

# POLEN OP WEG NAAR HET OUDE ANTISEMITISME

POLES ELECT CONSERVATIVE  
WHO REJECTED CLAIMS OF ANTI-JEWISH POGROM

OPPOSITION CHALLENGER ANDRZEJ DUDA BEATS CENTRIST  
PRESIDENT KOMOROWSKI IN RUN-OFF

Door A.Z.

Conservative opposition challenger Andrzej Duda on Sunday won Poland's presidential run-off, exit polls showed, trouncing incumbent centrist Bronislaw Komorowski with promises of generous social spending.

An MEP and lawyer with a populist streak, Duda scored 53 percent support ahead of Komorowski, who mustered 47 percent, exit polls showed, giving a key indicator of the national mood ahead of an autumn parliamentary election.

Official results are expected later Monday. Turnout was a historic 56 percent.

Analysts said voters hungry for change in the EU and NATO member state could oust the governing centrist Civic Platform (PO) in this year's parliamentary polls and return the controversial Jaroslaw Kaczynski and his conservative Law and Justice (PiS) party to power after eight years.

Speaking to wild applause at his Warsaw campaign headquarters, Duda said: "Thank you, President Bronislaw Komorowski for the rivalry of this presidential campaign and for your congratulations. Those who voted for me, voted for change. Together we can change Poland."

Komorowski was quick to concede defeat and said his loss was also a warning signal to his political allies in government. "This is the decision of the citizens of a free and democratic Poland, so I congratulate my rival, Mr Andrzej Duda and I wish him a successful presidency because I wish Poland well," he told supporters in Warsaw.

The victory for 43-year-old Duda marks the first major electoral win in almost a decade for the opposition Law and Justice party, which nominated him. In Poland, the prime minister leads the government but the president is head of the armed forces, has a say in foreign policy and in the passage of legislation, and also controls who heads the central bank. Duda served as legal adviser to former conservative



Andrzej Duda

*"Duda has criticized the president's apologies in recent years for the massacre that Polish farmers perpetrated against their Jewish neighbors in Jedwabne."*

President Lech Kaczynski, was a deputy justice minister, a member of the Polish parliament, and is now a member of the European parliament.

His victory throws down the conservative gauntlet to the governing center-right Civic Platform party. Eight years in power, the party has presided over rapid economic growth and rising salaries in eastern Europe's biggest economy.

But despite unprecedented prosperity, many Poles feel the fruits of their labor have been unfairly spread, resulting in increased inequality, and are eager for new faces at the top.

"Economic growth? For the average citizen it is hardly perceptible," said Zbigniew Pela, 53, a railway worker who was voting for Duda on Sunday. "They create good living conditions for some social groups, who have their businesses, and not for ordinary citizens." Jedwabne pogrom

In a presidential debate last week, the outgoing president defended his acknowledgement of the complicity of some his countrymen in the Holocaust. Duda has criticized the president's apologies in recent years for the massacre that Polish farmers perpetrated against their Jewish neighbors in Jedwabne. The 1941 Jedwabne pogrom, in which dozens of Jews were burned alive by villagers who trapped them inside a barn, was exposed in the early 2000s by the historian Jan Gross.

The discovery triggered furious reactions by Polish nationalists who claimed there was too little evidence to support the assertions, which they said falsely depicted Poland as a perpetrator nation instead of a victim of Nazi occupation.

Reiterating his past statements on the subject, Komorowski, 62, said during the debate: "The nation of victims was also the nation of perpetrators," according to a translation provided by the AFPnews agency. Duda called Komorowski's statements an "attempt to destroy Poland's good name."