

REPORTS



and DOCUMENTS

On Thursday, January 9th, 2020, the Sejm of the Republic of Poland adopted by acclamation a resolution in which it "condemns the provocative and untrue statements made by representatives of the highest authorities of the Russian Federation in which they are trying to hold Poland responsible for the outbreak of World War II." This event was widely commented on in the Russian press and caused an expected strong reaction from the Russian side.

Regarding this resolution, as well as about the absence of President Andrzej Duda at the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz organized by Yad Vashem in Jerusalem - again - the head of the Foreign Affairs Committee Leonid Słucki, the head of the Duma Vyacheslav Volodin and spokeswoman of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Maria Zacharowa all spoke out. Historians (not only Russian) have also succeeded in presenting a broad historical background, defending the words of President Putin, that Poland "was anti-Semitic", "cooperated with Hitler" and "falsified history by attacking Russia", "unlawfully blaming Poland for the outbreak of war (Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact)". One of the methods used in this narrative is, among other things, presenting facts without a historical and political context or ones own actions - as a result of which an anti-Polish, black and white thesis is put forward. For example, it is suggested that the words of the Polish Ambassador in Berlin Mr. Lipski, well known to historians and repeatedly published, are somehow a newly found archival document, that testifies to Polands participation in the Holocaust. "Playing with the archives" freely selecting documents or interpreting them, sometimes manipulating what they say or imposing their own interpretation of what is in them as indisputable.

"Sputnik Polska"

"Sputnik Polska", published in Polish, is obviously a propaganda tube of the pro-Kremlin Sputnik, although the contents of the national editions and the Russian main edition differ from each other.

The resolution of the Polish parliament was criticized on January 10, among others by Russian spokeswoman for the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Maria Zacharowa, who described it as "revisionist". "It seems that, as at the time of the Inquisition, science was recognized by the Polish Sejm as heresy, and proponents of historical facts were accused of witchcraft. This is how ideology overcame the truth. And the truth was established by the Nuremberg Tribunal. If the Polish Sejm has doubts about its decision, it must be declared. This approach has its qualification: a review of the

results of the Second World War "¹ - wrote Zacharowa on Facebook, which was quoted in the Russian and Polish media.

On the same day, the Polish resolution was condemned, as a hostile act against Russia, by among others Senator Franc Kłincewicz. "This is not only an unfriendly, but it is an openly hostile act against Russia, and adopted by the Polish Sejm on the anniversary of this great day - the 75th anniversary of the victory over fascism. This is a clear insult to the memory of thousands of Soviet soldiers who died during the liberation of the country(Poland),"said the Senator.

As Kłincewicz pointed out, the historical truth "was in the hands of the political situation, petty ambitions of the Polish elite". "Trying to elevate Poland in such a negative way, that it hit rock bottom," said Kłincewicz ².

In Poland, it is believed that the problem was also due to the fact that the World Holocaust Forum was organized by Moshe Kantor, "Putin's man" (see below), not the Israeli authorities. The person organizing the event was important enough, to become one of the threads of the discussion about the Forum in the context of a possible Russian political trap set up for the Polish President Andrzej Duda.

Moshe Kantor is defended in "Sputnik Polska"by Agnieszka Wołk-Łaniewska. The author presents the figure of Kantor, whom she supposedly knows personally, with the thesis that his connections with the Kremlin are irrelevant, because "The blame for not inviting the President of the Republic of Poland to speak in Yad Vashem is not borne by either Moshe Kantor or Vladimir Putin, or the Polish diplomacy, which - according to the Polish opposition - could have, but did not know how to arrange for Duda to be one of the speakers.The fault is borne by the president himself and his political formation, which openly admits that they are against telling the truth about the attitude of Poles towards the Holocaust. This will not pass in Israel "³. The addition of the last sentence is intended to make the reader aware that the Jews agree with this.

