

## NY TV Station apologizes for error Blaming Poland instead of Germany for Auschwitz

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Public Television's WLIW21 on New York's Long Island issued a formal apology to the Polish American Congress, the Kościuszko Foundation and the Polish Consulate for inadvertently describing the Auschwitz concentration camp Hitler's SS operated in German-occupied Poland as "Polish" instead of German.

In an apparent attempt to be politically correct, much of the American media seems to go out of its way to deliberately avoid connecting the word "German" with the words "concentration camp" whenever there's reference to the camps the Germans built in Poland, according to Michael Preisler, co-chair of the Holocaust Documentation Committee of the Polish American Congress. He is also a Polish Catholic survivor of Auschwitz.

"They like to call these camps 'Polish.' We would like them to be accurate and not mislead the public by calling the German camps Polish," said Preisler whose committee has been fighting such misidentification for many years. "It's been repeated so often, a lot of people have come to believe it."

The largest group murdered in Auschwitz was Jewish. Poles were the second largest.

The United Nations considered the misrepresentations so inaccurate and misleading it felt compelled to issue a directive in 2007 clearly defining Auschwitz as German, not Polish.

Preisler noted that Adolf Hitler and his Nazi Party created a public relations problem for Germany for the past 70 years when he started World War II with his invasion of Poland in 1939 and then went on to murder millions of Jews, millions of Poles and millions of so-called "others."

To the discomfort of the German people and their country's image, the unyielding determination to "never forget" keeps this problem in the public eye and serves as a constant reminder to the world of this fact. Preisler thinks the media may want to be sensitive to the way the Germans might feel about always bringing up the past and their part in the Holocaust. "I wish they would be just as sensitive about the feelings of the Polish people and not confuse the American public by putting a 'Polish' label on Auschwitz or any other German concentration camp."

Preisler says he is grateful WLIW was quick to recognize and acknowledge the objections of the Polish American community. "We have always had an amicable relationship with the station and understand this was a mistake. But we suspect some of the other major media may have done it with deliberate intent."

PBS Station WLIW addressed the following statement to the Polish American Congress, the Kościuszko Foundation and the Polish Consulate:

*"WLIW21 apologizes for the misleading language printed in our April 2009 program guide, In Focus, regarding the upcoming broadcast 'Swimming in Auschwitz' that identified Auschwitz concentration camp as 'Polish.'*

*"The language used was an editorial oversight due to space restrictions and was only meant to reflect the camp's geography. The language was not intended as a characterization of Poland or its people.*

*"We sincerely apologize for any misrepresentation construed and offense taken by the statement, which was accidental. 'Swimming in Auschwitz' is being broadcast April 4 as part of WLIW21's special programming in honor of Holocaust Remembrance Day throughout April as a way of acknowledging all the victims of Nazi actions.*

*"WLIW21 has a long tradition of producing and broadcasting Jewish and Polish programming that documents the contributions and heritage of both*



## A Resolution Celebrating 90 Years of US-Polish Diplomatic Relations passes US Senate

On April 1st, 2009, a resolution Celebrating 90 Years of US-Polish Diplomatic Relations (S.Res.9) was passed/agreed to in the U.S. Senate. The bill was originally introduced on January 7th, 2009 by Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN) and co-sponsored by Senators Mikulski (D-MD) and Voinovich (R-OH).

A corresponding version in the U.S. House of Representatives (H.Res.266) was introduced on March 19, 2009 by Re. Daniel Lipinski (D-IL); the bill was referred to the House Committee on Foreign Relations.

### Full text of the resolution reads:

Commemorating 90 years of U.S.-Polish diplomatic relations, during which Poland has proven to be an exceptionally strong partner to the United States in advancing freedom around the world.

*Whereas* the United States established diplomatic relations with the newly formed Polish Republic in April 1919;

*Whereas* the year 2009 marks the 20th anniversary of democracy in Poland, as well as the 20th anniversary of the fall of communism in Poland;

*Whereas* the year 2009 marks the 10th anniversary of Poland's accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO);

*Whereas* the year 2009 marks the 50th anniversary of the Fulbright Educational Exchange Program in Poland;

*Whereas* Poland has overcome a legacy of foreign occupation and period of communist rule to emerge as a free and democratic nation;

*Whereas* Poland has strongly supported the United States diplomatically and militarily, as well as supporting United States-led efforts in combating global terrorism, and has contributed troops to the coalitions led by the United States in both Afghanistan and Iraq; and

*Whereas* Poland has cooperated closely with the United States on issues such as democratization, nuclear proliferation, human rights, regional cooperation in Eastern Europe, and reform of the United Nations:

Now, therefore, be it Resolved, That the Senate-

- (1) Celebrates the 90th anniversary of U.S.-Polish diplomatic relations;
- (2) Congratulates the Polish people on their great accomplishments as a free democracy; and
- (3) Expresses appreciation for Poland's steadfast partnership with the United States.

□

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communities, including 'The Polish Americans,' 'The Music & Dance of Poland: Mazowsze,' 'The Jews of New York,' and 'A Laugh, A Tear, A Mitzvah.' We will continue to support these communities and are committed to reviewing all communications more carefully in the future."

