

POLAND:

DEMOCRACY AND THE CHALLENGE OF EXTREMISM



A SPECIAL REPORT BY THE
ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE



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INTRODUCTION

Facing Up to Extremism, Past and Present

In Poland today, the influence of xenophobic political currents has grown to worrying proportions. The recently formed coalition government contains two extremist parties with strongly anti-Semitic profiles. Furthermore, the government is backed by a powerful media presence, in the form of the right-wing Catholic radio station, Radio Maryja. Understanding how this situation has come about is the purpose of this report.

Since the formation of the coalition government in May 2006, the Anti-Defamation League has spoken out vocally and forcefully against the persistence of anti-Semitism and intolerance in Poland. Throughout, we have made the point that a large proportion of the Polish people are disturbed and outraged by these political views.

Indeed, this aversion to anti-Semitism is shared – we believe sincerely – by Poland’s senior political leaders. In July 2006, at a somber ceremony held to mark the 60th anniversary of the Kielce pogrom, during which 40 Jews who survived the Nazi Holocaust were brutally slaughtered, a message sent by the Polish President, Lech Kaczynski, spoke eloquently and truthfully about this terrible episode. Kielce was “an unjustifiable and shameful crime,” the President said. “This was a huge dishonor for Poles and a tragedy for the few Jews who survived the Nazi Holocaust.”

President Kaczynski’s words marked another milestone on Poland’s extraordinary journey in facing up to the modern history of Polish-Jewish relations. In that regard, the President was continuing the noble legacy of other great Poles, such as the late Pope John Paul II and the previous President, Aleksander Kwasniewski, who understood that Polish pride would be restored by honestly confronting this painful past, rather than denying or minimizing it.

Being truthful about history is, perhaps, a natural outgrowth of Poland’s epic struggle for democracy. That struggle made a decisive contribution to the collapse of Soviet communism, a system founded upon repression, propaganda and myths.

Yet one of the features which distinguishes democracy from the one-party state is the circulation of a plurality of views and opinions. Some are enlightened and outward-looking. Others promote bigotry and prejudice. The two minority parties in the government, the League of Polish Families (LPF) and Self-Defense, belong firmly in the latter category. That is why it is so regrettable that the leader of the LPF, Roman Giertych, was appointed Education Minister. Someone who heads a party steeped in hatred is hardly in a position to educate against it.

Some observers have pointed to the fact that the electoral fortunes of these and similar parties have always fluctuated. However, even if support for the LPF or Self-Defense declines, that does not mean that anti-Semitism and intolerance will lessen. Dangerous ideas can migrate from one party to another: as our report demonstrates, over the last 12 months Radio Maryja, a shrill voice for anti-Semitism, homophobia and intolerance, has become a crucial pillar of support for Law and Justice, the main party in the coalition to which both President Kaczynski and his twin brother Jaroslaw, the Prime Minister, belong.

If there is a lesson here, it is simply this: a proper reckoning with the past cannot ignore the present. In his message to the commemorations in Kielce, President Kaczynski declared that there is, in Poland, “no room for anti-Semitism and racism.” Sadly, there are many in Poland, whether politicians or journalists or broadcasters, who believe otherwise and act accordingly. It is our hope and expectation that in today’s democratic Poland, which has been such an inspiration to those other countries in the region which have emerged from communism, the ugly legacies of the past will be buried, once and for all.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Poland has emerged from the repressive years of communist rule as a pluralist democracy. Its accession to membership of the European Union in 2004 confirmed that a robust democratic system is in place, which includes important legislative instruments to protect minorities from hate speech and hate crimes perpetrated by extremist groups.
- The consolidation of democracy in Poland has been accompanied by the recognition of many leading Poles that their country needs to honestly confront its long and painful history of anti-Semitism. The recent commemoration of the 1946 Kielce pogrom is another sign of Poland's commitment to this process.
- However, politics in Poland remains vulnerable to nationalist extremism, intolerance and anti-Semitism. The most worrying indication of this trend so far has been the formation, in May 2006, of a coalition government comprised of the Law and Justice Party in partnership with the extreme right-wing League of Polish Families (LPF) and the populist Self-Defense parties. Ministerial posts were awarded to Roman Giertych, leader of the LPF, and Andrzej Lepper, leader of Self-Defense. Lepper has expressed admiration for Hitler's policies and is the recipient of an honorary doctorate from MAUP, a private Ukrainian university responsible for publishing the majority of the anti-Semitic newspapers and journals available in Ukraine.
- The most disturbing outcome of the coalition's formation has been the appointment of Roman Giertych as Minister of Education. The political orientation represented by Giertych, whose Ministry's responsibilities include tolerance education and Holocaust education, has traditionally been anti-Semitic and xenophobic. The LPF's agenda has been resolutely hostile towards homosexuals and foreigners and many of its leading figures have made anti-Semitic remarks. Its youth wing, the All-Polish Youth, is named after a pre-World War II Polish nationalist movement which successfully campaigned for the introduction of a "Jews bench" in Polish universities to separate Jewish and non-Jewish students.
- Giertych has reacted to Israel's decision to freeze contacts with his Ministry by making overtures to the Jewish community. In press interviews, he has spoken of the need to combat anti-Semitism. However, his party has made no attempt to confront the anti-Semitism in its ranks.
- A key pillar of support for the coalition government has been the anti-Semitic Catholic radio station, Radio Maryja. Associated with a strict religious order, the Redemptorists, Radio Maryja commands an audience of up to 3 million, and also runs a TV station and a daily newspaper. Once

closely associated with the LPF, Radio Maryja has shifted its support to the Law and Justice Party. Despite the attempts of some prominent church leaders to curb hate speech on the station's broadcasts, the Polish Prime Minister Jaroslaw Kaczynski, the twin brother of President Lech Kaczynski and a regular guest on Radio Maryja, has referred to its critics as "enemies of freedom."

