

## **Jews in Poland in the aftermath of the 1967-68 antisemitic campaign: biographic experience, identity changes and community dynamics**

During the years 1967–68, under the slogan of anti-Zionism, Poland’s government organized an antisemitic campaign in order to use the scapegoating strategy as a response to social tensions. The campaign culminated in March 1968. The Jews, as well as people who did not feel Jewish but were categorized as such by the persecutors, fell victim to public stigmatization, party and army purges, and expulsions from jobs and universities. A direct consequence of the antisemitic witch-hunt was forced emigration of about 15,000 people deprived of Polish citizenship. To some extent, the experiences of émigrés have been discussed in memoir literature, film documentaries and scholarly publications.

What happened to those who remained in Poland? What factors made them stay in the country? Were they considering emigration at all? What were their strategies of surviving in a hostile environment during the campaign and afterwards? How were they handling the loss of security, felt all the more severely as it happened less than a quarter of a century after the Holocaust? How did the events of March ‘68 affected their families, relationships, friendships and occupational careers? How was the situation handled by those families whose members split, some emigrating and some remaining in Poland? How life “after March” affected socialization and intergenerational dynamics? How did the experience of oppression affect their later identification? Did it increase or decrease their sense of belonging to the Jewish minority in Poland? Are their lives represented in today’s picture of the past events? The project’s objective is to address these questions. We are interested in individual biographies as well as in transformations of institutionalized Jewish life in Poland (schools, religious communities, secular cultural and educational organizations, periodicals etc.). We will address the question of how were individual and collective Jewish lives in Poland changing in a long-term perspective marked by the post-1968 social and political dynamics.

The research is based on in-depth interviews with persons who experienced antisemitic stigmatization during that time. We will conduct interviews throughout Poland, not only in large cities. Some interviews will be taken with emigrants whose families did not leave the country. We will also analyze autobiographical literature, archival documents, articles in official and oppositional press of the communist period and in the Jewish press, documentaries as well as contemporary commemorations. The materials and research questions require an interdisciplinary approach. This is why we established a consortium of three institutions to form a research team of experts in historical sociology, educational research, cultural and literary studies, political science, research on antisemitism and Jewish studies. In cooperation with researchers from the Czech Republic, Germany and Romania, we will compare the antisemitic campaign in Poland (its dynamics and impact) with parallel events and historical processes in other countries of East-Central Europe.