a reward for his work, the leader of the German soldiers—the psychopathic, pedophilic Oskar Dirlewanger—was nominated for the Iron Cross.

Poles did much to save Jewish victims from the Nazi genocide. More are members of the Righteous Among the Nations than men and women of any other country. There were Poles who collaborated with the occupiers, but that was the case wherever jackboots trod. There were hideous examples of anti-Jewish violence after the war, but they were by no means the national norm.

Poles have faced a series of colourful libels against their national character. The *Times* columnist Giles Coren once wrote a piece claiming the grandfathers of Polish immigrants “used to amuse themselves...by locking Jews in the synagogue and setting fire to it,” and responded to complaints with “F\*\*k the Poles.” It is inconceivable that a writer who used such slurs with regard to people of other ethnicities could maintain his influential and profitable career, yet Coren has. Kate Maltby, writing for the *Guardian*, claimed it was a disingenuous maneuver by the Polish government to take Prince William and his wife to Stutthof concentration camp rather than Auschwitz because the former was “initially built to imprison ethnic Polish leaders among the

resistance and intelligentsia.” Such is the ignorance of Western Europeans to Central and Eastern European suffering that Maltby was unaware that Auschwitz was also initially used to imprison Poles.

There has been a perverse compulsion among Western European and American commentators to suggest that Poland and other Central and Eastern European societies are bigoted and backwards. And criticisms of their governments have blurred into libels of their peoples. When a march took place in Warsaw on Independence Day last year, for example, Western commentators claimed that “60,000Nazis” — “fascists and white supremacists” to a man—had been marching. It was left to local commentators to observe that “neo-Nazis, white supremacists and overt fascists” had been “a small minority.”

Such hysteria has now erupted again. The American Jewish group the Ruderman Family Foundation released a video that featured men and women barking “Polish Holocaust!” and ended with the ludicrous demand that the United States, which is allied with Saudi Arabia and Qatar, sever ties with Poland. The American Jewish Committee condemned the video and it was retracted but it spoke to the need for a cooling of the rhetorical temperature. Historical wounds on both sides should be acknowledged and respected.

None of that is meant to soften my words against censorship. I believe most people see through the media hysteria and casual slurs, and that Poles need not fear their acceptance. Nor am I claiming that there are no ahistorical, chauvinistic perspectives in Poland—there are, including the MP who claimed that Jews were unanimous supporters of the Soviets, and asked if a single Pole had ever been saved by a Jew. (He perhaps was unaware that hundreds of the victims of Katyn were Jewish, and that when the Home Army opened the Warsaw Concentration Camp during the Uprising, many Jewish prisoners took up arms and joined the fight.)

Still, while defending the right to free inquiry and free expression, Westerners should acknowledge the injuries that have been done to Polish people, and avoid a patronizing and fearmongering perspective on their current political situation. Such a tone encourages defensiveness and does nothing in the service of the truth.

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The Jerusalem Post

## POLAND ISN'T THE ONLY COUNTRY CENSORING SPEECH ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

*Jewish organizations, including the Simon Wiesenthal Center, said for their part that they understand the Polish frustration with terms like “Polish death camps.”*

BY JTA

FEBRUARY 7, 2018

In 2015, Ukraine’s president signed a law whose critics say stifles debate on the historical record of World War II and whitewashes local perpetrators of the Holocaust.

Law 2538-1 criminalized any rhetoric insulting to the memory of anti-communist partisans. And it celebrates the legacy of such combatants – ostensibly including the ones who murdered countless Jewish and Polish citizens while collaborating with Nazi Germany.

The law generated some backlash, including an open letter by more than 70 historians who said it “contradicts the right to freedom of speech,” ignores complicity in the Holocaust and would “damage Ukraine’s national security.”

But as with similar measures in Europe’s ex-communist nations, the Ukraine law generated little opposition or even attention internationally — especially when compared to the loud objections to a similar measure in Poland that was signed into law on Tuesday by the president. The law had passed both houses of parliament in recent days. The United States and Israel joined historians and Israel’s Yad Vashem Holocaust authority in decrying the bill.

“The Ukrainian and Polish laws are similar, but in Ukraine’s case we didn’t see anything even close” to the avalanche of condemnations that Poland received, said Eduard Dolinsky, director of the Ukrainian Jewish Committee and a longtime campaigner against Holocaust revision in Ukraine. “I wish we had; maybe this law could have been stopped in Ukraine.”

To activists like Dolinsky, the singling out of Poland reflects the ongoing politicization of the debate on Eastern Europe’s bloody World War II history. They say the conversation is distorted by geopolitical tensions involving Russia, populism, ignorance and unresolved national traumas.

There are clear similarities between the Ukrainian and Polish laws, according to Alex Ryvchin, a Kiev-born Australian-Jewish journalist and author who has written about the politics of memory in Eastern Europe. “Both seek to use the legitimacy and force of law to enshrine an official narrative of victimhood, heroism and righteousness while criminalizing public discussion of historical truths that contradict or undermine these narratives,” he said. Yet, he noted, “The reaction to the Polish law has indeed dwarfed the response to persistent state revisionism elsewhere in Europe in spite of the fact that the rate of collaboration was generally lower in Poland than in Ukraine and Latvia.”

The Baltic nations of Lithuania and Latvia were pioneers in nationalist legislation that limits discourse about the Holocaust in their territories. Critics say these laws also shift the blame for the murder of Jews, which was done with local helpers, to Nazi Germany alone. They also seem to equate the Nazi genocide with political repression by the Soviet Union – which many in the former Soviet Union blame on Jewish

communists.

In 2010 Lithuania — a country where Nazi collaborators virtually wiped out a Jewish community of 250,000 — amended its criminal code, prescribing up to two years in jail to anyone who “denies or grossly underestimates” the crime of genocide or “other crimes against humanity or war crimes committed by the USSR or Nazi Germany against Lithuanian residents.”

Similar legislation in Latvia from 2014 imposes up to five years in jail for those who deny the role of “the foreign powers that have perpetrated crimes against Latvia and the Latvian nation,” without mentioning the involvement of Latvian SS volunteers in murdering nearly all of the country’s 70,000 Jews.

The denial of local culpability during the Holocaust is at the root of opposition to Poland’s law, which sets a maximum of six years in jail for “whoever accuses, publicly and against the facts, the Polish nation or the Polish state of being responsible or complicit in the Nazi crimes committed by the Third Reich” or “grossly diminishes the responsibility of the actual perpetrators.” On Tuesday, President Andrzej Duda said he would sign the laws (which he did later in the day), finalizing them, but also refer them for review by Poland’s highest court.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who in the past has been criticized for not calling out his country’s Eastern European allies on these issues, called the Polish legislation “baseless” and said Israel opposed it. The US State Department in a statement suggested it could have “repercussions” for bilateral relations with Poland.

Israeli Education Minister Naftali Bennett’s scheduled visit to Poland this week was canceled after he criticized the law, which Israel’s embassy in Poland said was generating antisemitic hate speech in the media.

Back in Israel, the Polish Embassy condemned what it called ignorant remarks by Yair Lapid, a prominent opposition leader. Citing his credentials as the son of a Holocaust survivor, Lapid said the Polish law is designed to hide how Poland was “a partner in the Holocaust.”

Jewish organizations, including the Simon Wiesenthal Center, said for their part that they understand the Polish frustration with terms like “Polish death camps,” which seem to shift the blame for Nazi war crimes to Poland — one of the few Nazi-occupied countries where the Nazis did not allow any measure of self-rule or integrate locals into the genocide.

And the term is especially offensive in Poland, where the Nazis killed at least 1.9 million non-Jews in addition to at least 3 million Jews.

But, many Jewish groups added, the legislation in Poland ignores how many Poles betrayed or killed Jews and is therefore detrimental to the preservation of historical record and free speech.

Dolinsky in Ukraine isn’t a fan of the Polish legislation, either.

“But I don’t quite understand why it and only it provoked such a strong reaction,” he added. “We needed that strong reaction two years ago in Ukraine. This fight needs to apply to all these cases. For the pressure to be effective, it shouldn’t be selective.”

Dolinsky believes that Ukraine — which, unlike Poland, shares a border with Russia — is getting a free pass from the West because it is subjected to hostility from Russia under President Vladimir Putin.

In 2014, Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine amid ongoing psychological warfare against the Baltic nations, often involving the deployment of Russia’s mighty army around those countries in blunt

loudspeaker diplomacy.

“There is a lot of Russophobic sentiment worldwide and it means international silence on countries with a conflict with Russia,” said Joseph Koren, chairman of the Latvia Without Nazism group.

“Poland and Hungary are in a different category,” agreed Dovid Katz, a scholar of Yiddish in Lithuania and longtime campaigner against Holocaust distortion there. The singling out of Poland and Hungary, he said, is “not least because the issues of the Holocaust, antisemitism and restrictions on democratic expression in these countries have never been perceived primarily through the same binary lens of pro-and anti-Putin.” Under that alleged cover of silence, in Ukraine and the Baltic countries there is a rapid lifting on taboos that had been in place for decades on the honoring of war criminals, even including SS volunteers who enthusiastically participated in the mass killings of Jews and Poles.

Largely ignored by the international media, Latvian President Raimonds Vejonis last week gave the final approval for a law that offers financial benefits to all World War II veterans – including SS volunteers who murdered Jews. Latvia is the only country in the world known to have an annual march by SS veterans, which takes place with the approval of authorities’ on the country’s national day in the center of its capital, sometimes with mainstream politicians in attendance.

Last year, the municipality of Kalush near Lviv in Ukraine decided to name a street for Dmytro Paliiv, a commander of the 14th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS, also known as the 1st Galician.

Ukraine’s state television observed a moment of silence for the first time last year for Symon Petliura, a nationalist killed by a Jewish communist for Petliura’s role in the murder of 35,000 to 50,000 Jews in a series of pogroms between 1918 and 1921, when Petliura was head of the Ukrainian People’s Republic. “There is less willingness to speak out on Ukraine in media, in the scientific community and in Western governments, so it seems,” Dolinsky said.

But this alleged turning of a blind eye, he added, is a disservice. “Ukraine needs to join Europe as a civilized member of that family of nations. And for that to happen, it needs to speak honestly and openly about its history,” he said.

