Chapter 1//

The Enemy Within: Divisive Political Discourse in Modern Poland

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Introduction

Poland's ethnic demography, borders, and regime type changed multiple times in the course of the 20th century. Ethnic Poles made up just 65% of the population in the interwar period, but today the country is one of the most ethnically homogeneous in Europe. Poland's borders were redrawn in 1918, 1921, 1939, and 1945, creating conflicts with neighboring states along the way. Poles also lived through a brief bout of parliamentary democracy, followed by military dictatorship, Nazi and Soviet occupation, a period of Stalinist totalitarian rule, four decades of authoritarian socialism, and a more extensive democratic period that, some argue, is eroding (Rohac 2018). Through all of these transformations, fifth-column accusations remained a staple of political discourse.[2] In 1922, Poland's very first president Gabriel Narutowicz was murdered following a collusive fifth-column claim that he represented the interests of world Jewry and owed his career to Jewish financial circles (Brykczynski 2016, 23). In the 1940s, Polish Communists framed the opposition as a subversive fifth column seeking to sell their country to Nazi Germany. In 1967, the First Secretary of the Polish United Workers Party railed against a Zionist subversive "Fifth Column," demanding that the supporters of Israel and western imperialists leave the country. In the 1980s, the authorities claimed that the Solidarity trade union was led by Jews "whose interests and goals were incompatible with the Polish national interests" (Michlic 2006, 259). "Jewish connections" continue to be evoked to delegitimize political opponents in post-1989 Poland (Forecki 2009; Charnysh 2015, 2017).

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[2] Discourse, policy, and mobilization are three possible forms of fifth-column politics that may or may not occur concurrently (Radnitz and Mylonas, Introduction). This chapter focuses primarily on *fifth-column discourse*.

How do political actors choose who to target with a public fifth-column accusation and with what images, discourse, and metaphors? What explains the resonance of a particular fifth-column appeal? Drawing on research in social psychology, I argue that fifth-column accusations work by redefining ingroup boundaries. Their indirect targets are not only the alleged fifth column, but ingroup members who can be pressured into switching sides to dissociate themselves from the fifth columnists. Fifth-column appeals are as much about reshuffling existing political alliances as they are about demonizing opponents or external enemies. Such appeals work best when they activate preexisting cultural schemas. When choosing their targets, political actors thus draw on deeply held biases in their societies and instrumentalize preexisting cleavages based on ethnicity, religion, status, or experiences.

I use this theoretical framework to interpret fifth-column politics in 20th-century Poland. I highlight similarities between the left- and right-wing parties' attacks against ethnic and ideological fifth columns in the interwar period, in the aftermath of WWII, and in the late 1960s-early 1980s. In all three periods, domestic political competition rather than security threats motivated fifth-column accusations. In each case, political entrepreneurs sought to divide their opponents and redraw existing political alliances in their favor. In the interwar period, the nationalist right framed Jews and anyone working with them as a fifth column. It articulated a collusive claim in order to delegitimize Polish parties allied with the Piłsudski government, getting them to switch sides. After WWII, the Communists claimed that the opposition betrayed the Polish nation by colluding with Nazi Germany in order to attract some members of the anti-communist underground to the Communist cause. In the 1960s, the United Polish Workers' Party (PZPR) adopted right-wing language from the interwar period by framing "Zionists" as a fifth column serving Germany, seeking to divide societal opposition to its rule and to convince Polish functionaries to fall in line with Gomułka. Across three cases, political entrepreneurs adopted comparable discursive techniques despite their ideological differences and changing geopolitical environment. They used anti-Semitic stereotypes that have become an integral part of the nationalist narrative, activating latent faultlines within the Polish society.

Fifth-Column Discourse from the Social Identity Perspective

Fifth columns are understood as "domestic actors suspected of working on behalf of external actors to undermine the state or regime" (Radnitz and Mylonas, Introduction). A standard fifth-column narrative thus evokes threats emanating from inside and outside a social group at the same time. I argue that this property makes fifth-column accusations particularly useful to political entrepreneurs who wish to divide their opponents and convince some members their rival group to switch sides.

