

Poland's New Defense Minister Under Fire for Comments on 'Protocols'

By Donald Snyder

The Anti-Defamation League has called on Poland's new defense minister to apologize and retract 2002 comments about the anti-Semitic "The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion."

On November 9, the ADL charged the designated Polish defense minister, Antoni Macierewicz, with making an offensive anti-Semitic response to a caller during a broadcast on Radio Maryja, a notoriously anti-Semitic radio network.

The caller asked what Macierewicz thought about the "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion," a document circulated by the czarist secret police to promote the belief that there is an international Jewish conspiracy to control the world.

Macierewicz responded that he had read "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" and found it interesting. He acknowledged that there's a debate about the theory's authenticity, but he said, "Experience shows that there are such groups in Jewish circles."

Macierewicz's comments during the Radio Maryja broadcast are also criticized in the 2010 book "The

'Experience shows that there are such groups in Jewish circles.'

Populist Radical Right in Poland" by the sociologist Rafal Pankowski, a professor at Collegium Civitas, a private college in Warsaw.

"While [Macierewicz's] statement was made many years ago, it indicates profound and virulent anti-Semitism," the ADL's national director, Jonathan Greenblatt, wrote to the incoming Polish prime minister, Beata Szydlo of the newly elected party Law and Justice. "We trust that you would not allow anyone of such convictions to be a member of your government."

Law and Justice is a right-wing party with close ties to conservative elements in the Catholic Church.

Macierewicz has a reputation for believing in conspiracy theories.



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Antoni Macierewicz: *Made anti-Semitic comments on Radio Maryja, a notoriously anti-Semitic radio network.*

In 2006 he claimed that six Polish foreign ministers were Soviet agents, including two Jews and a World War II Polish Underground hero.

Macierewicz is also a fervent believer in a conspiracy to explode a Polish plane near Smolensk, Russia, in April 2010. This alleged conspiracy is said to include Russia, Germany and elements of the moderate Polish party Civic Platform. President Lech Kaczynski of Law and Justice died in the crash, as did other major party figures. Investigations by the Polish and Russian governments blame pilot error for the crash.

According to a 2015 ADL study, the level of Polish anti-Semitism is one of the highest in Europe. Thirty-seven percent of Poles harbor anti-Semitic attitudes, as compared with 16% of Germans.

Widespread xenophobia has also surfaced during the current refugee crisis. Leading members of Law and Justice have said they will oppose the relocation to Poland of migrants from war-torn Syria and Iraq.

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