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Encountering anti-Polonism

W obliczu antypolonizmu



Chapter One: An overview of anti-Polish Sentiment

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Version 9 – 19th June 2024

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Chapter 1 - An overview of anti-Polish Sentiment

It should be remembered that fear of the unknown is common in the animal kingdom. You only need to approach a wild animal such as a bird in your garden to see this. Therefore, it is not surprising to me that bigotry exists now and has existed since before the birth of civilization.

Racism or ethnic discrimination is a slightly newer form of bigotry but still has a long history. In the birthplace of democracy, the noted philosopher Aristotle believed that the Greeks were by their nature meant to be free. The rest, or barbarians as he saw them, were by their nature meant to be slaves.

One virulent form of discrimination is anti-Semitism. The study of anti-Semitism was once not taken seriously. We have seen great progress to fight anti-Semitism amongst other bigotries.

Sadly, Anti-Polonism in 2024 as I write this is still not seen as significant issue. After all what is wrong with telling *Polish jokes* about *Nazi Poles*? Poland's has a rich history, great cultural, played an important contribution to the world, yet I continue to see anti-Polish sentiment persisting.

There are several terms for Anti-Polonism including anti-Polish sentiment, and Polonophobia thus the decision to call this project Encountering Anti-Polonism (**EA-P**). Those behind the project have personally experienced hostile views about us and Poland.

anti-Polish sentiment relates to Poland, Poles, and Polish cultural. **EA-P** defines anti-Polish sentiment as atypically, disparagingly, unfairly, antagonistically, or unequally anything related to Polishness. This results in the negative impression of Polishness through deliberate or accidental misinformation, poorly researched data, and outright hostile propaganda.

Anti-Polonism reached its height during World War Two (**WWII**) with the deliberate attempted genocide of Poland by especially Nazi Germany but also Soviet Russia plus the Ukrainian and Lithuanian nationalists.

Other examples of Anti-Polonism include wrongly ascribing complicity or collaboration to Poles for the crimes of Germany and Russia especially implying the Nazi German camps were Polish; Polish jokes or other ways of making out Poles as stupid;; omitting or mischaracterizing context of Poles and Poland in history; and that Poles are drunkards, backward, or especially anti-Semitic .

There is a long history of prejudice against Polishness, and it has taken many forms. It will take years to document all of this using the material already available to **EA-P**. The focus of my book using **EA-P** material is covers issues related to the Nazi German occupation of Poland in the written word. Still, this is a summary of the history of Anti-Polonism.

History of anti-Polish Sentiment

Polish culture has a long history. Proto-Slavs arrived in what is modern day Poland in 1400BC . Poland is one of the oldest countries, dating back to the tenth century, but not much is known before this. . Thus, Polish history until 10th century is largely legendary . Poland celebrated it millennium in 1966 . Still the Polish state existed before 966. As Poland emerged on the world stage there was already ethnic hatred towards Poles by the Germanic tribes to the west of Poland.

Polish history started with a German invasion, and over the centuries Poland has faced the same problem. With Poland accepting Christianity and becoming a sizeable state, it would have hoped the German attitudes would change. Sadly, the continued attempts by Germanic forces to invade and suppress Polish culture show this to be a false hope.

Still the strong avoid bigotry thus with the defeat of the Teutonic knights, Poland emerged as a Middle Ages superpower. This appears to have meant anti-Polish sentiment was limited as I found little evidence of it. The only example was due to their appearance Poles in Western Europe were derided in the 15th century. Still, when Poland fell into decline, anti-Polish sentiment rocketed.

Being mostly a vast plain, Poland regularly faced invasions, which has continued into living memory. All Poles have family memories of relatives who suffered under the Nazi Germans or Soviet Russians. Poles have been forced to fight against not just invasion but interference. This meddling and conquests resulted in three partitions, after which Poland disappeared from the map of Europe but not the hearts of Poles.

What followed was state-sponsored persecution of Poles by especially the Russian and Prussian empires in the 18th century. These countries repeated this again under the names Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia in the 19th century.

This did not stop Poles fighting for their culture, however, as in the case of the November Uprising of 1830 (lasting until 1831). The persecution of other ethnic groups making them moved abroad is often remembered, but it is forgotten that Poles faced oppression, forcing Poles to flee abroad.

The following is on the Russian and Prussian / German partitions. In the Austrian partition things were better but there were incidents such as the wrongful arrests of Poles.