The statement was signed by WLIW21 New York Public Television Management. □

### PAC Day on Capitol Hill from 8

too long remedied in the near future. The PAC delegation offered not only some ideas as to possible courses of action but also, and more importantly, offered its broad readiness for support and cooperation with the congressional offices in order to finally make Poland's inclusion in the VWP a reality.

The PAC was pleased to note that some much-needed actions had already taken place. For example, in the run-up to the meeting, Senator Voinovich's office put Dr. Andersen in touch with an associate director in the Office of Legislative Affairs at the Department of Homeland Security, their contact person who deals with the matters relating to the Visa Waiver Program.

In the spirit of cooperation, the PAC delegation also suggested to the legislators that they introduce resolutions on the Senate floor commemorating some of the most important anniversaries that take place this year. Those, very positively received, initiatives include the following:

1. Commemoration of the 65th Anniversary of the Polish American Congress (Sen. Durbin)
2. Commemoration of Poles who were helping Jews during WWII, based on the records of Yad Vashem (Senator Specter/a draft of the resolution was already forwarded to the Senator's office)
3. 70th Anniversary of the beginning of WWII & 65th Anniversary of the Battle of Monte Cassino and Polish participation (Senator Voinovich)
4. 20th Anniversary of the Round Table talks in Poland & 20th Anniversary of the beginning of free elections in Poland (Senator Mikulski)
5. 230th Anniversary of the death of Casimir Pulaski (Senator Burriss)

The day ended with the group's participation in a policy reception entitled "In Honor of NATO and its Enlargement," hosted by the Central and Eastern European Coalition, that was also held that day on the Capitol Hill. (For more information about the reception see below.)

"Although our time on Capitol Hill was short, not lasting even long enough to see Washington's fabled cherry trees in blossom, it was without a doubt one of the most successful education efforts made by the PAC in recent times at the federal level," President Spula noted.

"We took forward to pressing ahead during the current Congress, buoyed by the knowledge that we already have an important number of supporters in the Senate and House of Representatives, and thankful that our voice is heard where it counts the most--by our elected officials in the nation's capital."

### NATO's enlargement celebrated during CEEC reception

A policy reception In Honor of NATO and its Enlargement took place in the Caucus Room of the Russell Senate Office Building in Washington, D.C., on 25 March 2009 (5-7 p.m.).

The objective of the event was to celebrate NATO's 60th anniversary as well as its two past rounds of expansion.

On July 8, 1997, three former communist countries - Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic - were invited to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which finally took place in 1999.

In 2004, the membership of the Alliance expanded with the accession of seven more Eastern European countries: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania.

The importance of NATO's 60th anniversary and the celebration of its enlargement was underscored by the presence of a panel of prestigious speakers who all played an important role in supporting NATO's enlargement.

After the opening remarks by Frank Koszorus, President of the American Hungarian Federation, the Director of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America Michael Sawkiw introduced the

distinguished invitees - Sen. George Voinovich (R-OH), Zbigniew Brzeziński, former U.S. National Security Adviser under President Jimmy Carter, Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and Kurt Volker, US Ambassador to NATO.

The special guests all delivered moving and powerful speeches. They reflected upon the last 60 years that brought enormous historical and geopolitical changes in Europe, starting with the division of the continent into the capitalist and communist blocs and ending, 40 years later, with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent freedom of former socialist and communist countries from the Soviet regime.

Sen. George Voinovich remembered the moving historical moment and the emotion he felt when, as a member of President George W. Bush's official delegation to Prague to 2002, he witnessed the joyful celebrations on the capital city's streets following the declaration that other seven Eastern European countries were invited to join NATO.

Zbigniew Brzeziński underlined the importance of trans-national relations, particularly with Russia. NATO's strength, he said, lay in its members' number and future enlargements will not therefore, as some predict, weaken the organization.

Sen. Barbara Mikulski remembered how much Europe's post-war division emotionally affected her own Polish-American family and the American communities of Eastern European immigrants. These ethnicities, she said, defined America - their presence allowed the country to become one-of-a-kind mosaic, rather than a melting pot.

Kurt Volker expressed the wish to see Sweden, Finland and Austria join NATO in the future. Their membership should not be underestimated, he said. It would be beneficial to the organization insofar as it would reinforce the cooperation and expand common values between the European and North American continents.

Michael Haltzel, a former senior foreign policy advisor to Sen. Joseph R. Biden and Democratic Senate staffer on NATO and Balkan policy, together with Congressman John Shimkus (R-IL), both expressed their joy at celebrating the 5th and 10th anniversary of NATO's enlargement.

The closing remarks were delivered by Marju Rink-Abel from the Estonian American National Council.

The event was attended by many other distinguished guests, among which were several ambassadors of Central and Eastern European countries - Amb. Audrius Bruzga from the Lithuanian Embassy, Amb. Petr Kolar from the Czech Republic Embassy, Amb. Latchezar Petkov from the Bulgarian Embassy and Amb. Adrian Vierita from the Romanian Embassy.

The Central and East European Coalition comprises 18 national membership organizations representing more than 20 million Americans. The Polish American Congress is one of its co-founders and an active member of the CEEC.

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