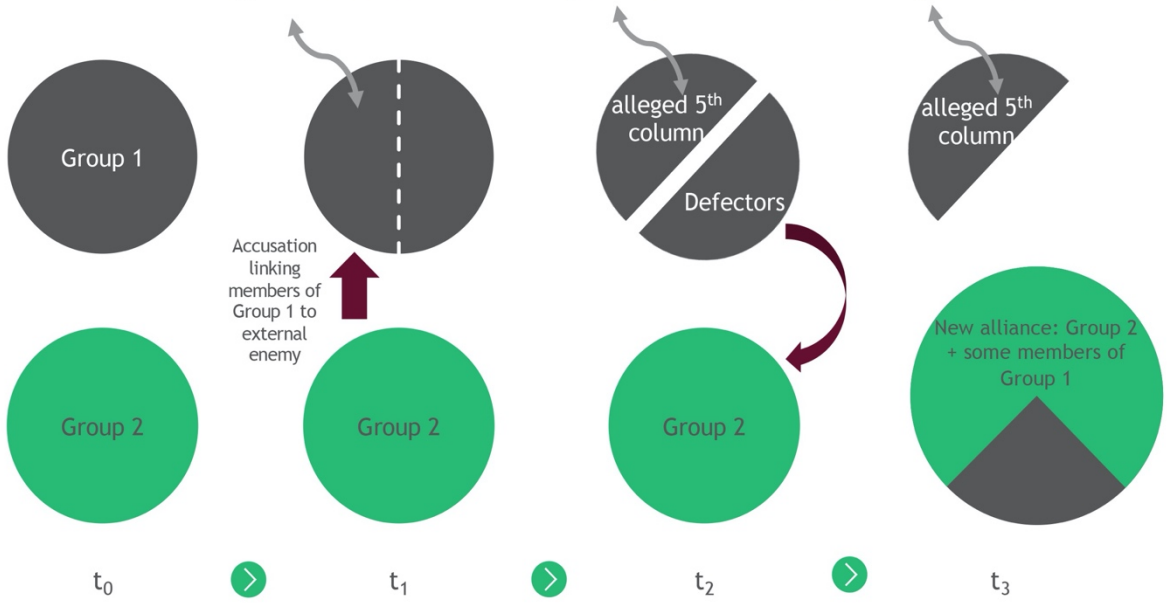
The immediate consequence of fifth-column rhetoric is stigmatization of select ingroup members who are exposed as deviant and duplicitous for collaborating with the enemy. Individuals framed as disloyal to their ingroup for serving the competing outgroup incur heavy penalties. Research shows that ingroup deviance is judged more harshly than outgroup deviance because it threatens the positive image of the ingroup, as demonstrated by studies of the "black sheep effect" (Marques, Yzerbyt, and Leyens 1988). Relatedly, fifth-column activity means not only betraying the ingroup but also strengthening the rival outgroup at its expense, which makes it an especially consequential transgression in the eyes of the ingroup members (Travaglino et al. 2014). For instance, disclosing sensitive information to a domestic audience is perceived as much less problematic than disclosing it to a foreign actor, an act of treason that historically carried the death penalty. Fifth-column accusations thus provoke greater moral outrage and punishment than other types of accusations.

By provoking outrage against purported betrayal, fifth-column accusations have the potential to transform group boundaries and reshuffle existing alliances. As McDermott (2020, 7) argues, political actors evoke outgroup threat because it "offers a very elegant solution to the very real organizational challenge of establishing collective action." Researchers have shown that priming threats from outside the group has different effects than priming threat from inside (Greenaway and Cruwys 2019). External threats increase the perceived homogeneity of the ingroup (Rothgerber 1997), strengthen ingroup identification and attachment (Brewer 2001), and facilitate coordination and cohesion among ingroup members (Benard 2012; W. G. Stephan and C.W. Stephan 2000). Internal threats, by contrast, decrease the perceived homogeneity of the ingroup, weaken ingroup identification and attachment, and thus undermine coordination within the ingroup (Greenaway and Cruwys 2019; Jetten and Hornsey 2014).

Evoking internal threat and external threat side by side can be used to undermine cohesion within the accused rival group, which is purported to contain a fifth column, while

erasing perceived differences between those members of the accused group who are willing to dissociate themselves from it and members of the accusing group. For example, by singling out Jews as a fifth column in the interwar period, Polish nationalists sought to split the center-left coalition by getting the center-left Piast party to switch sides, as discussed below. Similarly, the German Right attacked the Social Democratic Party as serving Jews and international interests in order to split the left and attract German workers to a more conservative agenda following Germany's democratic transition in 1918 (Crim 2011, 627). The countervailing effects of fifth-column accusations on group identification and cohesion create tension that can be resolved by redefining the ingroup/outgroup boundary to exclude the purported fifth column. Switching alliances to dissociate from the fifth column restores ingroup cohesion and homogeneity and resolves this tension. Effective fifth-column discourse thus undermines unity and coordination within the group that contains the alleged fifth column and increases identification and cohesion within the new coalition, which now excludes the fifth column.

Figure 1. Schematic representation of the argument.



Because of their potential for both inclusion and exclusion of ingroup members, fifth-column accusations have frequently surfaced during the periods of nation and state building, regime change, or in times of war. Branding ethnic minorities as serving external enemies has recast them outside of the national ingroup and, at the same time, increased the perceived homogeneity and cohesion of the reconstituted ingroup, now composed of ethnic majorities, by

obscuring class and ideology distinctions among its members. For instance, the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism or Judeo-Communism emerged in Central Europe in the aftermath of WWI, as a response to the dissolution of empires, military defeat, and the outbreak of revolutions of 1918-1919 (Gerwarth 2008). Fifth columns have also been invoked in times of internal instability because they place dissenters outside the national ingroup, reducing opportunities for collective action against the regime, even as they rally popular support for the government among the rest of the population. This is the case in contemporary Russia, with anti-Putin protesters branded as Western agents. Fifth-column rhetoric can facilitate the reshuffling of existing political coalitions by excluding the alleged fifth column and by signaling greater opportunities for cooperation among actors who share internal and external enemies. In all of these situations, fifth-column discourse shapes political outcomes by changing group boundaries and facilitating coordination and cohesion within the new alliance.

