

Dariusz Libionka

“Truth About Camps” or the Uneventful 1942

Prepared by the Institute of National Remembrance (*Instytut Pamięci Narodowej*, IPN) and publicized for quite some time in advance, the website titled “German Death Camps and Concentration Camps in Nazi Occupied Poland 1939–1945” opened on 1 September 2012.¹ Its launch was noted by the Polish Press Agency (*Polska Agencja Prasowa*, PAP), in the press and on various websites. According that the information given by that educational portal’s authors, it contains “basic information on the death and concentration camps established by the Third Reich in occupied Poland during World War II.” As is known to some, that initiative was a direct reaction to the expression “Polish death camps” used by the U.S. President Barack Obama in his speech. The IPN Portal authors do not however refer directly to that incident. Instead, they only discuss the press discourse: “While harmful terms appear in international media that ascribe the establishment of these camps to nations under occupation, we demonstrate that the sole and full responsibility for the creation of ‘death factories’ should be borne by Germany.” But they do not say who, where or when the establishment of death camps and concentration camps was attributed to Poles or to other nations of occupied Europe.

The text written by the project director Doctor Sławomir Kalbarczyk from the Warsaw IPN headquarters does not contain anything specific either. But Kalbarczyk tries really hard to convince us that that “the phrase [Polish death camps] suggests that Poles were the creators and administrators of such camps.” It is not my intention to engage in a discussion on semantics but I think that the use of that phrase does not indicate historical revisionism. I do not know of any statements that Adolf Hitler, Heinrich Himmler, Reinhard Heydrich, Odilo Globocnik and other Nazi leaders were of Polish origin. I am shocked that “international media” are accused of such deep ignorance or, making matters worse, of intentional manipulation of public opinion to incite an anti-Polish sentiment. This text addresses two issues: 1. The selection of information that the IPN wished to provide to the foreign recipient (for the website was made primar-

¹ “German Death Camps and Concentration Camps in Nazi Occupied Poland 1939–1945,” the Institute of National Remembrance, <http://www.truthaboutcamps.eu/>, retrieved 12 September 2012.

ily for the foreign recipient) and the way that information has been presented; 2. The approach of the Institute toward the subject matter of the Holocaust.

The portal consists of Doctor Kalbarczyk's introduction ("Our Mission – In the Name of Historical Truth") and five sections ("It Began in the Third Reich," "Poles under Occupation," "Repressions against Poles," "German Camps," "Holocaust"). Considering the IPN's supposed role, the last two sections are particularly important. The main text of the "German Camps" section is the work of Doctor Maria Wardzyńska – employee of the Main Commission for the Investigation of Nazi War Crimes (*Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce*, GKBZHwP) and then of the IPN. Whoever treats the statements of an IPN spokesman seriously and expects factual and exhaustive information is likely to be gravely disappointed. The information on German terror on Polish territory, particularly the information on the camp system, is far from detailed. For example, the sentence that the concentration camp at Birkenau was established in 1941 is imprecise and unclear. The poetic rendering of certain parts of the text vividly resembles the PRL-period stylistics, which is visible, for example, in the statement that "Hitlerite² Germany planned to destroy not only the Polish state, but also the Polish nation." Making matters worse, there are many serious factual mistakes. For instance, it is not true that KL Lublin (Majdanek) was established in August 1941. Even though the decision to build the camp was made during Himmler's visit in Lublin in July 1941, the first group of prisoners (Soviet POWs) was detained there only in October while Poles arrived in the camp at the end of December. Gestapo functionaries were not members of the death camps' personnel, neither were the Poles who helped Jews killed there. Such theses were repeated, and quite effectively, by PRL propaganda. The information about the death of Polish children from the Zamość region in the death centre in Chełmno nad Nerem (*Kulmhof*) remains unconfirmed. Even more surprising is the author's thesis that children from the Zamość region were gassed in the death camp in Sobibór. Other mistakes and misrepresentations that regard the death camps' operation shall be discussed later.