Russian partition

During the occupation by the Russian empire there were attempts to russify the land annexed by them in the partition . Works on Polish history and literature were censored. The January Uprising (22nd January 1863 to 11 April 1864) resulted in more anti-Polish feeling and all teaching was in Russian from then on. Even after the insurrection was put down, the Russian press declared that they had not finished with Poland. Russian newspapers also spread anti-Polish sentiment.

Prussian / German partition

In the 18th century, Poles were considered inferior by Germans hence incapable of governing themselves. Examples include the German writer Johann Georg Adam Forster who described Poles as *cattle in human form*. Frederick II, King of Prussia 1740 to 1786, views on *the slovenly Polish trash* of West Prussia were expressed in unflattering North American parallels.

The expression *Polish Parliament*, in Swedish *Polsk riksdag* and German *Polnischer Reichstag* is used to mean disorder and anarchy. *uncultivated* people. In the German case, this meant Poles, and the motif runs through the 18th century history of Prussian reclamation. This was used to rationalize the partitions of Poland.

The following may appear to be a Nazi statement, but it was Otto von Bismarck who united Germany: The Prussian Germans' *goal was to extinguish Polish culture and language.*

The January Uprising (22nd January 1863 to 11 April 1864) resulted in more anti-Polish feeling. The German media spread anti-Polish accounts whilst German soldiers conducted atrocities in mid-1900. German newspapers raised a great clamor about Poles disliking Germans coming to Poland. The King of Prussia, Frederick III (born 1831, died 1888), was known for his anti-Polish policy. In Prussian partitioned Poland, the language and cultural were suppressed.

Like in the Russian partition, teaching in Polish was stopped. In the German partition areas this was from 1872, German became the language used in state-run schools.

The anti-Polish policy of Otto von Bismarck, the Chancellor of Prussia between 1885 and 1900 was called *Polakożerstwo*. Sometimes it is used for the general prejudice against Poles especially in the 19th and 20th centuries in Russia and Nazi Germany.

1900s

The Polonia, Polish immigrants, face discrimination in employment, housing, and social interactions. These stereotypes of Poles were reinforced by German immigrant's views. The results of this bias in the partitions era meant Ethnic Poles were described as stupid, violent, disorderly, filthy, and less evolved humans.

Poles had spent much blood over the century of occupation and suppression yet David Lloyd George who was for 6 years the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom described Poland as *an historic failure, which has won her freedom not by her own exertions, but by the blood of others.*

When Poland regained her independences after the First World War there was a new aspect to Anti-Polonism with claims about extremist anti-Semitism. The fact was that most atrocities against Jews were the work of Russians there was unbelievable press reporting, political considerations creating the myth Poland was the most anti-Semitic nations on the planet.

After the Nazis were voted into power in Germany, the BBC (**British Broadcasting Corporation**) joined others in refusing to criticize the German leadership giving the British public a false impression of Poland.

The Soviet Russia, later Russian Federation, have made much of Poland's non-aggression with Nazi German. This is partly due their secret clause with German. There was no secret clause in the Polish treaty with Germany.

Hitler ordered the invasion of Poland only because Poles refused an alliance with Nazi Germany. Poland was offered Ukraine by Hitler, but Poland was not interested. However, this did not deter the constant wooing by Germany.

British public opinion prior to and during WWII was shaped by pro-Soviet members of the British media including the BBC. Key individuals at the BBC were shamelessly pro-Soviet meaning a false impression was given to Polish/Soviet relations. This at a time (1939-1945) when the BBC was at the forefront of news and the most trusted source in Britain. During the German invasion, the BBC played down the crisis.

World War Two

When faced with stopping Nazi German expansion in the 1930s, Poland did not falter, even though the Polish military suffered from a lack of modern armament compared to Germany. Polish industry and finances simply could not match Germany.

Poland was invaded on 1st September, 1939 . Nazi German atrocities were conducted from the start.

There are myths about the German invasion of Poland which started WWII. These include that Poland was quickly defeated, Polish cavalry charged tanks, the Polish air force was destroyed on the ground, Poland surrendered, and even Poland started WWII by Poland by refusing Hitler's reasonable demands.

The origin of World War Two is often described in a confused way. There claims that German land was given to Poland after World War One. This is untrue as it was simply Polish Land being returned to Poland.

