

Ban Sought for Nazi-Era School Book

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The Public Chamber urged the Prosecutor General's Office to ban an anti-Semitic publication favored by Adolf Hitler on Friday, just weeks after Moscow prosecutors found it to be of "historical and educational" value.

The chamber's secretary, Yevgeny Velikhov, asked Prosecutor General Yury Chaika to open an investigation into the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion," the rights watchdog said on its web site.

The book, first released in 1903 by a tsarist-era anti-Semitic newspaper, details the Jewry's purported plans of world domination. The book has since been exposed as a forgery based on a 19th-century political pamphlet by French political satirist Maurice Joly, but has nevertheless become a staple of anti-Semitic literature. It was taught in schools in Nazi Germany.

Chaika's office did not comment on the request over the weekend. But his subordinates ruled in March that "Protocols" did not fan ethnic hatred, and its content was "politically and historically educational," the Public Chamber said.

The ruling was passed by Moscow's Northern Administrative District Prosecutor's Office and later upheld by the City Prosecutor's Office, it said. Both refused to place "Protocols" on a federal list of extremist materials, citing an unspecified "psychological examination" of the book, it said.

The Public Chamber based its own request on an appeal by two prominent members of the Academy of Sciences, Yury Pivovarov and Valery Tishkov, who criticized the ready availability of "Protocols" in Russia, including at the prominent Books of Russia fair earlier this year.

"This book is often called the banner of anti-Semitism," Vera Alperovich, an analyst with the Sova anti-xenophobia watchdog, said by telephone Friday.

But she admitted that even Sova's experts were divided on the issue. "We fear that if the book is banned, it might provoke a backlash from anti-Semitic groups who would blame Jews for banning the book," Alperovich said.

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