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W LONDYNIE

ZESZYTY NAUKOWE

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BRITISH ADULTS' MISCONCEPTIONS IN 2015
ABOUT POLISH GOVERNMENT'S
„COLLABORATION” WITH NAZI GERMANY
DURING SECOND WORLD WAR

INTRODUCTION

Polish Media Issues (PMI), established in 2005, is an international group which has as its primary media presence a very interactive page on Facebook with currently about 2,400 members/followers. For the previous 11 years PMI has been the leading global organisation enacting corrections to be made in various media (now overwhelmingly in digital media) in response to the appearance of, typically, „Polish death/concentration camps and ghettos”, and these camps „in Poland”. The number of media issues found by PMI since 2005 is about 2,600, with a peak of 507 in 2014 alone.

PMI has from its inception been concerned about the level of incorrect knowledge, and the total lack of knowledge in many cases, held by adults about Poland during the Second World War (WW2), as evidenced by the ongoing appearances of these insensitive and disrespectful phrases. A small proportion of these phrases seem to appear in a repetitive manner by publications/groups that, sadly, apparently want to intentionally make anti-Polish statements. However, the majority of

these incorrect phrases are written by well-intentioned individuals and journalists who simply know little or nothing about the true, full plight of Poland before, during, and after WW2.

Even though PMI's core of activists (who make the majority of the interventions in seeking corrections) have had numerous first-hand experiences of the sometimes astounding lack of awareness of Polish history, there had been no independent research sponsored by PMI to benchmark this important data. Therefore, when a small amount of funds (£600 including VAT, sourced from the USA and the UK) became available for a suitable PMI purpose in late 2014, it was eventually decided to carry out some research to be used in a press release in conjunction with the 70th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz on 27 January 2015.

It was planned to have the hopefully-useful results play a part in better educating the media bodies & journalists/editors, the general public, academia, schools, and government about Poland's and Poles' important roles and activities before, during, and after WW2. PMI had stopped counting all the times that journalists and editors stated: „Oh, our readers already are aware of _____ about Poland”; we could now have a substantiated reply for at least these two topics that the research covered, to use when needed.

In the past, PMI had only been able to be reactive to incorrect media issues about Poland/Poles, and we regularly decried the recurring lack of knowledge about Poland & Poles. With this research, we had taken a very pro-active step, with quite limited funds, in independently verifying the core problems that cause many of these media incidents to occur in the first place.

We considered the following research topics to measure the UK Adult Public's knowledge of:

- Auschwitz liberation anniversary;
- Katyń treachery and cover-ups;
- collaborators with Nazi Germany;
- Poland/Poles contributions to Allied war efforts;
- „Germanisation”/kidnap of ethnically-Polish children;
- Soviet invasion of 17 September 1939;
- exclusion from 1946 VE-Day Victory Parade in London.

Five highly reputable UK public opinion research companies bid on the two questions that the funds allowed, for a sample of 2,000 adults age 18+, via online, weighting-adjusted methodology, within the mid-January 2015 timing; research was carried out by Populus. In future, an expanded set of questions, in more than one country, are hoped to be done; but this research exercise was a very useful test-run – and provided some surprising and valuable results.

When PMI was very kindly allowed by PUNO to have two speaker allocations under the 2015 theme of „How Poland and Poles are Depicted in Textbooks and British Media”, it was agreed to use one of the speaker allocations to present the results of this innovative research.

THE QUESTIONS ASKED

The two questions eventually arrived at were:

- Question A: Which, if any, of the following countries created the Auschwitz concentration/death camp?
- Question B: Which, if any, of the governments of the following countries did NOT collaborate with the Nazis during the Second World War?

The choice of countries for both questions is shown here in alphabetical order, but it is important to note that when the respondents saw this list of countries on their screen, they were shown the choices in a random order, changing each time a new respondent answered these questions.

- Austria
- Czechoslovakia
- France
- Germany
- Great Britain
- Hungary
- Poland
- USSR

Additional choices allowed: „can't recall Auschwitz/Nazis” and „don't know”

THE RESULTS

QUESTION A: AUSCHWITZ CREATOR/S

– WHICH COUNTRY OR COUNTRIES WERE RESPONSIBLE?

ANSWER	%
Germany	85
Poland	10
Austria	8
USSR	2
don't know	6

Analysis: While it is somewhat „refreshing” to have Germany mentioned by 85% of UK adults – thank goodness it was at least that high! – the 10% for Poland is sad to see, but not at all surprising to us at PMI. This may help explain some of the references we see to „Nazi Poland”. It is also likely to be evidence of the misplaced „logic” (ignorance, of course) that implies the following: *As Auschwitz was in „Poland”, then it must have been the Poles that put it there, or were possibly complicit in allowing it.* The levels of ignorance about Poland’s brutal occupation in WW2 can help explain the 10% figure. Sadly, it may remain that way in the future despite whatever educational campaigns are undertaken.