The short section devoted to the perpetrators ("Concentration Camps' Functionaries") contains five (!) extremely laconic biographical notes on SS camp commandants. One learns, for instance, that Christian Wirth became the Bełżec camp commandant in 1941 and that he was an inspector of the Operation Reinhardt (*Aktion Reinhardt*) death camps in 1942. Such a level of generality deprives the text of any cognitive value. Each "biographical note" is supplemented with a citation from a source. The Polish version of the website lists only their English editions, which is yet another manifestation of the carelessness charac-

² The text refers to the Polish-language version of the portal, where the term *hitlerowski* ("Hitlerite") is used rather than the more common *nazistowski* ("Nazi"). Please note that the portal also has its English version, where both terms are rendered as "Nazi" (translator's footnote).

teristic of this project. For reasons unknown this section lacks short biographical entries for the commandants of the remaining Operation Reinhardt camps. The "information" regarding Wirth is taken from a work of the Israeli researcher Yitzhak Arad first published in 1987. It is difficult to say why the authors chose to educate the world using classical, half-a-century-old publications. The newest and only Bełżec death camp monograph by Robert Kuwałek was published in 2010 in Lublin and has been translated into German and French. Judging from the texts on the IPN portal, its authors are completely ignorant of these publications.

The unsigned texts about other camps are also full of mistakes and misrepresentations. Firstly, the statement that Bełżec was "located in the centre of the General Government" is at least debatable. Secondly, the date of the establishment of the camp (1 November 1941) is a complete fabrication. Thirdly, the first deportations to that death centre took place on 17 November (and not on 15 or 16) and they lasted until mid-December (and not until November 1942). There is also a mistake in the surname of one of its commandants (his name was Gottlieb Hering and not Gotlob). As the authors are unfamiliar with basic publications on the subject it is no surprise that they overestimate the number of Bełżec victims (500,000–600,000). The newest publications offer a lower estimate (over 434,508 Jews) based on a January 1943 telegram sent by the Operation Reinhardt coordinator Hermann Höfle to GG SS-Obersturmbannführer Franz Heim.³ An article about that written by the British historian Stephen Tyas was published in an anthology by the Institute of National Remembrance.⁴ There is no evidence, however, to suggest that 1,500 Poles were killed in Bełżec. Such a claim was made by the PRL-period propaganda. By contrast, it is known perfectly from which countries Bełżec received its transports. One shall not find that "detail" on the IPN portal though. There is also a mistake even in the general information about the victims' origins: they were not only citizens "of German-occupied Europe" but also citizens of the Reich and Slovakia, which was not under occupation. One also learns nothing about the fate of the last prisoners of Bełżec. They were deported to Sobibór in June 1943, and then what? The text lacks information on the number of Bełżec survivors and much other basic data.

The note on the death centre in Chełmno nad Nerem is even worse. One learns that the number of its victims amounted to 200,000–300,000 ("mostly Jews"). Such estimates appear in older publications (even in those published

³ On the basis of his own calculations based, among others, on Höfle's information Robert Kuwałek estimates the number of Bełżec victims at ca. 450,000. See idem, *Obóz zagłady w Bełżcu* (Lublin: Państwowe Muzeum na Majdanku, 2010), 172.

⁴ Stephen Tyas, "Brytyjska Intelligence Service: odszyfrowane wiadomości radiowe z Generalnego Gubernatorstwa," in *Akcja Reinhardt. Zagłada Żydów w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie*, ed. Dariusz Libionka, (Lublin: IPN, 2004), 261–266, here 264–265.

by Yad Vashem) while newer Polish studies estimate the number of its victims at slightly over 150,000 Jews (see: Julian Baranowski's text in *Ośrodek zagłady w Chełmnie nad Nerem i jego rola w hitlerowskiej polityce eksterminacyjnej* [Łódź–Konin: Muzeum Okręgowe, 1995], p. 24 – publication in partnership with the Main Commission for the Investigation of Nazi Crimes in Poland). Researchers are extremely cautious with regard to suggestions that the victims of the Chełmno nad Nerem death centre included children from the Zamość region, 82 children from Czech Lidice and 5,000 Soviet POWs. By contrast, the IPN website presents that information as a fact. The oddest thing is that the authors included Jews from Holland and Hungary among the camps' victims but simultaneously omitted 20,000 Jews from the Reich, Czech Republic and Luxemburg, who were deported to the Łódź ghetto in the autumn of 1941 and then transported mainly to Chełmno! The website of the Regional Museum in Konin gives slightly higher estimates (160,000–200,000) but it treats the information on children from Lidice as "less certain." The role of the IPN should be, it seems, to carry out genuine research and not to repeat and reinforce the hearsay introduced into scientific circulation during the PRL period.

