

## *Kampania antysojonistyczna w Polsce 1967-1968*

**(The Anti-Zionist Campaign in Poland, 1967-1968)**

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The term “anti-Zionist campaign” is misleading in two ways, since the campaign analyzed in this study began as an anti-Israeli policy but quickly turned into an anti-Jewish campaign, and this evident anti-Jewish character remained its distinctive feature. Firstly, the words Zionism and Zionist, were a substitute and code-name for “Jew” and “Jewish.” Secondly, “Zionist” signified Jew even if the person called Zionist was not Jewish. These paradoxes reveal the essential features of the phenomena. For this reason this study retains the name “*anti-Zionist* campaign,” indicating its perverse meaning in italics.

The events described in the book took place in two acts: the first in the summer of 1967, the second in the spring of 1968. In the summer of 1967 the Cold War and subordination to Moscow had caused the Communist leaders of Poland to take the Arab side in the distant conflict in the Near East. The inhabitants of Poland were supposed to follow in the steps of their rulers. Thus an anti-Israeli propaganda campaign was unleashed, mobilizing the masses to express dictated opinions and feelings. The political police monitored non-conformist attitudes and informed the leaders that Polish Jews sympathized with Israel. Communist party leader Władysław Gomułka stigmatized them for this crime, and the first punishments followed. A number of persons who had previously sought to deal with the Jews were concentrated in the secret services of the Ministry of Interior (MSW), and they now felt that their moment had at last approached. The events of the spring of 1968, called the March events, had a much more extensive scope and greater drama than the first act. The authorities unleashed a large-scale hate campaign in reaction to student protests and the ferment among intellectuals who had been increasingly frustrated by restrictions on freedoms, censorship and withdrawal from the reforms Gomułka had promised when taking power in 1956. Among the alleged internal enemies the campaign attacked, the *Zionists* were preeminent. In just a few days the *anti-Zionist* propaganda reached its apogee, large numbers of people were mobilized against the enemy, hate sessions organized throughout the country, and a purge begun. Simultaneously, an intra-party struggle was going on behind the scenes. The campaign was officially terminated in July 1968, although its deceleration had begun earlier. Its most significant aftereffect, a wave of mass Jewish emigration, lasted for many months afterwards.

To avoid misunderstandings and myths that have accumulated around the topic in the past, this book refers mainly to primary sources: the archival documents (mainly in the archives of the communist party Central Committee and the Ministry of Interior) and eyewitness accounts. This first monograph

focusing on these events benefits from the recent opening of the archives in Poland. A selection of the most significant, newly declassified documents has been added in the documentary Annex.

The *Introduction* explores several political and social processes of the two decades of communist rule in Poland prior to the campaign, which contributed to the events of 1967-1968 and placed the main actors of the events into the key institutions of the Polish People's Republic (PRL). These processes involved: the structuring of intra-party groups and their conflicts in 1948, 1956 and in the 1960s, including the emergence of General Mieczysław Moczar's *national Communists*; inter-generational tensions that increased strains on the petrified bureaucracies of the regime in the 1960s; and a legacy of well-rooted anti-Semitism to which, paradoxically, the consequences of the Holocaust and the participation of Jewish communists in the post-war imposition of the new regime had contributed.

Chapters I, II and III investigate the beginning and development of the campaign in 1967: the Polish and Soviet leaders' reactions to the Six Day War in June 1967; the conflict inside the Polish Politburo, which broke out when Gomułka publicly accused Polish Jews of supporting the Israeli aggressors and American imperialists; the MSW coverage of the behavior of Poles and Polish Jews during the war, and the resulting guidelines for the secret services to focus on *Zionists* as the new leading enemy; and a wave of rumors, intrigues and hysteric meetings in the Army, which began to purge Jewish officers.

Chapters IV and V provide a detailed description of the events and decisions that made the *Zionists* the main target of a massive hate campaign that began on March 11, 1968, following the student protests and riots. Chapter IV tracks down the *anti-Zionist* initiative from the MSW and how it transformed into the official policy. Chapter V analyzes the behavior and motives of the communist leaders, who supported or opposed the campaign, when and why. Chapter VI presents the campaign itself, that is, its hybrid nature combining elements of communist purge and the anti-Semitism of the extreme right; the meaning of the propaganda messages and the enormous machinery that was set in motion to convey them (press, radio and television, books and pamphlets, leaflets and posters, and in particular thousands of public gatherings); and the patterns and results of the anti-Jewish purge.

Chapter VII investigates the campaign as a social phenomenon. It discusses various motives of its participants: the eruption of anti-Jewish resentments, the skillful channeling of general social discontent with living and working conditions into expressions of *anti-Zionism*; similar release of cadre and generational tensions, the powers of opportunism, conformism and fear in the monocentric regime; and the "privatization of the instruments of coercion," which made individual pursuit of private interests serve the public evil. Chapter VIII deals similarly with the phenomenon of mass emigration that followed the campaign: how the party leaders decided to open the doors for emigration as a solution to the Jewish question; how *Zionists* were forced to choose to leave; and the motives and patterns of emigration, which embraced about 13,000 people. Particular attention is given to the push factor of the "unbearable atmosphere," the internal dynamics of the social process of exodus, the fear of the return to a no-exit situation, an accelerated de-Polonization (disassimilation) of Poles of Jewish origin, and the social structure of migrants.

Chapter IX investigates why and when Gomuška changed his mind and decided to end the campaign, and how this was implemented. It also presents the political events that followed the campaign: changes in the leadership at the party Congress in late 1968 and the abortive attempts to use the *anti-Zionist* weapon against Gomuška himself. The last chapter deals with the “shadow of March” - the long-term consequences of the campaign and its place in the political discourse up to 1989, including a special session of the party Central Committee Secretariat in January 1988.