

POLONIA UNDER ATTACK

By Halina Grochowska-Jimenez

ARE YOU PART OF POLONIA UNDER ATTACK? Does your organization have funds that its membership have accumulated over the years and now there is a group interested in getting their hands on it? Has a small group of individuals infiltrated your organization and begun to create havoc, division and discord? Are they making inquiries into your organization's legal documents such as articles of incorporation or bylaws? Are they checking into and asking questions about the organization's financial records or bank accounts? Are they volunteering to act as your organizations' representative or to collect funds on your behalf? When they attend meetings are they disruptive and argumentative? Are statements being quietly made through rumor about your organization's leadership with implications of theft or abuse of position? Has your organization always been peaceful and everyone got along and everyone worked for the good of Polonia until these individuals got into your organization? Is your leadership being harassed with incessant phone calls and/or letters of inquiry about your organization or its funds? Have you or your organization been threatened with lawsuits or the police or the FBI or the IRS or other government organizations? If you can answer YES to many of these questions **then you are part of Polonia under attack.**

Polonia is under attack in San Francisco. We are waging the battle of Monte Casino in San Francisco. Because we are under attack we want to inform every Polish organization in the United States of the tactics that are being used to try and divide us. These tactics are not new. Communist and fascist infiltrators have used such tactics for years to break up viable, growing, and strong organizations. The purpose, of course, is to DIVIDE, DESTROY and STEAL FUNDS leaving nothing but ruin and bad feeling. The Polish Club, Inc. and its officers in San Francisco are in the midst of a great battle to defend itself from the take over of just such a group of individuals. The property on which the Club stands could bring a substantial amount of money if it were demolished and condominiums built and sold instead. Certain individuals have made comments about selling this building and buying a *better* property somewhere else. This is stupidity, a false argument to try and deceive. The Polish Club, Inc. has proudly stood on its current location since 1926 and has been the proud representative of Polonia to both the American and Polish community for over 75 years here in San Francisco and in the State of California. We have proclamations from the Mayor of San Francisco, from California State Senators and from the Governor of the State of California congratulating Polonia for its involvement in the life and history of the City and the State. We are sure that your organizations have equal standing as ambassadors of the Poles in America in your communities and must therefore also be protected from infiltration and destruction by such individuals.

You may ask, how are these attacks structured? How do these individuals get in to try and create ruin and discord? The answer is simple – by slow, quiet and systematic infiltration of Polish organizations that have money. Many Polish organizations structure themselves around the Catholic Church. These individuals come into the community representing themselves as God-fearing, church going

members. They attach themselves to church organizations or social functions. Through innocent conversations they find out about the different organizations, how active they are, how old they are, *how much money they have, how strong they are*, who the officers are. Then they join these organizations, the ones with money. Once they gain membership they begin to do “**research**” on the organizations. Research involves obtaining copies of the organization’s documents such as articles of incorporation, bylaws, reading through minute books and financial records searching for loopholes. Particular attention is paid to reviewing financial records and then implications are made of irregularities to try and discredit the current officers. If that doesn’t work, the next step is to review the corporate documents for loopholes. Once these individuals obtain membership into the organization the decisions and practices of the organization are then constantly questioned and attacked at meetings. Of course, questioning practices, trying to straighten out records in itself is not a bad thing. But these tactics are used not to improve the organization but with the intent to divide the community, to gain stature for oneself, **AND TO GET VOTED INTO OFFICE** by “discovering” corruption. Once in office it is then easy to gain access to accounts and funds. Other tactics include the constant harassment of officers with letters and phone calls, with constant demands to see this record and that record, with anonymous letters or falsified forms made to look as though they come from a governmental agency. Once a loophole is found they begin to maneuver around the loophole. If the officers or the members protest then these infiltrating individuals send letters out to other local Polish organizations asking them to “intervene” on their behalf to help clear up the “corruption.” If that fails threats are then sent out via letters to the officers that attorneys or governmental agencies will be contacted. At meetings, if Robert’s Rules of Order are used by the organization these infiltrators twist the rules out of shape so that meetings fall apart. They argue every point to minute detail so that other business cannot be transacted. They are especially belligerent if they lose the vote to get into office. This organized minority distorts, argues and questions every letter, bill, motion, recommendation of the officers of the organization until the meeting falls apart. As people begin to leave because of upset and disgust (*and this is part of the tactics*) this minority then proposes motions which, if all the members were present, would never have passed the vote of the majority.

How do you protect yourself and your organization?

1. **Learn your rights.** No one has the right to threaten you with the police, the FBI, the IRS or with any other governmental agency as a means of frightening you to keep you silent or to stop you from participating in your organization or from lawfully defending yourself or your organization. If you are being threatened in this manner you are being harassed. Harassment is against the law. Remember that you too have rights and one of them is not to be harassed.

You may also be threatened with lawsuits as a means of silencing you. This too is a form of harassment. Its purpose is to frighten you to keep you silent and to keep you from exercising your rights. Remember, you have the same rights and that includes the right to an attorney. If you receive a letter from an attorney do not let it intimidate you, especially when its from someone who is trying to harass you. A letter IS NOT LAW. Keep copies of all letters and make tapes of all voice mail messages for your

records so that you will have physical evidence of the harassment. Keep records of disruptions of your group meetings, the tactics used, the date and who used them. Ask your members to also keep records of any phone calls, letters, etc. Keep all your original documents. Make copies of everything and then contact your local police department and report these activities.

2. **Review Your Organization's Financial Records.** Check your financial records. Get help in formatting them correctly and in keeping proper records of assets and expenses. Get help from a professional accountant if necessary. Make disclosures to your membership so that no claims of fraud can be made. Use proper procedures when withdrawing funds. Make sure you have the proper number of officer signatures and resolutions reflecting financial decisions in the corporate records.

3. **Hire an Attorney.** If yours is an organization of long-standing have all corporate records reviewed by a competent attorney. Hire a larger firm that has the resources, experience and specialists to provide competent advice. This may seem like a waste of money but, in the long run, it is money well spent for peace of mind and the security of the organization. Remember, the older your organization the more likely you have document irregularities which may haunt you in the future with loopholes for infiltration. It is VERY VERY IMPORTANT to have all your records checked and brought up to date.

4. **Stand Behind Your Leadership.** Do not abandon your officers during the time of battle. They need your support. If they have competently and honestly provided good leadership to your organization then stand along side them to defend your organization. **BE SURE TO ATTEND ALL YOUR ORGANIZATION'S MEETINGS** so that motions and decisions do not get carried by the infiltrating minority vote. **This is very important.** A strong united membership can carry important votes and decisions. Do not allow your organization to be divided. Rebuke the invaders by not allowing them to distress you to the point where you do not want to come to meetings. Remember, **this is a tactic.** These individuals do not want you to come to meetings. If you come to meeting you can vote AGAINST them. That is why it is very important that you attend all meetings.

This article has been written on behalf of the Polish Community of San Francisco to warn all Polish communities everywhere in the U.S. so that they do not have to go through the battle we are currently waging. Keep Polonia strong in the United States and please pray for our victory.

If you have any question or comments about your findings please write or call me:

Halina Grochowska-Jimenez
4175 – 20th Street
San Francisco, CA 94114
Ph.: 415/648-0231