As for Majdanek, the authors do provide the estimated number of victims from the State Museum at Majdanek website but their summary of the camp's history completely obfuscates it. The statement that the camp's construction began in 1941 is cognitively useless. As for Operation Erntefest [Harvest] (the biggest single execution during World War II), the website does not specify the number of its victims (18,000 in Lublin, 42,000 in total; the portal does not mention the labor camps in Poniatowa and Trawniki, to which Jews from the Warsaw ghetto were deported and which were closed during Operation Erntefest). The number of Majdanek's gas chambers comes from outdated publications – there were three instead of seven gas chambers. Moreover, KL Lublin's sub-camps were not "organized" in Budzyń and elsewhere. Instead, existing forced labor camps became Majdanek's subcamps. The authors omit the camp in Bliżyn, which was Majdanek's sub-camp, but they do mention the camp in Puławy, which never had the status of a sub-camp. There is also no description of the camp on Lipowa Street in Lublin – the site of detention of over 2,000 soldiers of Jewish origin taken prisoner in September 1939 and then murdered during Operation Erntefest. Majdanek prisoners came not only "from occupied territories of the USSR" (Belarusians) but also from eastern provinces of the Second Republic of Poland (Ukrainians, Poles and Jews).

The text on the death camp in Sobibór overstates the number of its victims (250,000) but it may be argued that that figure is still in scientific circulation. It is a school pupil's mistake though to claim that Sobibór began to receive transports of Jews from Holland, France and Belgium in November 1942. It is certain that transports from Holland and France began to arrive in Sobibór only in March 1943. And nobody has ever heard about Jews from Belgium in Sobibór – Belgian Jews died in Auschwitz, Buchenwald and Bergen-Belsen. In September

1943 Sobibór received transports not only from the USSR but also from Lida and Vilnius. The website does not mention Slovakian Jews among the camp victims. Moreover, Sobibór prisoners died in three and not four gas chambers. As for the death camp in Treblinka the authors "forgot" that its victims included Jews from the Radom District (major ghettos located in Częstochowa, Kielce and Radom) and Białystok District – a fact so widely-known that one does not even have to consult specialist literature. The definition of death camps as sites of extermination of "predominantly Jews and Roma" is grossly inadequate. Finally, the note on Operation Reinhardt lacks basic information such as when it started and ended or where its name comes from. It seems pointless to list any more mistakes, as those listed are sufficiently discreditable.

The second most interesting text titled "Holocaust" is a work of Jan Żaryn – chief of the IPN Public Education Bureau (*Biuro Edukacji Publicznej*) during Janusz Kurtyka's tenure as IPN President, professor of the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University (*Uniwersytet Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego*, UKSW), Catholic Church historian in the PRL, author of numerous publications on the Church and national camp history and active participant in public life. Similarly to Doctor Wardzyńska's text, his is also highly general. As for the pre-war period he repeats the ritual formula that the Polish-Jewish "tensions" intensified at the end of the 1930s "primarily on economic grounds." It shows that the author understood neither the texts by Roman Dmowski, Jędrzej Giertych, Tadeusz Gluziński, Karol Stożanowski, Father Stanisław Trzeciak and by hundreds of their imitators nor articles from the nationalist press. The Polish right-wing did not hate Julian Tuwim because he owned a factory in Łódź, just as the specter of a wave of conversions from Judaism to Catholicism, which kept Zofia Kossak-Szczucka awake at night in 1936 and which she thought tantamount to *finis Poloniae*,⁵ was not based on economic grounds. Anti-Jewish writers and leaders of anti-Semitic organizations would surely have been surprised if they had heard that they reduced the "Jewish threat" to economic considerations. Żaryn is also guilty of misrepresentation when he writes about Polish-Jewish relations. In fact, the attitudes toward Jews and the "Jewish question" were diverse. One does not learn from his text that the main advocates of the radical solution of the "Jewish question" were nationalists of every description supported by the Catholic Church. The information on the Third Reich Nazi policy is frightfully general. For example, what does it mean "[t]he Germans made elimination of the Jews one of their war aims"? Other statements are horribly awkward: "The Germans conducted the first massacres of Polish Jews during the warfare against Poland in September 1939 murdering 7,000 civilian members of Judaism." Civilian members of Judaism! The author clearly read some studies but departed from the truth when he was summarizing them. The "ghettoization" process was gradual and, contrary to what he has written, some ghettos were open. His