- Anti-Semitic content broadcast on Radio Maryja includes ugly stereotyping, conspiracy theories, claims that Jews were responsible for communist-era repression and accusations that Jews are using the Holocaust to leverage compensation payments from Poland. In March 2006, the commentator Stanislaw Michalkiewicz declared on air: "Jews have humiliated Poland internationally by demanding money... Kikes sneak up behind us to try to oblige our government to pay them money on the pretext of these demands." Such statements are very much in keeping with the views of Father Tadeusz Rydzyk, the power behind the station, who has stated on-air that Judaism is a "trade, not a religion."

RECOMMENDATIONS

If it is true, as President Kaczynski has repeatedly stated, that there is no place for anti-Semitism and racism in today's Poland, immediate and long-term measures need to be taken, among them:

- Roman Giertych should be removed from the position of Education Minister. The leader of a party steeped in anti-Semitism and intolerance should not be influencing education policy and curricular reform in a democratic country which is also a member state of the European Union.
- Andrzej Lepper should issue a statement forcefully condemning anti-Semitism and return the honorary doctorate conferred upon him by MAUP. Both Lepper and Giertych should announce their commitment to take disciplinary action against members of their parties who promote hate or incite hate crimes.
- The provisions of the Polish Constitution and Penal Code which deal with racism and anti-Semitism should be fully implemented. Radio Maryja, which has consistently violated these provisions by broadcasting hate speech, should be held to account in a court of law. The station should not receive funds from individuals whose racist and anti-Semitic activities are in breach of Polish law.
- Poland's leaders should stop giving Radio Maryja legitimacy. They should refuse to appear on its programs until such time as the station offers an explicit commitment to stop broadcasting hate speech.
- Poland's government should renew its commitment to promoting a tolerance agenda in education, the media and other sectors.

SECTION ONE: CHARTING THE RISE OF EXTREMISM

Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia After 1989

Since the triumph of democracy in 1989, Poland has made important advances in terms of human rights and the protection of minorities. Perhaps the most significant international recognition of the progress of reform in Poland came with its admission to the European Union in 2004.

However, recent political developments have demonstrated that Poland is, like other European countries, still vulnerable to political currents which are extremist and xenophobic. Following the parliamentary election of 2005 and the formation of a right-wing government coalition in 2006, views which were traditionally regarded as marginal have become more common in the political mainstream.

Throughout the 1990s, the nationalist right markedly extended its political and social base, through numerous publications, discussion clubs, social events and, most significantly, an extensive religious network around the radical Catholic Radio Maryja.

The consolidation of political freedoms in Poland allowed radical nationalist groups to campaign openly. Throughout the 1990s, the nationalist right markedly extended its political

and social base, through numerous publications, discussion clubs, social events and, most significantly, an extensive religious network around the radical Catholic Radio Maryja, which is discussed in the next section of this report.

The circulation of extreme nationalist ideas among young people is partly due to the influence of a racist skinhead subculture which first emerged in the 1990s. Throughout that decade, the authorities adopted a fairly benign approach to political extremism, despite a wave of racist violence encouraged by political groups such as the National Rebirth of Poland (*Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski*, NOP). None of the racist organizations was banned despite the existence of legal provisions, in line with the legislation of the majority of other European countries, which would have enabled the authorities to do so. For example, Article 13 of the Constitution of the Polish Republic, enacted in 1997, specifically forbids Nazi and fascist parties “as well as those whose programs or activities sanction racial or national hatred.”

In the early 1990s, the best-known leader of racist extremists, Boleslaw Tejkowski, gained the support of a small group of pensioners and a larger number of young skinheads. Tejkowski’s group was called Polish National Community – Polish National Party (*Polska Wspolnota Narodowa – Polskie Stronnictwo Narodowe*, PWN-PSN). It achieved notoriety due to its outrageous anti-Semitic statements and provocative actions, such as the anti-Jewish demonstration at Auschwitz in April 1996.

Nevertheless, by the middle of the decade, the popularity of Tejkowski had already been overshadowed by other, more effective leaders of extremist anti-Semitic groups who were more focused on mainstream politics. One such group was Krzysztof Kawecki's National Right (*Prawica Narodowa*, PN), which boasted of its close links with Jean-Marie Le Pen's *Front National* in France. In December 1995, the PN held a demonstration in the city of Lublin protesting the election of the left-wing candidate Aleksander Kwasniewski as the country's president. Supporters were encouraged to join the rally by means of a poster bearing the slogan "Stolzman out!" (according to anti-Semites, the "real," Jewish, name of Kwas-



Supporters of the All-Polish Youth (MW) demonstrating in Warsaw, June 11, 2006

niewski) and displaying Kwasniewski with a revolver pointed at his head. The demonstration was formally held to commemorate Eligiusz Niewiadomski, the nationalist fanatic who assassinated Gabriel Narutowicz, the President of Poland, in 1922.

The PN had some success in forming coalitions with conservative groups. As a result, several politicians connected with it held government posts in the 1997-2001 center-right government (Krzysztof Kawecki as Deputy Minister of Education and Marek Biernacki as Minister of the Interior).

Some of its former representatives, such as Marcin Libicki, a Member of the European

Parliament of the currently ruling Law and Justice party, have continued their careers as members of other political parties.

Other far-right groups, notably the All-Polish Youth (*Młodzież Wszechpolska*, MW), continued throughout the 1990s without making much of an impact upon government. Yet they managed to train a number of young leaders who would later enter politics as members of the League of Polish Families (*Liga Polskich Rodzin*, LPR), largely because of the vital backing provided by Radio Maryja.