To Ryvchin, the Australian author, the “particularly forceful reaction to the Polish law is likely because Poland is seen as the epicenter of the Holocaust,” he said. The Germans built extermination camps only in Poland, according to Holocaust historian Efraim Zuroff.

“Any attempt to distort or disguise what happened in Poland is seen as a particularly egregious attack on the history of the Holocaust and the memories of the dead,” Ryvchin said.

Ironically, Poland is perhaps singled out for criticism because of the country’s vocal civil society and the lively debate it is generating over the politics of memory, Katz suggested.

Even today, he said, Poland and Hungary “have robust liberal movements that themselves counter official government policy on many issues — unlike the Baltics, where dissent is often quashed using the full force of the law.”

NOTE:

In Israel, a law to criminalize Holocaust denial was passed by the Knesset on July 8, 1986.

## **Denial of Holocaust (Prohibition) Law, 5746-1986**

Definitions 1. In this Law, "crime against the Jewish people" and "crime against humanity" have the same respective meanings as in the "Nazis and Nazi Collaborators Law, 5710-1950.

Prohibition of Denial of Holocaust 2. A person who, in writing or by word of mouth, publishes any statement denying or diminishing the proportions of acts committed in the period of the Nazi regime, which are crimes against the Jewish people or crimes against humanity, with intent to defend the perpetrators of those acts or to express sympathy or identification with them, shall be liable to imprisonment for a term of five years.

Prohibition of publication of expression for sympathy for Nazi crimes 3. A person who, in writing or by word of mouth, publishes any statement expressing praise or sympathy for or identification with acts done in the period of the Nazi regime, which are crimes against the Jewish people or crimes against humanity, shall be liable to imprisonment for a term of five years.

Permitted publication 4. The publication of a correct and fair report of a publication prohibited by this Law shall not be regarded as an offence thereunder so long as it is not made with intent to express sympathy or identification with the perpetrators of crimes against the Jewish people or against humanity.

Filing of charge 5. An indictment for offences under this Law shall only be filed by or with the consent of the Attorney-General.

**The Jerusalem Post**

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## **HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE LAW PUTS POLAND ON THE WRONG SIDE OF GLOBAL LEFT**

No Polish family was left untouched by the Nazi death machine. As a result, when Poles hear the words “Polish death camps” or “Polish Holocaust” they bristle.

BY MATTHEW TYRMAND

As the global media has highlighted ad nauseam, Poland recently passed through the legislature a bill that seeks to criminalize the holding of the Polish state complicit for the German Nazi crimes of the Holocaust and the attendant German atrocities during WWII. Currently the bill is being looked at by Poland’s Constitutional Tribunal after Polish President Andrzej Duda sent it for review to make sure it complies with the Polish Constitution.

This bill, known as “Ustawa IPN” (“Institute of National Remembrance Law”), was motivated by Poles’ desire to correct historical inaccuracies regarding Poland’s image and the purported role Poland played during this dark time in history. Poland suffered more than any other country during this period as the Nazi plan was to extinguish Polish-ness and Poland from the map in the hegemonic expansion of the Third Reich, in addition to their “Final Solution” vis a vis European Jewry.

Widely accepted estimates of loss of life in Poland suggest six million Poles perished – three million Jewish and three million non-Jewish Poles. No Polish family was left untouched by the Nazi death machine. As a result, when Poles hear the words “Polish death camps” or “Polish Holocaust” they bristle. Only in recent years did the international media formally change their style guides to strike “Polish death camps” from the press lexicon (and in a fitting display of how widespread this ignorance was, even such a supposedly liberal, sensitive, worldly, cosmopolitan, nuanced ivory-tower academic elite as Barack Obama used the term, referencing Auschwitz in a speech in 2012, to such widespread consternation that it served as a final straw on this issue).

Poland was literally the only country in Nazi-occupied Europe that never demonstrated any complicity with the fascist Nazi occupiers (we all remember the Vichy regime in France and the Quisling one in Norway, which were closer to the norm than the exception in continental Europe). Poland operated a government in exile in London, never had a single SS volunteer, and saw penalties for hiding Jews more severe than anywhere else (whole families, such as the Ulma family in Markowa, Poland, were executed for doing the right and honorable thing).

The government in exile made it a crime for Poles to give up Jews to the Nazis, under penalty of death, and the “Council to Aid Jews” (Zegota) was set up by the Polish resistance in 1942. Poland had more “Righteous Among the Nations” than any other nation according to Yad Vashem – which makes sense as Poland was ground zero for European Jewry for many centuries, which in turn is why Hitler’s Final Solution was so predicated on a network of death camps being built in Poland. To this day there are more stories of the hiding and saving of Jews by Poles in Poland being continually unearthed and honored.

Poles valiantly kept fighting throughout the war, under the worst of circumstances, against the longest of odds (all should read about the legendary Warsaw Uprising, which US President Donald Trump spoke of eloquently in his July 2017 open-air Warsaw speech) and despite the largest loss of life nominally and on a per capita basis of any nation in Europe fighting to maintain its existence. What was the result of this unparalleled sacrifice? Despite an Allied victory, Poland lost its independence yet again when it was traded away to another tyrannical hegemony-seeking despot in Josef Stalin and the Russian Soviet communists by FDR at Yalta in 1945.

So while the German industrial machine was being rebuilt by American taxpayers, affording

Germany the ability to pay reparations and reform its image as a bastion of cosmopolitan elitism (and a multi-generational proponent of Eurocentrism, globalism, progressive leftism, multiculturalism, cultural relativism and post-modernist social theories) Poland was suffering for five more decades under the jackboot of Iron Curtain Sovietism.

Fast-forward to 2015 when Poland elected, with an unprecedented-in-scale democratic mandate, its first purely conservative (and nationalist populist) government: Law & Justice (PiS). This party had no ties to the communists or the corrupt post-communist petty oligarchy that, fully amnestied by Lech Walesa, had successfully exploited the transition after 1989 for personal gain and to the detriment of the Polish people/nation, often allying with the EU in ceding Polish sovereignty to Brussels. The Law & Justice government, with its pro-nation state sovereignty mandate, found itself in direct opposition to the EU's centralization of power project and its designs on introducing supranational governance to an open-border super-state. We have watched this nasty, ideologically-driven international media war play out for over two years.

Given this historical context, one can understand why this Polish government, with the paramount motivation to correct the historical record regarding Poland's wartime history, would draft a bill such as "Ustawa IPN." It was cronyist looting more than governing or correcting false historical narratives that took precedence for PiS's Eurocentric predecessors, Civic Platform (PO), the party of Donald Tusk and Radoslaw Sikorski. When this was exposed during the infamous hidden tapes scandal Aferatasmowa (printed transcripts demonstrating the extent of PO's brazen back-room corruption published in Polish news weekly Wprost) it led rightfully to its being ignominiously turfed out of power, much to their Brussels partners' chagrin, and to Law & Justice receiving its overwhelming mandate from a fed-up Polish electorate.

That being said, Law & Justice has not made it easy on itself in the way this bill was constructed and with regard to utilizing the necessary diplomacy to communicate its goals while treading into this highly (and justly) sensitive topic.

The criminalization of speech, with the threat of up to three-year prison sentences for violating the proposed law's rather vague precepts, for which the Polish government is currently under attack, does not deviate that greatly from similar pieces of established law in Germany, Scandinavia, France, the UK and Israel in their own treatments of Holocaust denial and that era's tragic history. (This author believe all these laws violate the fundamental human right to unfettered free speech, which is inextricably linked to the ability of free societies to remain optimally free and ultimately innovative and prosperous. Under the rubric of policing "hate speech" – which can never be fundamentally defined and as such offers a plethora of slippery slopes toward censorship and thought crime as per Orwell – there is a European societal standard applied in contravention of this natural right.)

**In the case of the Polish law there exists a clear double standard. Moreover, there is massive disinformation circulating on what the law is actually meant to police** – so massive in fact that it seems that this is being used as an opportunity to undermine the Polish good faith motivations behind this law's support in order to coercively play politics.

The law explicitly states that the criminal action pertains exclusively to the allegation of Polish state complicity, not the complicity of individual Poles, some of whom, during wartime (and before and after, as any society will see) did atrocious things and are worthy of the historical condemnations that have been levied and will continue to be researched and highlighted.

The roll-out of the law, as with its wording and the communications that surrounded it, was particularly egregious. After sitting on it the entire first half of this government's term, the Polish Justice Ministry pushed it to the Sejm (the lower house of Polish Parliament – the first stop for new legislation) for a vote on Friday January 26 – one day before International Holocaust Memorial Day. I have written in the past in about the rogue justice minister (Zbigniew Ziobro) with his own political agenda (factions exist in every political party and movement) and in this case the timing was too guaranteed to create a diplomatic crisis to be anything but an inside operation.

This came on the heels of newly elevated Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki's successful trips to Brussels and Davos, where he handled himself with aplomb with Eurocrat Jean-Claude Juncker and the Davos international media elite. Morawiecki successfully put a new face of centrism, pragmatism, rationality, worldliness and reasonableness on this Polish government. The internal faction of hardline nationalists, which Justice Minister Ziobro founded and leads (Solidarna Polska) and its supporters were displeased to see Morawiecki's collective Polish success abroad, which undermines their own electoral aspirations. Hence the deliberately provocative timing of this bill.

Not surprisingly, given the timing, and the fact that the coming Israeli electoral cycle is currently heating up, Israeli politicians flocked to this issue to paint this law as an example of legislating fallacious historical revisionism and a form of Holocaust denial (by shifting potential culpabilities), and thus a re-institutionalization of what they allege is Polish cultural antisemitism. This has now escalated with the entrance into the fray by the international media cohort, American legislators, the US State Department and many others of the global political classes who have since weighed in on this issue.

As with Ziobro's botched initial judicial reform, put forward this past summer, he again, evidently not a believer in Harry S. Truman's "the buck stops here" aphorism, went absolutely invisible for the month since the brouhaha commenced. Instead, as also had played out previously with this past summer's judicial reform, he sent his lackey deputy minister, Patryk Jaki, to be the public face of the ministerial defense of this bill, its structure and wording, and its timing (all very tough to defend – especially given the diplomatic crisis that was birthed from its release... as outcomes in politics matter).

