

Glorifying A Polish Antisemite

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February 22, 2021

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

It's hard to believe that this has happened, but incredibly enough, an employee of Poland's embassy in London has launched an online campaign to burnish the legacy of a Polish nationalist who promoted an alliance between Poland and Nazi Germany and worked to cleanse Poland of Jews.

As shocking as it sounds, Agata Supinska is trying to buff up the tarnished image of Wladyslaw Studnicki (1867-1953), a journalist and political operative, with the full knowledge and approval of the embassy.

Supinska and her supporters raised funds to restore his long-neglected grave in London as a first step toward rehabilitating him. She told Vice World News he should be remembered as a patriot who dedicated his life to Polish independence, though she added she does not share or endorse all his noxious beliefs.

Astonishingly enough, the embassy supports Supinska's campaign.

"The efforts to restore Wladyslaw Studnicki's grave ... is a civic initiative," it said in a statement recently. "Agata Supinska got involved in this project in a purely personal capacity. The embassy of the Republic of Poland supports all grassroots civic initiatives aimed at preserving the memory of Poles and their achievements ..."

One can safely assume that the decision by the embassy to back Supinska's campaign was taken in Warsaw rather than in London.

Since 2015, Poland has been ruled by the right-wing Law and Justice Party, which hews to a revisionist approach to Poland's complex wartime history. Poland's policy is underpinned by the notion that Poles behaved heroically during the German occupation.

It is true that Poles did not establish a collaborationist regime to assist the Nazis in consolidating the occupation and persecuting and murdering Polish Jews. But it is equally true that a number of Poles were active participants in Germany's quest to exterminate Polish Jews during the Holocaust. This is a fact that the current Polish government finds difficult to accept and internalize.

Similarly, Poland's government underplays the massive extent of antisemitism in interwar Poland, of which Studnicki was a prime proponent.

Referring to its Jewish citizens as "parasites on the healthy branch of the Polish tree," Studnicki called for the incremental emigration of the country's 3.3 million Jews. He believed they should be resettled in Palestine. His view was shared by a great many Poles, particularly those on the right.

An ardent anti-communist, he sought to align Poland with Germany. At one point, he even suggested that the Polish army should join forces with the Germans against the Soviet Union. Within a year of

Germany's invasion of Poland, Studnicki, eager to sell his plan to the Nazis, sought a meeting with Adolf Hitler. Though Hitler did not grant him an audience, he managed to see Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels. But his efforts were in vain. The Nazis imprisoned him briefly.

Studnicki left Poland after the communist takeover and settled in London. He never returned to his homeland, and the Polish government of the day banned his books.

Despite his poisonous views, Supinska has hailed him as "one of the greatest Polish thinkers of the 20th century ... who has not been accorded respect, and was forgotten for many years." She claims he protested the Nazi mistreatment of Polish Jews.

"He was mistaken in many matters ... and as a politician and publicist he was very radical in many of his judgments, but the fact that we do not share his perspective and judgments does not mean that we should accept his tomb rotting in the mud," she wrote after starting her pro-Studnicki campaign.

Supinska is entitled to her opinions, but her attempt to whitewash Studnicki as a hero is unconscionable.

"We are appalled by this case of glorification of an antisemite, with the tacit approval of the Polish embassy, Rafal Pankowski, the head of the Polish anti-racism organization Never Again, said.

He's right, of course.

A dyed-in-the-wool racist like Studnicki should not be honored as a paragon of Polish pride and patriotism. Poles of his ilk stain Poland's image and reputation.

It is astonishing and disappointing that the Polish government is so utterly clueless.

<https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/glorifying-a-polish-antisemite/>