The developments outlined here reflect deeper issues about how Poland relates to its history, particularly when it comes to anti-Semitism. On the one hand, Poland has ratified a number of international conventions pertaining to minorities and human rights and guaranteed some of those rights in the legal system. However, the implementation of such laws has sometimes been criticized as half-hearted. In addition, the unprecedented discussion about the legacy of anti-Semitism, provoked by Jan Tomasz Gross's book about the 1941 Jedwabne massacre, "Neighbors," demonstrated the fact that many intellectuals and political leaders, as well as members of the general public, are willing to face and condemn the darker aspects of the nation's past. It also highlighted some negative tendencies, providing a pretext for a wave of anti-Semitic publications and statements which underscored the deep-seated prejudice that exists in sections of society. Indeed, Gross's more recent book, "Fear," about the Kielce pogrom of 1946 and the broader issue of anti-Semitism in Poland immediately after the war, may well provide another opportunity for these sentiments to be aired once it is published in Polish.

The Jewish community in Poland today is very small, commonly estimated at between 5,000-10,000 people. Nevertheless, anti-Semitism remains an active phenomenon in Polish society. Research conducted by Warsaw University sociologists revealed that the proportion of Poles who subscribe to “strong” anti-Semitic views doubled in the period 1992-2002 from 8 percent to 16 percent. According to Professor Ireneusz Krzeminski, the rise in anti-Semitic attitudes can be attributed to the increased presence of anti-Semitic discourse in the public sphere, not least through Radio Maryja.

Much of the printed anti-Semitic material available in Poland has been distributed by the state-owned company *Ruch*, which owns a network of newspaper kiosks all over the country. This has included publications produced by Leszek Bubel, the leader of the hardline anti-Semitic Polish National Party (*Polska Partia Narodowa*, PPN), such as pocket editions of *Tematy Niebezpieczne* (“Dangerous Topics”), a Holocaust-denial book written by Dariusz Ratajczak, and “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion,” the infamous anti-Semitic forgery. *Ruch* distributes several press titles published by Bubel, including the radical anti-Semitic weekly *Tylko Polska* (“Only Poland”). *Ruch* has also distributed *Szczerbiec* (“The Royal Sword”), a publication of the neo-fascist National Rebirth of Poland (*Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski*, NOP), notorious for denying the Holocaust and openly praising anti-Semitism.

The 2005 Election and the Formation of the Current Coalition Government

The swing to the right in Polish politics in the fall of 2005 surprised many observers, who had initially expected a coalition more oriented towards the center. Although the extreme right-wing League of Polish Families (LPF) polled only 8 percent of the vote in the September 25, 2005 election, in May 2006 it entered into a formal parliamentary coalition with the ruling Law and Justice party (LJ). The radical populist Self-Defense party (*Samoobrona* in Polish), which polled 11.4 percent, is also part of the coalition.

Law and Justice itself has evolved from a more mainstream center-right position towards accommodating some of the ideas propagated by Radio Maryja and its head, Father Tadeusz Rydzyk. Lech Kaczynski, the Polish President and the founder of the LJ, underscored this link in an interview with the weekly *Polityka*, in which he stated: “I believe in the need for cooperation with people of national-Catholic views in one political party.” While many leading advisers in the president’s circle are not hardliners, others around him have a more radical background.

One such individual is Michal Kaminski, who, in 2001, mobilized the local population of Jedwabne in north-east Poland against the 50th anniversary commemoration of the notorious wartime pogrom in that town. Kaminski, now representing Law and Justice in the European Parliament, is on record as declaring his allegiance to the infamous slogan “Poland for the Polish,” which evokes memories of the anti-Semitic violence of the 1920s and 1930s.

In the early 1990s, Kaminski was briefly involved in more radical politics as a

member of the extremist National Rebirth of Poland (NOP). By 2006, he was among Kaczynski's main campaign advisers and his political significance may grow still further.

Another LJ MEP is Marcin Libicki, once a leading member of the PN. In March 2001, Libicki supported, on "humanitarian grounds," Henryk Mania, a man convicted by a Polish court for participation in the wartime mass murder of Jews at the Chelmno death camp. More recently, he sparked a controversy by demanding the demolition of the synagogue in the city of Poznan. "The synagogue building has no aesthetic value," stated Libicki in an article he published in a local edition of the newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* on January 12, 2006. He went on to claim that the construction of the synagogue in the early 20th century had been "an openly anti-Polish act" and part of "a plan of Kulturkampf [cultural struggle] which provided for a cultural diminution of the architectural expressions of Polish and Catholic influence in the city." Concluding the article, Libicki proposed the building's demolition.

Alicja Kobus, leader of the Jewish community in Poznan, described Libicki's proposal as "shocking." The building, which currently serves as a swimming pool, is widely regarded as an architectural treasure. There are plans to renovate it and convert it into a Tolerance Center with the support of the European Union.

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The rightward trend in Polish politics has been accompanied by greater intolerance of opposing positions, particularly if these are portrayed as being overly liberal or not sufficiently in tune with strict Catholic doctrine. Following the violent dispersal of an anti-discrimination march in Poznan on November 19, 2005, which had been heavily criticized by right-wing politicians and leading figures in the Catholic Church for its defense of gay rights, a wave of protests and solidarity demonstrations swept through several Polish cities. These protests involved a broad coalition of human rights advocates, intellectuals and artists voicing their opposition to the increasingly intolerant drift of state policy. In some cities, such as Elblag, the demonstrators were violently confronted by skinheads and other racists.