Morawiecki added fuel to the fire in Germany for the Munich Security Conference when he fielded a question from Ronen Bergman, an Israeli journalist (and a New York Times contributor), who seemed less interested in a breakdown of the actual mechanics of the law than in spinning a validation of his preferred depiction of it for his partisan readership and preening his own moral high ground against the Polish Prime Minister.

Bergman floridly emotes: "[Morawiecki] stares at me as if he is examining some kind of nuisance" in his accounting of the prime minister's response to his question. Said response (using the word "perpetrators" to refer to other groups during the war, including Jews) was admittedly not well constructed to assuage legitimate sensitivities. As one who knows the Polish prime minister and his pragmatism personally, this was probably more owed to the nuance of linguistics in word choice than a desire to be malicious, which clearly does no good for anyone. Bergman continues: "These comments left me flabbergasted. My eyes were filled with tears of pain and rage. I was glad I had at least helped reveal his true colors with my question."

Hardly the journalistic presentation of one who wants to report news.

(Lest this 100% Jewish author be labeled an antisemite, again, for not adhering to whatever the "acceptable" sensibilities might be in describing this above incident as prescribed by the global media elite, like Mr. Bergman's family mine too was dramatically and forever impacted by the Holocaust, as my Polish father's line was all but extinguished by the Nazis in the Warsaw ghetto and Majdanek death camp in Lublin, Poland. Moreover, these issues regarding Polish-Jewish relations and history are ones I have thought and exposted on deeply. N.B.)

One month after the initial vote, the justice minister came out of hiding to declare in an interview (and formally state on the ministry's website) that with the bill passed there will be no freezing of its enforcement, in a direct move to undermine ongoing talks and the review to soften its language and structure and make it more palatable to critics. This was clearly an attempt to

prevent diplomatic resolutions from being consummated and a sabotaging of the Polish-Israeli dialogue that was to commence in coming weeks.

The great and tragic irony of this diplomatic crisis – propelled further by those (internally and externally) who have a strong political interest in seeing Poland and this conservative nationalist populist government, not pliant to Brussels' diktats, weakened – is that heretofore Polish-Israeli relations were the strongest of any EU nation's relations with the Jewish state. These strong modern-era relations have been predicated on shared history and identity; hundreds of years of Polish-Jewish cohabitation; a large number of Polish Jews being instrumental in the creation of the Zionist state (with Polish one of the first languages utilized in the Knesset); existent strong contemporary trade ties with a material amount of modern Warsaw being developed by Israeli business concerns; congruent political alignments (especially now with both countries being governed by true conservative parties) on border security and the shared distrust and willingness to call out radical Islam (which clearly differs from the majority of the political classes of Western Europe); relatively few incidents of actual antisemitic violence in Poland (starkly juxtaposed with the regularity of such incidents in France, Germany, Scandinavia, and the rest of the progressive leftist Western continent which continues to appease Islamist political cohorts); and most recently, the abstention by Poland at the United Nations vote condemning the US in the moving of its embassy to Jerusalem (where predictably every EU nation from Germany westward voted to condemn President Trump's action).

Also telling is that in 2008, on the fortieth anniversary of the 1968 university purges of Jewish students, president Lech Kaczynski (the president when Law & Justice last dominated Polish politics), led the initiative to symbolically restore Polish citizenship to those Jews who were ejected and consequently fled Poland.

It is clear, given the double standard on widespread pan-European laws censoring speech regarding these sensitive historical issues, that the politically oriented motivation for this dramatic attack on Poland's iteration of this sort of law extends beyond European political actors.

Recently, the Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center loudly and publicly issued a call for Jews to limit their travel to Poland, that reads: "In wake of the controversial new Holocaust Law in Poland and the anti-Semitism it has unleashed that has left the Jewish community shaken, the Simon Wiesenthal Center (SWC) is considering issuing a Travel Advisory for world Jewry."

Despite such a dramatic statement there does not seem to be any evidence of this "unleashing" of antisemitism by any empirical metric. Can such "unleashed antisemitism" be similarly disproven against the empirical reality of seeing robust antisemitic activity in France, Germany, Sweden, the UK, Holland, Belgium, et al perpetrated by hostile third world migrants and refugees from the Islamic third world, many of whom stridently believe in theological diktats that include death by jihad to worldwide Jewry?

Polish synagogues, both actively attended ones and historical sites (frequently refurbished due to their cultural importance), do not need 24-hour armed protection. Can the same be said in Berlin, Germany? Or in Copenhagen, Denmark, or Gothenburg and Malmo, Sweden? The selection of Poland as a focus of consternation and intervention by organizations, foundations and advocacy groups reeks of this uber-politicization.

**We have seen Poland under attack this way from the global elite time and again since this government took power.** Recently, the annual march in Warsaw this past November 11 celebrating Polish Independence Day was painted by the global media as an assemblage of fascists and Nazis despite the fallacious manufacture of this allegation. It further indicated Poland is under attack for political reasons and held to a far different, and non-merit-based, standard by those coordinating the undermining campaign. When a far-left "charitable" foundation engages in

provocations to drive negative media coverage and test the viability of enforcing this proposed law, and internal political opposition (such as Donald Tusk represents) can bludgeon externally from Brussels perches, then it also indicates the existence of such a campaign.

But outcomes do matter in geopolitics and as such it is worth reconsidering the negative diplomatic implications of following through with passage of this law in its current form. Diplomacy is built around getting the other side to see and understand your viewpoint and goals through dialogue and discourse. There needs to be a serious reworking of the structure of this bill, something that appears may be currently in the works (as long as the Polish justice minister is not able to quash such efforts), where the violations and the enforcement mechanisms are clearly delineated and communicated and found to be acceptable to more than just the far-right domestic Polish political base.

If this does not occur, then the globalist Left political cohort will have won (with some domestic assistance) in successfully driving a wedge in relations between Poland and its US and Israeli allies – all helmed by governments that share much in policy philosophy. This would be an unacceptable failure with long-term negative implications for Poland's ascendant standing in the European political order along with a negation of the concomitant opportunities for the American and Israeli allies' deeper engagement with Poland on a myriad of shared interests.

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## The Unz Review: An Alternative Media Selection

A Collection of Interesting, Important, and Controversial Perspectives Largely Excluded from the American Mainstream Media

<http://www.unz.com/article/bitter-tantrums-and-buried-history/>

### Bitter Tantrums and Buried History

MAX DENKEN

MARCH 11, 2018

#### Part 1: The Tantrums

An Israeli and eventually international Jewish mass hysteria erupted as of the last week of January 2018 over a Polish law that makes it a punishable offence to defame the Polish nation by speaking of “Polish concentration camps” or blaming the Polish people otherwise for the Jewish Holocaust. The hysteria started right at the top with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who spoke of [“attempts to rewrite history.”](#) It moved downstream through figures like Israel’s ambassador to Poland [Anna Azari](#), the politician Yair Lapid, and lower yet to species like Lahav Harkov, who tweets as “Knesset Reporter & Analyst for The Jerusalem Post,” “Proud Zionist” and “pink” feminist.

Ultimately a questionable new bill, sponsored by 61 members of the Israeli Knesset proposed that what it defined as a “Polish bill to outlaw talk of Poles’ complicity in the Nazis’ crimes” be construed as a form of [illegal Holocaust denial](#)—even though that is not the Polish bill’s intention. It means to outlaw the phrase “Polish concentration camps” and other such slanders blaming Poland and the Polish people for a German genocide.

That some individual Poles, in a country under German occupation and continuous terror, did abet or profit from the genocide is an entirely different matter. Vultures, vermin and parasites are always drawn to the dying, the more so when their own environment is dying too. They did so throughout German-occupied Europe, where there was little German terror but many times the small Polish ratio of collaboration with the Nazis. They do so in every war of annihilation and every other major human disaster.

The same voices of opprobrium and outright slander as in Israel were raised by the international Jewish media and practically the entire major progressive press (Caveat: there is no non-progressive press). *Time Magazine*’s title was typical: [“Poland Just Passed a Holocaust Bill That Is Causing Outrage”](#) (2.1.2018). There was no mention of what causes outrage in Poland. There is hardly ever a mention of the Poles’ pain and suffering, but the writings about Jewish pain and suffering—undeniably great but not outside the range of comparison to Poland’s—could fill the granaries of a medium-size country.

Jewish opinionators were worse than that. Let Lahav Harkov’s tweet (Twitter, 1.27.2018) stand to sum up the tenor of Israeli opinions, and Harry Maryles’s [“Polish Death Camps”](#) ([JewishPress.com](#), 1.31.2018) stand for the Jewish diaspora’s opinions, without wasting verbiage on small nuances in the rest of them.

Harkov’s tweet consisted entirely of [“Polish Death Camps”](#) repeated 14 times. It’s a disgrace equal to the worst antisemitic slurs. I wonder how Jews would feel if I produced a post consisting of a phrase like “Elders of Zion,” or “Yagoda + Madoff = Jews” duplicated 14 times and conveying, *ipso facto*, that it sums up my opinion of the Jewish people.

Maryles’s article contains subjective assertions that could be challenged, but I’ll focus on just one that has the appearance of being more objective: “Except for the righteous gentiles among them, the Poles were perhaps the most eager participants of all nationalities in helping Nazis send Jews to the death camps of any other country. Just about every Polish Jew who survived the Holocaust—that I have ever spoken to—has made this claim.”

I’ll leave the rest of this text to formulate the anti-claim.

There were hundreds of other additional Poland-bashing utterances by Israeli and Jewish media, Jews of all stripes, politicians homing in on an easy target of a country “shockingly” 99.5%+ white, and the enormous Western media megaphone of them all. We have space just for one.

In mid-February, The Ruderman Family Foundation, one of those “inclusion and diversity”-obsessed American-Jewish outfits that do all they can to generate new American antisemites

where there were none before, started a petition at [NeverDeny.org](http://NeverDeny.org), urging people to sign under the plea, “In the name of 6 million Jews, The United States must suspend relations with Poland now!” The Ruderman people also placed a professionally produced video on YouTube under the title “I will go to [Polish] jail,” with a lineup of American Jews saying “Polish Holocaust” and urging the United States to suspend its relations with Poland.

In Poland, the tempers boil, but the supposedly “far-right” government is strangely timid in this matter. Polish media are abuzz, but as far as the world is concerned, if it’s not in English it didn’t happen. It may well be that so many Jews with a public voice will continue hammering on this hot iron in an incendiary way that they will at last succeed in minting millions of new antisemites in Poland too.

