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Polish Anti-Defamation Committee

John A. Drobnicki
CUNY York College

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Polish Army in France

Several committees of the Polish American Congress had used anti-defamation in their title, but one of the most vocal groups was the Polish American Congress Anti-Defamation Committee of California. The group was founded in 1986, with Teodor Polak as chair, after the California State Education Department proposed a mandatory model curriculum on Human Rights and Genocide which neglected the treatment of Poles during World War II. The group's lobbying proved successful when a Polish section was added to the final version of the curriculum that was adopted for use in the state's public schools. The Anti-Defamation Committee also publicized and protested any slights directed toward Poles, especially those in the media. Any time a magazine, newspaper, or television program referred to "Polish death camps" or made a Polish joke, a letter or press release from the Committee would follow, and an article about the slight or slur would appear in the group's newsletter, Alert, edited for many years by Artur Zygmunt. In 1993, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith went to court claiming that it had exclusive use of the service mark "anti-defamation," and the central office of the Polish American Congress in Chicago eventually agreed to abandon further use of the name, leading the California group to change its name in 1995 to the Polish American Defense Committee (PADC). Strongly believing that Poles were co-victims of the Holocaust along with Jews, the group defended the presence of the Carmelite convent at Auschwitz and criticized authors (Jerzy Kosinski and Yaffa Eliach), books (Maus and Neighbors), films (Shoah and Schindler's List) and subjects (Kielce and Jedwabne) which they felt presented a biased view of Polish-Jewish relations. In 1999, the PADC joined with the Polish American Congress and six Polish victims in filing a motion to include Poles among the victims of Nazi persecution who would receive $1.25 billion in a Swiss bank settlement. However, the motion was denied, as was the appeal. —John Drobnicki


Polish Army in France ("Haller's Army"). When the United States declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917, the dream of an independent Poland advanced toward realization. Polish immigrants in America, especially the Polish Falcons, had, from the start of World War I, struggled for this goal. What had seemed a faint possibility now appeared closer to being accomplished. Ignacy Jan Paderewski, whom many recognized as the voice of Poland in America, addressed the Falcons in Pittsburgh later that month. He proposed the creation of "Kościuszko's Army," consisting of 100,000 men who would fight as part of the American Expeditionary Force. Canada, at Britain's bidding, was already secretly training 23 Falcons to serve as officers in a future Polish military unit. Three of these men, in uniform, also spoke at the same meeting.

The idea of an ethnic unit in the American army had no prospect of success from the start for various reasons. But France took advantage of Polish aspirations, and in early June formally established the Polish Army in France by presidential decree. In August the French sent a delegation to America to negotiate recruitment of Polish immigrants for the army. It included Wachaw Gasiorski, head of the Falcons in France, whose assignment was to work out the details with the Polish National Department (Wyzwial Narodowy). France's unilateral proclamation of the army pleased neither Britain nor the United States, but by October both reluctantly agreed to cooperate with their ally in the matter. Recruitment formally began that month in Chicago, even though volunteers left for the Polish Army camp at Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, before the public inauguration of the effort. The Falcons were ready to do their duty for Poland as they saw it and predominated among the first volunteers.

The camp, a summer bivouac for the Canadian Army, was hastily prepared to accommodate the recruits. Colonel Arthur D'Orr