After several months of protracted negotiations, a formal coalition agreement between three parties – Law and Justice, the LPF and Self-Defense – was reached in May 2006. Roman Giertych of the LPF and Andrzej Lepper of Self-Defense were nominated as Deputy Prime Ministers and Ministers of, respectively, Education and Agriculture. Their parties also received the portfolios of maritime economy (LPF) and labor and social issues (Self-Defense) and received some important posts in state-run agencies and state-owned electronic media.

For example, the LPF successfully nominated Piotr Farfal, a 28-year-old activist of the All-Polish Youth, as deputy head of state-run Polish Television (TVP). Farfal's extremist past was quickly exposed by the *Gazeta Wyborcza* newspaper. The paper reported that, in 1995, Farfal set up an openly racist publication entitled *Front*. In its third issue, *Front* declared: "Harsh repression against Jews is necessary for our

nation wishes to develop independently and healthily. It is time we rid ourselves totally of the Jews... Poles bribed by Jewish money and selling to the Jews deserve not only our contempt, but also severe punishment... Our cause is holy, Jews out of Poland!". In another edition of the magazine, Farfal himself stated: "We do not accept cowards, collaborators or Jews."

In the clamor which followed both the revelations about *Front* and widespread protests about his appointment to TVP, Farfal denied his association with the magazine and threatened to sue *Gazeta Wyborcza*. However, the newspaper, with the assistance of the anti-racist Never Again Association, published further details of Farfal's involvement in racist circles, including an article he published in the Holocaust-denying magazine *Szczerbiec*. The new revelations led to further protests, including one from the Polish branch of PEN, the international writers association, but did not result in Farfal's dismissal.

In addition to the three allied political parties, the government is supported in parliament by National Faction (*Kolo Narodowe*), a group of defectors from the LPF, led by the ex-Radio Maryja employee Anna Sobocka and Boguslaw Kowalski, the publisher of the nationalist – and often anti-Semitic – weekly *Mysl Polska* (Polish Thought). Kowalski became a Junior Minister of Infrastructure in the coalition government.

The government has also won support from the Patriotic Movement (*Ruch Patriotyczny*). On July 16, 2006, the Movement's leader, Antoni Macierewicz, was praised by the newly appointed PM Jaroslaw Kaczynski as the best candidate for Deputy Minister of National Defense charged with reforming the military intelligence services. Formerly an LPF MP, Macierewicz has a long history as a right-wing activist. After taking up his new post, Macierewicz stirred a major controversy by announcing that the majority of Polish Foreign Ministers since 1989 had

been Soviet agents – a fiercely criticized claim for which he was forced to apologize.

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Polish human rights advocates are increasingly concerned that the current political climate provides an atmosphere conducive to violence against minorities. The magazine of the Never

Again Association identified 227 hate incidents in the latter half of 2005 and first half of 2006, some of them anti-Semitic in nature. Among these was an assault, on May 27, 2006, upon Michael Schudrich, Poland's Chief Rabbi, who was punched and attacked with pepper spray in a Warsaw street by a man shouting "Poland for the Polish." The police identified and arrested Karol G., a 33-year-old extreme-right activist and former parliamentary candidate of the Polish National Party (PPN), who admitted the assault. The attack was widely condemned by government and in the media, with President Kaczynski personally apologizing to Schudrich. Three months later, the assailant received a two-year suspended prison sentence.

Another notable incident took place on May 16, 2006 when an anti-racist activist was stabbed and nearly killed near his home in Warsaw. The attack was widely regarded as connected with the neo-Nazi Web site "Redwatch," operated by the

Polish branch of the Blood and Honour network, which had published the activist's name on its list of "enemies." The Redwatch Web site published the photos and names of people who – according to the Web site's creators – "were involved in anti-fascist and anti-racist activities, including non-white immigrants, activists of leftist associations and all kinds of supporters and activists of the homosexual and pedophile lobby in its wide sense." After a lengthy investigation, the authorities in Poland arrested several people linked to Redwatch and one man who allegedly carried out the attack on the activist. Redwatch's Polish site was subsequently removed from the US server which had been hosting it, following pressure from Polish human rights groups and the Polish government, as well as a number of US organizations, including ADL.

On June 15, 2006, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the increase in racist and homophobic violence in Europe, in which Poland was mentioned (alongside France, Belgium, and Germany) as a country that has experienced a rise in intolerance. The resolution provoked a strongly hostile reaction from the Polish leadership and a special motion was passed by the Polish parliament rejecting all allegations that intolerance exists in Poland. Three days after the resolution was passed, Giertych announced that it was "an insult to Poland and our nation." On July 14, 2006, the youth organization of the Law and Justice party conducted a symbolic public "execution" of the resolution, with a party member dressed up as a hangman cutting the paper sheet with the resolution in two.

Extremists in Profile: The LPF and Self-Defense Parties

The League of Polish Families (*Liga Polskich Rodzin*) is the main extreme-right party in Poland. It was formed shortly before the September 2001 parliamentary election, in which it achieved an unexpected electoral breakthrough with

7.9 percent of the vote and 40 MPs. In the 2004 elections to the European Parliament election, the party won 15 percent of the vote. Since then, its support has declined; in September 2005, it won 8 percent in the national election.



Roman Giertych (left) of the League of Polish Families consults with Andrzej Lepper of the Self-Defense Party

The LPF has revived the pre-World War II tradition of the *Endecja* (National Democracy) Party. Overtly anti-Semitic, *Endecja* supported a mono-ethnic idea of nationhood based on the attachment to Roman Catholicism as state religion and a homogenous national culture.

The leader of the radical faction within *Endecja* was Jędrzej Giertych, notorious for his obsessive anti-Semitism and open admiration of fascism. After the communist takeover in 1945, Giertych wrote a number of books on Polish history published in exile which were laced with anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. Today's leader of the LPF is Jędrzej Giertych's grandson, Roman, while the LPF presidential candidate in the 2005 election was Jędrzej Giertych's son, Maciej.