The fifth-column discourse is often unrelated to the actual level of internal or external threat; it does not necessarily respond to security risks presented by espionage, sabotage, or other subversive activity. In interwar Poland, German and Ukrainian minorities presented greater risks to the nascent Polish state than the Jewish minority, which became the main target of Polish nationalists. When the loyalty of some domestic groups appears suspect, political actors can act on their suspicions covertly -- by increasing surveillance, restricting the right of assembly or freedom of movement, or excluding some groups from employment in sensitive occupations (Radnitz and Mylonas, Introduction). Airing their suspicions by openly confronting the alleged fifth-columnists can backfire by exacerbating intergroup tensions, antagonizing the purported fifth column's external allies, or putting traitorous groups on alert. When actors are instead interested in changing political alliances, they will pick a target that can activate preexisting cultural schemas and fragment their rivals. In Central Europe, Jews were a frequent victim of fifth-column accusations because anti-Semitism was widespread and because many center-left coalitions included Jews.

This discussion suggests the following expectations about the occurrence and content of fifth-column discourse. First, such discourse will be motivated by the desire to undermine or reinforce cohesion within social groups rather than by the genuine presence of internal or external threats. Political actors will publicly evoke fifth columns to reinterpret group boundaries and alter existing political alliances. Second, fifth-column discourse will target not only the

alleged fifth column, but also the affiliated ingroup members, whose allegiances such discourse will seek to influence. If fifth-column accusations are successful, these ingroup members will switch sides. Third, fifth-column discourse will often draw on preexisting cultural schemas and prejudices, targeting peripheral ingroup members.

Fifth-Column Rhetoric in Poland

This section applies the insights from social identity theory to decode nationalist rhetoric in 20th-century Poland. I draw parallels between (1) ethnically charged fifth-column discourse by the nationalist right in the interwar period (1921-1939), (2) fifth-column rhetoric focused on ideology by the Soviet-backed Polish Workers' Party immediately after WWII, and (3) the revival of ethnicity-based fifth-column accusations by the Communist party in the post-Stalinist period (1956-1980).

The Jewish Fifth Column in Interwar Poland

When Poland regained independence after 123 years of control by Russian, Prussian, and Austrian empires, ethnic Poles made up just 65% of its population. The country hosted sizable Ukrainian (14%), Jewish (10%), Belarusian (3%), and German (2%) minorities and bordered revolutionary Russia and revisionist Germany. Forging a sense of national unity among diverse citizenry in a hostile international environment was a challenge. The Jewish minority pledged loyalty to the Polish state immediately after independence and lacked connections to external powers that could destabilize Poland. Other groups were much less governable, however. The Germans in the Prussian partition resented losing their dominant status and hoped for reunification with Germany (Chu 2012); the Ukrainians in Galicia sought to win more autonomy through terrorism (Horak 1961); and the Belarusians consumed the Soviet propaganda and voted Communist (Vakar 1956; Kopstein and Wittenberg 2003).

All three groups were potential fifth columns from the security standpoint; at one point or another all were under surveillance or infiltrated by government agents. Yet it was the less threatening Jewish minority and its Polish allies who bore the brunt of fifth-column accusations in the interwar period. This outcome is more consistent with the alliance-shifting functions of the

fifth-column discourse. From a social identity perspective, ethnic minority groups that are willing to cooperate with the ethnic majority are better targets because they can be used for undermining existing interethnic coalitions and changing political alliances. Targeting the more cooperative minority delegitimizes some majority group members by association, motivating them to switch sides. I expand on this explanation below.

The first decades of Poland's independence were marred by the stalemate between two political blocs: on the left, a broad coalition of socialists, liberals, and peasant radicals united by Marshal Józef Piłsudski and on the right, the National Democrats (or *Endecja*) masterminded by Roman Dmowski.[3]

In the first democratic elections, in 1922, the Endecja movement, represented by the coalition of the National Populist Union, the Christian National Party and the Christian Democratic Party, secured 39% of seats in the National Assembly. The left, incorporating the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), the radical peasant Emancipation party, and other smaller groups, secured 25% seats in the Assembly. Together with center-left Piast, the pro-Piłsudski group held 40% of seats. Thus, neither the left nor the right could create a majority government (Brykczynski 2016, 84-85).