Thus, Wołk-Łaniewska's article can be seen as a pre-emptive strike - suggesting that Kantor's contacts with Putin are not relevant in this case. As you can see, not only Poles, but also in Israel, there is surprise because "Haarec" mentioned, among others, that it is not the Israeli government or Yad Washem,which stands behind an event of such format as the commemoration in Jerusalem, but "Putin's friend"⁴.

TASS

Leonid Słucki, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the State Duma, often quoted for his attacks on Poland.

On January 9, TASS quotes Słucki, who criticized the Polish resolution. Some time later he even announced a possible counter-resolution of the Russian Duma⁵.

¹ <https://pl.sputniknews.com/polska/2020010911631247-rzeczniczka-msz-rosji-o-uchwale-polskiego-sejmu-ws-odpowiedzialnosci-za-wybuch-wojny-sputnik/>

² <https://pl.sputniknews.com/swiat/2020011011631971-rosyjski-senator-polska-uchwala-to-wrogi-akt-wobec-rosji/>

³ <https://pl.sputniknews.com/opinie/2020011311648133-czemu-zydzi-nie-chca-dudy-sputnik/>

⁴ <https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/swiat/haarec-izrael-skapitulowal-przed-rewizjonizmem-putina/1sn8sv6>

⁵ <https://tass.ru/politika/7490289>

“Rossijska Gazieta”

On January 9, 2020, an article by Yevgeny Szestiakov was published in the pro-government daily *Rossijska Gazieta*. "What is Poland afraid of?", Which commented, on among other things the decision of President Andrzej Duda to obtain from participation in the events planned for January 23 on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz camp by the Soviet army.

After announcing the President's decision, the daily writes, "many in Israel must have breathed a sigh of relief. The leader of the country, which in the Jewish state is unofficially considered a partner in the Holocaust, did not have the moral right to be present among the Heads of State that liberated the prisoners of the camp"⁶.

“Rossijska Gazieta” accuses Poles of anti-Jewish actions for financial reasons, including the Polish authorities, because "after the war, Poland appropriated the property of Jews who died in the Holocaust."

Poles were to have idly watch Jews dying in the ghetto, and help offered was only a drop in the ocean. As already mentioned above, there is no journalistic balance here, for example, the realities of the occupation (including the death penalty for helping Jews), individual and organized help for Jews (e.g. the establishment of the Council to Aid Jews) are thought to be marginal .

The image presented in the RG is clearly anti-Polish, almost cynical. "All the time the uprising was going on [in the ghetto in 1943], there was a circus performing on the streets of Warsaw, and the citizens seemed to go to the performances as if nothing unusual was going on," we read.

The article also refers to Israeli sources by choosing anti-Polish quotes and facts, e.g. by referring to the *Haarec* newspaper, where Poland was said to be "falsifying history". The text ends with a statement that "in Israel, they do not forget that some groups in Poland cooperated with fascist Germany, while the Red Army and its allies from the anti-Hitler coalition liberated Europe from Nazism." As you can see, for example, the participation of Polish soldiers fighting on the western and eastern fronts, fighting for victory over the Third Reich is totally ignored by the author...

On January 14, Vyacheslav Volodin, Leader of the Duma, spoke again about Polish anti-Semitism, this time during the opening of its Spring session. “ The largest part of the Jewish nation in Europe, was killed in Poland. And this was not by chance (...) for this reason, hundreds of concentration and death camps were located in Poland, where Jews, Slavs and prisoners of war from other nations, were consistently liquidated. In many respects, the pre-war atmosphere in Poland and the position of the country's authorities looked favorably at this, which fueled anti-Semitic feelings in society and created the ground for genocide in the future -, the Holocaust. For this, the current leadership in Poland should apologize to the Jews and the whole world ”⁷ - said Volodin Wołodin. His words were widely cited by the Polish and Russian media, for example *Rossijska Gazeta* gave them a telling and expressive headline: "Wołodin called on Poland to apologize for preparing the ground for the Holocaust"⁸.

