

„When you tell a lie
hundred times,
it becomes the truth”.

Dr. Joseph Goebbels
(the minister of Propaganda
in the Hitler’s cabinet)

Anti-Polish Propaganda

Propaganda: *information, ideas, or rumors deliberately spread to help or harm a person, group, movement, institution, nation, etc.*

In the year 2013 the Foreign Ministry of Poland intervened over 100 times protesting against false statements concerning Poland all around the world but mostly in the USA and Great Britain.

Let’s start from the beginning.

The idea that Poles are an inferior people is not new. The rumors were first spread that they were unfit to rule themselves in the 18th century, by Austria, Prussia (Germany) and Russia as justification of the ensuing partitions that took place in the 1790’s. Poland lost its independence to three occupiers and underwent a thorough Germanization and Rusification for over hundred years.

Despite the fact that the terrible atrocities during the years 1917-21 against Jews in the contested borderland between Poland and Russia were the work of the Red and White Russian Armies, propaganda spread by the press and fueled by political and ideological sympathies towards revolutionary Russia as well as antipathy harbored towards its Polish opponent labeled Poland right at her rebirth after WWI irrevocably as the most anti-Semitic of nations (read: Jews in Poland).

During the Weimar period 1919-33, a bitter Germany following the loss of its Empire, intensified a negative campaign against the Poles by attempting to brainwash their citizens through textbooks and other popular media. These actions greatly influenced the view held by other peoples in Europe, including Jews. Hitler’s propaganda to justify the 1939 invasion had not much to add to complete their stereotype of Poles as “untermenschen” (“sub-human”), so soldiers could carry the order directly received from the Führer to kill Polish women and children with no mercy.

The betrayal of Poland (one of the main Allies) by President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill, was lead by minimalization or exclusion of significant contributions of Polish nation in winning the war against Germany, by press and political officials (read; “Forsaken Ally”).

In the United States, the image of Polish immigrants held by their German immigrant predecessors bolstered the racist stereotype of Poles among other ethnic groups (White Men versus Polacks). The image of Poles as morons and the Pole as the worst anti-Semite was revived as the intense focus on the Holocaust arose in the 1960’ s at the same time as the "Polack joke" became a major cultural phenomenon in the USA. Positive personal experiences or empirical knowledge about Poland did not modify the already ingrained image. Interestingly, the image of Poles as inefficient, lazy, and incompetent appeared widely during the beginning of the Solidarity movement in 1980, to condemn the strikes as the actions of people who simply did not wish to work. The Poles meanwhile singlehandedly initiated the break-down of the communist system peacefully, without the use of violence - they also inspired and encouraged other countries to follow their example.

The indoctrination of Americans begins fairly early; students at private and public schools receive twisted facts or none at all. It is a common practice to omit the role of Poles at the battle of Vienna, American Revolutionary War, WW II, etc. Instead, Polish anti-Semitism is usually brought up and grossly exaggerated. More unfortunate is that this is what most students will remember about Poland. Meanwhile the media and individuals like Mr. Lanzmann, as well as Professor Jan Gross of Princeton University, continue a profitable smear campaign, discrediting Poland and Poles with every book, movie, article or interview.

Even the current U.S. President Barack Obama, during the posthumous commemoration of the famous Pole Jan Karski, (who was first during the Second World War to provide detailed information to the Americans regarding the extermination of Jews), unwittingly referred to a concentration camp as “Polish”, instead of “Nazi-German” - a recent common “mistake” that is repeated within the media and by everyday individuals without concern.

Conclusion

Increased accusations of "Polish war crimes" strike a different nerve than everyday Polish jokes and derogatory slurs such as the term "Polack." These accusations are personal attacks against those Polish individuals whose families witnessed and experienced the true horrors of the Second World War.

Dieter Shenk, a German author during a meeting in Warsaw organized in the Fall of 2013 for the purpose of discussing the worldwide spread of the new phrase "Polish Death (or Concentration) Camps" stated: "Memory is like a dog; it lays down where it wants." He is convinced that the breeding of this phrase is not a simple insensitivity or ignorance of history, but rather it is a conscious and deliberate manipulation of facts in order to blame Poland for the atrocities of WWII. It is done by those who want to cover their wrong doings and whose primary goal is to discredit Poland's public reputation.

Only a few Poles become angry and either request an apology or organize protests. The Polish-American community at large ignores the issue. Polonia is aware that this issue is embedded in American culture, that it is an uphill battle to argue with those who harbor an inadequate education and are brain-washed early as youngsters.

We can only hope that books such as "A Question of Honor", "Beyond Solidarity" or "Bloodlands" may open some minds and dampen stereotypes. But to truly terminate the smear campaign against Poland perpetrated by the media, vital legislation is needed that would render these false historical statements as a crime. In Poland, the recent petition to the Polish Congress concerning the phrase "Polish death/concentration camps" is a move in the right direction in the search for a concrete solution to subdue anti-Polish propaganda.

Petition to the Polish Congress

Petycja do Parlamentu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w sprawie uznania sformułowania „polskie obozy koncentracyjne” za „kłamstwo oświęcimskie”

Pani Marszałek Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej,
Panie i Panowie Posłowie !

My, niżej podpisani Obywatele Rzeczypospolitej, wzywamy Sejm aby nie zwlekając uchwalił prawo, w którym jasno będzie określone, że publiczne użycie sformułowania „polskie obozy koncentracyjne”, „polskie obozy śmierci”, „polskie obozy zagłady” i tym podobne w odniesieniu do niemieckich nazistowskich obozów koncentracyjnych jest „kłamstwem oświęcimskim”. Dotykające Naród Polski zniesławienia ze strony mediów i osób używających takich określeń są coraz częstsze i, jak można przypuszczać, nie przypadkowe. Jeśli nie będzie się temu przeciwdziało, także w sferze symbolicznej, niebawem światowa opinia publiczna będzie przekonana o tym, że to Polacy są sprawcami Holokaustu i ponoszą za niego odpowiedzialność.

Nie możemy do tego dopuścić. Naszym żywotnym interesem narodowym jest obrona dobrego imienia Polski i Polaków przed oszczerczymi pomówieniami. Milczenie w tej sprawie, brak zdecydowanego sprzeciwu wobec kłamliwych sformułowań oznacza zgodę na nie, zgodę na zakłamywanie naszej historii. A naród, na który przerzucono niemieckie winy z II Wojny Światowej nie będzie traktowany na równi z innymi na arenie międzynarodowej. Polacy staną się ludźmi niższej kategorii – właśnie przez to, że nawet we własnym prawodawstwie nie bronią swojego honoru i godności.

Liczymy, że posłowie reprezentujący naród nie będą się wzbraniać przed tak oczywistą, ponadpartyjną i jednoczącą wszystkich Polaków inicjatywą. W imię prawdy historycznej oraz poczucia sprawiedliwości, pamiętając o tych wszystkich obywatelach Polski, którzy ponieśli śmierć podczas II wojny światowej w niemieckich obozach koncentracyjnych

petycja i karta podpisów do pobrania stąd: <http://reduta-dobrego-imienia.pl/>

obecny Art. 133 kodeksu karnego stanowi: "Kto publicznie znieważa naród lub Rzeczpospolitą Polską, podlega karze pozbawienia wolności do lat 3".