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10<sup>th</sup> July 2008

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Dear Mr Scott Langham,

Re: Complaint by Federation of Poles in GB versus Daily Mail  
Your ref 081278

We apologise for our late response to your letter of June 4<sup>th</sup> and your subsequent letter of 17<sup>th</sup> June 2008 but we have had to give the response of Mr Robin Esser the most careful consideration.

Some of our colleagues still remain dismayed that the editor of the "Daily Mail" should feel no need to offer an apology to Poles who felt so offended by some of the past headlines and, in particular, were upset that Mr Esser suggested that at no stage had the newspaper intended to suggest that Poles were worth less than Gurkhas, despite asking an obviously rhetorical question implying that.

However the Executive of the Federation has sought to find the positive aspects of this debate. In particular it notes the readiness of the newspaper to remove or amend offensive articles on its website, to publish more positive stories about the Polish community in the UK, to take more care of possible terminology that Poles may find offensive, to seek comments more often from representatives of the Polish community and to offer the Federation space to express its views at some length in the "Daily Mail". As we are aware that many of these offensive stories and headlines are now more than a year old and that in more recent months the coverage, and in particular the headlines, have appeared more circumspect in their description of Poles, we are prepared to let the matter rest provided that the previous relentless denigration campaign of the past is not repeated and that we are given at least one chance by the "Daily Mail" to express our view of this dispute.

We would like to ask however that the proffered right to reply be in the form of an article in one of the earlier pages of the "Daily Mail", rather than tucked away in the letters column.

We enclose the proposed text of our article and look forward to your confirmation that this is acceptable to the editors of the "Daily Mail" and that our article will be duly published.

If this can be arranged positively we would then look forward to future cooperation with the "Daily Mail" in providing facts and comments for future articles on the presence of Poles in the United Kingdom.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Wiktor Moszczyński  
Research Officer,  
Federation of Poles in Great Britain

## Poles in the UK and the "Daily Mail"

Older readers of the "Daily Mail" would be aware that there has been a sizeable Polish community in this country since World War Two. Polish soldiers, sailors and airmen had fought alongside British servicemen against the Nazi threat. They had integrated well into British society without losing their distinctive culture.

Since then a large number of Polish and other Central European citizens came to the UK after these countries joined the EU in 2004. Estimates indicate that up to one million new Poles could have arrived here in the course of the 4 years that followed, though many came only seasonally. Young and middle-aged Poles came here overwhelmingly to work and they have made a significant contribution both to Poland where many of them sent part of their savings, and to the British economy. According to the National Bank of Poland about £4bn are sent each year by Polish workers in the UK to their families at home. However according to the National Institute of Economic and Social Research the Polish workforce contributed £12 billion to the British economy in the years 2004 to 2006. So both economies have gained from their presence.

We have all heard about the competent cheap Polish plumbers and seen the smiling Polish waitresses and shop assistants. In fact Poles helped revive British agriculture, especially in Scotland, Wales and Lincolnshire and to boost the recent house-building boom in this country (before it went pear-shaped earlier this year), although they were often exploited in the hotels and building sites as they struggle to obtain the legal minimum wage and basic employment rights. Thousands, more entrepreneurial, have now set up their own businesses, while others can be found in responsible positions in the NHS, social services, accountancy and banking. Employers praise their positive work ethic and are eager to recruit them. According to the Institute of Directors, out of 500 employers surveyed by them 61% say they hire Poles because of their superior skills and only 16% because they were cheaper. 32% of this workforce has had a university education; more than 90% are less than 40 years old.

Poles pay income tax, national insurance and local council taxes. According to Piotr Grzeszkiewicz, director of recruitment agency Sara-Int, the Polish workforce contributes about £1.9 billion a year to the British exchequer in income tax and national insurance and this does not include council tax. Poles are integrating well into the British way of life, especially if they are setting up families here. Of course we are aware that their presence has had its impact on the resources of local councils, schools and health trusts, but much of this is covered by the contributions of Poles to the exchequer. Much has been made of the fact that with such a high number of Poles in this country, they have inevitably added to the crime statistics, both as perpetrators and victims, which again has placed a strain on local police resources. Yet those same statistics show that Poles in the UK are three times more likely to be law-abiding than the average UK citizen.

