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The Wall Street Journal Changes Style Guide, Concentration Camps Were "German"

Kosciuszko Foundation petition about to reach 100,000 signatures

NEW YORK, November 29, 2010 - The Wall Street Journal gets it: Auschwitz was not a Polish concentration camp. The paper has officially changed its style guide to make sure that reporters refer to it as a German camp. It's time for the rest of the American media to do the same.

Style & Substance editor, Paul R. Martin yesterday made an official entry into The Wall Street Journal Essential Guide to Business Style and Usage, which said, "Concentrate on this: There were no Polish concentration camps in World War II. Auschwitz and other such camps in Polish territory were operated by German Nazis."

One would think such a style change is unnecessary, yet educated journalists often make this mistake for brevity's sake. Unfortunately, this twists historical facts, and the victim becomes the perpetrator. Poland fought Nazi Germany longer than any other country, yet sloppy journalism makes Poles seem responsible for building the German concentration camps.

A documentary called "Upside Down" by Canadian filmmaker Violetta Cardinal interviews Canadian and American school children who think Poland built the concentration camps because they are referred to as "Polish." That is the result of the media's shameful Holocaust revisionism.

Time magazine, with today's date on it, Nov. 29, 2010 has a story, "Brief History: Nazi Fugitives," which refers to "Poland's Sobibor death camp." That turns history on its head. Polish Jews were murdered in Sobibor by Germans.

Martin's stylebook bulletin to the WSJ editors and reporters said, "The slip is easy to make, but it understandably raises hackles in Polish camps and shouldn't happen." The bulletin continues, quoting, Marcin Sobczyk, Warsaw bureau chief for the WSJ Newswires. "Auschwitz is officially known as 'Auschwitz Birkenau: German Nazi Concentration and

The Kosciuszko Foundation: The American Center of Polish Culture

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Extermination Camp.' He adds, "There's an old argument that Auschwitz was operated on Polish soil, and therefore that it's fair to say it was a Polish camp. However, it's also false. During WWII, the Polish state existed only as a mostly London-based government in exile and didn't control any territory during the war. What's more, Nazi Germany insisted Auschwitz wasn't even occupied, but an inseparable part of the Reich. In October 1939, Nazi Germany annexed the Polish town of Oswiecim, renamed it Auschwitz and incorporated it into its gau (province) of Oberschlesien (Upper Silesia) as part of the Landkreis (county) of Bielitz. The Auschwitz concentration camp was therefore on the territory of the Reich."

This is exactly why I posted a petition on The Kosciuszko Foundation's web site, requesting newspapers to "include entries in their stylebooks requiring news stories to be historically accurate, using the official name of all 'German concentration camps in Nazi-occupied Poland.'"

Now that The Wall Street Journal has made this style change, the paper will be removed from the petition, which has been signed by nearly 100,000 people in less than one month. Some of the signers include, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Lech Walesa, Chief Rabbi of Poland Michael Schudrich, Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, Oxford historian Norman Davies, Oscar-winning composer Jan A.P. Kaczmarek, Foreign Minister of Poland Radoslaw Sikorski, American Jewish Committee Executive Director David Harris, Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur, and Piotr Cywinski, Director of Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum Site.

The fact that Mr. Cywinski has signed the petition and spoken out on this issue should get through to editors around the world.

Two weeks ago, Poland's Court of Appeals ruled that the publisher of the German newspaper Die Welt can be sued for using the phrase "Polish concentration camp" when writing about German concentration camps built in Poland by the Nazis. The Polish foreign ministry is considering filing a lawsuit.

It is particularly distasteful for German newspapers to use this phrase, because these camps were designed and built using German engineering. Shifting blame onto Poles for this is unforgivable, and at some point, running corrections in the next day's paper will not be enough. German newspapers and the German wire service, Deutsche Presse Agentur, must also change their style guides.

While The New York Times has printed corrections after it uses this erroneous phrase, it has yet to make an official entry into its stylebook. The Associated Press has also yet to

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change its stylebook. Let's hope they do so soon. The protest against this libelous phrase will continue until it stops appearing in the media. Every day thousands of more names appear on the Kosciuszko Foundation's petition. To add your name, log on to thekf.org

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Founded in 1925, the Kosciuszko Foundation promotes closer ties between Poland and the United States through educational, scientific and cultural exchanges. It awards up to \$1 million annually in fellowships and grants to graduate students, scholars, scientists, professionals, and artists, and promotes Polish culture in America. The Foundation has awarded scholarships and provided a forum to Poles who have changed history.

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