

Justyna Ball from 2

Last November, Catholic bishops asked for Rydzyk's resignation for Radio Maryja's own good. As they put it: "The language of a politician, especially a Christian and a priest, cannot be a language of hate and aggressiveness."

Instead they asked that: "In public debate, present were: mutual love, culture and dialog. And to remove all aversion to the other person who may have other political views, religion beliefs, race or nationality." They also reminded us that the church cannot identify with one specific political party. Get it?

In "Memory and Identity," John Paul wrote: "If a man can decide by himself, without God, what is good and what is bad, he can also determine that a group of people is to be annihilated."

Just so you know, the majority of Polish Catholics clearly see the separation between JP's teachings and what Rydzyk has on his agenda. Many even consider it a sect and believe that what "father" Rydzyk does actually divides Poles.

After several controversial speeches and writings, he was accused of anti-Semitism. To be fair, and I know only a margin of his repertoire material... I bet some of them are no more anti-Semitic as many articles in the US media are anti-Polish or anti-Catholic.

But since they are never to be put side by side for the public to compare and decide, Radio Maryja loses and the media wins again - no surprise there. But that's not the point...

Rydzyk's listeners are no more nationalistic than the average American, but the problem is how to outsmart the media. To scream nationalistic slogans and blame Jews for everything does not work.

My point is that this is not the way, not by stirring more controversy, and providing more ammunition for the enemy. His way leads nowhere.

Polonia starts from a lost position and that's why we should be careful and try not to act irrational. They don't send bulldozers to preserve the archeological site of fine ancient relics, do they?

There is a difference between being called an anti-Semite and actually being one, and do you truly believe that Rydzyk is the right person to represent those who feel offended?

I believe not, and I'll explain. Polonia is only one of several Rydzyk's targets, but we are probably the most important one. That's right - we have money, and if you keep telling us that the land of our ancestors is in danger and is run by evil and he, a true Pole knows how to fight it, we'll follow the lead.

Somehow we believe that he has the means to rescue Poland from foreign influence, and we just have to send him US dollars. Not all of us can vote in Polish elections, but we can chip in. If we still speak Polish, but cannot vote, and we tune in to his well promoted in Polish American press, radio station, we can at

least influence our families in Poland because we know "the truth," and we know what's good for the country.

Are you amongst those who in 1997 donated funds to save Gdansk's shipyard? Are you aware that nobody (besides the "Father director" and a few of his coworkers) still don't know what happened to that 100 million z! Rydzyk can't explain it. Coincidentally, although the shipyard never received any of that money, at the same time Rydzyk's media emporium grew and since 1998, owns a newspaper, a TV station and a graduate school.

Polonia is on the frontline of the war with anti-Polonism, and although Radio Maryja talks about it and talks about it a lot, nothing is actually being done, and at this point to tell you the truth, I don't think "father" Rydzyk cares as long as the money pours in.

Anybody who lives in the US knows how difficult it is for Polonia to fight back against anti-Polish statements. Having someone like Rydzyk to speak up for us is rather... counterproductive and quite risky. I don't think we can afford it.

Instead we should be represented and give legitimacy and power to one general organization that would represent us in every major case in the press and on TV, and would react quickly and follow a routine. This organization would keep doing it until the average American nationwide will learn about such organization, its actions, the reasons why it is doing what it is doing, its importance, and pretty much the whole mechanism behind it. You are not just doing it to enlighten the average reader or viewer, but to give the future attackers an orange light, a warning.

For us, it's easy. When it looks like anti-Polonism and smells like anti-Polonism, it most likely is anti-Polonism. We can learn from our Jewish brothers as they are experts in spotting anti-Semitism. Just follow the example.

We don't even have to create such an organization as we have it already. We just have to give it more support and more recognition amongst Polonia through the Polish-American press. This will bring donations, which will lead to more power.

It's called the "Polish American Congress Anti-Bigotry Committee" with Frank Milewski presiding over it. He is doing a superb job, and I don't think we could slack on it.