Maciej Giertych withdrew from the presidential race due to poor showings in the opinion polls. Still, he remains the leading light in the LPF group of MEPs in the European Parliament. On July 4, 2006, Maciej Giertych scandalized many of his fellow MEPs by praising the late Spanish dictator, Francisco Franco, on the 70th anniversary of the start of the Spanish civil war.

One of the LPF's founders is Ryszard Bender, a historian and former MP in the communist Parliament in the 1980s (currently a member of the Senate). In 2000, during a Radio Maryja broadcast, he publicly defended the Holocaust-denier Dariusz Ratajczak and himself denied that Auschwitz was a death camp. During the 2001 election campaign, Bender participated in television spots denying the facts of the Jedwabne pogrom.

The parliamentary faction of the LPF today is dominated by a group of relatively young activists from the party's youth wing, the All-Polish Youth. They are believed to be personally loyal to Roman Giertych, who resurrected the All-Polish Youth in 1989 and remains its honorary chairman. The All-Polish Youth is named after a nationalist youth organization active in the 1920s and the 1930s, which was vehemently anti-Semitic and violent and which campaigned successfully for a so-called "bench ghetto" (*ghetto lawkowe*) to segregate Jewish and non-Jewish students at Polish universities.

In 2005 and 2006, the LPF targeted mostly gay and feminist groups. This incitement included derogatory language and the encouragement of violence, as when Wojciech Wierzejski called for gay rights demonstrators in Warsaw to be "beaten

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by batons," including any foreign politicians who participated alongside them (he subsequently denied making that remark). An anti-gay counter-demonstration organized by the All-Polish Youth on April 28, 2006, just a few days before the LPF's entry into government, turned violent when the demonstrators physically attacked gay rights marchers in Krakow. Roman Giertych

publicly called for a ban on a pro-gay Equality March in Warsaw on June 12, 2006. In many ways, gays have now joined Jews as the main target of the hateful rhetoric of the extreme nationalists in Poland.

Faced with international pressure, notably the refusal of the Israeli embassy in Warsaw to engage with the Education Ministry while Roman Giertych holds the post, the LPF leader visited the commemoration ceremony for Jedwabne victims on July 10, 2006. At the same time he criticized the position of the Israeli embassy as "unacceptable." Critics of Giertych point out that his overtures to the Jewish community – in an interview with the Israeli newspaper, *Ha'aretz*, he complained that "I like the Jewish people and I don't understand why they don't like me" – stand in stark contradiction to the anti-Semitism that is rampant among the party's rank and file.

Self-Defense (*Samoobrona*) is a populist party with a program composed of randomly assembled socialist, nationalist and even liberal slogans. As a measure of

its political elasticity, it should be noted that two of the Self-Defense parliamentarians in the European Parliament are members of the Party of European Socialists, while the other four are registered as independent. The party emerged from a radical farmers' protest movement led by Andrzej Lepper in the early 1990s, in reaction to economic hardship in rural areas.

Self-Defense won 2.8 percent of the vote in 1993 and 0.1 percent in 1997. In 2001, it achieved a breakthrough with 10 percent of the national vote. In 2005, it won 11.4 percent, while Lepper won 15 percent as a presidential candidate. Lepper's foul language, frequent breaches of the law, such as road blockades, as well as his authoritarian style in managing his party, have frequently led him into disputes with the political mainstream in Poland.

Lepper has had a long record of expressing far-right sympathies. He has also praised Adolf Hitler's economic policies. In 2004, he accepted an honorary doctorate from MAUP, a Ukrainian private university which is responsible for publishing the vast majority of anti-Semitic journals and newspapers available in Ukraine and which counts the former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke among its faculty. Challenged about this connection by a Polish journalist, Lepper snapped back: "Then write that I am an anti-Semite."

In contrast to the LPF, the voter base of Self-Defense seems much less concerned with symbolism and ideology than with socio-economic issues. Lepper's embrace of xenophobic positions can therefore be seen as more opportunistic than ideological. Perhaps because of that, he has had few qualms about entering into partnerships with individuals such as Leszek Bubel, the notorious anti-Semitic publisher who was a former editor of Self-Defense party newspaper (Lepper and Bubel have fallen out with each other since then). Lepper has also tolerated the presence in his party of young neo-Nazi skinheads. The local branches in Koszalin and Szczecin in particular have been infiltrated by self-proclaimed national socialists.

Mateusz Piskorski, a newly elected Self-Defense MP, is a good example of this tendency. He was previously a translator and publisher of hardcore Nazi material such as the brochure, entitled "National Socialism," authored by the British National Socialist Movement ideologue David Myatt. He was also the publisher of several neo-Nazi magazines which contained offensive racist material. For example, a 1999 article about the conviction of a skinhead for beating up an African American basketball player in Poland, entitled "Judeo-Justice," said: "Many of you [...] must have heard of the punishment of one of the most accomplished members of our movement, Pawel from Stargard. When it occurred, the attack on the nigger Eggelston was widely reported even in the national media [...] The court that handed down this verdict was clearly not guided by the interests of Poland, nor that of the white race. Pawel is in jail, and the provocateur Eggelston still besmirches Polish earth. Rather than hopping around someplace in Mozambique from one palm tree to another in search of coconuts, he is constantly wandering the streets of Stargard."

In 2004, Piskorski was forced to withdraw from the electoral race for a European Parliament seat after his neofascist background was revealed in the press. Nevertheless, just one year later he resurfaced as a successful candidate for the Polish

national parliament and as one of Andrzej Lepper's chief advisers.