⁵ Zofia Kossak, "Nie istnieją sytuacje bez wyjścia," *Kultura* 26 (1936): 1–2.

groundless generalizations stem from projection of the situation in the Warsaw ghetto onto other Jewish ghettos. For instance, underground press was a Warsaw ghetto phenomenon – political life went on only in some ghettos. I am very surprised that Żaryn forgot about communist activity in the Warsaw ghetto! His exposition is also imprecise and informatively useless – in his discussion on the executions in the East Żaryn mentions neither Einsatzgruppen nor numerical data (with the exception of those regarding Ponary). He also makes a controversial statement that Poles who actively participated in pogroms of Jews (which should actually be called “massacres”) in the summer of 1941 were “inspired or forced by the Germans.” Many months of research conducted by historians and the IPN prosecutor did reveal German inspiration in certain instances. But other murders were spontaneous. The theme of German coercion appeared in testimonies of those accused of crimes against Jews and should be treated more as a defense strategy. The author does not know basic facts. For instance, no decisions on the final solution were made during the Wannsee Conference. Instead, its participants discussed executive matters, which the author could have learnt about, for example, from IPN bulletin *Pamięć.pl* (note on assassination attempt on Heydrich in *Pamięć.pl* 2 [2012]: 5). Moreover, Wannsee is not situated near Berlin but is a district of Berlin. And even though Hans Frank’s representative was promised that the deportations would begin in the General Government, the deportations of Jews from the Łódź ghetto to Chełmno had already been proceeding. What is more, the statement: “In total, the staff of Operation Reinhardt and the three death camps employed 92 Germans and 300–350 guards, mostly of Ukrainian origin,” is an effect of a total misunderstanding. Publications list about 450 Germans subordinated to Globocnik including 92 functionaries who came to the Lublin region to carry out the euthanasia programme (codename T4) coordinated by Hitler’s chancellery. The figure comes from Globocnik’s report of 27 October 1943. While it is true that they constituted the core of the personnel of the death camps (each had 20–30 SS employees), it is commonly known that Operation Reinhardt staff commanded far bigger forces consisting of police units and sub-detachments from the SS training camp in Trawniki. Żaryn’s text does not say that members of that formation were recruited mostly from among Soviet POWs. As for the Warsaw ghetto uprising, Żaryn fails to provide the name of the Jewish Military Union (*Żydowski Związek Wojskowy*, ŻZW) commander Paweł Frenkel and significantly overstates German losses (over 80 casualties!). The uprising survivors include hundreds of Jews who managed to reach the “Aryan” side and thousands of Jews deported to forced labor camps in Trawniki, Poniatawa and Budzyń. Żaryn does not mention those places but claims that during 1942–1944 “hundreds of thousands of Jews” were executed in labor camps (in Płaszów, Auschwitz and Stutthof and also at Majdanek). The source of such estimates remains unknown. Żaryn could learn from that very IPN website that Majdanek was not a labor camp but a concentration camp used as a death camp during Operation Reinhardt – its function as a labor camp was

only additional. Moreover, the statement that "Adolf Eichmann [was] the main coordinator of the mass liquidation of the Jewish nation" is not true with reference to the General Government, where His local counterpart was the Operation Reinhardt chief of staff Höfle, who organized transports to Bełżec, Sobibór and Treblinka. It is possible to list even more mistakes, vague statements and misrepresentations.

