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Conference of European Rabbis

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The rise of anti-Semitism in Europe: 'Go back to your own country they say. But I'm not leaving. I'm a German Jew'



'I was born here. I'm a German Jew,' says restaurateur Uwe Dziuballa. CREDIT: CRAIG STENNETT/THE TELEGRAPH

The Rise of Antisemitism





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A restaurateur has found himself at the sharp end of an anti-Semitic resurgence as populism grips Europe. This is the second in a series. The first, The watchers trying to protect Europe's Jews, can be read here.

Uwe Dizuballa was locking up Schalom, the Israeli restaurant he runs in the German city of Chemnitz, when he noticed the crowd of men gathered across the street. There was something unsettling about the way they were looking at him. A moment later the first stone was thrown. It broke one of the restaurant's windows. Another hit Mr Dziuballa in the shoulder. Voices came from the men across the street. "You pig, Jew!"

Last summer Mr Dziuballa found himself on the front line of a new wave of anti-Semitism sweeping Europe. More than 70 years after the end of the Second World War, he was attacked in the German city of his birth — for being Jewish.

There had already been trouble in Chemnitz that day: street protests had erupted against the suspected killing of a local man by two Muslim asylum-seekers, but Mr Dizuballa had no reason to suspect the protesters would turn on him as a Jew. Though he did not know it, on the other side of town neo-Nazis were openly giving the Hitler salute.

By the time police arrived, his attackers had fled. The restaurant windows were shattered and the sign was broken. There were disturbing echoes of the Kristallnacht Nazi pogrom of 1938, when the windows of Jewish businesses were smashed and thousands were sent to the concentration camps.

"I'm not leaving," says Mr Dizuballa. "I was born here. I'm a German Jew."

Anti-Semitic attacks rose by 13 per cent around the world last year, according to a study by Tel Aviv university's Kantor Centre. Troublingly, the highest incidence was in major Western democracies





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like the UK, US, Germany and France.

But while most media reporting has focused on how the influx of Muslim migrants to Europe has fuelled a new form of anti-Semitism, in Germany and many central European countries it is an old and all too familiar anti-Semitism which is behind the rise - driven by populism and the indigenous far-Right.

There was a ten per cent rise in anti-Semitic crimes last year in Germany. Of almost 1,800 recorded, 90 per cent of them were the work of the far-Right, according to official police figures.



A pig head with the Star of David and Jew written inside left outside Uwe Dizuballa's restaurant in Chemnitz



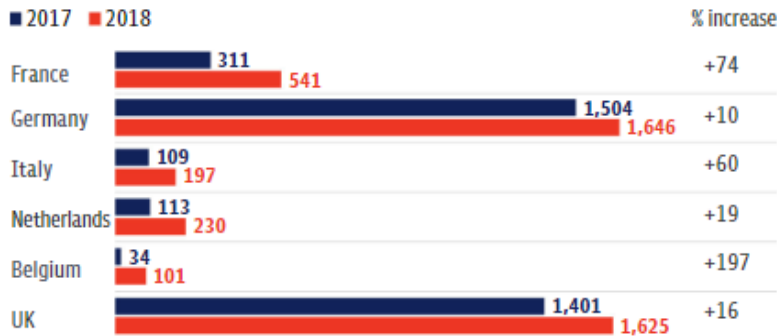
Evidence is labelled by police after windows were smashed in Mr Dzuiballa's restaurant



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Recorded anti-Semitism incidents



“Something changed last year. There was always some anti-Semitism here, but I never thought twice about wearing a kippah in the streets,” says Mr Dziuballa, referring to the traditional Jewish skullcap. “Now if I know I’ll be in the city centre, I wear a baseball cap on top so people don’t notice.”

Earlier this year, Felix Klein, the German government’s official anti-Semitism commissioner, warned Jewish people not to wear skullcaps in public for their own safety, only to retract the warning after a public outcry.

His comments came after Alexander Gauland, the leader of Alternative for Germany (AfD), described the Nazi era as a “speck of birds--- in 1,000 years of glorious German history”.

The shifting of the dial in German public discourse and politics is repeated across much of central Europe. In Poland, the introduction of a controversial “Holocaust memory” law by the populist government last year has been the trigger for a spike in anti-Semitic behaviour.

Election candidates have thrown Jewish skullcaps at each other and traded accusations of “kneeling before Jews”. Stereotypical Jewish caricatures have been hanged in effigy.





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In Hungary, the government of Viktor Orbán demonises George Soros, the Jewish philanthropist, accusing him of plotting mass Muslim migration to Europe.

Mr Orbán has poured funding into campaigns against anti-Semitism, whilst at the same time his government has been accused of Holocaust revisionism in its attempts to rehabilitate Miklós Horthy, the Hungarian leader who allied the country to Nazi Germany during WWII.

At least two men wearing Jewish skullcaps were attacked in Budapest last year, and there have been reports of people shouting “Heil Hitler” at Orthodox Jews.

In Austria it emerged last year senior figures in the far-Right Freedom Party (FPÖ) - then part of the coalition government - were members of fraternities that produced songbooks with openly Nazi lyrics such as: “Step on the gas, old Teutons, we can make it to seven million.”