Frank and others like "sharpshooter" Charlie Chotkowski do a wonderful job answering false statements, but how many of the two million Poles in Chicago actually know who they are?

Do Jewish people give money to some synagogue to fight anti-Semitism? No! ADL (Anti Defamation League) has a budget of \$50 million. If Polonia only gives 1/10 of it to PACABC, they may have money to start something (hire people to organize projects, pay writers, journalists, place ads, hire lawyers, etc.). They can press the Polish consulate, of

course, and the Polish government for support (they won't help if it is church-related but THEY CANNOT REFUSE such aid if it is non-political, for a good cause as Poland's good name will be restored, etc.).

Giving money to Rydzyk only helps spread accusations that anti-Semitism is growing in Poland, because Rydzyk is gaining popularity.

He is too easy of a target. This is the most ridiculous way to fight anti-Polonism as we are actually helping them use it against us. We should instead look for ways to outsmart them.

It's the same vicious circle as us being angry with gas prices, but buying China-made products which fuels the Chinese economy that requires more oil. Nothing beats Wal-mart prices, does it?

The media has the upper hand by saying that someone made an anti-Semitic comment without the actual quote. However, by repeating this notion over and over, people start to believe that he is an anti-Semite and what he did becomes secondary. Let ME decide. Same as in the case of the Iranian president - he is known especially in the US (according to the media) for his desire to "wipe Israel off the map or off the Planet Earth." The actual quote of his 2005 speech has never been played anywhere.

If it was truly a free society, some would ask for a debate on interpretation. This is the power of the media, to create an illusion. You cannot win it. You can provide less arguments, weaken the case and not make it stronger.

There is also another aspect of this, which disgusts me...

By judging from the actions of Rydzyk's followers, his message triggers some unchristian behavior.

So the gut feeling tells me that something is not right. Days after Bronisław Geremek's tragic death, several Radio Maryja fans showed up on Krakowskie Przedmieście, one of the busy streets in Warsaw, with a white sheet that said: "Dziękuję ci Boże, że go od nas zabrałeś!" ("Thank you God for taking him!").

How can a Catholic person feel pleasure from someone's death? Do you think that John Paul would approve such actions? Is this the Catholics' new version of paying tribute to death?

Do you really think that the Pope would want someone to be dead, even his greatest enemy? I may disagree with Prof Geremek on the issue of "lustracja," although as a member of European Parliament, representing Poland, he did a fine job. And I would never want him to die and I would not dare enjoy his death and thank God for it. A person who ignites such feelings amongst Polish Catholics cannot be good.

Prof Geremek, a Polish Jew, who as a child escaped the Warsaw ghetto, had a Catholic funeral, because of his children, and Benedict XVI sent a messenger with a speech. It is one thing to search for the truth, but promoting hate is another and that's what Rydzyk's "family" is doing.

Although we can blame some Jews for their actions, just as we blame some Poles for theirs, I don't think it is fair to put blame on all Jews just as we reject common responsibility be placed upon us.

If we make an argument to follow Rydzyk's belief... that all Jews are bad, are all Poles good or are Poles 50/50?

And if Poles are 50/50, are all Jews still bad?

We are no saints, but there are some of us who have a talent of bringing out the worst in us. In my opinion, he is that person.

See how easy it is for Rydzyk to get money and how difficult it is to promote Ewa Kurek's book. Which one do you think is doing a better job?

Rydzyk is like that action toy, "Jesus with flexible arms & gliding action" that Borders bookstore sells. One may ask: Is this the right way to promote the image of

Jesus? Some may stick to the less provocative way via spoken word... while others say that even a plastic toy is a good promoter.

Rydzyk is like that. Remember the caricature of John Paul on pizza boxes during his trip to the US? Someone made muchos dollars off of them, but did the money go to the church? Many people felt offended.