⁶ <https://rg.ru/2020/01/09/pochemu-varshava-stremitsia-izbezhhat-otvetstvennosti-za-holokost.html>

⁷ <https://rg.ru/2020/01/14/volodin-prizval-polshu-izvinitsia-za-podgotovku-pochvy-dlia-holokosta.html>

⁸ Ibidem.

Historians (and not only Russian ones) joined the Russian politicians in chorus to support President Putin. For example, Mikhail Miagkov, the educational director of the Russian Military-Historical Society, who strongly spoke about the resolution of the Polish parliament, calling it shameful and Russo phobic. "The disgraceful, Russo phobic act passed by the Polish politicians about the equalizing the responsibility of the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany for the outbreak of World War II, this once again confirms that currently the Polish authorities are engaged in open falsification, rewriting the history of World War II and waging an information war against Russia"⁹ - said Miagkov. According to Miagkov, Poland is making a victim of itself, while it was actually Hitler's partner.

"Poles are shamefully trying to hide the fact that it is Warsaw that is responsible in many respects for the fact that Hitler's appetite for occupying territories grew to such proportions" [...] The Polish authorities repeatedly met with Hitler, Goering and Ribbentrop. Negotiations were underway regarding the conquest of living space in the east. And Poles political elite intended to participate together with Nazi Germany, in the division of the Soviet Union - believes Miagkov.

Miagkov suggests that the documents referred to by President Putin are unique and shed new light on the issues discussed. Meanwhile, as a researcher, his behavior is not unbiased, as he should mention that both documents referred to by the President of the Russian Federation were already known in the USSR (cited in the collection of documents in 1981).

Historical discussion, in which Poland is shown as Hitler's faithful ally and blaming Poland directly, for the outbreak of World War II has a wider dimension. This matter is being dealt with, not only by the main media, but also by other portals, which sometimes having a great impact on the shaping of public opinion in Russia. An example of this can be, the heavily propaganda oriented military-historical portal, "War Obojrieni" (topwar.ru). In the history tab, on January 15, an article with the following significant title was published: "How Poland, together with Hitler started World War II"¹⁰. From this headline alone, you can read its anti-Polish thesis. The authors of the text connect the entry of the Polish Army into Czechoslovakia in 1938 directly with the outbreak of World War II, which is a historical manipulation and brazen propaganda.

Current events are also being used to contradict the "false Polish version of history", e.g. the anniversary of the RKKA's entry¹¹ into Warsaw (January 17, 1945), and the by coincidence declassified documents concerning the Warsaw Uprising, etc. the mass of articles and contributing texts about the January offensive in 1945 and the rapid occupation of Poland, e.g. in the "Russian Gazette" is not accidental - it is suggested that the ingratitude of the Polish authorities in a situation where thousands of Red Army soldiers died liberating its "Polish brothers", members - together with the Russians and Czechoslovaks - of the "Slavic brotherhood"¹².

Of course, it is not without a good reason that the first link in the text on RG.ru is the commentary by Maria Zacharowa, widely published in the Russian press, who on January 13 expressed her surprise that Poland is not celebrating the 75th anniversary of Warsaw's "liberation" by the Red Army. " If we

⁹ <https://pl.sputniknews.com/opinie/2020011011635205-opinia-polska-okazala-sie-ofiara-agresji-i-sama-jest-sobie-winna-sputnik/>

¹⁰ <https://topwar.ru/166727-kak-polsha-vmeste-s-gitlerom-razvjazyvala-vtoruju-mirovujuju-vojnu.html>

¹¹ RKKA – Рабоче-крестьянская Красная армия (Robotniczo-Chłopska Armia Czerwona), nazwy Armia Sowiecka (Советская армия) zaczęto używać dopiero w 1946 r.