Since his election to parliament, Piskorski has participated in a November 2005 Brussels conference of *Reseau Voltaire*, a conspiracy-obsessed group that believes the 9/11 attacks were the work of US and Israeli intelligence services. Currently, Piskorski is a leading spokesman on foreign policy in Self-Defense's parliamentary faction.

Roman Giertych as Minister of Education: A Preliminary Assessment

The appointment of Roman Giertych to the post of Minister of Education resulted in widespread dismay in Poland and abroad. The move provoked numerous protests, especially from teachers' and students' groups who expressed fears that Giertych's nationalist ideology would be imposed upon the school system. A number of non-governmental organizations voiced concern at the appointment, as did the Israeli embassy in Warsaw, which described Giertych's party as "a vehicle for anti-Semitism."

A series of protest demonstrations took place all over Poland, with the largest demonstration in Warsaw gathering some 3,000 teachers and students. An open letter calling for Giertych's dismissal circulated on the Internet. Within a few days, some 150,000 signatures were collected, including numerous intellectuals and respected public figures such as the Oscar-winning film-maker Andrzej Wajda. In an article published in the *Warsaw Business Journal*, Abraham H. Foxman, National Director of the Anti-Defamation League, argued: "...if Mr. Giertych really must be in the cabinet, then it should not be in the post of Education Minister."

Owing to these protests, Giertych's actions as a minister may have been more cautious than expected. Yet some of his decisions suggest that his party's xenophobic agenda has influenced his decision-making.

On June 9, 2006, for example, Giertych dismissed the Director of Polish In-Service Teachers Center (CODN), Mirosław Sielatycki, for publishing "Compass: a manual on human rights education with young people," and banned its distribution and sale. The manual was the Polish translation of material prepared under the auspices of the Council of Europe. Giertych took umbrage at the fact that the handbook discussed homophobia as a source of discrimination. In response, Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, said: "I do not understand how teaching tolerance can be grounds for dismissal." It should be noted that CODN has been the leading provider of material on Holocaust education for Polish schools.

Giertych has stated that "there is no room, nor will there ever be any room, for homosexual activism within the school system in Poland on my watch." In several cases, meetings with activists of groups such as the Campaign Against Homophobia have been cancelled by headmasters following the Ministry's instructions. The new internet filter recommended by the Ministry for use in schools blocks all sites with any reference to gays or homosexuality, while failing to block neo-Nazi and racist sites such as Redwatch.

In the same vein, Giertych has proposed the introduction of compulsory “patriotic education” for the nation’s youth. Giertych is also in favor of separating the teaching of “Polish history” from “general history,” ostensibly to strengthen national pride and national awareness. On this latter proposal, according to an August 2006 poll conducted by GfK Polonia, a full 66 percent of Poles disagree.

In part because of Israel’s refusal to allow an Education Ministry run by Giertych to supervise visits to Holocaust sites by Israeli youngsters, an agreement was reached in principle that the Prime Minister’s chancellery would take over the organization of these visits. In response, Giertych took the highly unusual step of visiting Jedwabne on July 10, 2006, laying flowers at the monument to the massacre and declaring: “There is and will be no place for anti-Semitism in Poland.” This statement was another indication of his attempt to mend fences with the Jewish community, but there is nothing to suggest that it is taken seriously by his own party or by the actions of his Ministry.

SECTION TWO: Radio Maryja – Hatred on the Airwaves

Radio Maryja was established in 1991 by Father Tadeusz Rydzyk, a priest who belongs to the Redemptorist order. By the late 1990s, the station had won a significant audience of devoted listeners, estimated between 1 and 3 million – or some 2-3 percent of the total media audience in Poland, with a strong base among the elderly and those with minimal education – making it one of the largest national media outlets. In addition to being a platform for religious messages, Radio Maryja established itself as an important political force with a clear xenophobic and anti-Semitic agenda. Rydzyk has been frequently compared to Father Coughlin, the rabidly anti-Semitic American priest who hosted a radio show during the 1930s.

In 2001, the support of Radio Maryja was crucial in the formation and subsequent entry to Parliament of the LPF. By late 2005, Radio Maryja had loosened its connections with the LPF, transferring its support to the Law and Justice (LJ) party which won both the parliamentary and presidential elections of that year.

Radio Maryja remains a key source of support for the current right-wing coalition government comprised of Law and Justice, LPF and Self-Defense. Law and Justice receives favorable treatment on Radio Maryja's programming and its leaders frequently participate in its broadcasts. In October 2005, Polish President Lech Kaczynski spoke of his gratitude for having

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received the support of Radio Maryja as a presidential candidate. In May 2006, Jaroslaw Kaczynski was even more direct, calling the stations critics "enemies of freedom."

Since the coalition was formed, Radio Maryja has become a major outlet for the promotion of government policy. Leading cabinet ministers regularly travel to Radio Maryja's headquarters in Torun to take part in marathon live broad-

casts lasting many hours. Jaroslaw Kaczynski, the Law and Justice leader and twin brother of Lech, who became Prime Minister on 9 July 2006, appears frequently.

Ownership and control

In addition to Radio Maryja, Rydzyk also controls the daily newspaper *Nasz Dziennik*, the television station *TV Trwam* and the private university *Wyzsza Szkoła Kultury Społecznej i Medialnej* (Social and Media Culture Higher School) in Torun. The university recently announced that it was launching a course in diplomacy which would, according to Krzysztof Bosak, a parliamentarian from the LPF,

“teach students patriotic, Catholic and national values.” Poland’s Foreign Ministry said that graduates from the school would stand the same chance of entering the diplomatic service as those with diplomas from mainstream universities.

The ownership and control structure of Radio Maryja and its allied institutions is, on paper, rather complicated. Formally speaking, the radio station is owned by the Redemptorist Order, which is known for its strict interpretation of Catholic doctrine, in contrast to those tendencies in the Church which are more liberal on issues like relations with the Jewish people.