Who is responsible for the carnage of WWII? It seems that R. J. Overy (British historian) it is too naïve to blame Hitler, Germany, Italy, and Japan. Germany had little responsibility except that Germany had lost the First World War. We are told that *it must not be forgotten that war in 1939 was declared by Britain and France on Germany*, so I guess we can ignore a little thing such as the invasion of Poland. With this type of view, it is easy to see how responsibility for the German camps has been shifted onto Poland.

As to Poland being defeated quickly there are many reasons. By the time Poland was invaded, the Germans had access to the Austrian and Czech industries. Thus, when you add Slovak and Soviet Russian forces aiding the German invasion and the situation was impossible for Poland. In fact, the war was made possible by the Soviet Union's pact with Nazi Germany. Due to Western powers, Poland was forced to delay mobilization, with catastrophic results. Poland still universally rejected Hitler's demands.

After the German occupied Poland, despite what some claim, the Germans wanted a puppet Polish government but couldn't find anyone to form such a government. The Germans found willing collaborators in most occupied countries resulting in puppet governments but not in occupied Poland.

The result was that Poland suffered most from Nazi German actions out the occupied countries. Once it was clear that Poles wouldn't collaborate, the goal of the Nazi Germans was to remove Poland permanently, meaning the death of thirty million humans. However, it was accepted that not all could be killed at once.

The Nazi Germans then created a variety of camps, including concentration and death camps run by the SS (Schutzstaffel).

Poland and Poles fought from the first day to the last against Nazi Germany. Poland never surrendered. The Polish government initially crossed into Romania, then power was transferred to France and later to Britain.

After German attacked their Soviet allies, Both the British and American governments encouraged pro-Soviet anti-Polish propaganda. This was especially true of Beaverbrook press and the BBC.

The BBC takes part in the campaign to vilify Poles as *reactionaries, fascists and anti-Semites*. Pressure had been put on the BBC, but it was unnecessary. The Polish media based in the UK was forbidden to tell the truth. The BBC deleted any

reference to Polish cities of Lwów and Wilno as being Polish. This is the same BBC which suppressed Alexander Werth, BBC correspondents, report on the German Majdanek concentration camp in occupied Poland.

The German run Holocaust of the Jews

This work does touch on the Polish–Jewish relationship during the German occupation of Poland; however, it is not the focus of our work. No country or people are perfect. There were atrocities conducted by ethnic Poles but very few and small in nature compared to others.

Regardless there should be no debate that the **Nazi German concentration and death camps** were forced upon occupied Poland, but there are those who blame Poles for them.

It was German anti-Semitism that caused the attempted extermination of Jews in Europe during WWII. This is a historical fact but despite this there are claims that instead of Germany and Germans being responsible it was Poland and Poles. Other voices accept German responsibility, but that Poles were worse than Germans.

The result is that often all Poles are blamed. Kornbluth uses the Jedwabne massacre to prove all claims made against Poles. He goes on to praise the Soviet-controlled government for their role. Like Gross, Kornbluth draws on dubious sources: a single Jew in hiding knew what all Poles were doing.

The tragedy that was the Shoah can never be underplayed. Still, the Nazi instruments of destruction affected others. Ethnic Poles themselves faced genocide. When the Soviets took control of the extermination camps, there was enough Zyklon B to kill a further twenty million people.

Ethnic Poles played an insignificant part in the German run Holocaust of Jews.

Post WWII

Even in the Solidarity era negative views of Poles were widespread in the Federal Republic of Germany. Ethnic Poles were described as incompetent and unproductive. The strikes against communism were said to be because Poles did not want to work. More recently neo-Nazi National Democratic Party (NPD) used anti-Polish signs in their election campaign.

BBC

The BBC has come up a number of times as spreading anti-Polish propaganda. This continued in the 90s and more recently.

The BBC invited Konrad Bartelski, considered the best British skier since the War, to cover the 1992 Olympic Games. When a presenter mispronounced his name, instead of apologizing, he instead said: "*In your position I would have changed my name long ago.*"

In 2008, the blame for this rise in racist attacks has in part has been placed with BBC coverage of Poles, according to one Conservative Member of Parliament. Daniel Kawczynski accused the BBC of focusing on Poles when '*in reality, nine out of 10 immigrants to Britain were not Poles or other East Europeans, but people from the Indian subcontinent, Africa and the West Indies*', and going on to say they were going '*for the soft touch, the white Christians from Poland, and I am sick and tired of it*'

Chris Moyle's, at the time a leading DJ for BBC Radio 1, was forced by public pressure to apologize for saying that Poles made good prostitutes. Moyle did apology but half-heartedly.

