

Polish PM cites shared Nazi horrors to ease speech law anger

By **MONIKA SCISLOWSKA**
Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland — Poland’s prime minister sought to ease concerns Thursday over a law criminalizing some public comments about the Holocaust by invoking the horror both Poles and Jews experienced at the hands of Nazi Germany, saying it bound their countries in a joint pursuit of the truth.

Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki gave a televised address hours after Poland’s Senate passed the legislation, which already had strained the country’s relations with Israel and the United States.

Striking a conciliatory note, Morawiecki said that telling the truth about what happened in Nazi-occupied Poland during the Holocaust is a task Poland and Israel share.

Poland will “never curb the freedom of the Holocaust debate,” he said. “We owe that to all those who experienced it.”

The bill proposed by Poland’s ruling conservative Law and Justice party calls for fines and prison sentences of up to three years for purposely trying to attribute the crimes Nazi Germany carried out during the nearly six-year occupation to the Polish nation as a whole.

The lower house of Poland’s parliament approved the legislation last week. To become law, it still requires approval from President Andrzej Duda, who has said he supports it.

While the bill exempts



AP Photo/Alik Keplicz, file

The entrance to the former Nazi Death Camp Auschwitz with the “Arbeit Macht Frei” (Work Sets you Free) writing above, in Oswiecim, Poland.

artistic and scholarly work, it has raised concerns that the Polish state itself will decide what the facts of its wartime history are and which statements it finds objectionable enough to prosecute. Israeli officials have expressed outrage, while the United States asked Polish lawmakers to reconsider.

Polish Deputy Justice Minister Patryk Jaki suggested that Israel had been consulted on the bill and voiced no objections. Many in Israel have characterized the proposed law as an attempt to whitewash the role some Poles played in the killing of Jews during World War II.

Israel “opposes categorically” the vote by Poland’s senators, the Israeli Foreign Ministry said.

“Israel views with utmost gravity any attempt to challenge historical truth,” the ministry said in a statement. “No law will change the facts.”

A group of Israeli lawmakers introduced a bill on Thursday that would toughen Israel’s Holocaust denial regulations to make “denying or minimizing the involvement of the Nazi helpers and collaborators” a crime.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center, a Jewish rights group headquartered in Los Angeles, accused Poland’s conservative government of trying to suppress the “widespread participation of individual Poles in the persecution and murder of Jews during the Holocaust.”

Poland’s government has argued that it is fighting against the use of phrases like “Polish death camps” to refer to the camps Nazi Germany operated on Polish soil and where Poles were killed along with Jews and others.

Poland was among the countries hardest-hit by Nazi Germany, losing some six million citizens, half of them Jews.

BRIEFLY

Special service includes singing of hymns

HERMISTON — Food, fun and fellowship are featured during an upcoming special service.

The Hymnspiration is Sunday from 4:30-5:30 p.m. at Victory Baptist Church, 193 E. Main St., Hermiston. Everyone is invited to show up and sing old hymns.

For more information, contact Chris Finley at johnchris_1@msn.com or 541-571-2516.

Ladies night features food and fellowship

PENDLETON — Area women are invited to take the night off for food, fellowship and fun during a gathering coordinated by the Pendleton First Assembly of God Church.

Facilitated by Terri Hardcastle, Ladies Night is Tuesday from 6-8 p.m. at Abby’s Legendary Pizza, 828 Southgate, Pendleton. Salad and pizza is provided. The ministry

group meets the first Tuesday of each month.

For more information, including other ministry groups, contact 541-276-6417, groups@pendletonfirst.com or visit www.pendletonfirst.com/groups.

Pastor to share about orphan outreach

HERMISTON — Rev. Wayne Lavender will share about a mission project that helps with displaced children around the world.

Foundation 4 Orphans works to meet the educational, emotional, physical and spiritual needs of orphans. The presentation is Monday at 7 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church, 191 E. Gladys Ave., Hermiston.

The nonprofit organization was founded in 2011. In addition to meeting the needs of orphaned children, it provides an opportunity for Christians to help others who live in a world of pain and suffering.