¹² <https://rg.ru/2020/01/16/rodina-polsha.html>

are talking about an obvious tendency, then I can not understand how one can commemorate the anniversary of the outbreak of war, while at the same time practically ignore the anniversary of ones liberation? " (...) "at the same time the causes of the outbreak of war and the pre-war situation are completely distorted" (...) "At this pace, anti-fascists in Europe will again be forced to go underground"¹³ - the spokeswoman for the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs wrote on Facebook.

The question of " Warsaw's liberation on January 17" became an opportunity for a new Russian offensive, bringing the dispute to the next level. Instead of discussing the reasons for the outbreak of war, which is becoming more and more difficult for the Kremlin (also due to the reaction of Western media), this time, a narrative was introduced, on the role of the Red Army in the "liberation of Poland" (Eastern Europe). Again, "playing with" archival documents. A collection of documents regarding the Warsaw Uprising have been published on the website of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. This resulted in a reaction by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which stated that "the Red Army liberated Poland from the German occupation, but did not bring Poland freedom."

The position of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs caused a violent reaction from the Russian side. On January 17, Russian politicians criticized the Polish view of history, on the pages of Ria Novostia, among other publications.

The Russian Ambassador to Poland, Sergei Andreyev, stated that Poland is trying to adjust history to current politics, which is why "... historical facts are interpreted and supported in order to prove certain historical postulates, that are often not related to history. They are adapted to justify current political tasks and objectives "¹⁴.

Słucki referred to the position of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs - that the Red Army did not bring freedom to Poland - saying that it was "Ruso phobia, ingratitude and historical lies"¹⁵.

In turn, the deputy Leader of the Duma, Piotr Tolstoj, said that the words of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs were "Russo phobic hysteria and historical arrogance"¹⁶, which have engulfed the minds of the current Polish authorities, and recent statements by Polish politicians have cause astonishment and indignation.

The Opposition

Russian émigré Andrey Ilarionov, who devotes a lot of space on his blog to Putin's speeches, is very active in fighting the Kremlin's propaganda.

Ilarionov also agrees with those who believe that the forum in Yad Vashem is being prepared to suit Putin and should be read as a provocation and a political trap, set up for President Andrzej Duda, who has not been given the right to speak at it. Ilarionow quotes the portal "wPolityce", where one of the articles reads that "The World Holocaust Forum was therefore in fact also a trap set for Poland by the

¹³ <https://rg.ru/2020/01/13/zaharova-udivilas-otkazu-varshavy-prazdnovat-75-letie-osvobozhdeniia-ot-fashistov.html>

¹⁴ <https://ria.ru/20200117/1563557045.html>

¹⁵ <https://ria.ru/20200117/1563553908.html>

¹⁶ <https://ria.ru/20200117/1563549550.html?in=t>

Kremlin. In this perspective, every attack on President Duda - who decided not to authorize this event with his presence - is a game in the Russian scenario¹⁷.

The article has been translated into Russian and published on Ilarionov blog as close to and consistent with his view on the matter¹⁸. The organizer of the commemoration ceremony at Yad Vashem must have, and has, influence on who will speak and who will not.

Ilarionow's earlier entry, from December 28, which accuses President Putin of manipulating facts and two documents (Lipski-Beck from 1938 and Hitler-Beck from 1939), citing them together, which changes their meaning, is also extremely interesting. A corresponding fragment of the discussion about these two alleged archival revelations found by President Putin, the Russian emigrant describes in this way: "... Putin first glued his story together from quotes from two different documents referring to different periods in time, of different participants, and in different circumstances. In this way, it turned out that the words spoken by Hitler to Beck in January 1939 were spoken by Lipski in September 1938. Thirdly, Putin replaced the ideas on resettlement discussed in 1938 with the decision on annihilation of 1942. Finally, in accordance with the living conditions of immigrants, the Franco-Polish project of Madagascar simply was not comparable to the Soviet Siberian-Amur project"¹⁹.

Minister Beck's silence to Hitler's proposals, which in diplomacy means disagreement, for President Putin, who manipulated the two mentioned different documents, meant Beck's consent and thus consent to Hitler's plans, and this way co- participation in the outbreak of war.