In this unstable situation, the National Minorities Bloc, comprising Jewish, Ukrainian, Belarusian, and German groups held together by the Zionist leader Yitzak Grünbaum, could serve as a kingmaker. The Bloc held 16% of the vote and 15% of seats in the National Assembly. While neither the left nor the right were happy about the situation, the left was more open to working with the Bloc than the openly anti-Semitic Endecja. An alliance with the Bloc would enable the left to form a majority government and secure the results of the upcoming presidential

[3] Piłsudski and Dmowski stood for the two opposing conceptions of Polish nationalism. Piłsudski glorified Poland's past as the multiethnic Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1569-1795) and embraced ethnic minorities as a part of the Polish nation. He led Poland through the destructive but eventually victorious Polish-Soviet war (1919-1921), which determined Poland's eastern borders and solidified the negative view of the Red Army and the USSR among the large segments of the population in the borderlands. Dmowski, by contrast, perceived Poland's diversity as its Achilles heel. He condemned the religious tolerance that attracted a large Jewish population to the Commonwealth and argued that the future belonged to the ethnically homogeneous Polish nation. In his view Germany, not Russia, was Poland's key external enemy. He glorified Poland of the Piasts (10th to 14th century), which allied with Moscow to fight the Teutonic Order and controlled lands that were subsequently conquered by Prussia (Dabrowski 2011).

election (Brykczynski 2016, 87).[4] To prevent this outcome and split the pro-Piłsudski camp, the right sought to create an alliance with the Bloc untenable for the left by labeling Jews as traitors and those willing to work with Jews as betraying the Polish nation (Brykczynski 2016).

To that end, Endecja portrayed Gabriel Narutowicz, presidential candidate from the left and a Roman Catholic, as colluding with the world Jewry (Brykczynski 2016, 25-26). When Narutowicz was elected, the right sought to sabotage his inauguration by claiming that he owed his career to "Jewish financial circles" and would extend "Jewish-Masonic influence" over Poland (Brykczynski 2016, 25-26). The National Democrats unleashed their fury not only on Jews, but also on Piast, the party most likely to split away from the pro-Piłsudski camp. The party's leader, Wincenty Witos, was castigated for "marching under the command of the Jews" and "betraying Poland." Under pressure, Piast issued a public declaration that explained its support for Narutowicz as "not the result of some deal reached with any of the Polish left-wing parties or let alone with the national minorities" (Brykczynski 2016, 29-31). Narutowicz was assassinated just five days after assuming office, and the right succeeded in bringing Piast to its side. The center-right coalition between Piast and Endecja (Chjeno-Piast) ruled briefly and unstably in 1923 and again in 1926.

In May 1926, the Chjeno-Piast government was unseated by the coup organized by Piłsudski. Piłsudski soon created the Non-partisan Bloc for Cooperation with the Government (*BBWR*), which rested on electoral support from Poles, Jews and other minorities. Endecja was now back in the opposition, facing a center-left alliance with ethnic minorities that it had tried to prevent years earlier. The National Democrats resorted to the old tactics to split their rival. They accused Piłsudski of protecting "Judeo-Polonia" and neglecting Polish national interests and claimed that support from ethnic minorities was evidence that Piłsudski "betrayed the nation" (Michlic 2006, 96). Jews themselves were charged with collaborating with the USSR and supporting Communism. The Soviet Union was perceived as a key threat by Piłsudski's support base, which made Endecja's appeals more persuasive among this group. Endek activists referenced the recent Polish-Soviet war to reinforce their claims. For example, Pro-Endecja Reverend Stanisław Trzeciak argued in a 1937 article: "The Jews betrayed the Polish Army. They did not participate in the defense of Lwów. They constituted 99% of those who acted

[4] The Polish president in 1922 was elected indirectly, by members of the National Assembly.

against the Polish state during the Soviet-Polish War of 1920. Ninety-eight or 100 percent of Jews are communist revolutionaries" (cited in Michlich 2006, 90).

Communism was the enemy Dmowski's and Piłsudski's voters could agree on; linking Jews and Communism facilitated coordination between some segments of the BBWR and Endecja. The Endeks questioned the loyalty of Piłsudski's Polish supporters for siding with the Jews and, by extension, with the Communists, in order to divide them and discredit the Piłsudski regime. Endecja's rhetoric was thus designed to rally ethnic Poles, particularly from the BBWR, against a common Jewish-Communist threat, to get them to join the right.

Endecja's approach succeeded after Piłsudski's death. In 1935, the BBWR disintegrated and its right-wing members founded the Camp of National Unity (*Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego, OZN*). The OZN adopted discrimination of Jews as its official policy, breaking away from the BBWR's tolerant legacies (Wynot 1971). In its 1937 *Theses on the Jewish Question*, the OZN warned that Jews belonged to "a universal, Jewish a-state group" that "possessed separate national goals" from Poles and repeated Endecja's earlier rhetoric linking Jews to the Red Army and the Comintern (Wynot 1971, 1049). Anti-Semitism became a bridge between many former BBWR members and Endecja.

Enemy Rhetoric in the Aftermath of World War II

In 1939, the Soviet Union and Germany invaded Poland. The ensuing five years of brutal occupation left a deep impression on Polish society. In contrast to other states of the Eastern Bloc that allied with Nazi Germany (Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria) or were occupied by Germany alone (Czechoslovakia), Poles felt neither guilt for collaborating with the Nazis nor gratitude for being "liberated" by the Soviet Union at the end of the war (Lewis 1982). During the conflict, ethnic Germans and Ukrainian nationalists collaborated with the Nazi regime and perpetrated violence against Poles and Jews.