Radio Maryja also falls under the supervision of the Bishop of Torun. However, over the years it has become clear that the station is effectively run by Rydzyk himself, with little or no interference from outside. The Polish Catholic Church has attempted to rein in Radio Maryja on several occasions, but to no avail.

In April 2006, the Vatican’s representative in Poland, Archbishop Jozef Kowalczyk, publicly demanded that Radio Maryja be disciplined and brought under control of the Polish Episcopate. There was speculation that the Archbishop’s statement might hasten the end of Radio Maryja as an independent political force, especially

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as the station had directly challenged Pope Benedict XVI by claiming that his German ethnic background made him ultra-sensitive to charges of anti-Semitism. In an article for *Nasz Dziennik*, the theologian Boguslaw Wolniewicz made a veiled reference to Jews as the “people

putting pressure” on the Pope, asserting: “No one in the world fears being called anti-Semitic more than a German.”

Rydzyk stood his ground and, in June 2006, the Polish Episcopate accepted a new mandate for Radio Maryja. A Programming Council was formed consisting of representatives of the Episcopate and the Redemptorists in equal measure.

The arrangement leaves Rydzyk in control and he remains defiant in the face of criticism. This confrontational mood was demonstrated at the annual national pilgrimage of Radio Maryja supporters in Czestochowa on July 9, 2006. The meeting gathered some 200,000 people, including Giertych and Lepper, a sizeable group of ministers and MPs and six bishops.

Bishop Ignacy Dec delivered a speech which claimed that “the anti-Christian attitude of some masters of Europe today is clearly expressed through the promotion of abortion, euthanasia, homosexual marriage, feminist movements, and recently it was manifested in an aggressive assault against Poland, including against Radio Maryja and *TV Trwam*.” Archbishop Slawoj Leszek Glodz declared, “the power of Radio Maryja is the truth about God and the Fatherland.” The show of strength in Czestochowa demonstrates that Radio Maryja enjoys the support of important figures within the Polish Church leadership who share its ultra-conservative and nationalist ideology.

Radio Maryja’s vast operation confirms its solid financial base. Despite a number of attempted legal probes, the details of its finances remain undisclosed. Rydzyk

himself actively solicits funds from listeners. In an emotional broadcast in October 2004, he pleaded: “For our voice to be heard across the whole world, we need 24 million zlotys [about 7 million dollars]. This is a small sum.”

In the late 1990s, Radio Maryja collected several million dollars in donations aimed to save the Gdansk Shipyard, the birthplace of the independent “Solidarnosc” trade union, from bankruptcy. In April 2006, TV Polonia reported that the Polish national prosecutor was investigating Radio Maryja for allegedly diverting these funds into a company which later went bankrupt.

Another important source of funding is Jan Kobylanski, a Polish emigre millionaire residing in Uruguay. Kobylanski is a notorious anti-Semite who stands accused of betraying Polish Jews to the Gestapo during the Second World War. In 2005, a TV Polonia report revealed that Kobylanski had met with a number of Polish politicians, including Andrzej Lepper, who said confidently that his host was not an anti-Semite. However, the same report aired an interview with Kobylanski in which he declared: “This is a tragedy, that in the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 85 percent of the main positions are in the hands of Jews. What is this? The Jewish Ministry of Foreign Affairs? Or is this the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs?”

That one of its backers should hold such views is hardly a shock. Since its inception, Radio Maryja has promoted a narrative based on nationalist extremism, anti-Semitism and conspiracy theory, both coded and open.

Anti-Semitism on Radio Maryja

In several instances, anti-Semitic comments have been made by listeners during interactive shows – a fact often mentioned by Radio Maryja’s defenders, who believe that the station cannot be held responsible for what callers say on the air. However, there are many examples of program hosts and their invited guests making similar remarks. Rydzyk himself has routinely referred to Polish State Television as “TELAVision”, suggesting it is dominated by Jews. On August 20, 2002 Rydzyk openly degraded the Jewish religion on air: “I call it ‘ai vai shalom’. It is clearly a religion of trade. It is trade, and not religion.” He personally warned against a non-existent plan to bring about the immigration of a few hundred thousand Israelis to Poland (April 30, 2002, June 4, 2002, February 19, 2003).

Antoni Macierewicz, a close political ally of Rydzyk, and now Deputy Minister of National Defense, said in a broadcast on July 19, 2002 (in response to a listener’s question about the notorious Tsarist forgery, “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion”): “I read it, it is very interesting, some say it is authentic, some say it’s not, I am not a specialist. Experience shows that there are such groups in Jewish circles.”



Bigotry on the radio dial: Poster promoting Radio Maryja

Zygmunt Wrzodak, a radical MP elected on the LPF ticket, has been another fre-

quent guest. On April 15, 2002, he declared in a broadcast: “It is known that the European Union is controlled by freemasonry (...) and the interest is the following: to empower both these nations, a global Jewish nation and a European German nation.”

The pernicious myth that Jews working at the World Trade Center in New York received advance warning of the Al Qaeda attacks on 9/11, and therefore stayed away, also received an airing in Rydzyk’s media outlets.

Radio Maryja’s broadcasts showcase hostility to liberal democracy and the values of pluralism, as well as a tendency to adopt the conspiracy-laden view of the world found in much of the media in Arab and Muslim countries. The pernicious myth that Jews working at the World Trade Center in New York received advance warning of the Al Qaeda attacks on 9/11, and therefore stayed away, also received an airing in Rydzyk’s media outlets. In a Sep-

tember 2002 article written for *Nasz Dziennik* and repeatedly aired on Radio Maryja, Czeslaw Bartnik, a priest and professor at the Catholic University of Lublin, claimed: “Somebody warned all the Jews working in the twin towers and did not warn all the other employees.”