Considering Jan Żaryn's ideological sympathies and inspirations, it is not really surprising that he is particularly interested in Jewish issues. While his texts on other topics often constitute valuable historical literature, his publications devoted to Polish-Jewish issues (disregarding their content-related level) often treat the Holocaust subject matter instrumentally – to say the least. Making matters worse, as IPN Public Education Bureau Chief he created historical policy. He is responsible for the withering of the IPN research on the Holocaust and for the total fiasco of the Index program created to describe and analyze instances of repressions for aiding Jews. Consequently, he is to blame for wasting human energy and public money. Being a reviewer of that program, I am surprised that such a partial person with such obvious political sympathies (Żaryn is a member of a committee of support for the Independence March [*Marsz Niepodległości*] organized by radical right-wing circles on 11 November) was once again designated to protect Polish *raison d'état*. Why was not somebody like Adam Puławski from the Lublin IPN Branch Office asked to write such a text? Puławski is an internationally-recognized historian and co-author of the 2005 IPN educational set on the extermination of Polish Jews.⁶ That choice remains yet another mysterious aspect of the said institution's functioning.

The authors of the remaining texts are: Anna Jagodzińska from the IPN Office of Preservation and Dissemination of Archival Records ("It Began in the Reich"), the Gdańsk IPN Branch Office spokesperson Jan Daniluk ("Poles under Occupation") and Sebastian Piątkowski – the only specialist on the occupation period in the group ("Repressions against Poles"). These texts should be treated as supplementary material. The most important issue here is obviously that of the repressions against Poles who aided Jews – the topic appears in the texts by Daniluk and Piątkowski. The former is right when he writes about a whole spectrum of Polish stances toward Jews and about persisting anti-Semitism. He also stresses that these issues are an object of research and bitter controversy. As for organized aid to Jews (Council for Aid to Jews [*Rada Pomocy Żydom*]), it did not have a nationwide character but was practically limited to Warsaw for many reasons. Such activity also was organized in Kraków and Lwów but on a much smaller scale. Unfortunately, the author provides an incorrect name – Jews' Aid Council (*Rada Pomocy Żydów*) instead of Council for Aid to Jews. The

⁶ *Zagłada Żydów polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*, introduction by Adam Puławski; chronology, short biographies, glossary, selection of materials, ed. Adam Puławski, Agnieszka Jaczyńska, and Dariusz Libionka, *Teki Edukacyjne IPN* series (Warsaw: IPN, 2005).

statement that “some” Jews found shelter in orders is striking not just for linguistic reasons. But he deserves praise for providing the truest estimate of the number of Jews rescued on Polish territory (30,000–35,000). By contrast, most publications give much bigger numbers (100,000). It is not true though that the Polish Underground State (*Polskie Państwo Podziemne*) severely punished all instances of anti-Jewish activity. For many reasons only a very small number of blackmailers (*szmalcownicy*) and informers were punished. Piątkowski focuses on the Nazi repression system and, unfortunately, presents the instances of aid provided to Jews out of a broader context. It is praiseworthy that he departs from the stereotype that the Germans always executed those who helped Jews. He coyly mentions detention of helpers in concentration camps but the clarity of his exposition leaves much to be desired (“The Poles arrested for helping the Jews who managed to avoid execution were usually sent to concentration camps.”). In fact, those arrested for helping Jews were tried before special courts, which passed death sentences often commuted to imprisonment or detention in a concentration camp. It is difficult to comprehend the author’s linguistic incompetence for he has described these issues thoroughly, also in our journal.

Be that as it may, despite certain shortcomings the two texts are much more informative than the portal’s most crucial texts, that is, those devoted to camps and the Holocaust.