The security perspective suggests that governments would be more concerned about ethnic minorities linked to the country's external enemy. From the social identity perspective, however, fifth-column discourse against the collaborating ethnic groups, already ostracized and soon to be expelled from Poland, would have limited political uses. In competition with diverse

political groupings united to prevent the Communist takeover, the small but well-connected Communist forces decided to base their fifth-column rhetoric on ideological differences instead.

The anti-Communist opposition was composed of ethnic Poles from all sides of the political spectrum; some wound up on the German and others on the Soviet side of the Molotov-Ribbentrop border in 1939. To divide and conquer, the Communist Party framed some of the opposition members as fifth-columnists with ties to Nazi Germany, claiming that they fought the Red Army in order to deliver Poland into German hands. According to Gomułka, "These traitors dream[ed] about a fascist dictatorship in Poland; fearing […] the growing strength of the Polish people, they want …to help Berlin by calling for the end of the fight against the Germans and by turning arms against their brothers fighting the occupiers, against the Polish Workers' Party ..." (quoted in Zaremba 2001, 122). Both Home Army and the right-wing National Armed Forces (*Narodowe Siły Zbrojne*) were attacked as Nazi collaborators who murdered Jews and partisans (Steinlauf 1997, 49). The PPR also continuously emphasized the unity of Poland and the Soviet Union in the fight against Nazi Germany, a key enemy for the interwar Endecja movement, with a goal of attracting some of Endecja's former members. It offered members of the anti-Communist underground a choice to switch sides and emphasized that they shared some enemies with the PPR.[5]

The opposition did not reciprocate with similar accusations against the Communist Party. Instead it portrayed Communists as an external threat and called for national unity and putting away old political disagreements. It ridiculed the Communist Party's new name, Polish Workers' Party (*Polska Partia Robotnicza, PPR*), as standing for "Paid Lackeys of Russia" (*Płatne Pachołki Rosji*) and branded Communists "Stalin-Jews," sent by the Soviet Union in order to take over the Polish government (Behrends 2009, 452).

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[5] In addition to discrediting their opponents, the PPR adapted its universalist ideology to incorporate many elements of Polish nationalism. In 1944, when their reputation was especially poor, Communist activists went as far as to hold a Catholic mass to celebrate the anniversary of the Polish victory against the Soviet Union in the battle of Warsaw (Zaremba 2001, 140). To justify their support for the Soviet annexation of the eastern territories, an extremely unpopular policy, the PPR invoked Dmowski's vision of "Piast Poland." The lands acquired by Poland from the West were presented as the "Recovered Territories," returned to their motherland after some 900 years of German exploitation (Kulczycki 2002). This narrative linked Poland's new borders to its heroic past under the medieval Piast dynasty, reframing the loss of eastern borderlands as compatible with Poland's national interest (Zaremba 2001, 133-34).

Although the PPR and its successor, the United Polish Workers Party (PZPR), failed to attract broad societal support, they succeeded in splitting the opposition and recruiting some of its members into their ranks. An early convert was Bolesław Piasecki, who headed the extreme right faction, ONR-Falanga, on the eve of World War II and joined the Home Army at the end of the conflict. Piasecki agreed to join the Communist side after the Soviet security forces arrested him in 1944. In 1947, Piasecki founded the PAX movement of pro-Communist Catholics, which eventually absorbed many members of the former Endecja (Behrends 2009). Endecja activists also flocked to the newly created Association for the Development of the Recovered Territories (*Towarzystwo Rozwoju Ziem Zachodnich*) and to the anti-German League of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy (*ZBoWiD*).

To be sure, the fifth-column rhetoric alone was insufficient to bring about the rapprochement of Communists and the nationalist right. The Red Army and Soviet NKVD were necessary to convince many opposition leaders that resistance was futile. Still, the fifth-column narratives increased fragmentation and infighting within the anti-communist underground and attracted some of its members to the Communist side.

Witch-hunt against the Jewish Fifth Column in 1968

Perhaps the most notorious example of fifth-column discourse occurred in 1968, while Poland was a one-party state. Although elections were still held, there was no meaningful political competition in the country at that time. To understand political discourse, one needs to focus on the growing opposition to Communist rule and internal rivalries within the Communist party. In this period, the party invoked the Jewish fifth column to sow disunity in response to mounting societal opposition to its rule, blaming Poland's economic problems on its Jewish members and at the same time framing the dissenters as encouraged by Israel. Portraying some party functionaries as a Zionist fifth column also resolved the long-standing rivalries within the PZPR by convincing many party functionaries to fall in line with its leader, Gomułka. Even the public at large embraced the campaign, as suggested by the secret reports to the Ministry of Interior Affairs (Zaremba 1998, 2001).