Or "Racing Nuns." No batteries required. This one is a wind-up toy. "Mother Teresa never moved that fast." One website selling those advertised them as follows:

"Some of us around the office have gotten into the 'habit' of lining them up on opposite sides for crazy head on collisions. It's just like church." Who ever thought of that?

Don't get me wrong - faith is important, but there are different ways of approaching it, and Rydzyk is not helping but rather causing more headaches.

Anti-Polish sentiments are not only domains of the American media. Some European press just loves to brag about their anti-Polonism. It may have to do with the Polish immigration wave and gaining influence by some Poles. The mechanism is the same: the article pops, then the Polish organization protests, the media responds by saying it's not their view but the writer's and then sends an apology in a private letter. The British "Daily Mail" promises to be more sensitive in the future.

The tabloid officially acknowledged the mistake and agreed to post a letter by ZPP. Now the Zjednoczenie Polskie, the largest Polish organization in Great Britain is demanding an apology from The Times for the article written by Giles Coren who explains two kinds of immigrations:

"That is the difference between the two kinds of migration, you see: the economic and the humanitarian. We, Corens are here now, because the ancestors of these Poles now going home used to amuse themselves at Easter by locking Jews in synagogue and setting fire to it. Harry didn't leave in the hope of finding a better life. Just life. The option to return was not there for him, for obvious reasons, and by 1945, the Poland he had left did not exist anymore. My sympathy for the plight of the modern Polack is thus limited, and if England is not the land of milk and honey it appeared to them three or four years ago, then, frankly, they can clear off out of it."

Ok, I know... but do you think Rydzyk will make things better?

Furthermore, I think Prof. Bronisław Geremek's presence was contradicting Giles Coren's accusations.

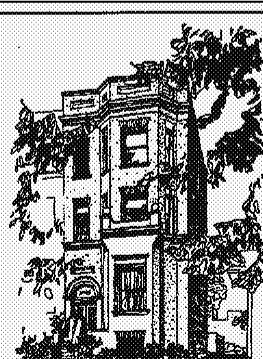
Enter Pan Mateusz who is my savior. There were times when my son, Francis, stationed in Warsaw for one school semester, needed some maintenance in his apartment (one Ikea tool set can only help so much), and Pan Mateusz was there to assist with paint jobs, shower installments, curtain rods, and basically anything to make Fran's life more pleasant.

Then one day, the day after Pan Mateusz and I discussed a curtain rod installment (cement wall requires a special drill), he made the national news! Apparently, "my" Pan Mateusz leads a double life. As Dziennik.pl reported, he was behind a white sheet with "Father" Tadeusz Rydzyk's face painted across, with the words "God, why haven't you taken him?"

As the news reported, this was his reaction to the ridiculous response to Prof Geremek's death.

And I wondered where that sheet came from. Hopefully not from my linen closet!

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What's Your Legacy

Many people talk about leaving their will to worthy causes, but don't have a will, and do not realize it requires a will to do so. The laws of most states make it clear that personal property goes automatically, by law, to your nearest relative, even if they are quite distant ones, unless you have a legal will that says otherwise. If you have no relative, it goes to the state. More than half of all adult Americans die without having made their wills. Most of them undoubtedly planned to do so, but never got around to it. Some had wills but didn't keep them current. When you have a will, you should update it every few years as conditions change. Also, always name an executor who will carry out your wishes. Besides money, non-cash possessions can also be used as contributions and various donation plans can be carried out. Be a philanthropist: leave your stocks, bonds, real estate, art, valuable collection or insurance to continue the Polish - American traditions. Your will is the most important way of giving. When you're gone, it is a legacy that is not forgotten. In your will, you can specify what you would like your donation to be used for. For help in making your will, contact a competent lawyer. **The American Center of Polish Culture, Inc. is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization that needs your help and legacy.**

The American Center of Polish Culture, Inc.
2025 "O" Street, NW • Washington, DC 20036
Tel: 202-785-2320 • Fax: 202-785-2159 • www.polishcenterdc.org