In the conclusion of his ideological *exposé* Kalbarczyk states the following: “We hope that the website we launch on the anniversary of Hitlerite Germany’s invasion of Poland will meet our expectations and contribute to the elimination of the notion of ‘Polish’ death camps, which misrepresents the historical truth.” My feelings are quite the opposite. The most important texts on the website contain a number of mistakes and misrepresentations, even when they discuss commonly known issues. The editors’ carelessness is shocking. It seems that the portal was prepared in haste to ensure its timely launch on 1 September. Ideology too influenced its final shape while knowledge about the camps turned out to be of secondary importance. Information available on Wikipedia and on dozens of websites devoted to Nazi crimes, let alone that provided on websites of museums and memorial sites, is much more precise and, first and foremost, contains fewer mistakes. If this initiative were not the work of an institution as important in Polish public life as the IPN, the matter should be mercifully ignored. This example shows that the Institute is unprepared for dealing with the occupation-period subject matter. The only consolation is that an average foreign reader will have difficulty accessing this repository of ignorance. I am particularly saddened, however, by the reference to the anniversary context in Kalbarczyk’s text “In the Name of Historical Truth.” He did write that the portal opened on the anniversary of the outbreak of the war with Germany but he forgot to add that 2012 marked the 70th anniversary of the beginning of the mass extermination of Polish Jews. That fact slipped not only his mind but

also the minds of everyone at the IPN as they were preoccupied with tilting at anti-Polish windmills.⁷

Postscript

After I had written the above text I read the newest, sixth edition of the *Pamięć.pl* bulletin. It contains four pieces of material connected with the topic of my polemics: an editorial by the editor-in-chief, an advertisement of the portal, a warning against the consequences of lack of historical policy and a text about the Provisional Committee for Aid to Jews (*Tymczasowy Komitet Pomocy Żydom*). I do not have space to discuss that last text printed in the "Chronology" section. It is enough to say that once again the issue of aid to Jews becomes more important than the Holocaust itself. The portal's advertisement reminds the readers that President Barack Obama used the expression "Polish death camp" and expresses a concern about how it will be understood by an unspecified "less well-informed reader." The IPN portal with its "reliable information on the topic" is supposed to be the only rescue. In his editorial, the *Pamięć.pl* editor-in-chief Andrzej Brzozowski also called the website "reliable" ("a source of reliable knowledge on the Hitlerite extermination machine," "describing the authentic history of the German concentration camps"). Does he not know the difference between death camps and concentration camps? Unfortunately, the text also contains an insinuation regarding the author of President Obama's speech ("Let us hope that [its author – D.L.] was just uninformed"). Brzozowski cannot decide whether the use of the controversial expression helps preserve a stereotype or proves "lack of elementary knowledge." The statement that the portal is to be "a new weapon in that struggle" shows that even though the bulletin changed its editorial staff and title, its ideological profile continues practically unchanged.

But Brzozowski's article is just an overture to the appeal of Doctor Joanna Lubecka from the Kraków IPN under the all-saying title "Jak rozpętałyśmy drugą wojnę światową" [How we started World War II]... Already the first sentence shows that the author knows little about the Holocaust. For Jan Karski was not "the first person to inform the West about the Holocaust." Historical matters are apparently less important for Lubecka than the horror of the situation, which was also the case with the authors of the IPN portal. Lubecka prophesies that if we remain passive, in 100 years' time the expression "Polish death camps" will have become common, meaning that Poles are going to be blamed for the extermination of Jews. All the signs are that this catastrophic scenario shall come true. In 2009 the Polish ministry of foreign affairs intervened with regard to the use of that expression 103 times, "including 76 times in Europe." And here we reach the heart of the matter. Similarly to many other commentators and

⁷ Aside from the note about Janusz Korczak in *Pamięć.pl* – an IPN organ – which contains a sentence on the Great Action in the Warsaw ghetto (*Pamięć.pl* 4–5 (2012): 4).