At first blush, the 1968 hunt for the Zionist fifth column can be attributed to changes in the international environment. In June 1967, Israel launched a surprise attack on Egypt and

secured a decisive victory over the coalition of Arab states in six days, changing the balance of power in the Middle East. The USSR perceived the Israeli strike an act of aggression sponsored by western imperialists and broke off diplomatic relations with Israel. Poland and the rest of the Eastern Bloc had to follow suit. Yet Polish society did not see the situation the same way. Poles sympathized with Israel's fight against the Arab coalition (Rozenbaum 1978). The Polish Ministry of Internal Affairs was particularly worried about Polish Jews, concluding that the majority "adopted pro-Israeli views, opposed to the Party's politics and the position of the Polish government and foreign to the Polish population." It registered numerous expressions of solidarity with the Jewish cause and 81 instances of Jews volunteering to join the Israeli army or transferring their savings to Israel (Stola 2000, 48).

To deal with the situation, Gomułka summoned the provincial party secretaries to coordinate an anti-Israeli campaign. The state media and the provincial and local party branches played a crucial role in framing the conflict. To make Israel more threatening to the Polish masses, propaganda linked it to a more traditional enemy, Germany. On June 13, daily *Zycie Warszawy* claimed that Israel had received military supplies and ideological direction from West Germany (Rozenbaum 1978).

On June 19, 1967, Gomułka for the first time invoked a fifth column. In his speech at the Congress of the Polish Trade Union, he exhorted: "We cannot remain indifferent toward people who in the face of a threat to world peace, that is, also to the security of Poland and the peaceful work of our nation, support the aggressor, wreckers of peace and imperialists… We do not wish a "fifth column" to be created in our country" (Michlic 2006, 247). This part of the speech was criticized by other Politburo members, who were taken by surprise by his decision to search for internal enemies (Stola 2000, 184). The "fifth column" sentence was censored in print, but the phrase became a "hit" following television and radio broadcasts of the speech (Michlic 2006, 247). Emboldened by praise from Moscow, Gomułka repeated the fifth-column accusations at the June 27 Politburo meeting. He framed those who did not stand firm against Israel as traitors ("with two souls and two homelands") and argued that they could bring Poland to the brink of a nuclear war if no action were taken (Stola 2000, Appendix 3). For the time being, however, the propaganda centered on external enemies and no policy changes occurred.

Only in March 1968, nearly a year after the Arab-Israeli war, did the fifth-column accusations become concrete and reach a broad audience. This development was prompted by

student protests against the ban on Adam Mickiewicz's play *Dziady*. The play was banned as Russophobic in January 1968 and by March, the unrest spread from the Warsaw University to other educational institutions. Student rallies were brutally suppressed and soon blamed on a "Zionist conspiracy." The authorities mentioned prominent Jewish students as instigators. Among others, they named Antoni Zambrowski, the son of prominent PZPR Central Committee member Roman Zambrowski, and Ewa Zarzycka, the daughter of Chairman of the Warsaw National Council Janusz Zarzycki. Both were well-known as Jewish and neither was in Poland at the time of the protests (Michlic 2006; Stola 2000). From then on, the anti-Israel campaign morphed into the campaign against the Zionist fifth column within Poland (Michlic 2006). The "Zionist" label was applied loosely, referring to Jewish descent, alleged disloyalty to Poland, or both (Michlic 2006, 244). Its use allowed the PZPR to deflect accusations of anti-Semitism while continuing to target Jews and Poles associated with them. Indeed, most Poles understood the term as the equivalent of "Jew," an interpretation recognized and encouraged by the authorities (Michlic 2006, 245-46).

For maximum effect, the party resorted to tropes from the interwar period. It framed Zionists as wealthy, powerful, and conspiratorial (Stola 2000, 154). The propaganda also contained elements from the myth of Judeo-Communism, though Jews were now accused of a different crime: Stalinism (Glowinski 1991, 64; Michlic 2006, 257). The "Zionists" were framed as threatening because they served a broad range of foreign interests - Israeli, American, and West German. The link to Germany, Poland's traditional enemy, was especially prominent in the propaganda. For example, an article published in *Trybyna Mazowiecka* on March 25, 1968, claimed: "The Zionists […] would like to impose upon the people of socialist Poland the policies of Israel, the German Federal Republic, and imperialism.... While they impute to us all kinds of barbarism and crimes, they smile at the 'German henchmen of their relatives' in West Germany" (cited in Michlic 2006, 249). Rumors circulated that one thousand former Nazis advised the Israeli army. Jews were blamed for launching an "anti-Polish offensive" in the West by slandering the Polish nation as anti-Semitic and blaming Poles for the Holocaust (Steinlauf 1997, 80). The propaganda claimed that Israel and the Zionists decided to absolve Germans of the crimes committed during WWII "in exchange for compensation in the amount of more than three billion marks" and to convince the world that these crimes were perpetrated by Poles instead

(Stola 2000, 165). Reactions to these outrageous claims in the West were then broadcast in Poland to escalate the campaign.

Why did the party with many prominent Jewish members and a history of combating anti-Semitism now turn against Zionists? What explains the curious mixture of anti-Semitic tropes from the interwar period, distortions of the Holocaust, and claims about Jewish Stalinism?

