

Hate-Crimes against Poles in UK in 2007

Although police forces and community leaders are referring to an increase in hate crimes in the UK in relation to Polish workers and other Central European visitors there appear to be no specific statistics held on this. I have contacted police authorities in Kent, Cambridgeshire, Norwich and West Yorkshire and all of them confirmed that no actual records of hate crimes against Poles were being kept. The Metropolitan Police seemed to be more aware and advised that of the 4494 crimes perpetrated against victims of Polish origin in London between December 2006 and November 2007 only 48 were "self-defined" as being a hate crime. This statistic suggested that the victim had to be sufficiently politically aware and sufficient fluent in English to classify the attack on them as a hate crime. As many Polish victims probably do not have good English, it seems likely that the proportion of hate crimes is actually higher.

Yet despite the lack of statistics police spokesmen around the country freely refer to a rise in such crimes. "The Scotsman" (27.06.07) quotes crime prevention officer, PC Kevin Lawson as stating that "there's been a big increase in reports of racial crimes involving people from Eastern European countries, especially Poland" and the same article states that "more than a third of the 900 race hate crimes in Edinburgh took place in the city centre" (between April 2006 and March 2007), "and most of those involved Eastern European victims." A similar comment comes from a police spokesman in Blackpool (Blackpool Today – 17.04.07) who states that "Polish people in the resort are facing exploitation, intimidation and even attack, much of which goes unreported." According to the "Belfast Telegraph" (12.01.2007) half of the recorded racist crimes in Northern Ireland are directed "against the white European community." "It is believed," continues "Telegraph" crime correspondent Jonathan McCambridge, "that the vast number of these crimes are against eastern Europeans, particularly members of the Polish community."

Racial tension against Poles is encouraged by the BNP and examples of their leaflets and propaganda have been recorded by local newspapers in places like Harrogate, Spalding and Bognor Regis.

Of course the Poles are sometimes victims of crimes committed by their own fellow countrymen but that does not apply to any of the incidents mentioned here. Also not included are the many tragic killings of young Polish women, which do not necessarily have a racist connotation but result from their vulnerability and naivete about their immediate social environment. Angelika Kluk in Glasgow, Kamila Garsztka in Bedford, Beata Bryl in Amersham, Monika Szmecht in Liverpool, Zuzanna Zommer in Leeds, Lydia Motylska in Beeston and Magda Pniewska in Peckham all appear to have been murdered when alone and unprotected because of a lack of awareness of the danger of their immediate surroundings.

Nevertheless even if there are no reliable statistics there is sufficient evidence that can be garnered from the press, most notably the local press, which shows a growing trend towards violence and abuse against Poles in this country, particularly in the more rural areas. Few of the incidents appear to have occurred in big cities such as London. Of course, bearing in mind that many similar incidents go unreported, the high amount of recorded incidents is certainly alarming.

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Here is a summary of over 50 incidents recorded by the press throughout the country in 2007.

January 19th – Oxford Mail. 2 Polish students were attacked by a mob in Abingdon. 6 people were arrested.

January 30th – This is Hampshire. Report on Pole who suffered “aggravated racial abuse” in Southampton, when attacked by 3 men

February 7th – Daily Record. Patryk Mních battered and hospitalized (for 3 months) in race hate attack in Edinburgh

February 10th – Wigan Online. Polish workers housed in sink estate where they were harassed and racially abused by ex-Council problem tenants

February 25th – BBC Hampshire. 3 Polish men beaten in “unprovoked attack” in Basingstoke. 16 people arrested.

March 7th – Northern Echo. Polish taxi driver racially abused and beaten in Bishop Auckland.

March 11th – Wrexham Evening Leader. Flintshire Council decides to clean up anti-Polish and anti-Semitic graffiti on Shotton Railway Bridge

March 20th – Redditch Advertiser. Gang of 4 men attack Pole with baseball bat causing local employer to complain that this is one among many racist incidents against Poles

April 10th – N.W. Evening Mail. 2 Polish men hit with cricket bats in racially motivated attack in Barrow by a gang of 10

April 11th – Get Reading. Driver in Reading argues with Poles, then drove car at them.

April 15th – This is Hampshire. 2 Polish men taken to hospital in Southampton after serious assault following racial abuse.

April 21st – Redditch Advertiser. Polish factory worker victim of abusive gang assault

April 22nd – Cheltenham on line. Croat Martin Travnik had bottle smashed in his face by a woman accusing him of being Polish

April 23rd – Sunday Mail. Pregnant woman Magda Kucho rescued from 3 racist thugs with a Doberman by Celtic footballer Artur Boruc

April 24th – Kent News. Polish bakery in Sevenoaks to close after repeated attacks by thugs smashing window shop front and calling out “Polish bastards”

May 1st – Wandsworth Guardian. Court report on Polish woman spat at and abused and nearly pushed on to track at Streatham station (incident occurred March 6th)

May 20th – Lifestyle Extra. Pole nearly killed in a pub in Leyton after sandwich board smashed over his head

May 24th – East Anglian Daily News. Court session on 6 youths assaulting and abusing 2 Poles in Kings Lynn. Action took nearly 10 minutes – caught on CCTV.

Outcry from police when guilty youths did not get custodial sentences.