a number of “protectors of good name,” Doctor Lubecka too becomes a victim of the propaganda she practices – she fights a danger she herself creates. She commits an act of manipulation in her discussion on “Barack Obama’s scandalizing comment.” For she not only refers to his words out of context but also making matters worse, she negates that context or even misrepresents it. Let alone the fact that her sarcastic remarks about the supposedly undereducated “Harvard graduate” are simply unacceptable. Her insinuations against the U.S. President are not so much deceptive as ridiculous. Equally absurd are her references to a conspiracy theory that blames Germany for the establishment of the expression “Polish death camps” in the public discourse (hence, it is no coincidence that the Polish ministry of foreign affairs most often intervened in Germany). For Germany is supposedly interested in a revision of history and in separating “ordinary Germans” from the Nazi crimes. Following that line of reasoning the use of the expression “Polish death camps” is an element of “German political marketing.” The author claims that its appearance in the German press is anything but accidental. From that point of view the argument that its users referred to the camps’ geographic location and that it was a mental shortcut is nothing but pulling the wool over our eyes. Particularly because at the same time there is a tendency to avoid geographical designations in the names of the camps in the Reich. Doctor Lubecka seriously wonders why the Nazi concentration camp in Dachau is not referred to as a German concentration camp in Dachau. By the way, the IPN portal features a text on the concentration camp in Stutthof, which was not located on the occupied Polish territory but on the territory of the Free City of Gdańsk... That information is not corrected even though it is enough to consult any historical atlas or even the map reproduced on the website to notice that fact. Similarly, the camp in Gross-Rosen too was outside the territory of the Second Republic of Poland. The map’s title says that it shows death and concentration camps on “Polish territory” but it is difficult to treat such an approach other than as a mental heritage of the PRL. Returning to Doctor Lubecka’s exposition, she forgets that that unfortunate expression appeared in Zofia Nałkowska’s *Medaliony* (which the *Krytyka Polityczna* editor-in-chief Sławomir Sierakowski mentioned in the TVN24 television studio).⁸ She could learn from Wikipedia that a part of Jan Karski’s book devoted to the death camp in Bełżec was published under the title *Polish Death Camp* in October 1944 (see p. 642). Besides, the whole article is available in an online archive. Its headline informs that it is a memoir of a Polish officer who accessed “Nazi execution grounds in Bełżec” dressed as a fire fighter.⁹ Is Doctor Lubecka unfamiliar with that text, which calls for a totally new approach to the whole matter? And what about the *Pamięć.pl* editorial staff? I am not a fan of the expression “Polish death camps” but I demand putting an end to the inspiration of hyste-

⁸ *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 30 May 2012.

⁹ “Polish Death Camp,” *Collier’s*, 14 October 1944.

ria and fear, a matter-of-fact analysis of the matter and, particularly, provision of reliable information to readers. Last but not least, Doctor Lubecka proposes a thesis that the expression "Polish camps" was used to "convince some people" that Poles were co-responsible for the Holocaust. That has supposedly been proved through surveys conducted in "selected American schools" which clearly showed that most of their students identified Poles with Nazis. What surveys? Conducted where, when and by whom? Of course, we do not learn that. Is it an effect of reading German weeklies such as *Der Spiegel* and *Focus*? And how is it in Germany? How many German students think Poles to be Nazis? Finally, how many of the 103 interventions of the Polish ministry of foreign affairs actually regarded negation of German responsibility for the extermination of Jews?

There is neither space nor time to further discuss Doctor Lubecka's text so let us focus on its conclusions. She claims that we can either defend ourselves with our own historical policy or the world is going to believe that "we started World War II." For Lubecka, historical policy is tantamount to principled reaction to each manifestation of revisionism and to ensuring the use of proper terminology – German crimes instead of Hitlerite or Nazi crimes. But the thing is that even the texts on the IPN portal talk about "Hitlerites." Unfortunately, the expression "Hitlerite" also appears in the text by editor-in-chief Andrzej Brzozowski. But what happens if we stamp out the expression "Polish camps"? Are there going to be protests against the use of other expressions such as "Warsaw ghetto"? Because the appearance of a new bugaboo is certain. For it is obvious that a "less well-informed receiver" could think that Warsaw ghetto was established by Poles and even a "less well-informed receiver" knows that Warsaw is the capital of Poland, even if only because it hosted the Euro 2012 matches. Perhaps the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs should launch a campaign in consultation with IPN historians to introduce a new, more adequate expression? Particularly because one can read about "Polish ghettos" in reliable historical literature.

Aside from that characteristic mentality of a besieged stronghold, if the issue of the use of the unfortunate expression "Polish death camps" broke the deadlock in the research on the German occupation of Poland, and especially on the camps, it would be a hope-inspiring prospect. Unfortunately, the IPN website and the line of argument presented in *Pamięć.pl* show that such a change is highly unlikely.

Translated by Anna Brzostowska