Interestingly, Ilarionov emphasizes that both documents were published in Russian in 1981, in a two-volume collection of documents devoted to the period 1937-1939, later made available on the internet and therefore, widely available.

As a quasi-Russian (opposition) voice and in the world strongly opinion-forming, one can quote the view of Bloomberg's columnist, Russian émigré, Leonid Bershidsky. Bershidsky notes in his article entitled "Putin's latest obsession - a new narrative about World War II" where President Putin and his advisers noticed a negative, from the Kremlin's point of view, anti-Russian trend in the way historians are writing about the history of World War II. "The Kremlin is extremely sensitive to such signals, not only because of the propaganda used in domestic politics, but also because the international position that this country gained, as a military conquest as a result of World War II"—Bershidsky emphasizes²⁰.

Over the years, Soviet Russia was seen in the West mainly, as an ally, that helped defeat Hitler and without which it would not have been possible for the Allies to defeat the Third Reich. However, recently the way of thinking about the role played by the USSR during World War II, has changed gradually. The result of this was, among other things, a recent European Parliament resolution recalling the role of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, in bringing about the outbreak of World War II and de facto, drawing an equals sign between both the Nazi and Communist regimes. The Kremlin must think of Israel as its main ally and Poland, as its main enemy for faking history.

¹⁷ <https://wpolityce.pl/swiat/481313-swiatowe-forum-holocaustu-pulapka-z-ktorej-polska-uciekla>

¹⁸ <https://aillarionov.livejournal.com/1156682.html>

¹⁹ <https://aillarionov.livejournal.com/1154106.html>

²⁰ <https://www.bloombergquint.com/gadfly/putin-s-latest-obsession-rewriting-world-war-ii>

"Israel will never agree to the nationalist attempts by Poland and the Baltic countries to impose their own narrative, which is supposed to remove from them, once and for all, the allegations that the locals population collaborated with the Nazis in the Holocaust"²¹ - notes Bershidsky, who was born in a family of Moscow Jews.

Conclusions

- the anti-Polish theses presented are one-sided, Poles are accused of anti-Semitic attitudes while ignoring or marginalizing the facts of individual and organized assistance to Jews
- balance does not appear in journalistic texts, presenting the truth selectively or in a false way
- no voices opposed to the words of President Putin are quoted, also none from Jewish circles, suggesting that in Israel, an anti-Polish attitude exists that finds Poland guilty of the Holocaust and that this view is common
- the impression is made, that the subject about the outbreak of WWII and "Polish anti-Semitism" has reappeared as a result of the "discovery" of new archival documents, which is not true
- in addition to the main threads of the dispute, other ones are opened - under the pretext of fighting the "Polish false version of history", other anniversary of events are also being used in the anti-Polish revisionist context, e.g. the occupation of Warsaw on January 17, 1945, citing new, declassified documents.
- The Kremlin is trying to take advantage of the differences in current EU-Poland relations
- Polish-Israeli relations are a particularly sensitive area, which the Russian authorities are trying to use for their propaganda-media attack on Poland. The Kremlin may intensify this type of action.

Columnists

Evgeny Shestakov - editor of the international branch of "Russian Gazeta"

Agnieszka Wołk-Łaniewska - publicist, political commentator (e.g. NIE and Trybuna), currently a journalist at Sputnik (Sputnik Polska, the Polish edition).

Politicians

Leonid Słucki - Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the State Duma

Vyacheslav Volodin - Chairman of the Russian Duma

Maria Zacharowa - Spokeswoman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Franc Kłincewicz, member of the Federation Council Defense and Security Committee, a Senator

Piotr Tolstoj - Deputy Chairman of the Duma

Sergei Andreyev - Russian Ambassador to Poland

²¹ Ibidem.

Historians

Mikhail Miagkov, scientific director of the Russian Military-Historical Society