June 2nd – This is Wiltshire. Deputy coroner in Swindon records death of Michal Zajac killed in a pizzeria the previous year as being the result of a beating.

June 8th – BBC NI. Belfast arsonist Kenneth McBride sentenced to 5 years for firebombing a house with Polish migrants

July 19th – Herts Advertiser. Police say they are still looking for witnesses on attack on 2 Poles by 5 Asians in St Albans in February

July 20th – BBC News. 2 teenagers in Wisbech given detention orders for attacking 2 Poles in December while shouting “This should get you of our country.”

July 31st – BBC Scotland. 11 year Polish boy kicked and punched by 2 teenagers in what Aberdeen Police believe was a racist attack.

August 7th – Evening Leader. Polish man stabbed to death by a Scotsman in a Wrexham pub. Racist incident not ruled out.

August 9th – BBC Hereford. 2 Poles assaulted by 3 thugs near Redditch in “racially aggravated” attack causing police to set up special patrols.

August 9th – Cotswold Journal. Brawl in pub after racial abuse of a Polish barman near Gloucester.

August 16th – Denbighshire Free Press. 2 men from Corwen accused of attacking Polish worker in a pub toilet in Mold

August 17th – Evening Leader. Polish man attacked, robbed and kept against his will in a car park in Redditch – 4 men charged.

August 23rd – BBC London. Policeman accused of misconduct in death of Pole in a police cell in Chingford.

August 24th – Hereford Times. 2 Poles abused, kicked and hit by an iron rail in Leominster Town Centre.

September 5th – Kent BBC. Poles racially abused and attacked by a gang of six in field near Sittingbourne.

September 6th – This is Hampshire. 4 young Poles (2 male, 2 female) attacked by British thugs in Andover.

September 11th – BBC Hereford. 3 Polish men racially abused and attacked in Hereford Town Centre

September 27th – Norwich Evening News. Gary Davy gets 6 months suspended sentence for knife attack on Pole in “mob violence” in Norwich pub.

September 28th – Wisbech Standard. Pakistani shopowner and Polish assistant beaten up by 30 strong mob after displaying Union Jack on a shop front. Participants described their activity as “fizzie bashing”.

September 29th – Times on Line/Daily Mail. Report on tension in school in Chatham where Polish and Slovak parents confront bullying of their children. Police say there are 13 racially motivated incidents in 6 months in Chatham and several people have been charged or admonished by police for racial abuse.

October 11th – Wiltshire Times. Polish national attacked by a gang of 4 in Westbury and struck with broken bottle.

October 16th – Tyrone Times. Polish family in Moygashel, NI, defiant in staying home after their house was paintbombed.

October 26th – Ham & High. Polish music fans emerging from a concert are taunted and beaten up by gang in Tufnell Park.

October 28th – BBC NI. Robert Spence gets 6 years for “clearly a racially motivated attack” on a house in Belfast after he had beaten a Pole over the head with a baton in 2006 following a burglary.

November 7th – Gloucester Echo. Report that streets in town centre are too dangerous for Poles at night.

November 8th – Basingstoke Gazette. Court jails gang of thugs who “acted like a pack of animals” when beating up 3 Poles in Basingstoke Town Centre.

November 10th – Richmond & Twickenham Times. Polish man abused and threatened by passenger with a gun on a Richmond bus.

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November 15th – Northampton Chronicle. Lithuanian couple receive extra police protection after their home attacked by mob chanting “Poles go home”.

November 27th – Daily Post. Court told that the killing of Adam Michalski in Wrexham was “partly racially motivated”.

December 10th – Belfast Telegraph. Polish man stabbed in Dungiven by gatecrasher to a Council sponsored social event for migrants.

December 15th – Lancashire Evening Post. Man struck a Polish woman security officer in Blackpool after calling her “a Polish cow”.

December 16th – News & Star Carlisle – Polish man hospitalized after attack by 3 thugs in Carlisle Town Centre

January 4th – The Guardian. Journalist with Polish lodgers describes how his house in Salford was attacked by thugs who called “Get them f.... Polish out of the house or I’m gonna burn it down.”

Of course these are the recorded incidents which have attracted the notice of police and local journalists. It appears that the better off sections of British society, including most employers, journalists, politicians and community leaders seem to welcome the Polish presence in the UK, particularly because of its positive input into the British economy.

But those British residents who feel handicapped or are jobless or come from a vulnerable minority, seem to find the Polish presence threatening, particularly to their jobs. This will get worse when the British economy will appear to contract later this year. This resentment changes into hostility when it transpires that the Government has no idea how many Central Europeans there are in the country. It is vital that the government provides a prompt improvement in genuine data on how many Poles and Central Europeans live in each local community, thus allowing a proper assessment of the resources required to manage the Polish impact on local schools, housing, transport and the health service. Certain newspapers make the situation worse by publishing biased articles with emotional headlines that give the indigenous population the fear that their national heritage is under threat from these new visitors.

In our letter of November 29th 2007 we urged the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to consider a 10 point plan to reduce tension and prejudice concerning Polish citizens working and living legally in this country. The purpose of this report is to stress the urgency of taking measures to reduce inter-community stress and we look forward to hearing the Secretary of State’s positive response to our letter.

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