



Germany's anti-Polish ideas in WWII dated back to the 18th century

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The idea for Germany's September 1, 1939 invasion of Poland may have originated nearly 200 years earlier, according to Iwo Cyprian Pogonowski, an authority on Polish history and culture and advisor to the Holocaust Documentation Committee of the Polish American Congress. Prof. Pogonowski is the author of several books and atlases on Poland.

In the second half of the 19th century, Otto von Bismarck, Germany's "Iron Chancellor," began advancing the concept of exterminating the Poles. Adolf Hitler made Bismarck's concept a reality after Poland turned down his offer to join Germany and Japan in an attack on the Soviet Union.

Pogonowski gave the following chronology of this historical development:

When the Germans, and especially the Prussians, say that Hitler spoke straight out of their hearts ("Der Fuehrer hat von unseren Herzen gesprochen") one should inquire what was in the hearts of the Prussian population of Berlin when they listened to an Austrian born demagogue who took great pride in his "musicality," a term he used to describe his ability to feel what the crowd wanted to hear.

Hitler, as an Austrian and admirer of the Polish victory over Lenin's Bolshevik invasion of 1920, actually wanted an alliance with Poland and Japan in his obsession to attack the Soviet Union.

However, the Berliners apparently radicalized Hitler's attitude towards the Poles, especially when Poles refused to join his anti-Soviet alliance and did not yield to his demands to give up Gdansk and other territories of the Prussian partition of Poland of a century earlier. In order to understand what Hitler found in the hearts of Berliners, let us look back into the history of the Kingdom of Prussia and the ideology of its leadership. In the second half of the 19th century, Bismarck revived memories of the German genocide of the Balto-Slavic Prussians in the 13th century. As early as 1856, Prussian Chancellor Otto Bismarck (1815 - 1898), Berlin's ambassador to the all-German Parliament in Frankfurt, wrote that the Polish minority must be exterminated.

Bismarck's anti-Catholic and anti-Polish policies were the basis for his "Kultur Kampf" program. Such ideas were a prelude to the genocides and mass murders of the 20th century - the century in which more people were killed than ever before.

Chancellor Bismarck repeatedly likened the Poles to wolves which should be "shot to death whenever possible." In 1861 he declared, "Hit the Poles till they despair of their very lives... if we are to survive, our only course is to exterminate them." (Werner Richter, 'Bismarck' New York: Putnam Press, 1964, page 101).

Generally, Bismarck's extremist attitude towards the Poles remains unknown in America. Thus, on March 5, 1990, during progress towards the unification of Germany, a headline f U.S. News & World report stated: "Finishing what Bismarck began." It must have been written without the knowledge of Bismarck's pronouncements such as those quoted above.

Prussian hatred of everything Polish is well documented ever since the Hohenzollerns, the ancestors of German emperors, starting in 1525 and for more than a century, had to pay tribute to the king of Poland and then started paying tribute to the king of Sweden. The Kingdom of Prussia was created in 1701 with its capitol in Berlin. This move shaped the cradle of modern German militarism. The name "Prussia" symbolized the

continuity of German militaristic tradition. It recalled the 13th century conquest and genocide of the Balto-Slavic Prussians by the armed monks of the Teutonic Order. However, the Kingdom of Prussia faced destruction during the Seven Years War. Berlin was occupied and burned by the Russian army in 1760.

Russia decided to destroy the new Kingdom of Prussia in order to prevent it from acquiring the means to unify the 350 independent German principalities into a united Germany with its new capitol in Berlin. In exchange for Prussia and Silesia, Poland was to give Podolia to Russia. However, Polish citizens living in Podolia refused to agree to become subjects of the tsar.

Poland's refusal saved the Kingdom of Prussia from destruction and permitted the Hohenzollerns of Berlin to return to their schemes for partitioning Poland after a new and weak-minded Tsar Peter III (1728-1762) became very accommodating to Prussia. The situation remained favorable to Berlin after Peter III was assassinated with the connivance of his German wife, Catherine II (1729-1796), who usurped the Russian throne by a coup d'etat on July 9, 1762.

Berlin was then able to provoke a series of Polish-Russian wars. Each war gave Berlin a chance to rob Polish land by annexation. Cultural and economic oppression by Prussia of the annexed Polish lands followed until the times of Bismarck who formed his plans for exterminating the Poles. Berliners had a strong anti-Polish tradition which helped inspire Hitler's genocidal crimes against the citizens of Poland.

On April 24, 1939, when Hitler terminated his non-aggression pact with Poland, he was furious that Poland rejected his offer of friendship and alliance.

Hitler made such an offer for the first time as early as August 5, 1935 when he declared that good Polish-German relations were of primary importance to him. He wanted a military alliance with Poland and Japan against the Soviet Union to which he had no access. Poland's territory constituted a physical barrier between Germany and the Soviets.

Apparently Hitler's "best case scenario" was to attack the Soviets with some 600 divisions: 220 German, 200 Japanese, 100 Polish and 80 of other nations, without having to fight on the western front. He hoped to mobilize in Poland some 10% of the population, or over three and half million men.

When Poland refused, Hitler put in practice Bismarck's plans and committed mass murder in Poland. □

After Success Abroad, a Polish Scientist Returns Home

By: **Chelsea Wald**,
freelance science writer in New York.