These narratives start making sense when we consider fifth-column appeals as an attempt to redefine group boundaries by breaking some groups and strengthening others. By insinuating that the protests against censorship were a Zionist conspiracy, the authorities aimed to undermine the cohesion of the student movement and to prevent it from spreading. The purported Jewish connection implied that the protests did not represent public opinion and served Poland's external enemies. However, the propaganda did not simply blame individuals of Jewish origin for the unrest. In naming children of prominent Jewish communists, the anti-Zionist campaign targeted segments of the party apparatus itself. The anti-Zionist campaign allowed some party elites, most notably the Partisan faction (*Partyzanci*), to weaken the cohesion of their rivals within PZPR and to redraw coalitions within the party in their favor. The fifth-column accusations exposed some party members and protected others, facilitating coordination by actors with diverse interests around a preexisting but dormant faultline that separated individuals of Jewish origin, their families, and their allies from the rest of the group. The PZPR's inclusion of Jews in governance and attempts to reduce popular anti-Semitism now allowed the party to accuse Jews of betraying their Polish ingroup by colluding with the outside enemy. The campaign brought about the dismissals of many Jewish and Polish Communists, opening new career opportunities for their disgruntled colleagues and subordinates and thus creating shared interests among them (Stola 2000, 202). In doing so, the campaign increased cohesion within the PZPR.

Separating Jewish from Polish communists also ensured that the party's problems could be recognized and punished without endangering the stability of the Communist regime as a whole (Stola 2000, 196). If the "Jewish Stalinists" had diverted the party's agenda in the past, then the party cleansed from the Zionist elements would truly serve the Polish nation. The ordinary Poles could denounce corruption, economic mismanagement, and police brutality, as long as they attributed these problems to the Zionist meddling (Stola 2000, 193-96; Zaremba 1998, 144-70).

To sum up, although many aspects of the anti-Zionist campaign were improvised, its main pieces came together in a politically effective way. The propaganda excluded Jews from the Polish ingroup by presenting them as traitors. The use of Endecja's tropes underscored the continuities between interwar Poland and the Polish People's Republic and tapped into widespread anti-Semitism. Reliance on preexisting cultural schemas thus added credibility to the PZPR propaganda despite popular distrust in the party as a source of information. Similarly, the references to West Germany and the Holocaust served to rally Poles in defense of their ingroup from both symbolic and military threats. West Germany was much more threatening than Israel, with which Poland had recently enjoyed good diplomatic relations. Germany did not recognize the redrawing of borders in 1945, and the Poles still remembered the brutality of Nazi occupation and the unease over the fate of Polish Jews. Connecting Zionists to West Germany and invoking the Holocaust thus anchored the Communist propaganda in powerful symbols and painful memories and signaled shared interests between the PZPR and Polish society. Whatever its failings in domestic politics, the party-state alone could defend Poland from external threats to its territory and reputation.

Marcin Zaremba's analysis (1998, 2001) of the secret reports to the Ministry of Interior Affairs suggests that large segments of Polish society embraced the campaign. Zaremba argues that during the anti-Zionist witch-hunt the majority of Poles viewed the PZPR as supporting their national values (Zaremba 1998, 144-60). Additional evidence of the campaign's popularity comes from the local party gatherings. Stola (2000, 189-90) notes that party events were better attended than usual, lasted for many hours, and involved many more speeches by the rank and file during the anti-Zionist purge. Piotr Osęka (2008, 302) points out that in March 1968 party membership increased faster than in the previous months. Of course, the party branches also had an incentive to report higher participation to the center, lest they also be accused of supporting Israel.

The PZPR's own analysis of letters sent to the editorial office of *Polityka* in March-May 1968, reprinted in Stola (2000), suggests that the propaganda resonated with Polish society. The letters repeated stereotypes about Jews and discussed the special hatred of Jews for Poles together with their love for Germans. All references to Gomułka, on the other hand, were positive: the letter writers expected the First Secretary to address Poland's social and economic problems by removing Jews from power (Stola 2000, 358). Thus, even if some harbored doubts

about the credibility of the PZPR, the fact that the propaganda referenced familiar stereotypes and evoked the threat from one of Poland's traditional enemies (Germany) ensured its popular resonance.

Fifth-Column Appeals at the End of the Communist Period

The anti-Zionist campaign ended by 1969, but the PZPR continued to use the "Jewish fifth column" to divide the opposition in the 1970s and 1980s. The Communist press portrayed the Committee for the Defense of the Workers (KOR), created in 1976, as alien to Polish society because of its "revisionist-Zionist" connections. A few years later, the authorities claimed that the Solidarity Trade Union was run by Jews and distributed fake leaflets warning that Solidarity's "Jewish leadership" planned to capture power in order to rule over Poles (Michlic 2006, 259). Posters distributed by the Polish Security Service depicted one of KOR's leaders, Bronisław Geremek, receiving instructions from an Israeli rabbi on the phone (Zawadzki 2010, 231). The growth of Solidarity was accompanied by the rise in anti-Semitic leaflets, brochures and books sponsored by the state (Cała 2012, 513).