Attempts to massage all these gratuitously offensive, racist, Poland-bashing statements do not work either. Emmanuel Nahshon, spokesman for the Israeli Foreign Ministry, tweeted on January 29: “The issue is NOT the death camps. **Of course they were not Polish.** Those were German death camps. The issue is the legitimate and essential freedom to talk about the involvement of Poles in the murder of Jews without fear or threat of penalisation.” A day earlier, Mr. Nahshon had tweeted: “**We expect the Polish government** to change the wording of the bill before its final adoption and to conduct a dialogue with Israel on the subject.”

Let me discard the earlier statement before I put the later out of its misery. For a sovereign country to declare so brazenly what line it “expects” another sovereign country to follow, is an outrage. It’s imprudent too for a small, remote Jewish country not entirely essential to the daily reality of Central Europe. And it’s foolish when directed toward the key country in the bloc standing athwart the Socialist-Muslim alliance—the Jewish scholar of Islam, Bat Ye’or, called it “Eurabia”—that’s smothering the life out of that continent, its civilization, and its 2000+ year-old Jewish community.

Eurabia, whose leaders like [Angela Merkel](#), and pal of Yasser Arafat [Federica Mogherini](#), cry crocodile tears on Holocaust Remembrance Day and rail against “antisemitism” while being directly responsible for importing that antisemitism, via millions of their beloved Muslim “migrants” and the resulting contagion of public harassment, beatings and murder of Jews the like of which Europe has not seen since Hitler. Not to mention the form of antisemitism that masquerades as anti-Israelism whose purveyors are the same Communist-Socialist circles from which both Merkel and Mogherini and so many other European Union grandees have sprung.

How strange what Israel’s *crème de la crème* chose to criticize on the 2018 Holocaust Remembrance Day, and what it chose to pretend not to see.

Now to Emmanuel Nahshon’s earlier statement. We all know—or do we?—that the term “Polish concentration camps” was invented in 1956 by Alfred Benziger, a former sergeant in the Nazi Abwehr and post-war head of the spook Agency 114 that was sluicing Nazi war criminals into counter-intelligence work against the USSR with a wink and a nod of the CIA. That was a coordinated effort to shift blame for the Holocaust from Germany to the country that Germany had enslaved, destroyed and used as a territorial basis for carrying out its genocide of the Jews.

And we know, presumably, that this term has been used in German national and provincial media along with other massive bleaching operations seeking to relieve the guilt over Germany’s deeds during the war, including but not limited to the “Poor, noble German soldiers/ Jew-hating Polish resistance” TV mini-series “Our Mothers, Our Fathers,” a flagship product of the national public channel ZDF.

To acknowledge that “Polish concentration camps” were not Polish is as much a concession as allowing that Spanish flu was not Spanish.

Lastly, even if not “Polish” death camps, why in Poland? We know that answer too, don’t we: because those hidebound Polaks hate the Jews. That was the unambiguous statement of [Yair Lapid](#), chairman of a minor party in the Knesset and Israel’s former Finance Minister. But maybe there is a simpler explanation devoid of casual anti-Slavic racism: Poland, because that’s where the Jews were.

Over one third of Europe’s 9-plus million Jews were in Poland, another 2.5 million in next-door Russia, and another 1.35 million in other countries then-bordering on Poland: Romania, Czechoslovakia and the Baltic states. And there were Germany’s own 525,000 Jews and Austria’s 190,000, with the united Reich not even bordering on Poland but having swallowed it whole either by direct annexation or through the Nazi-ruled “General Governorate.” All that makes for over 7.5 million Jews in a contiguous zone of Europe whose center was Poland. If you had the analytical German mind of people like Adolf Eichmann, was there another choice?

Let us now move to the most controversial and long-simmering part of the dispute, and the one that the Polish nation's less strident foes in Israel, represented by the "conciliatory" voice of Israel's Foreign Ministry, express as "talk about the involvement of Poles in the murder of Jews." Of course, let us talk about that.

How many Poles snitched on Jews to the Germans, or murdered them, or grabbed whatever Jewish assets they could, has not been established and cannot be established as long as the maximalist side is represented by a sociologist posing as historian who is sponsored by critical theory-infected Princeton university, George Soros media such as *Project Syndicate*, and ultra-progressive/neo-Marxist German media such as *Der Spiegel* and *Deutsche Welle*—remember the whitewash agenda there. Not to mention such purveyors of fake news as the American, Jewish-controlled newspaper that found only a Soviet idyll in Ukraine during the worst period of Stalin's genocide there and, curiously, downplayed Hitler's genocide of the Jews because it was bad for business.

The same newspaper that on December 10, 1942, published an article under the headline, "**Poles Ask Allies to Halt Slaughter**," that started with the sentence, "The Polish Government has asked the Allied governments if there is any possibility of restraining the Germans from continuing their mass extermination of the Jewish population of Poland and their plans to obliterate the Poles as a nation."

On Page 8, and to no effect whatsoever.

The same paper that, on February 6, 2018, published an article under the title, "**Poland's 'Death Camp' Law Tears at Shared Bonds of Suffering With Jews**," even though the reverse title, "Jews' response to Poland's 'Death Camp' Law Tears at Shared Bonds of Suffering With Poles" was equally viable.

Jan T. Gross, for that's the name of the Poland-bashing star of the progressive *zeitgeist*, is the son of a Polish Catholic woman who saved his Jewish father's life during the war and later married him. He has built a stellar career out of a gross libel of the Polish people, anchored by such nuggets as his statement that Poles during the war murdered more Jews than Germans. His selective retelling of well-known (in Poland) stories like the Jedwabne massacre has already been refuted by Polish scholars with better and more appropriate credentials, such as Marek Jan Chodakiewicz and Piotr Gontarczyk. As to Jedwabne specifically, a three year-long (2000–2003) investigation by the Polish Institute of National Remembrance concluded in two reports—203-pages and 1059 pages—that the massacre took place, there were about 340 victims (Gross: 1600), and about 40 Polish men participated in the crime (Gross: "half the village"), watched over and most likely forced by German soldiers who provoked (Gross: "permitted") this crime in the first place.

A massacre remains a massacre regardless of the count of victims, but a major error or empty hyperbole that remains unrectified eighteen years after it was published evinces at best sloppiness, if not ulterior motives. Particularly so when the author is an academic and holder of an endowed chair in history, as Gross was then. The shabby intent transfers to repackagers of the libel, of which one reads many in the Israeli, German, and American press.

The kind of image Israelis have built of the Poles based on Jedwabne and Kielce is analogous to an image of Israelis that one might construe based on the **Deir Yassin massacre** or the terrorist **bomb attack on King David Hotel**. Throw not stones if you live in a glass house.

But it's not only Israelis. Without a scintilla of knowledge in the subject matter, Heather Nauert, spokesperson for the US State Department, issued a statement on January 31 on behalf of her boss, Rex Tillerson. Opening with some bromides about the Holocaust as "painful and complex," she proceeded to threaten "**Poland's strategic interests and relationships—including with the United States and Israel**" over the new law. Among the questions that statement arouses, one is especially piquant: does the US State Department speak for Israel too? And if that is the State Department of the "Alt-Right" president, why do we need to worry about the Left?

Not that it was dormant. "**Poland's Jews fear for future under new Holocaust law**," trumpeted the Guardian on February 10, 2018, opining further that the law "proved a diplomatic and public relations catastrophe abroad, as scholars, Holocaust survivors and friendly governments alike have lined up"—of course, to bash Poland with any "progressive" cudgel at hand.

As one of the proofs why Poland's Jews now "fear for the future," the Guardian-of-the-Left relayed that an editorial on the "rightwing" TV *Republika* webzine described the crisis as a "test of loyalty" for Polish Jews. Oy vey, antisemitism, again. What such agitprop always manages to omit is the telling detail. The telling detail of *TV Republika* is that it was founded by a patriotic Polish Jew and

important journalist, Bronislaw Wildstein. Wildstein is one of the most outspoken foes of the kind of Sorosque Jews, and Poles too, who dig under his country with their “diversity,” “antisemitism,” and “refugees” backhoe.

Just to make sure we get how much Jews in Poland have to fear today, the lefty Brit juggernaut graced its article with a photograph entitled, “A crowd surround a dead man on the street in the Warsaw ghetto around 1940.” The crowd is mostly well-fed and decently dressed; none show much concern for the dead man, and some are smiling to the camera. Those nasty, cruel Poles. The only thing missing is a caveat that Poles had no entry to the ghetto; everyone in the photo is a Jew.

I will not go here into the worn-out story of Yad Vashem’s “Righteous Gentiles” and its 6,706-strong undercount of Poles who risked their lives to save Jews. But let me quote a bigger authority than Yad Vashem: my mom.

## ***Part 2: The History***

My mother, a bearer of both Polish and Jewish genes, saw her parents hauled off to no-return Majdanek and her brother shot point blank by a German SS-man during a Sunday promenade with her in a center-city square. She lost a cousin to the NKVD in the Katyn forest, and what would have been her future mother-in-law to the OUN Ukrainian Nazi allies. She was one of the few survivors of the Janowski death/labor camp and would be state’s witness against its commandant/sadist-from-hell. She jumped from a death train going straight to the gas chambers of Belzec. She heard the train engine’s Polish crew risking their lives to warn the still-hopeful crowd at the platform in Lvov that Belzec was not just another “concentration camp.” She then wandered, expiring, through the endless frozen forest until saved first by a Polish peasant and then by a German colonel. She endured prolonged interrogations, beatings and weeks of dungeon imprisonment first by the Gestapo and, a year later, the NKVD. And a sexual assault — exactly what kind she could not bring herself to tell — by a Soviet Army cavalry squad of “Asian-looking” soldiers whose odor would wake her up in the middle of the night, even 50 years later. That’s what I call “seen it all”: a double Holocaust. And she told all and sundry, whenever the occasion arose: “If it weren’t for the Poles, not a single Jew would have survived in Poland.” About 100,000 survived, hiding among the Poles. There must have been many more “righteous” among the latter than Yad Vashem’s 6,706.