For more information about the presentation, call 541-567-3013. The organization’s website is www.f4o.org.

LIMEY PASTOR

The wheat and the tares

While ago I had given my former boss, Ralph, a copy of Scupoli’s “Unseen Warfare,” a devotional classic of the Christian Orthodox world. He and I were talking about it this week. I had been reflecting on it with him and my own copy. As a board member of his church he found it very rich and it is opening up new channels for him. It is a treasure that is covered in the dust of time.

Scupoli had first published his work in 1589 and a later version was produced by the monk, Nicodemus of Mount Athos. Christians over the years have found this a very useful text. I have been rereading this book as well as looking at my own mental processes, that is to say my own thoughts, my own moods and feelings — which I have found to be a source of both the good and the dark and saddening thoughts and temptations.

The book is hardly available in the bookstores, but it can be sought out.

In connection with this, this week I have been both reading this book and reflecting on Jesus’ own parable of the Wheat and the Tares. I see this parable as portraying an analog of my own fertile brain, which is a mixture of impulses or thoughts that can either feed me and my soul, or can obstruct me and hold me back from the joyful Christian life.

Our thoughts and other elements of mental life seem to spring from nowhere, being self-generated or sewn by any gust of wind that blows through the world, and can lead us into worry and disturbance; or, conversely, they can lead on to confidence and joy. They are all mixed together and can, without tending and leading, grow like weeds or spring forth in beauty like roses in a garden.

It is possible however, to work with the Holy Spirit to seek a holy contemplation that will help us in purging evils, cultivating good and pleasing God. Scupoli’s book is full of examples of such efforts.

Now, as a good Lutheran, being doctrinally appropriate, it is my belief that we are saved by faith alone, not works — and I can understand that it could be perceived that the spiritual combat as described by Scupoli could be considered as just that. I think I prefer to take it a little differently.

I see the effort as a different type of warfare shown in Jesus’ parable below, where he talks about a story from his rich lore drawn from the environment of the Galilee. It is a farming environment and uses the language known by his listeners from a setting very similar to Eastern Oregon (I do know that, because I went there ... both the Galilee and Eastern Oregon).

Here Jesus uses the image of a field to represent the fertile land of a human soul. He uses the language of the harvest, a language of feeding and receiving, both goodness and blessing from the gifts of living processes as a language of the work of our reception and interception with the salvation of Christ’s presence.

First, let me reintroduce this parable for



COLIN BROWN
Faith

your enjoyment and contemplation from the King James version of the New Testament from Matthew 13:24-30:

Another parable He put forth to them, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The servants said to him, ‘Do you want us then to go and gather them up?’ But he said, ‘No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, “First

gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.”

The work of the human being is to receive that, which the creation provides it naturally and to accept and work with the good seeds of that receiving, and to reject that which is worthless. There is a continual rain of gifts from the creation that comes to our soil.

Sometimes

there are gifts of sadness, of leaving a work that one loves, of losing a person to death or divorce, of running out of money and bearing difficult times. Each of these negative things also brings new understandings, new seeds of effort, new work to be done and new directions to be explored. There is much good to be had in winnowing the chaff and claiming the good things there.

But our sins and disordered affections weigh on us, and leave us feeling empty and void, even the shadows of temptation haunt us. In the parable above it calls these tares, or bad seeds, weeds, seeds of poison plants — their effect on us is to leave us feeling clogged, bloated by indigestible things not proper to the human being, and our souls feel shackled to a landscape of the desert, earth without fruit, craving without the hunger for love.

In Jesus’ parable we cannot get ourselves free by ourselves. Jesus’ gathering and the fire do the work.

There is a harvest when the weeds and the crops are separated — and the products of this harvest go in two different directions. The weeds into the fire, the wheat into the granary that will feed the Christ-born human being. Let Christ do the work of the harvest.

I pray my friends, that you might discover the usefulness of Scupoli’s book as modified by Nicodemus and take up a study of it. I pray that you will come to the harvest joyful knowing that you have followed the guidance of the Holy Spirit as much as possible.

Amen.

■

Pastor Colin Brown can be reached at colin.brown@usa.net.



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