'I never thought twice about wearing a kippah in the streets,' says Mr Dziuballa. 'Now if I know I'll be in the city centre, I wear a baseball cap on top so people don't notice' CREDIT: CRAIG STEINNETT /THE TELEGRAPH





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Born in 1953, in what was then known as Karl-Marx-Stadt, in communist East Germany, Mr Dziuballa spent some time in New York and Miami before deciding to return home after German reunification to open the city's only Israeli restaurant in 2000.

He encountered harassment from the start. But in the past year, he says the tone has changed. Those behind the threats have started identifying themselves. He shows an email which reads "We will find you, you s*** Jew. Go back to your own country." The sender's name is clear from the email address.

Regional analysts attribute the resurgence of the far-Right parties in Europe in recent years - from Germany's AfD to France's National Front as well as the nationalist governments in Poland and Hungary - to the twin crises of the 2015 migrant influx and Eurozone debt crisis.

Mr Dziuballa believes the problem in Chemnitz is economic. "This city used to be called the Manchester of Saxony. But after reunification all the industry collapsed. People who used to be respected figures lost their status.

"There are always people who come offering simple answers to complex problems, who say everything would be better if only Muslims weren't here, if Jews weren't here. And there will always be people who believe them."

It is an analysis that is echoed by Sigmund Königsberg, the anti-Semitism commissioner of the Berlin Jewish community.

"There is no new wave of anti-Semitism," Mr Königsberg says, sitting in a cafe outside Berlin's historic New Synagogue. "Anti-Semitism has always been there in society. What has changed is that it has become acceptable to practise it in the open again.

"Things that people used to say only in the pub to trusted friends are being said openly. In part that's because the memory of the Shoah is





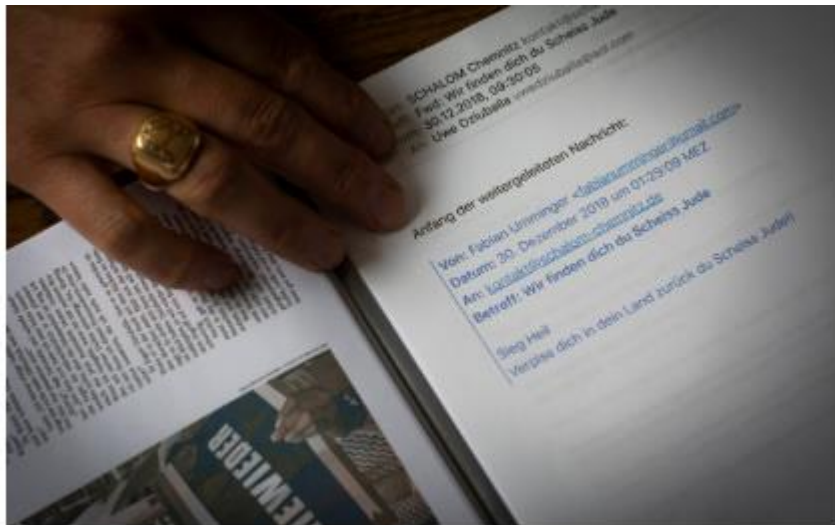
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receding. There are not many survivors still alive, and soon there will be none left.

“But it’s also because of what’s happening politically. You take a party like the AfD. They have a deliberate tactic of breaking taboos. They say things like the Nazi era was birds****, or Germans have to stop feeling guilty for the Shoah, then they apologise. But it doesn’t matter. The taboo has been broken, and it’s become acceptable to say these things again.”

Charles Grant, the director of the Centre for European Reform think-tank, said the fact that both the migrant and Eurozone crises have now been contained provides grounds for cautious optimism that the rise in far-Right ideology and anti-semitism will not become the ‘new normal’ for Europe.



Mr Dziuballa shows some of the hate emails he still receives CREDIT: CRAIG STEWNETT/THE TELEGRAPH



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"The results of last May's EU elections from across almost all of Europe suggested that the far-Right populist surge has peaked in the majority of EU countries," he added.



Neo-Nazis clashing with police in Chemnitz on the night Dziuballa's restaurant was attacked credit: PICTURE-ALLIANCE/BARCROFT IMAGES

Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, President, Conference of European Rabbis, said: "The sharp resurgence in far-right extremism is a painful reminder of Europe's darkest chapter and reminds us that antisemitism does not happen in a vacuum.

"As in the past, dangers can manifest if hateful rhetoric is left unchallenged. Such acts are an attack on Europe and its inherent values of respect for human dignity, human rights, freedom and equality."

Back in Chemnitz, Mr Dziuballa says the problem is fuelled by the fact that most people in the city have never met anyone Jewish.

"There are only 150,000 Jewish people in the whole of Germany, so





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how many can there be in a small city? All they know are stereotypes.”

The same holds true across much of central Europe, where once large Jewish populations were wiped out by the Nazis, and only tiny communities remain.

“I don’t want to underplay it or seem tough, I was scared the night of the attack,” Mr Dizuballa says. “But I try to be objective. It’s not an everyday occurrence.”

Additional reporting by Matthew Day in Warsaw

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