It is generally ignored, despite the mountains of documentary evidence, just what sort of hell the German occupiers imposed on Poland. In that kind of environment, the worst human elements emerge from the dark corners where they lurk in normal times. That goes both for the perpetrators — to look at portraits of dozens of the worst Nazi executioners like [Oskar Dirlewanger](#) or [Heinrich Müller](#) is to see pure evil — and the victim populations.

The Poles who snitched on Jews or killed or robbed them did not do so because they were Poles but because they were criminal, base or cowardly. And some, we have no means of knowing how many, also because they hated Jews. Just as we have no means of knowing how many Poles Jewish commissars in the Commie secret police — people like [Salomon Morel](#), [Julia Brystygier](#) or [Izaak Fleischfarb](#) — tortured to death because they hated ethnic Poles, how many because they hated anti-communists, and how many because they were conscience-less opportunists.

Symmetrically, some Holocaust deniers adduce Jewish ghetto police, kapos, snitches, brutalizers and exploiters of wartime Jews as evidence that Jews are themselves complicit in the Holocaust. But no; Jews too have their minority of unsavory specimens, and the unalloyed horror of the Holocaust allowed them to surface.

The tragic history of the “[Polish Anna Frank](#)” and her family offers a peek at the reality of those times: ghetto, rescue due to the privileged status of an uncle in the Judenrat, rescue again by a noble German officer, rescue again by multiple Poles in two cities, and a tragic end at German hands because of an anonymous snitch.

To smear the Polish nation as a whole with the broad brush dipped in the worst of its worst is no better than talk of “Jewish usury,” “Jewish perfidy,” “Jewish bankers” or “Jewish bolshevism.” But there is more.

For the nearly hundred years between 1850 and 1945 and to a lesser degree up to now, antisemitism in the eastern third of Europe, including Poland, has been deeper and more paranoid than in the West, excepting the anomalies of the Third Reich and, now, the Muslim

component of Eurabia. There are multiple causes, some quite bilateral, others inherent in the tragic fallacy of multiculturalism. Both sides tell only their convenient parts of the truth, and it's all too much to discuss here. But it's strange and unwarranted that all this Israeli and Jewish fury is directed toward Poland, and only Poland. Let me explain.

First, it is likely that the entire genus of Ashkenazi Jew would have been extinguished in the German, French and other Black Death and crusades-related pogroms and expulsions of the 13th and 14th centuries, had not the Polish sovereigns Duke Bolesław Pobożny (Bolesław the Pious) and king Kazimierz III Wielki (Casimir III "the Great") given the fleeing remnant a refuge and **royal protection**.

Second, Poland was the only country in German-occupied Europe where there was neither a collaborationist government nor volunteers in the Waffen SS or any other unit doing the Germans' wet work. There were no Polish concentration camps, and no Polish guards in the German concentration camps — but there were Russian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Latvian and other such guards-executioners. My mom saw them "at work."

There was but one ignoble exception: the **"Blue Police."** Subordinated to the German police, it consisted of about 11,000 pre-war Polish policeman who had been called to report to duty by order of Poland's Nazi ruler, Hans Frank, under penalty of death. While their task was to maintain simple law and order, they did participate in street round-ups and many engaged in extortion, snitching and other vile acts toward Jewish individuals — but not in the mass killing. And whatever they did, it still pales in comparison to the war-era **French, Dutch, Norwegian** and other police forces in German-occupied Europe. Moreover, in Poland's zone occupied by the Soviets in 1939–1941 there was the **"Red Police,"** composed of Soviet-collaborating Jews, Ukrainians and Belarusians who were doing to Poles what the "Blue Police" was doing to Jews in the German-occupied part.

There were over 400,000 Poles fighting the German occupiers in the largest underground army in Europe, and they executed anyone collaborating with the Germans to the detriment of Poles or Jews. There was the largest in Europe number of gentiles risking their lives to help and shelter Jews in the only country in Europe where the penalty for doing so was death to the protector and his entire family. And there was the largest army-in-exile fighting Hitler too: 250,000 men under British command, unable to help their ravaged homeland but instrumental in many decisive battles on the Western front.

The only semi-balanced article I have seen by an Israeli author in the Israeli press about the Holocaust libel law, Seth Frantzman's **"Setting history straight – Poland resisted Nazis,"** (Jerusalem Post, January 29, 2018) contains this sentence about the Polish resistance: "A few posters being put up and torn down pales in comparison to millions of Jews sent to death camps."

It was quite a bit more than "a few posters being put up and torn down."

The horror, death, enslavement and wholesale destruction of Poland: its people murdered by the millions, its culture, its entire infrastructure, schools, hospitals and its capital all in ruins, was much greater than Israelis and Jews at large seem interested to learn about. 1.4 million Poles were hauled from their homes and forced to work as slaves in German factories and fields, not counting 300,000 military prisoners who were so forced also. Between 35,000 and 50,000 Polish women were snatched off the streets and forced to provide "services" in German military brothels. A quarter million boys were kidnapped from their mothers and brought to Germany to be shaped into future Aryan SS-men, with the laggards exterminated by phenol injections and gruesome medical experiments.

The number of ethnic Poles murdered by the Germans was not "at least 1.9 million" as Frantzman's article states, but 2.77 million, i.e. almost equivalent to the 2.7 to 2.9 number of murdered Polish Jews. And that does not include the 150,000 Poles murdered by the Soviets with significant collaboration of Polish Jews in the years 1939–1941 and 1944–1945 [figures from Polish Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), 2009]. Moreover, much of that mass murder was a targeted "decapitation," pursued by Germans and Soviets in their respective occupation zones, to wipe out Poland's administrative, intellectual, scientific, spiritual, law and military elites, before more "culling" and then the formal enslavement of the remaining population. [See a compact, **referenced account of these crimes**]

There is hardly a Polish family that did not suffer murder at the hands of Germans, whether in arbitrary retail or planned wholesale, hauling to concentration camps or Gestapo abattoirs, brutal impression into slave labor or expropriation and exile far away from family home and land.

Frequently, all of the above. The physical damage to Poland at German hands, alone, stands at \$850 billion–\$1 trillion in 2018 dollars. Germany has not paid reparations even for that, though between 1952 and 2017 it paid so many billions in Deutsche marks and euros in so many reparations agreements with the State of Israel and Jewish Holocaust survivors, with additional agreements pending, that a non-specialist has no way to add it all up. And third: as opposed to this fixation on Poland, this hateful, worldwide baying from all quarters of Israeli and Jewish society, one does not hear much about their outrage concerning present veneration of many Nazi-collaborators and direct perpetrators of persecutions, round-ups and mass murder of Jews in countries like Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine and others.

How many Israeli politicians and media mavens commented on the giant portraits of Nazi allies and Jews' (and Poles') mass murderers **Stepan Bandera**, **Roman Shukhevych** and Yevhen Konovalets, **borne by adoring crowds of the "Maidan revolution"** in Lvov and Kiev, said "maidan" enjoying the enthusiastic support of at least two Jewish-Ukrainian oligarchs with Israeli citizenship?

I am yet to hear about Israel government's condemnation of Croatian mass celebrations of Ante Pavelic and the Croatian Ustasha who made of the **Jasenovac** concentration camp what Israelis call *gehennom* and Poles call *gehenna*, **more macabre** than the Germans' worst.

There is no American Jewish Committee thunder about the Jobbik party in Hungary, that country's third largest with 20.5% of the votes in the 2014 National Assembly elections, openly fascist and as ravingly **Jew-hating** as to, among others, wade on the parliament's floor in 2012 into advocacy for the Tiszaeszlár blood libel and its notorious trial that already in 1883 had been dismissed by Hungarian judges as prosecutorial fraud.

No coordinated storm of outrage in Israeli and Jewish media at Lithuania. No Jan T. Gross bestsellers about the massive Lithuanian collaboration in the corralling and delivery of Jews to their executioners, and volunteering to Waffen SS and to guard units at German concentration camps. And now, some of the chief criminals, e.g. **Jonas Noreika**, are honored with public plaques, and the head of Lithuania's collaborationist government **Juozas Ambrazevičius**, who, per Efraim Zuroff of the Simon Wiesenthal Center "collaborated with the Nazis" in the mass murder of Jews and "actively encouraged" Lithuanian participation in it, gets an official state burial with full honors, in 2012.

Kaunas, where that solemn funeral took place, was the locus of the Lithuanian Holocaust. Thousands of Jews were murdered there by Lithuanian militias *before* the arrival of the German army. It was here where **Seventh Fort** was constructed, the first and Jews-only concentration camp in German-occupied territories, staffed by Lithuanians, the chief task of their **Tautinio Darbo Apsaugos Batalionas** being the murder of the Jews of Kaunas and elsewhere in Lithuania and Belarus.

With all that, a public Israeli/Jewish storm about a Polish law demanding to put the Holocaust on the doorstep of the country whose government and people carried it out, Germany? Why, one may start noticing the grumbling by some Poles that this is all about money. Applying the vise of media-manipulated public opinion and the **U.S. Congress** as well as the **British Parliament** to gain an advantage in negotiations with Poland's government about "restitution" for any and all unspecifiable assets that had no heirs after their Jewish owners were murdered in the Holocaust. Which would be quite a unique arrangement, given that Poland bears no responsibility for the German murder and expropriation of the original owners, and the American Jewish and Israeli organizations that would collect the loot in 2018 have no evidence of title and are, in any case, not successors in title to the heirless and intestate Jewish citizens of Poland who perished at the hand of Germans under German occupation between 1939 and 1945.

Moreover, Poland has already provided restitutions under treaties with multiple countries for all legitimate property claims in Poland. Further claims may be pursued in Poland by the usual judicial means. Lastly, pursuant to a Polish law in 1997, Jewish organizations in Poland received restitution for over 2,500 German-expropriated or destroyed communal properties such as synagogues, cemeteries and cultural centers.

All this notwithstanding, there is quite a lot one can achieve by orchestrating an international storm about "Polish murderers of Jews," some sleight of hand with history and, astonishingly, recruiting the United States Congress and the British Parliament to do your bidding. And that recruitment appeared in March to have resulted in American heavy-handedness exceeding perhaps any comparable precedent.