But, in terms of the two questions asked, this result was relatively „good news”, as at least the vast majority of UK adults see Germany as the creator of Auschwitz.

However, within the UK, there were some significant regional/country differences in the percentage of respondents that selected Poland as a country that created Auschwitz:

BY UK COUNTRY / REGION THAT SELECTED POLAND
AS A CREATOR OF AUSCHWITZ:

COUNTRY / REGION	%
Scotland	18
West Midlands	14
Northeast	12
Eastern	7
Wales	4
UK as a whole	10

On the face of it, it looks like the Welsh and East Anglians have a significantly better knowledge about Poland in WW2 than the Scots and the West Midlanders in particular. Sample size may be somewhat a factor in these sub-sets of results – but there might also be some factors to do with situations within Scotland, and the recent Scottish Independence Referendum in September 2014. I leave it to those in Scotland to investigate this phenomenon further as they wish.

For the „especially bad news”, however, all we need do is look at the next set of results.

QUESTION B: WHICH, IF ANY, OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE FOLLOWING COUNTRIES DID NOT COLLABORATE WITH THE NAZIS DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR?

GOVERNMENTS WHICH WERE NOT NAZI COLLABORATORS

GOVERNMENT	FULL SAMPLE %	MALE %	FEMALE %
Great Britain*	73	83	65
USSR	34	45	24
Poland*	34	43	25
France	32	32	31
Czechoslovakia	17	23	11
Hungary	13	16	11
Austria	10	9	10
don't know	18	10	25

* These were the only truly non-collaborating Governments.

It is important to note here that the word „not” was all in upper case letters in the survey text, but the word „governments” was not emphasised in any way. In future, that may be an option to test, to see if it affects the results. The question was, however, worded very specifically to exclude the actions of individual Poles. If additional attention had been brought to this „nuance”, it would likely have resulted in skewed data due to over-emphasising these two entities, i.e., country versus individual. This also may be an option to test in future.

ANALYSIS

Well, where does one start with all this bad news?! First, how can 27% of UK adults think that the UK government actually collaborated with the Nazis! Worse still, how can a full third of UK Female Adults think this! That difference of 17% for males and 35% for females who did **not** select Great Britain as a non-collaborator is statistically significant. One can only conjecture on why this should be the case, as no funds were available for follow-up questions. One reason might be the historical preponderance of men in the UK military forces, and very few women, and the wars experience/reading that women don't receive.

Quite a few questions can also be asked of what part school education plays in all this, but it is a disheartening situation. As could be expected, 90% of those aged 65+ selected GB as not a collaborator, whereas only 57% of the 18–34 age groups selected GB.

Key Learning Point-1 (KLP-1): Secondary school education is likely failing to effectively teach the correct role of Great Britain/UK in fighting Germany in WW2.

Now, for the Really Bad News – only one third of UK adults selected Poland's as a non-collaborating government; which means that two-thirds think that Poland's government did collaborate with the Nazis. Pretty depressing for Polonia, no matter how one looks at it. Indeed, a sample of 2,000 is generally accepted as a valid size for reliable results when done by a reputable company like Populus, especially in full, un-split cell sizes. So, this is a quite worrying situation.

The most obvious analysis point to address initially would be this: What proportion of the respondents did not properly read and/or properly interpret the question, and for the word „governments” substituted (in their mind) the word „Poles”? If this occurred, then that could explain some of this „black-washing” of Poland's government in the minds of UK adults. Very sad as well is the continuing negative information gap evidenced by UK females, with only 25% selecting Poland's government as a non-collaborator (43% for males). This disparity alone merits additional research, as something very fundamental must be causing this significant difference.

In fact, the results from this question create many more questions than they answer.

KLP-2: The total non-collaboratorial behaviour of the Polish government before, during and after WW2 MUST be better taught in UK schools, and include all that it contributed to the Allied victories on all European battle fronts – as well as its subsequent treacherous treatment by the Allied powers to be conveyed, including Yalta, and the 1946 VE Day Victory Parade in London.

Finally, a comment must be made about the results for the USSR's government, which was selected by exactly the same number of respondents as Poland's government as a non-collaborator with the Nazis, at 34%. This beggars belief, in that, as all knowledgeable Poles know, the Soviets collaborated with the Nazis even BEFORE WW2 started, and from then up until June 1941.