The BBC programme Panorama in 2012 produced the ridiculous "Stadiums of Hate" in which it was predicated that there would be a blood bath when football fans visited Poland. Initial accepted it was quickly attacked for being one sided including by other British media, anti-racism campaigners in Poland, ethnic minorities in Poland especially Black and Jewish community leaders, Polish politicians and journalists and British fans visiting Poland. Even BBC presenter Gary Lineker criticised it .

The only contribution to Poles in Great Britain was a radio show "Poles Apart" which was run by Polish volunteers but even that was shutdown,

The massacre of Polish citizens by Ukrainians was one of the worse crimes not to receive widespread coverage. The BBC decided to muddy the water with its coverage. They state that *nationalist Ukrainian partisans killed about 40,000 Polish civilians during World War II*. But claimed the conflict killed up to 100,000 people in total. Therefore Poles killed more Ukrainians than Ukrainians killed Poles.

Even children were affected by BBC with their Poland Rat.

Beyond the BBC

In Germany there was an attempt to spread the blame for the Holocaust onto Poland. The drama “Unsere Mütter, Unsere Väter” made out that Poles were anti-Semites. It built on anti-Polish sentiment from the Germans occupation. The BBC chose to show it in the UK.

Now racist Anti-Polonism is founded in many other countries including the United States of America, Canada, United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany, Lithuania, Belarus, and Russia. The United Kingdom has seen a raise in hate crimes against Poles especially in Northern Ireland.

In the media the common issue is incorrect references to the German camps in occupied Poland and that Poles are the worst anti-Semites especially in the United States and the United Kingdom. The Israel Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir claimed *Poles suck [anti-Semitism] with their mothers' milk*. The Daily Mail in the United Kingdom has been a frequent been criticised for its coverage of Poles who live there. Amongst the stranger argument include the idea that Poles actually *allowed death camps to be built on their land*

The most common slur is word Polack. This is a derogatory reference to a Pole or person of Polish descent especially common in the US. Still even in countries such as United Kingdom where it is very uncommon it can be used such as the Giles Coren in his bias views against Poles.

There have been adverts which shows ethnic Poles in a bad light. An advert by German retailer Media Markt played on a stereotype in Germany that Poles are thieves. A T-Mobile in the Czech Republic advert offended Poles in 2014.

Those who express anti-Polish prejudice often defend themselves by arguing that ethnic Poles themselves are in denial or simply anti-Semites or spreading lies against Russia. There are people who claim their wording is right but the usage of half-truths and information supporting biased views can only confuse the average person. Falsehoods in all forms are wrong, especially those designed to spread lies. The media may argue it is merely putting forth the other side, but it should keep to the truth.

If you did the same thing to others, people, governments, and organisations would be fighting to see who could get credit for fighting this hate crime. Sadly, anti-Polonism is still acceptable in most countries. Poland suffered proportional the most in the second world war, and now most suffer again with the lies being told i.e., a double suffering as Bozena Karol first expressed. The inference that ethnic Poles played a key role in the atrocities conducted by the Germans is especially hurtful, as Christian Poles suffered alongside Polish Jews and other victims of the Nazi Germans.

Only evidence and facts can fight the lies. This project can provide this valuable material thus I call on you to help. Please join us on YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and Patreon to aid our vital work.

The types of bias

History of Poland plays a major role in shaping contemporary Anti-Polonism. The centuries of invasion, occupation, and partitioning has shaped perceptions of the Polish people in the eyes of others. The forms of anti-Polish sentiment come in two major types, each of which has two subtypes:

stereotyping and vilification of Poles and Poland.
governmental usage, including suppression of Polish culture.

Stereotyping

Examples of stereotyping are the portrayal of Poles as brutes, drunks, and anti-Semites.

Vilification of Poles and Poland

The migration of Poles within the EU is an excellent example of vilification. In countries such as the UK and the Netherlands, they are portrayed as stealing jobs, using benefits, and even eating swans.

Governmental usage

The best example of state persecution of Poland is that perpetrated by Nazi Germany during World War Two. There are many other examples, including the anti-Polish policies of the German Empire and the organized persecution of Poles in the Russian Empire.

Suppression of Polish culture

There are many forms, including banning the Polish language and limiting access to education, and related customs such as shutting down Churches and Synagogues used by Polish citizens.

Rodzaje uprzedzeń

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