On March 6, Politico (Europe) **revealed** the existence of a recent memo from the U.S. State Department declaring the new Polish law as an unacceptable violation of freedom of speech. The memo gave the Polish government a three-point ultimatum: either “resolve” this issue — needless to say to America’s and international Jewry’s satisfaction — or else Poland’s leaders will be barred from White House meetings, U.S. Congress will block funds for joint military projects in Poland including the stationing of U.S. troops there within the NATO framework, and there will be further “dramatic” consequences in case an American citizen is charged under the new law. Michael Brendan Dougherty asked on the pages of National Review, **“Is NATO in Poland to Deter Russians or Poles?”** Indeed.

Leaving aside what you get for “blasphemy” in Dar al-Islam, in Thailand, insulting the king will get you a prison sentence for 3 to 70 years. In Great Britain, a tweet expressing your dissatisfaction with the Pakistanization of British demographics or the Islamization of its culture will gain you a police knock on the door at 3 a.m., next morning, while if your child niece was “groomed” by a gang of “Asians” for 15 years, law enforcement for that entire period would have been in a state of catatonic hypersomnia. In Germany, a former Stasi agent, Anetta Kahane, has been chosen by no less than Justice Minister Heiko Maas to oversee the German Internet, remove “hate speech,” and prosecute its authors.

In Sweden, opposition to “immigration” in conversation or a social media post will get you a criminal hacking and “outing” by the far-left Expressen newspaper, including your photo, legal name, email and physical address, so that fascist Antifa thugs may better find you. And also, for your employer, neighbors, fiancée and family to know exactly what a racist Nazi you are, and do what’s right. In the United States, criticism of “people of color” or honest talk about racial or gender differences will bring on an automatic termination of your job, livelihood, and lifetime career too.

The United States has willed itself to blindness in all these egregious instances, but it bullies and blackmails Poland under the pretext of “freedom of expression” because Poland no longer wishes to be libeled as the perpetrator of the Holocaust. Who in the Trump administration put this sorry farce in motion?

### ***Part 3: Before we talk***

There is **nothing** in the new Polish “Holocaust libel law” that prohibits or penalizes talk about malfeasance by Poles toward Jews during the Holocaust or at any other time. It pertains only to blaming the Polish nation for the Holocaust and whitewashing German responsibility for it. By all means, let such talk flourish, as well as talk about the Poles who saved Jews from murder. But let it be a conversation, not a monologue.

Let us also talk about the persecution and murder of Poles by Jews, and following that, the persecution and murder of Russians and Hungarians — all in varying intensity throughout the first 55 years of the 20th century. Certainly not all Jews were involved in communist mischief, but chief founders of the respective Communist parties and executors of communist terror and mayhem were either in their majority (Hungary, particularly in 1919, ditto Germany) or astonishing plurality (USSR in 1917-1935) and Poland (1918-1920, 1939–1941, 1944-1956), Jewish.

I cannot conclude without revisiting at least one of the latest compliments paid especially by American Jews to the land neither they nor their immigrant ancestors who had lived in Poland for 600 years, mostly as an alien and alienated colony, have had the slightest true interest in. Making sure to first flash some creds in Western culture by citing Voltaire and later Santayana, Rabbi Menachem Levine declared on the pages of the Washington Times (February 20, 2018) that **“Poland’s new Holocaust law is yet another pack of tricks played upon the millions of murdered Jews in the Holocaust.”** Citing his other creds as a “grandchild of four Polish Holocaust survivors” (I am the grandchild of none), Levine calls that law “a disgrace and a mockery.”

While injecting the cliché about “6,700 Poles recognized by the Yad Vashem,” Levine proceeds to iterate all the arguments how it was the Poles who “made the Holocaust possible,” including “passively observing” and “enthusiastically supporting,” and why all that happened in Poland, which “both allowed and assisted in the Holocaust.” All that under a picture of the Polish flag with the Nazi *hakenkreuz* imposed upon it — removed hastily from the original article (bad for business etc.) but preserved in Polish media, e.g. [here](#).

I hereby sentence the good rabbi to compulsory participation in a four-day seminar that I will hold in the Church of the Good Shepherd Yeshua in Freedomia as a preamble to the truthful dialogue about who murdered whom in Poland. As a condition of attendance, class, please take down these names and prepare to know something about them when we meet on the first day:

- Jakub Berman
- Hilary Minc
- Roman Romkowski (aka Natan Grünspan)
- Anatol Fejgin
- Józef Światło (aka Izaak Fleischfarb, aka “The Butcher”)
- Jacek Róžański (aka Josek Goldberg)
- Antoni Alster (aka Nachum Alster),
- Helena Chaja Altenberg
- Leon Andrzejewski (aka Lejb-Wolf Ajzen)
- Gustaw Auscaler (escaped to Israel)
- Zygmunt Braude
- Mieczysław Broniatowski
- Julia Brystygier (aka Julia Prajs, aka “Bloody Luna”)
- Józef Czaplicki (aka Izidor Kurc)
- Berek Eisenstein
- Marek Fink
- Stefan Finkel
- Alicja Graff
- Kazimierz Graff
- Mieczysław (Szmul) Gross
- Maria Gurowska (aka Maria Zand)
- Wiktor Herer
- Adam Humer
- Edward Kalecki
- Pauline Kern
- Józef Jurkowski, (aka Josek Jungman, escaped to Denmark)
- Wacław Komar (aka Mendel Kossoj)
- Julian Konar
- Józef Kratko
- Ajzer Mąka
- Pinek Mąka
- Emil Merz
- Stefan Michnik (aka Stefan Szechter, escaped to Sweden)
- Mieczysław Mietkowski (aka Mojżesz Bobrowicki)
- Salomon Morel (escaped to Israel)
- Zygmunt Okręt
- Bronisław (Boruch) Nechamkis
- Henryk Piasecki, (aka Izrael Chaim Pesses)
- Lola Potok
- Leon Rubinsztein
- Maksymilian Schnepf (aka Maksymilian Sznepf)
- Shlomo Singer
- Michał (Mojżesz) Taboryski
- Benjamin Wajsblech
- Aleksander Warecki (aka Aleksander Warenhaupt)
- Zygmunt Wizelberg
- Helena Wolińska (aka Fajga Mindla Danielak, aka Helena Brus, escaped to England)

These are 47 names of Jews who ran the Communist terror machine in Poland in the years 1944-1955, most of them in military uniforms and with close links to the Soviet NKVD. Some were secret police officers, interrogators and torturers, some were concentration camp and prison commandants, some military judges and prosecutors, and others ideologues constructing the rationale for communist terror. And two, Jakub Berman and Hilary Minc, were two thirds of the triumvirate of hardline Stalinists that ruled Poland with an iron fist on behalf of Uncle Joe.

A specialist historian could come up with many more names and instances of Jewish executors of this terror, but I am just a non-specialized writer, albeit with a broad academic background devoid of a pre-programmed agenda. And this is difficult territory to navigate, requiring scrupulous research free of both politically correct inhibitions and antisemitic confirmation bias.

What's important to keep in mind is that these names stand for a group that constituted over 37% of just the **security terror apparatus** when Poland's Jewish minority, after emigration of some, numbered at most 100,000 — about 0.4% percent of the Polish population reduced from 35 million in 1938 to 23.6 million in 1946.

It will take you some weeks to research these names, but without that you have no business trying to form an opinion about any aspect of Polish-Jewish relations in the post-war era. You will find referenced Wikipedia entries about the more prominent names. There is some relevant literatures in English, e.g. Marek Jan Chodakiewicz's *The Dialectics of Pain: The Interrogation Methods of the Communist Secret Police in Poland, 1944-1955* and John Sack's *An Eye for an Eye*, though the latter presents the dozens of post-war Polish communist concentration camps run by Jews as pertaining only to German inmates, though there were many prisoners from the Polish anti-communist, anti-German underground, and from the Polish Silesian minority as well. If there is a single brief Polish online text you should struggle with, it's ***Faces of Security Services in the Polish People's Republic in the years 1944 – 1956***(translated title), with photos.

Part 2 of the seminar is called "The impact of Polish Jews' collaboration and participation in the Bolshevik invasion of 1919–1920 and the Soviet invasion and genocide in Poland, 1939–1941." Note that Jedwabne was in the zone of the latter invasion. In preparation, please research the name Jan Karski. Go to the Hoover Institution Archives website, Jan Karski web page, click on "Mission," click on "Karski's Reports." Click on the tag "**Jewish Questions at Home**" . Read the report. It's heartbreaking but our focus here will be on pages 6 and 7. The report is in Polish, but your interest in this field is insincere unless you learn to read Polish. A further bibliographical list will be distributed in class.

Part 3 is called "The shoe on the other foot — Jewish rescuers of anti-communist Poles during their intensive 1945-1955 persecutions and murders by the Soviet-Polish-Jewish Communist authorities." Your lecturer's page is blank on this, so the roles will be reversed. You will research the subject independently and will present your findings in class.

The seminar will conclude with a lecture entitled "If you embrace, you are embraced." Contrary to the massive international propaganda image of Jews and Poles as mutually exclusive, hostile camps, with the former a victim of genocide by the latter, we will discuss Jews who, as Polish patriots, fought in the front lines of military and cultural battles for Poland, and are to this day honored in that country. They were a minority among the Jews, but it's obvious that they had good reasons to love Poland and die for it, too.

There are too many on the cultural front to mention here, but as far as military matters go, among several others we will discuss Berek Joselewicz, a colonel and commander of an all-Jewish light horse regiment of the Polish insurrection army during the Kościuszko Uprising, later in other Polish formations in the Napoleonic wars; Major Bernard Mond, an infantry battalion commander during the 1919-1920 war against the Bolshevik invasion army and by 1939 the commanding general of the Polish 6th Infantry Division; and Countess Krystyna Skarbek, Winston Churchill's and Ian Fleming's favorite special-ops spy.

Among other markers will be the 650 Jewish volunteers in the Polish Legion fighting for Polish independence during World War 1, Polish towns where the Jewish communities allied with their Polish neighbors against the 1919-1920 Bolshevik invasion in opposition to those Jewish communities that supported it, several hundred Jews fighting in the Polish nationalist underground army during World War 2 (by 2001, about 250 had been identified by name), in addition to the estimated 100 thousand who had been drafted into the Polish Army in 1939 and experienced the hard fate of Polish soldiers and officers in the war years.

I first encountered the most horrific of the Jewish names adduced here when playing with my lead soldiers under a table around which the adults were whispering out of the earshot of commie snitches on the other side of the wall. The adults were ethnic Poles, Polish Jews, and my parents, who were a mixture of both. All survivors of their respective Holocausts, and all friends.

