

Ex-ADL Chief Foxman: Appointment of Far-Right Leader as Minister of Digital Affairs a ‘New Low for Poland’

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January 2, 2019

the **algemeiner**

A far-right Polish MP and former leader of the antisemitic Młodzieży Wszechpolskiej (MW-“All Polish Youth”) movement has been appointed to Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki’s cabinet, earning a sharp rebuke from a prominent US Jewish leader who survived the Nazi Holocaust in Poland.

“Poland seems to have reached a new low appointing a neo-Nazi antisemite in charge of internet and social media,” Abraham Foxman, the national director emeritus of the Anti-Defamation League and the head of an antisemitism study program at the Museum of Jewish Heritage — A Living Memorial to the Holocaust in New York City, told The Algemeiner on Wednesday.

Adam Andruszkiewicz, first elected to the Polish parliament four years ago as part of the right-wing populist Kukiz 15 party, was announced before the turn of the year as Poland’s new minister of digital affairs. The ministry was created in 2015 with a mission “to develop broadband infrastructure, support the creation of web content and e-services and promote digital competences among citizens.”

Andruszkiewicz, 28, is known for expressing strident right-wing views on social media, regularly dismissing opponents with terms such as “parasites,” “traitors” and “enemies of Poland.” As news of his ministerial appointment spread, video emerged of Andruszkiewicz — who is openly hostile to Poland’s LGBT+ community — chanting homophobic slogans at a 2009 demonstration against a Gay Pride parade in Warsaw.

“Where are the voices of outrage in Poland and in the EU?” Foxman asked. “And where is the US State Department?”

Andruszkiewicz was an outspoken supporter of legislation in 2018 that would have criminalized public discussion of Polish complicity during the Nazi Holocaust with up to three years imprisonment. The legislation was eventually passed last June with the imprisonment clauses removed, calming a year of tension over the proposed bill between the Polish government and Jewish organizations in Europe and the US.

At the height of the dispute, Andruszkiewicz told a Polish news outlet that “the Jews had great support among us, now they are losing it.”

“The State of Israel and the communities associated with it throughout the world (sic) are escalating this conflict, which is worrying,” Andruszkiewicz said at the time. He predicted that the dispute would increase negative attitudes toward Israel among Poles.

In defending the original legislation, Andruszkiewicz highlighted the two favorite themes of the Polish far right — the allegedly disproportionate presence of Jews in the post-war ruling Polish Communist Party (which ironically went on to launch its own antisemitic campaign against the remainder of Poland’s Jewish community in the late 1960s), along with the insistence that Polish citizens had an unblemished record in their treatment of the country’s 3 million Jews following the Nazi invasion of 1939.

In one tweet, Andruszkiewicz said that his grandfather had been tortured by the Communist secret police in 1950, and that one of the perpetrators was supposedly a Jew. “However, it never occurred to me to blame the whole Jewish nation for this,” he said. “I expect a similar attitude from Israel. Is it so difficult?”

In a Dec. 31 interview with the Polish Press Agency, Andruszkiewicz claimed that he currently had “very bad relations” with the Polish far right, specifically naming the antisemitic leader of National Movement (RN) party, Robert Winnicki, as his arch-opponent.

“This is due to the fact that I think that the right wing must unite today, while the National Movement attacks me and criticizes me,” Andruszkiewicz said.

In another 2018 interview, Andruszkiewicz lauded Hungary’s nationalist prime minister, Viktor Orbán, as his political hero, arguing that Orbán had created a “political model” for Europe. Orbán’s robust opposition to Muslim immigration into Europe was a major factor behind his admiration for the Hungarian leader, Andruszkiewicz explained.

Dr. Rafał Pankowski — a Warsaw-based scholar of contemporary antisemitism and racism, and co-founder of the anti-fascist NGO “Nigdy Wiecej” (“Never Again”) — told The Algemeiner in an email on Wednesday that Andruszkiewicz’s appointment was another sign of Poland’s rightward shift.

“The appointment of the former chairman of the notorious All Polish Youth to a government post amounts to yet another instance of legitimization of the extreme nationalist and antisemitic movement in the current political mainstream,” Pankowski said.

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