By presenting key opposition figures as fifth-columnists, the authorities hoped to split the movement and to convince the "true Poles" within it to negotiate with their government. The decision to repeat some of the claims from 1968 suggests that the party believed in their appeal among some segments of Polish society. In a 2008 interview, Adam Michnik, one of the Solidarity's advisors of Jewish origin, admitted his fears that "so-called true Poles" within the Solidarity movement would take over and use anti-Semitism to their advantage, isolating KOR and splitting the movement (Cała 2012, 513). His concerns were not unfounded. In 1980, some Trade Union members criticized KOR as dominated by Jews, and ominous graffiti, including "KOR and Jews away from Solidarity," appeared on buildings and fences near the 1981 Countrywide Meeting of the Solidarity Delegates in Gdańsk (Dobosz 1981, 8-9).

Ultimately, these attempts to undermine Solidarity by exposing real or imagined Jewish origins of its leaders failed. The trade union organizers resisted the fifth-column narrative created by the PZPR, perhaps due to their concerns about the Union's international reputation. Likewise, the Polish society could no longer be persuaded to cooperate with the party-state. It seems that by the 1980s the PZPR's legitimacy has eroded to the point where its claims were not credible.

Conclusion

Tracing the persistence of fifth-column claims in Poland suggests that they were driven by the need to undermine domestic political rivals rather than by genuine concerns about the disloyalty of alleged fifth columnists. Social identity theory elucidates how fifth-column accusations can be useful for a political entrepreneur. Such rhetoric stigmatizes select ingroup members by associating them with the treacherous fifth column and implying that they are betraying the ingroup. By priming threats from both inside and outside the ingroup, fifth-column accusations also undermine the cohesion of the social groups they target and increase the defection of their members to other groups. In this way, fifth-column discourse serves to redefine and restructure existing coalitions.

The analysis also suggests that institutions, ideological differences, or ethnic demography alone cannot predict the intensity or the content of fifth-column discourse. Jews were a frequent target for political actors of all stripes, not only for the anti-Semitic Endecja. References to Jewish betrayal continued even when the size of the Jewish minority in Poland dwindled from over 3 million to under 20,000 people. The Communist Party defined the fifth column in ideological terms in the late 1940s but returned to anti-Semitic cues in the 1960s. The Jewish threat was reinforced by its purported connections to the USSR or to West Germany, regardless of the actual allegiances of Polish Jews. Political entrepreneurs in Poland evoked Jewish enemies in part because of widespread anti-Semitism. They leveraged the emotional power of preexisting cultural schemas, with Jews as a minority that could be conceptualized as both inside and outside the national ingroup. Yet their ultimate aim was reshuffling existing alliances and dividing the opposition rather than demonizing the Jewish population or changing its behavior.

Poland was not alone in accusing the Jewish minority of disloyalty. The myth of Judeo-Bolshevism or Judeo-Communism was prevalent in much of Central Europe between the two world wars. In the aftermath of WWI, Jews were charged with betraying their nations on the battlefield and conspiring with Bolsheviks to foment revolutions -- this stab-in-the-back myth resembled claims of the Polish right that Jews supported the Soviet side in the Polish-Soviet war of 1919-1921. Jews were simultaneously portrayed as a revolutionary menace from “the East” that threatened the Christian nation and as agents of “Golden International” and Western

democratization (Gerwarth 2008, 198). The assassination of Poland's first president in 1922 was just one of many anti-Semitic attacks on politicians and public figures, including German Foreign Minister Walter Rathenau, Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, and Matthias Erzberger.

The myth of the Jewish fifth column remains alive and well in contemporary Poland, despite the absence of both Jews and Communists. The arrival of democratic competition in the 1990s increased the incentives to frame political opponents as not sufficiently Polish in spirit. In the first presidential election after the transition, the anti-Communist opposition spread rumors that Lech Walęsa's main opponent, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, was a hidden Jew (Gebert 1991). Since then, not a single electoral campaign was completely free from anti-Semitism (Forecki 2009, 163). Most recently, in the 2020 election, the ruling Law and Justice Party (PiS) insinuated that Rafał Trzaskowski of the liberal Civic Platform (PO) was beholden to Jewish and LGBT interests. In order to ensure the reelection of the incumbent president Andrzej Duda, PiS leader Jarosław Kaczyński accused Trzaskowski of colluding with billionaire George Soros and of supporting the restitution of prewar Jewish property. These allegations were repeated not only by the right-wing nationalist outlets, but also by the public television station, TVP, which is controlled by PiS. In the end, Trzaskowski lost to Duda by just 1.2% of the vote in the runoff.

The term "Jew" is increasingly used as a metaphor for the fifth-column status. It no longer signifies Jewish heritage, but instead represents "anti-national" values (Michlic 2006, 10). As Forecki (2009, 160) argues, the image of the "Jew in Poland stands for the foreignness of power and its appointed representative." Correspondingly, the Jewish label is often used by unscrupulous politicians to mobilize voters, discredit political opponents, or influence public opinion on complex policy issues. The Jewish threat is constantly linked to political issues that have little to do with Israel or Jewish religion (Charnysh 2015). Understanding the persistence of such associations is an important task for future research.

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