This collective hunt that the world's Jewry has been pursuing against Poland and the Polish people unrelentingly for the last 20 years, with the United States Congress and the British Parliament acting as beaters of the prey, is a disgrace. Combined with continuous attempts to squeeze property and billions of dollars from a country attempting to stand on its feet after 500

years of fighting off invaders from east and west, then sacrificing its treasure and many of its best men to save the West at the gates of Vienna in 1683, followed a few decades later by 146 years of the triple yoke of Russian, Prussian and Austrian occupation, followed by just 20 years of independence started with a desperate two-year war that stopped the Bolshevik invasion of Europe, followed by the hell of almost 6 years of German occupation, followed by betrayal by the Allies and the looting and squashing of the Poles for 45 more years of Soviet occupation, followed as of 1989 by the looting of Poland's industry, commerce, agriculture and natural resources via the **harmful premises** of **Jeffrey Sachs/George Soros economics**, followed, since November 2015, by a relentless assault from the Union of European Multiculti Socialists (EU) and its worldwide amen lobby — why, that's more than a disgrace.  
I will leave the choice of the descriptive word to you.

**Max Denken** *was born and lived until the age of ten in Communist-era Poland. He has since lived or commuted to work (in television) in 26 countries — as of 1969, as an American. Denken has university degrees in Economics, Political Science, Mass Media, and Film. Living in Japan until 2015, under the pen name Takuan Seiyo he wrote extensively in European and U.S. dissident media about the decay of the West as seen from the traditional East. As his native surname has more consonants than vowels, and in either of his ex-Japan home continents the hard Cultural-Marxist Left is in control, and uses it to persecute authors who challenge its totems and taboos, he now writes under a different pen name more indicative of his Central-European roots.*

**The Tagesspiegel**  
March 12, 2018

<https://www.tagesspiegel.de/wissen/erinnerungskultur-in-deutschland-holocaust-gedenken-kratz-nur-an-der-oberflaeche/21057664.html>

## **German historian: Our culture of remembrance omits Poles. “The boundaries between victims and perpetrators are being blurred”**

The Germans are proud of their culture of remembrance, but in fact the memory of Nazi crimes is superficial and incomplete – says German historian Stephan Lehnstaedt.

In the material published in the Tuesday edition of the *Tagesspiegel* journal, Lehnstaedt writes that German politicians show pride in the German culture of remembrance and in the critical approach to their own history, but a closer look raises the suspicion that their attitude “costs a little and helps them to gain the political capital.”

German memorial sites are experiencing record numbers of visitors, and at the same time funding for these places leaves a lot to be desired – emphasizes the historian. Lehnstaedt critically assesses recent changes in school programs, where there is less and less information about the Third Reich and German crimes. “Students visit historic places without preparation and confuse, for example, state security Stasi (in the GDR) with the SS (in Nazi Germany).”

The historian notes that the problem doesn’t apply only to students. Education programs for teachers do not sufficiently address the years 1933-1945.

Among the negative occurrences that have recently intensified, the historian mentions the blurring of the borders between the victims and the perpetrators. He refers to a report from scientists from the University of Bielefeld, published a few weeks ago, which shows that 18 percent of Germans believe that during the Third Reich their ancestors helped the victims. In fact, the percentage was 1000 times smaller.

Lehnstaedt notes that even more grotesque, in his opinion, is the view expressed by 54 percent of the survey participants who believe that their relatives were victims of the Second World War.

This is only possible if the victims were killed German soldiers. Such an approach blurs the border between the victims and the perpetrators and it means a return to the theory of unwanted war and of Germans being seduced by Hitler, which was popular in the 1950s – he explains. In his opinion, the German “narration of memory” is limited to the Holocaust.

Some groups of victims are mentioned marginally only, others are completely absent. Almost no one speaks about ethnic Poles, about Soviet prisoners of war or about non-Jewish civilians from some of the Soviet republics – all murdered by Germans, we read in *Tagesspiegel*. Too little is said, according to him, that in occupied Europe only ethnic Germans who supported national socialism did not have to fear reprisals. As he points out, the “forgotten victims” are actually millions of people.

The places of their death are almost exclusively in Eastern Europe, which means that they are “out of sight, out of mind” for Germans – says Lehnstaedt and points out that only the Auschwitz and Yad Vashem museums receive regular funds from the German budget. The German extermination camp sites located now in Poland: Belżec, Sobibór and Treblinka, and associated with Operation Reinhardt, in which German perpetrators murdered 1.8 million Jews, are only supported by way of exception and with minimal sums.

**Toronto Star**  
Wed., Feb. 28, 2018

Reply to Toronto Star's editorial, "Poland must face up to its history, not shut down debate" (February 24, 2018): "... it could amount to a form of Holocaust denial ... It amounts to an attempt to criminalize legitimate historical inquiry ... **The Canadian-Polish historian Jan Grabowski of the University of Ottawa, for one, estimates that Poles were responsible for the death of some 200,000 Jews during the war.** ... The new law, among other things, bans use of the expression "Polish death camps" – rather than something along the lines of "Nazi death camps on Polish territory." (The Star, along with many other news organizations, does not use that expression either after complaints from Polish organizations.)" No mention of the death penalty imposed by the Germans on Poles for helping Jews. Below is an edited version of the Polish Consul General's letter, as published in the Toronto Star on February 28.

#### **Poland's Law: Facing up to history, Editorial, Feb. 24**

Sadly, your editorial included certain misconceptions and unproven allegations that do not make for a fair and balanced dialogue, which we definitely need.

Your editorial suggests that the new regulations are an "ill-conceived attempt to criminalize historical inquiry about the Holocaust." I will answer with a quote taken from the law itself: "The perpetrator of an offence (of defamation) is not deemed to have committed a crime if the act is part of their artistic or scientific activities."

A careful reading of the wording helps understand that the law applies only to those who try to attribute the responsibility for the Holocaust to the Polish government or nation as a collectivity.

That much should be more than enough to protect artists and researchers. After all, Poland remains a European Union democracy, offering all the guarantees of fair treatment to anyone involved, including professor Jan Grabowski, whose hypothesis on the great number of Jews allegedly dead because of actions of Poles was quoted in the article next to the "tiny" total of 6,706 Polish Righteous.

Poland, unlike many, was never an ally of Nazi Germany. Out of the entire German-occupied Europe, it was only there that the Germans murdered any Polish citizen caught helping Jews, along with the family. The vast majority of Poles upheld human values and the Polish Underground State strongly opposed those who let harm Jews.

The first note of the genocide in Auschwitz was prepared by Witold Pilecki who volunteered to the camp, collected intelligence and organized resistance. Polish Government in Exile informed western allies about German camps and appealed to stop the Holocaust, which, remarkably, never happened.

Furthermore, the editorial reads that the Prime Minister of Poland, Mateusz Morawiecki, "(drew) an equivalence between a tiny number of Jewish collaborators with the Nazis."

This is another misunderstanding that was promptly explained by his office. The statement, which is easily available, also in English, reads inter alia: "Each crime must be judged individually, and no single act of wickedness should burden with responsibility entire nations, which were conquered and enslaved by Nazi Germany . . . Attempts to equate the crimes of Nazi German perpetrators with the actions of their victims — Jewish, Polish, Romani, among others — who struggled for survival should be met with resolute, outright condemnation."

I find in your editorial a call for a "free intellectual inquiry" on the Holocaust. Needless to say that the challenge requires an unbiased and fair approach. Please, let the Toronto Star be one of its promoters next time you touch upon such sensitive issues.

**Krzysztof Grzelczyk**, *Consul General for Poland in Toronto*

Regrettably, the left-leaning Toronto Star has a long history of denying the Polish Holocaust. Not only has it often referred to Nazi German camps located in German-occupied Poland as "Polish" or simply "in Poland" (although it never refers to camps in Nazi Germany as "German" camps, but rather "Nazi" camps), that newspaper has a long history of ignoring Polish victims of Nazi German camps and genocide. For example, an editorial "Holocaust memory must stay alive" (April 18, 1978), which specifically mentioned Auschwitz (originally established as a concentration camp for Polish political prisoners), the victims of Nazi German genocidal policies were identified as "all Jews, Gypsies, anti-Nazi-Germans and militant Christian churchmen."

Unfortunately, this attitude remains rather typical of the Toronto Star's shrill "social justice" warriors today. In a hateful article (November 13, 2017), "race and gender" columnist Shree Paradkar called Poland's Independence Day march, a "massive fascist rally" of "some 60,000 people, mostly men ... in that most white, most Catholic of European countries." In fact, persons with fascist leanings, albeit visible because of their rowdiness, were relatively few among the large crowd composed mostly of women, children, and the elderly, including representatives of Poland's visible minorities. These people simply came out to celebrate their country's freedom and were not in any mood for confrontations or clashes on this national holiday. Moreover, they were in no way responsible for the hijacking of the event by a group of aggressive people who did not represent them or their views. Paradkar maligns these ordinary people, whom she repeatedly stressed were "Catholic", "white," "Christian" and "anti-Islam," labelling them as bigots and racist hatemongers.

"There are those who will argue that even this putrid Polish crowd was not all bad. TVP said these were not extremists, but regular Poles expressing their love of Poland. These would be the ordinary people who hide behind those who own up to hatred. These are the ordinary folks, about as nice as the pus that flows out of a festering wound, who remain silent in the face of racist incursions on rights of their fellow citizens in the name of patriotism."

Paradkar would do Goebbels proud, even though her brand of ideology is actually reminiscent of the Soviet Union in the 1920s.

Contrary to what Paradkar claimed, there were no banners that read "Pray for Islamic Holocaust." Unlike the Star, the Washington Post ran the following correction on November 13:

*Earlier versions of this article — including the original headline — cited a CNN report that said a "Pray for an Islamic Holocaust" banner was displayed at the weekend march in Warsaw. CNN has since corrected its story and removed its reference to the banner.*

This piece of fake news was probably launched by an organization like the far left Krytyka Polityczna, a favourite source of viewpoints and information for the Western media.