The Federation of Poles in Great Britain has been concerned that over a period of 18 months stretching from 2006 to early 2008, "Daily Mail" headlines, in contrast to that of most other British newspapers, have stressed these negative aspects seemingly consistently and relentlessly. We made a study of 96 separate headlines concerning either "Poles" or "East Europeans" or "migrants" and found that all but 8 of them placed Poles and other migrants in descriptions that could have evoked resentment at their presence. In the worst headlines "Poles" and other "Eastern Europeans" were linked by word association with emotive phrases or words like "Feckless", "Chancers", "Race Riots", "swamp the NHS", "fears for schools", "cut-price

treatment”, “push British graduates to back of the jobs queue”, “killers, drug smugglers and rapists”, “Poles ahead of British workers for jobs”. Taken individually an editor might seek to justify each headline. Taken collectively this succession of headlines, and often the articles that followed them, have made Poles and other East Europeans living in the UK feel vulnerable and persecuted.

The editors of the “Daily Mail” have rightly pointed out that sometimes these headlines did not fully reflect the contents of the articles which followed them and which were often more factual and offered a different conclusion. The editors also declare proudly that “Mail” readers do not just read the headlines but the articles as well. We would have liked to agree but we all know that most newspaper readers do not read all the details of every article, especially if they are more interested in other news items, such as the fashion or sports pages. So they may feel they have received the full flavour of an article from the message trumpeted in the headline alone. “Mail” readers are no different.

To UK residents of long standing, the sensitivity of these leading headlines may not have been immediately obvious. They would probably have recognised them as insensitive if associated with, say, Indians or Jamaicans. To UK Poles they did appear offensive and all the more so because these headlines appeared so often. They felt that they were indeed being victimised by a relentless anti-Polish campaign in the “Daily Mail” and that, in the words of one prominent British journalist, “Poles were now the new Blacks”.

We are relieved to be assured by the Chief Editor that there was no intention to run an anti-Polish campaign and that these “robust” headlines were aimed more at the British Government, at their immigration policy and at the European Union. Fair enough. This still implies that Poles came into the firing line because they were the most visible symbol of those government policies that the “Daily Mail” wished to criticise. We maintain that even if it was not the intention of editorial policy to denigrate Poles directly, nevertheless Poles have felt humiliated by the coverage and vulnerable to numerous acts of overt hostility and even violence which they have experienced from a vociferous minority of UK citizens. There have been hundreds of cases of hate crime against Poles in this country recorded in the last 2 years by local media and the police, some leading to death or permanent injury, and we would not want these incidents to be encouraged by potentially inflammatory newspaper stories or headlines.

Because of the lack of proper government statistics on immigration, a matter that both the “Daily Mail” and the Federation of Poles both decry, the picture that people have of Polish workers and their families in the UK appears on a blank abstract canvass, where emotions, whether positive or negative, supply the colour and the content. People hear the different conflicting statistical claims and then believe what they choose to believe based on their own personal experience of Poles. Many who have employed or worked with Poles think highly of them and choose to discount the negative headlines; others who feel that their own jobs or their wage levels have been threatened by them see a darker picture. Judgements are clouded by personal experience and individual circumstances and these judgements are then reinforced or challenged by what they read in the newspaper. The need for sensitive impartial reporting on these issues is therefore of paramount importance.

In some ways the heat is off now. A good proportion of Poles have either already returned or are planning to do so in the next few years as the Polish economy improves and the Polish currency almost doubles in value against sterling. There is now more concern in the press and economic circles about the impact of their departure rather than of their arrival. Nevertheless a significant number are here and will continue to be here for some years. The need for sensitive reporting remains.

We have noted that the "Daily Mail" editorial board has agreed to "try harder" to be more sensitive to these issues in the future, we accept that they will be ready to correct future inaccuracies of fact in their stories and will seek more comments from representatives of the Polish community. We sense that in the last 3 months the tone of articles and article headlines have mellowed in relationship to Poles in the UK and become fairer and more balanced. We accept too that in the past, and also more recently, the "Daily Mail" have published other more positive articles concerning Poles. In the 18 month period referred to earlier, these positive stories were few and far between.

While we deeply regret some of the past coverage we would very much like to encourage the editors of the "Daily Mail" to continue the newer more sensitive response and hope that the more sensational newspaper headlines about Polish workers are now a thing of the past.

Wiktor Moszczyński  
Press Spokesman  
Federation of Poles in Great Britain 10<sup>th</sup> July 2008