Radio Maryja and its allied media continue to promote a nationalistic and anti-Semitic perspective on modern Polish history. On December 15, 2005, *Nasz Dziennik* published an article entitled “The cadres of the security services,” claiming that the Stalinist political police in Poland was run by Jews. The article was authored by Wojciech Wybranowski, a staff journalist of *Nasz Dziennik* and a known extreme-right political activists.

But it is the issue of the Holocaust which attracts the most venom on Radio Maryja. On March 27, 2006, its regular guest Stanislaw Michalkiewicz, who writes an anti-Semitic column in the far-right weekly *Nasza Polska* and was an LPF candidate for the Senate in 2005, aired a vehement attack on the so-called “Holocaust industry.”

Michalkiewicz resorted to anti-Semitic stereotypes of greedy Jews, claiming: “Jews have humiliated Poland internationally by demanding money...Kikes sneak up behind us to try to oblige our government to pay them money on the pretext of these demands.” Michalkiewicz further referred to “the rows kicked up by the Jews on the site of the Auschwitz camp, the blowing up of the Jedwabne incident, and currently, the preparations for a huge propaganda event in Kielce, on the anniversary of the so-called ‘pogrom’.”

Marek Edelman, the last living leader of the 1943 uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto, wrote a furious letter to the Prime Minister after the broadcast, protesting against the anti-Semitism propagated by Radio Maryja and calling upon the authorities to take appropriate steps.

Faced with angry protests inside and outside Poland, on April 12, 2006 Rydzyk eventually offered what was described as an apology for Michalkiewicz’s outburst, but not for previous expressions of anti-Semitism on the station. In fact, Rydzyk merely said, “No one here wanted to harm or offend anyone” before describing accusations of anti-Semitism against the station as “a malicious falsehood,” itself the

result of “a massed attack on Radio Maryja by the liberal media in mock defense of the Church and country.”

Following the Michalkiewicz scandal, the National Broadcasting Council, a national political body that oversees all electronic media licences and has power to fine broadcasters, asked Radio Maryja to officially respond to the accusations of anti-Semitism in Michalkiewicz’s broadcast. The case was also investigated by the prosecutor’s office in Torun which announced, on August 28, 2006, that it would not press charges and claimed that Michalkiewicz’s remarks “must not be seen as a premeditated, offensive or insulting action.” The prosecutor’s decision was denounced by the ADL in a statement which noted: “Radio Maryja is a major factor behind the worrying rise of anti-Semitism in Poland. This is a station which has persistently broadcast anti-Semitic slanders.”

So far, no legal sanctions or penalties have been applied against Radio Maryja or Rydzyk’s other outlets by the Polish authorities. Tellingly, Michalkiewicz himself attributed the controversy over his remarks to a “Jewish conspiracy.” Only a few days after the prosecutor dropped the case against him, Michalkiewicz was hired by Polish public radio to present a political commentary program. This decision by a state-funded body was widely condemned in Poland and abroad as a disturbing indication that anti-Semitism and hate speech are increasingly acceptable.

GLOSSARY OF POLISH POLITICAL PARTIES

The list below references only those parties mentioned in this report.

All-Polish Youth (*Młodzież Wszechpolska, MW*). Formed in 1989 by Roman Giertych, who remains its honorary chairman. The All-Polish Youth is named after a nationalist youth organization active in the 1920s and the 1930s, which was vehemently anti-Semitic and violent and which campaigned successfully for a so-called “bench ghetto” (*ghetto lawkowe*) to segregate Polish and Jewish students at Polish universities. Affiliated with the League of Polish Families (see below), the All-Polish Youth has a reputation for acts of violence.

Law and Justice Party (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS*). Mainstream conservative party formed in 2001 by twin brothers Lech and Jarosław Kaczyński, who are, respectively, President and Prime Minister of Poland. The party won power in the 2005 elections on a platform that was critical of the European Union and committed to maintaining a social safety net for Poland’s disadvantaged. The party is Catholic and nationalist in orientation.

League of Polish Families (*Liga Polskich Rodzin, LPR*). The main extreme-right party in Poland, formed shortly before the September 2001 parliamentary election. Strongly Catholic and nationalist in orientation. The LPR’s leader, Roman Giertych, was appointed Minister of Education in May 2006.

National Faction (*Kolo Narodowe*). Breakaway group from the LPR.

National Rebirth of Poland (*Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski, NOP*). A far-right party formed in 1992 which has minimal public support; affiliated with the European National Front, a neo-Nazi network.

National Right (*Prawica Narodowa, PN*). Extreme right-wing party modeled on the Front National in France. The PN was part of the right-wing bloc which governed Poland between 1997-2001, winning ministerial posts.

Patriotic Movement (*Ruch Patriotyczny*). Right-wing grouping formed in 2005 by Antoni Macierewicz, recently appointed Deputy Minister of National Defense. Other leading figures include Jan Olszewski, who was Prime Minister of Poland for a six month period in 1991-92.

Polish National Community - Polish National Party (*Polska Wspólnota Narodowa – Polskie Stronnictwo Narodowe, PWN-PSN*). Neo-Nazi party formed in 1990 with a strong racist skinhead following.

Polish National Party (*Polska Partia Narodowa, PPN*). A marginal grouping led by Leszek Bubel, an anti-Semitic publisher.

Self-Defense (*Samoobrona*). Populist party formed in 1992 by Andrzej Lepper, based among farmers. Once a member of the Communist Party, Lepper has promoted a populist message and has engaged in civil disobedience. Lepper was appointed Minister of Agriculture in May 2006.