This hate fest continued when another leftist columnist, Heather Mallick, decided to finger Poland as a prime example of where Jews are being "targeted" today alongside the slaughter of the Rohingya – some equivalence! (March 17, 2018), even though no one is assaulting Jews in Poland and even though Jews and other minorities are far, far, far more likely to be physically attacked and killed in France, Germany, the UK, the USA, Australia, and Canada, not to mention the endemic sectarian strife of India, the native land of Mallick's own father and Shree Paradkar, where violence against Christians and others non-Hindu groups is rampant.

## World Heritage Committee approves Auschwitz name change

Thursday, 28 June 2007

Christchurch, New Zealand - The World Heritage Committee has approved Poland's request to change the name of Auschwitz on UNESCO's World Heritage List. After international consultations, the property, listed as "Auschwitz Concentration Camp" in 1979, is to have the title of "Auschwitz Birkenau" and the subtitle of "German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp (1940-1945)."

In its decision the Committee, presently meeting in Christchurch, New Zealand, for its 31<sup>st</sup> session, also adopted a "statement of significance" for the site which reads as follows:

"Auschwitz-Birkenau was the principal and most notorious of the six concentration and extermination camps established by Nazi Germany to implement its Final Solution policy which had as its aim the mass murder of the Jewish people in Europe. Built in Poland under Nazi German occupation initially as a concentration camp for Poles and later for Soviet prisoners of war, it soon became a prison for a number of other nationalities. Between the years 1942-1944 it became the main mass extermination camp where Jews were tortured and killed for their so-called racial origins. In addition to the mass murder of well over a million Jewish men, women and children, and tens of thousands of Polish victims, Auschwitz also served as a camp for the racial murder of thousands of Roma and Sinti and prisoners of several European nationalities.

"The Nazi policy of spoliation, degradation and extermination of the Jews was rooted in a racist and anti-Semitic ideology propagated by the Third Reich.

"Auschwitz-Birkenau was the largest of the concentration camp complexes created by the Nazi German regime and was the one which combined extermination with forced labour. At the centre of a huge landscape of human exploitation and suffering, the remains of the two camps of Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II-Birkenau, as well as its Protective Zone were placed on the World Heritage List as evidence of this inhumane, cruel and methodical effort to deny human dignity to groups considered inferior, leading to their systematic murder. The camps are a vivid testimony to the murderous nature of the anti-Semitic and racist Nazi policy that brought about the annihilation of more than 1.2 million people in the crematoria, 90% of whom were Jews.

*"The fortified walls, barbed wire, railway sidings, platforms, barracks, gallows, gas chambers and crematoria at Auschwitz-Birkenau show clearly how the Holocaust, as well as the Nazi German policy of mass murder and forced labour took place. The collections at the site preserve the evidence of those who were premeditatedly murdered, as well as presenting the systematic mechanism by which this was done. The personal items in the collections are testimony to the lives of the victims before they were brought to the extermination camps, as well as to the cynical use of their possessions and remains. The site and its landscape has high levels of authenticity and integrity since the original evidence has been carefully conserved without any unnecessary restoration."*

## UNESCO approves Auschwitz name change

Christchurch, New Zealand

On 27 June 2007 the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO has decided to approve Poland's request to change the name of Auschwitz on UNESCO's World Heritage List. Auschwitz now will be known as "**Auschwitz-Birkenau. German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp (1940-1945)**," said Roni Amelan, a spokesman for the Committee. Previously the camp was listed on UNESCO's world heritage registry as the "Auschwitz Concentration Camp."

In its decision the Committee meeting in Christchurch, New Zealand, for its 31st session, also adopted a "statement of significance" for the site which reads as follows:

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Poland requested the change to ensure that future generations understand it had no role in the camp established by Adolf Hitler's forces during their brutal occupation of the country. Polish officials have complained that Auschwitz is sometimes referred to as a "Polish concentration camp," a phrase they fear may be misleading to younger generations who may not associate the camp with Nazi Germany.

"Unesco has made a decision as a result of Poland's request to change the name of Auschwitz Birkenau to reflect the historical truth," said Kazimierz Ujazdowski Polish Minister of Culture and National Heritage with the Israeli ambassador at his side. "This is a victory for truth".

German forces occupying Poland set up Auschwitz in southern Poland in 1940 as a labour camp for Polish prisoners, gradually expanding it into a vast labour and death camp that became the centrepiece of their plans to kill all European Jews. Between 1.2 and 1.5 million people died there, most of them Jews. Polish political prisoners, Soviet prisoners of war, Gypsies, homosexuals, people with disabilities and prisoners of conscience or religious faith were also killed.

The camp was made a World Heritage site by the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in 1979.

## **International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) adopts statement on defective codes of memory**

At its plenary meeting in Geneva on Thursday, June 29, 2017, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) adopted a statement supporting the Polish government's activities to root out such defective codes of memory as the "Polish camps" and "Polish death camps" from publications and public discourse on the annihilation of the Jewish people in the Second World War.

The IHRA has called for an end to using these misleading expressions to refer to places associated with the persecution and murder of the Jews by Nazi Germany on occupied Polish lands.

We welcome the IHRA's position as a measure against distorting the truth about the Holocaust and diluting responsibility for this heinous crime, which rests on Nazi Germany. It is the result of Polish diplomatic efforts, in particular those of the Polish delegation at the IHRA composed of representatives of government, museum and research institutions. It is also the result of engaging the international community in dialogue to promote the entire truth about the Holocaust based on reliable and open historical research. The Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including its missions abroad, has continually acted to root out expressions considered to be defective codes of memory from the Holocaust narrative.

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance is a global intergovernmental organisation set up in 1998. Its goal is to mobilise and coordinate support from political and community leaders for education, sustaining Holocaust memory and studies at the national and international levels. The IHRA has 31 member and 11 observer countries. Poland has been an IHRA member since 1999.

<https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/media-room/stories/ihra-statement-poland>

### **IHRA Statement**

04.07.2017

On 29 June, 2017, the 31 Members Countries of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) adopted, in consensus, a statement in which the organization stated its opposition to the historically unsupportable use of the terms "Polish Death Camps" or "Polish Camps" to refer to the camps and sites of persecution and murder established by Nazi Germany on invaded and occupied Polish soil.

The statement was drafted and recommended for adoption by IHRA experts working in the field of Holocaust remembrance, research and education. The IHRA, of which Poland was one of the first members joining in 1999, is committed to supporting accurate and open historical discourse about the Holocaust period. The IHRA appreciates the opportunity to work closely with the government in Poland as a long-standing and valued member of the organization.

## ONTARIO PRESS COUNCIL RULINGS ON “POLISH CONCENTRATION CAMPS”

**The Ottawa Citizen**  
March 24, 1988

### ***Press Council supports complaint against Citizen review***

Toronto – The Ontario Press Council has upheld a complaint by the Canadian Polish Congress about a review in the Citizen of the movie Sophie’s Choice.

The complaint, brought by Dr. A.H. Makomaski of the congress’s Ottawa branch, involved the phrase “Polish concentration camp survivor.”

The Citizen maintained this meant Sophie was a “Polish survivor of a concentration camp,” but Makomaski said members of the Polish community interpreted it as “a survivor of a Polish concentration camp.”

And he emphasized that concentration camps in Nazi-occupied Poland during the Second World War were, in fact, established and run by Hitler’s Germany.

The council has received a number of complaints in recent years from Polish groups sensitive to any misleading suggestion that such camps were Polish. It agreed that the phrase was ambiguous.

Text of the adjudication:

A capsule review of the film Sophie’s Choice in the Nov. 8, 1987, edition of The Ottawa Citizen said Meryl Streep won an Oscar for her portrayal of ‘a Polish concentration camp survivor.’

While the newspaper maintained this meant Sophie was a Polish woman who had survived imprisonment in a Nazi concentration camp, the press council finds the phrase ambiguous.

It agrees with the complainant that it could be interpreted to suggest the camp itself was Polish, an incorrect statement in light of the fact that Second World War concentration camps in Nazi-occupied Poland were established and operated by Hitler’s Germany. The complaint is upheld.

\* \* \* \* \*

**The Toronto Star**  
November 9, 1992

### ***Be clear on origin of death camps council urges***

From the Ontario Press Council  
Forty-seven years after the end of World War II there are probably many newspaper readers in Canada who do not know death camps in Poland were established and operated by Nazi Germany, the Ontario Press Council says.

In adjudicating a complaint by the Canadian Polish Congress against The Toronto Star, the council says articles should make that fact clear either through context or at least one specific reference.

The congress cited a number of stories published in The Star which it felt were not precise enough in references to concentration camps.

It noted that while The Star had corrected some obvious ambiguities it did not do so in the case of a June 3 Jerusalem story that said John Demjanjuk, accused of war crimes, was in “the Sobibor death camp in Poland and the Flossenbug concentration camp in Germany in March, 1943.”

“There is no explicit reference anywhere in this lengthy article making it clear that we are dealing with German-occupied Poland,” the congress said in its letter of complaint.

“Since the Nazis were found in many European countries, and now that 50 years have elapsed since World War II started, many readers, especially the younger ones and those of a non-European background, might well not be familiar with those historical events.”

The Star said a term such as “Polish death camp” would be obviously misleading but it was not inaccurate to write “death camp in Poland.” It added that the reference to Sobibor was incidental to the main thrust of the story and maintained that appearance of the word “Nazi” in several paragraphs provided adequate context for the Sobibor reference.

The Press Council, instead of upholding the specific complaint, chose to make what it regarded as a positive recommendation about how it believes newspaper should deal with concentration camp references.

Text of the adjudication:

The Toronto Star, responding to a complaint by the Canadian Polish Congress, agreed it would be wrong to use a term such as “Polish concentration camp” since such camps were established and operated by the Nazis in occupied Poland during World War II. But it maintained that there was nothing incorrect about a reference such as “the Sobibor death camp in Poland.” The Congress insisted that it should always be made clear the camps were Nazi-operated.

The Ontario Press Council, noting some references may be incomplete but not clearly inaccurate, declines to uphold the complaint in respect to a June 3 Jerusalem article about the John Demjanjuk war crimes case.

But it believes the issue is significant, that the sensitivities of the Polish community are important, and that 47 years after the end of the war there are many Canadians who have little or no knowledge about the death camps in Poland.

It suggests, therefore, that to avoid misunderstanding, either the context or at least one reference in any article about the camps should leave no doubt the Nazi occupiers set them up and operated them.