An August 29, 2008 article in the *Science Careers Magazine* tells about biochemist Agnieszka Dobrzyn who has been hired as a Lab Director at the Nencki Institute of Experimental Biology in Warsaw. Dobrzyn has won several prestigious grants in the past year, and her five-person lab is publishing their research on obesity-related diabetes regularly. "I really believe that I will be able to do something" to contribute to the field, she says, her smile wide and self-assured.

Dobrzyn, 35, was not as confident two-and-a-half years ago, when she took a gamble that could have scuttled her career. After a successful post-doctorate at the University of Wisconsin (UW), Madison, she ignored several job opportunities in the United States to return to Poland, a country with significantly less funding and fewer top research positions. She wanted to be part of the changes she was seeing--or at least hoped she was seeing--in the Polish scientific community, even if it meant taking on some career-related risk.

"The quality of science in Poland has suffered from two main, mutually related problems: catastrophic level of funding over the last few decades and brain drain of young, talented scientists seeking careers in North America and Western Europe," says Adam Szewczyk, the Nencki Institute's acting director. As in many other post-Communist countries, Poland's strong economy and ongoing political reforms are reversing those trends, creating the potential for a world-class science infrastructure. One of the keys to realizing this potential is attracting and supporting pioneers like Dobrzyn, promising researchers who are willing to demonstrate that a career in Poland can be as rewarding as one abroad. "I have this kind of patriotic thinking that if we won't come back and if we won't make a change, then who will?" Dobrzyn says.

Taking Risks

Dobrzyn grew up in Bia³ystok, a city in the east of Poland. When she was a child, her father, a chemist, worked as a food-safety tester for the government, and she learned to love science by visiting his lab. Later, she attended Warsaw University's Bia³ystok campus and then earned her Ph.D. in 2001 at the Medical University of Bia³ystok, studying the effect of exercise on muscle metabolism. She met her husband, Pawel Dobrzyn, also a biologist, while in graduate school.

James Ntambi says he "tried hard to persuade [Dobrzyn] to come and work in my lab as a postdoc" at UW Madison. Dobrzyn knew she wanted to work for Ntambi when she saw him give a conference presentation on his work in diabetes, which is as major a public health problem in Poland as it is in the rest of the world. Ntambi also made an offer to Dobrzyn's husband, Pawel, persuading him to switch from his focus on environmental biology. They accepted.

Ntambi's group was working on answering a burning question: Why does obesity lead to diabetes and other diseases? In particular, they wanted to know which molecules play critical roles. Dobrzyn was "thoughtful and thorough" in her experiments, Ntambi says--and they soon hit on something that was potentially groundbreaking. She and her colleagues found that the enzyme stearoyl-CoA desaturase (SCD) causes fat buildup in muscle, liver, and other tissues that don't usually have much fat. Mice without this enzyme build up less of that fat and are more sensitive to insulin--that is, less likely to be diabetic.

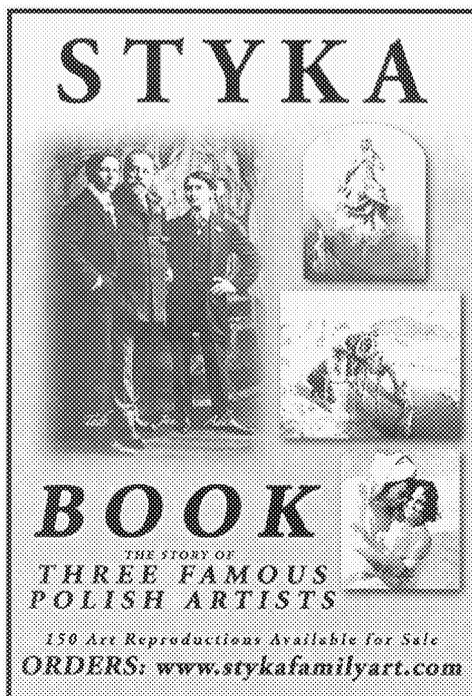
This single enzyme, they realized, could be a target for new treatments for diabetes and other diseases of obesity. "It was at that time a huge discovery," Dobrzyn says. The American Heart Association (AHA) agreed: They gave Dobrzyn a 2-year grant to study the effect of the enzyme on heart disease. It was an auspicious start to her career.

When her postdoc and the AHA grant ended in 2005, Dobrzyn faced a big decision: Should she follow promising prospects in the United States or return home to Poland? "It was pretty tempting to stay," she says--indeed, some Polish colleagues didn't understand why she would give up opportunities in the United States. But together, she and her husband decided to go back. Partly, they wanted to raise children in their home country, but they also wanted to participate in the changes that were taking place at home: Poland was becoming more integrated into the European Union, meaning more funding and more opportunities to interact with international colleagues. The Dobrzyns also heard rumors that young, successful scientists might soon be offered their own labs and larger grants.

Reaping Rewards

The two biologists returned to Poland, moving back to Bia³ystok, Dobrzyn's childhood home. Dobrzyn returned to her alma mater, the Medical University of Bia³ystok, to complete her habilitation, which is required for most independent positions in Poland. She quickly learned that the rumored reforms were still just rumors there; because of long-standing

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