What these results seem to demonstrate ever so clearly is the effective job that the USSR, and now Russia, have done in white-washing their own WW2 blood-stained history, and black-washing that of Poland's government – even to this day. It is utterly appalling that such a large proportion of UK adults are not apparently aware of the deep extent of the hand-in-glove collaboration between the Germans and the USSR/Soviets before and during WW2.

KLP-3: The education of UK school children and adults about the full role of the USSR in WW2 has failed abysmally, and must be rectified as to the collaboration with the Nazi Germans, the treachery involved in invading and subduing Poland in September 1939, and the subsequent illegal and horrific & murderous deportations of its citizens to slave labour camps.

TO SUMMARISE THE OVERALL IMPLICATIONS OF THESE RESULTS:

1. More corroboratory and expanded research required – AND more funding.
2. Consultation with Home Office, Police, Education Departments and other arms of Government.
3. Gain the positive attention of the media.
4. Educate more comprehensively – and correctly – in schools and universities.
5. Don't give up!

As mentioned at the end of the presentation I gave at the PUNO Conference on 11 April 2015, I strongly recommend to you, in your communications and activities with UK politicians at every level (as well as with EU politicians who are NOT directly elected!) – with the objectives of obtaining improved, correct information about Poland and Poles in schools and the public sector, that you please remember the photo I showed of the back of the cattle trailer, with the following words printed clearly on the tailgate: „Caution – Floor Covered With Politicians Promises”.

If you ever get a politician to make a promise for better information and education about Poles and Poland, be sure to hold them to their promises – and get them in writing!

Future Contact and Research: Please feel free to contact me, via the methods shown for myself, regarding these research results, and also regarding any future research collaborations that you might wish to undertake, or that I and/or PMI could join in with.

Grateful Appreciation expressed:

To the PUNO 2015 Conference organisers for allowing the Polish Media Issues group to have two speaker allocations, and I am especially grateful for the opportunity to present this new and important research, even though some of the results are quite alarming!

To the financial supporters of this first-ever PMI public opinion research, namely the **PADC - Polish American Defense Committee** (Roman Zawadzki in particular), **Support Poland Ltd** (Jan Niechwiadowicz in particular), **Polish Media Issues** (Chris Jezewski in particular), and **Advantage Management & Marketing** (my management consultancy company).

By: Daniel Mark Zamoyski 2016-05-27 Moderator: Polish Media Issues Group – PMI

Re: PUNO 2015 Presentation/Paper „**British Adults' Misconceptions in 2015 about Polish Government's »collaboration« with Nazi Germany during WW2**”

DANIEL M. ZAMOYSKI

**BŁĘDNA WIEDZA DOROSŁYCH BRYTYJCZYKÓW
W 2015 ROKU O „KOLABORACJI” POLSKIEGO RZĄDU
Z NAZISTOWSKIMI NIEMCAMI
PODCZAS II WOJNY ŚWIATOWEJ**

STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł dotyczy wyników badań opinii społecznej, przeprowadzonych na grupie 2000 dorosłych obywateli Wielkiej Brytanii w styczniu 2015 roku. Badania miały na celu rozpoznanie poziomu wiedzy historycznej wśród uczestniczących, którzy odpowiadali na dwa istotne pytania:

1. Który kraj lub kraje europejskie stworzyły obóz koncentracyjny Auschwitz podczas II wojny światowej?
2. Który (jeśli w ogóle taki był) z rządów europejskich nie współpracował z nazistami podczas II wojny światowej?

Autor podał, że 10% respondentów wskazało Polskę jako kraj, który odpowiada za stworzenie obozu koncentracyjnego Auschwitz, co zupełnie nie ma pokrycia w faktach historycznych, jak również napisał, że tylko 34% respondentów wskazało Polskę jako kraj, którego rząd nie współpracował z nazistami w czasie II wojny światowej. W artykule zostały przytoczone wyniki dotyczące innych krajów europejskich, np. Wielkiej Brytanii i Francji.

Na podstawie badań autor ustalił, że poziom ignorancji w dziedzinie historii był większy wśród osób poniżej 35. roku życia, co skłoniło go do zaapelowania o konieczność systematycznego przeprowadzania programów edukacyjnych, które obejmowałyby zasięgiem także kraje Ameryki Północnej, gdyż – według ustaleń autora – poziom ignorancji historycznej w USA jest znacznie wyższy niż wśród młodszych pokoleń w krajach europejskich.

Słowa kluczowe: Auschwitz, II wojna światowa, naziści, Niemcy, Polska, kolaboracja