

Nations, Not Pretexts

A Polish diplomat's letter to Tucker Carlson, and why the right should be the first to sign it.

By Aryeh Leib Thorne Toren

On 2 October, in an interview with the British politician Jacob Rees-Mogg, Tucker Carlson questioned why Britain fought the Second World War and argued that Hitler had grounds to invade Poland in 1939, calling the land in question “German territory with Germans in it.” When Rees-Mogg replied that otherwise Britons would be speaking German, Carlson answered: “Who cares?”

On 5 October, Poland's chargé d'affaires in Washington, Bogdan Klich, published an open letter on the embassy's X account. “As an American journalist who enjoys the democratic right to the freedom of speech, you have now become an apologist for Adolf Hitler,” he wrote. The remarks, he said, were “a colossal insult to the millions of victims of Nazism,” and he demanded that Carlson “immediately and publicly retract and apologize.”

Klich is right. And the people who should say so loudest are those of us who call ourselves nationalists and conservatives.

The oldest pretext

“German territory with Germans in it” is not an argument for nations. It is the argument empires use to swallow them: our people live there, so the land is ours. Poland was a nation with its own state, language and long history. Germany invaded it on 1 September 1939, and Britain and France declared war two days later. A nationalism worthy of the name defends the right of every nation to its home, Poland's included. A nationalism that makes excuses for 1939 has turned into the very thing it claims to oppose.

Who cares?

Jews care. Some three million Polish Jews were murdered in the Holocaust, roughly nine in every ten. The invasion Carlson rationalized opened the road to the death camps the Germans built on occupied Polish soil.

The Torah commands memory as a duty, not a mood. “Remember what Amalek did to you on the way” (Devarim 25:17): he fell upon the weary and the stragglers, “and he did not fear G-d” (25:18). The Torah does not ask us to remember Amalek's grievances. It asks us to remember what he did. “Remember the days of old, understand the years of each generation; ask your father and he will tell you, your elders and they will say it to you” (Devarim 32:7). The generation that can still tell us is almost gone. That makes falsifying its history more dangerous, not less.

Policing our own

This week marked three years since 7 October. We learned that day what happens when men decide that a grievance licenses anything. The left has its apologists for that day, and we are right to name them. But credibility demands the same standard at home. When a celebrated

voice on the right recycles the logic of 1939, conservatives should not leave the answer to a Polish diplomat.

This is not about free speech. Carlson may say what he likes; that is what a free country is for. The question is what the rest of us say back. Klich has answered. So should we.

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