

## Convention to Stop Hate-Mongering

By Edmund Lewandowski  
December 1998

Washington, Nov. 19, 1998, a normal day at work is a red letter day in the life of Anna Maruszczyk, a newscaster from Inforadio in Poland. Today she will meet her idol, the confident and conceited long-haired talk show guru who, some say, has an audience of fifty million. The talk starts innocently. A few cheap compliments relax our heroine. This, coupled with her lack of complete mastery of the English language, makes the task all the easier for the star of US radio.

The star begins by asking whether Poles ever discuss World War II. He risks the opinion that it is not, because this must be an awkward subject for them. He „proves” his opinion with the „fact” that there are no Jews in Poland because they were all killed by Poles. The Polish concentration camps, and they WERE Polish, were run by Poles. Hitler did not need to kill the Jews because the Poles did it for him. The Poles and only the Poles are guilty of exterminating the Jews.

In the US, concentration camps are often referred to as „Polish”. Anna must have been unaware of this. She came to the US on the eve of the taping of the show, and it is likely that she will remember the interview to her dying day. One day is not enough to grasp fully how they talk about Poland in the US. She was dumbfounded by the invectives and was unable to name a single Jew living in Poland. She went through an initiation which awaits most Poles who visit the US.

One often hears „Polish jokes”, often snide and derogatory to Poles. Even renowned papers like The New York Times write about Polish concentration camps and Nazi Poland. The embassy of the Republic of Poland in Washington has sent frequent letters to protest this, but they have been ignored. In spite of this lack of success, the embassy has promised to react to every instance of defaming Poland. Please refer them to the Cultural attaché Jaroslaw Kurek, tel. (202) 234-9296.

Recently, Californians of Polish origin protested the use of the comic book „MAUS” as a source for teaching the English language to foreign students at the University of Moraga. It describes events during World War II. Germans are depicted as cats, Jews as mice, and Poles as swine. It also shows the swine saluting each other with Nazi salutes and condemning the mice to death.

The Internet is also full of references to „Polish death camps”. It suffices to use one search engine to find fifty web sites using that term. For example, in the archives of ABC Radio, I found that „Polish concentration camps were the fruit of European anti-Semitism”.

The made-for-TV films „Shtetl” and „Shoah” present Polish society as a co-creator of the Jewish tragedy. Polish martyrdom is not mentioned. „Shtetl” shows the author’s pre-conceived picture of a small Polish town in which Poles, under the supervision of five Germans, murdered all the Jews. The American viewer is fed such filth at 10:00 p.m. on the best TV education channel, with an audience in the entire USA. On the other hand, the film „Zegota” was shown once at 11:30 p.m. in only a few areas. „Zegota” describes the activities of the only organization which helped Jews during the war.

I examined history books used in schools in the USA. Martyrology is confined to Jews. There is NO GERMANY, only Nazis who, pupils later learn from newspapers, ran the Polish death camps. When asked the nationality of the Nazis, the pupils of one school replied without thinking that they were Polish.

In June 1998, a film called „The Polish Wedding” was shown in cinemas. A critic from Chicago says that the film insults the religion of Polish Catholics. It also promotes the stereotype of Polish drunks. Americans of Polish descent boycotted the film, but this did not affect the producers. Films often show half-wits with names, which end in „ski”.

The US press often writes unfavorably about Poland. One of the leading papers recently wrote an article about drinking in Poland. It stated that there are so many drunks lying on Polish roads that one almost has to gather them with snow plows to make room for motorists. The paper stresses that a special, impartial observer wrote the article.

America Online does provide some data about Poland, in the form of a quiz which is subtle but still a sneer: „Poland, hmmm..... they drink a lot of vodka, they are more Catholic than the Pope, and they boil out all the taste from the vegetables before eating them.” Why does America Online promote negative images of Poland?

Americans are usually sensitive about insulting ethnic minorities. Therefore, it is all the more puzzling why so many sneers appear about Poland. Anti-Polish publications could lead to dangerous confrontations between Polish ethnic groups and the hate-mongers. One of my friends, a specialist on Polish collections at the Hoover Institute at Stanford University, suggests finding a Polish ethnic organization or embassy to initiate a „Convention forbidding anti-Polish hate-mongering” in an appropriate department of the United States government. Such a Convention, or even a legal act which could be executed in a court of law, would be the most effective way to end anti-Polish excesses.

Anna could not endure the ravings of her idol and left after thirty minutes. I hope that the experience will allow her to decide how best to acquaint her countrymen with what is really being said and written about Poland in the United States.

English Translation by W. Kolankowski

[Polish original printed in Polish National Daily „Rzeczpospolita” on December 15, 1998]