



POLISH LEAGUE AGAINST DEFAMATION

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The standpoint of Polish scholars affiliated with the Polish League Against Defamation on the activities of Jan Grabowski

We, the undersigned Polish scholars, working in Poland and abroad, strongly oppose Jan Grabowski's dissemination of a false and wrongful image of Poland and Polish people during World War II in placing the blame for the Holocaust upon the Polish Nation.

It is worth pointing out differences in the situations within other occupied countries, such as France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway and Hungary, and that of Poland. Here, the scale of terror spread by the Nazi-German occupiers was incomparably greater. Despite this, there were no institutions representing Polish society and the Polish Nation which supported the occupier's policy. This was unlike the case in many other occupied European countries, many of which had their collaborating governments and formations, including military forces (e.g. the SS "Wiking", "Nordland", "Galizien", "Nederland", "Wallonien", "Charlemagne", "La División Azul" divisions). Furthermore, the Polish nation actively opposed Nazi-German-orchestrated genocide by taking measures in institutional, legal and organisational forms established in the underground with the sole purpose of saving Jews (The Żegota Council to Aid Jews).

We are aware that in time of war not everyone acts like a hero, and many deem it expedient to save their own lives and the lives of their nearest and dearest, or to make a profit, and in so doing, some will commit vile actions for their own benefit. During World War II, due to the demoralising circumstances and German actions, it is true that vile-acting individuals could be found among Poles and Jews alike (especially in the ghettos). Yet, we should remember that the objective of the Germans was also to "eradicate the Polish Nation" and "completely destroy Poland" – an intent Hitler had announced before the outbreak of the war, and an action which was put into practice by the rounding up and extermination of Poles, e.g. in camps located in German-occupied Poland and Germany, in prisons and through public executions.

Poles have been awarded the most Righteous Among the Nations titles. It is especially worth underlining the fact that in occupied Poland alone, aiding Jews was punishable by death – even the death of the entire family of the harbouring individual. Yet, to save one Jew, one had to involve several or even several dozen people. And this was done. Neither the Polish government-in-exile in London nor any of its subordinate institutions agreed with the German policy of extermination – of Poles, Jews and other Polish citizens:

The Polish Government defends the interests of all Polish citizens of whatever religion or nationality they may be, and does it both in the interests of the State and in the name of humanity and Christianity. Poles in the Country and abroad stand united with it. At a Polish diaspora rally in Buffalo in the USA, a protest against ghettos and the bestial persecution of Jews in Poland was ordained. This is the stance of Poles!

A speech by Deputy Prime Minister Stanisław Mikołajczyk during a meeting of the Polish National Council [fragment] - London, 27 November 1942

In addition to the aforementioned statement, other calls were made public, including:

1. A common declaration of the governments of Poland, the United Kingdom and France against “the cruel persecution of Jews”;
2. **The Resolution of the Polish National Council on the mass extermination of Jews in German occupied Poland – London, 27 November 1942;**
3. A 10 December 1942 note of Ambassador of Poland Edward Raczyński addressed to the Governments of the United Nations.

Attributing complicity in the Holocaust to Poles, due to the existence of the so-called Blue Police, is a complete misunderstanding. Establishing such services as the Blue Police and staffing it with members of the society of the conquered country is not a Polish-specific phenomenon and stems from the logic of occupation – no occupying force can by itself secure the operation of all public services in the occupied country, such as the fire protection service, sanitary inspection and post offices. Making allegations of collaboration on this basis, and more specifically, of complicity in the Holocaust of Jews which was taking place at the time, can lead to absurd and odd conclusions, since analogous services and institutions also functioned within the Jewish community in the ghettos created by the Germans.

Grabowski fails to adhere to the fundamental rules of researcher’s credibility. He uses vivid and exaggerated statements to create propagandistic constructions, rather than to provide an honest picture. And, thus, he refers to the 1015 documented Jewish victims murdered by units demoralised by the savage and inhuman occupation as “the sea of evil”. At the same time, he fails to note the many thousands of those saved from the Holocaust by, usually, nameless heroes. It is worth recalling that 6,706 Poles were awarded the honour of the Righteous Among the Nations. This is remarkable, given that the possibility of providing Jews with effective help was limited, as 85% of the pre-War Jewish population did not speak Polish. This gave rise to a communication barrier. Moreover, Orthodox Jews not always agreed to place their children under the protection of “goyim”. On the other hand, mutual distrust was the result of the Soviet occupation, which was often supported by certain elements of the Jewish population, some of whom benefitted from it. Grabowski’s standpoint on the events in Jedwabne and the so-called 'Kielce Pogrom' lack the historical context, and it is in such a form that it was introduced to the global public. The elimination of crucial facts from the biography of the Jewish diaspora which would cast a shadow over the attitudes of many victims makes it impossible to provide the true picture of Polish-Jewish relations.

Based on digressions intended to cause a sensation and generate publicity, juggling with such words as “numerous”, “masses” and “many”, it is wrong to play on the feelings of the global public and distort the image of Poland. This has nothing to do with science, whose objective is to serve the truth. We must come to terms with the fact that we will not learn the details of the life and death of many murdered Jews and numerous Poles, who paid the ultimate price together with the harboured

Jews, and who, due to the restrictive conditions of awarding the “Righteous” title and disregarding Polish witnesses, have never been afforded justice.

The attitude of Polish society to Jews is best illustrated by Jews themselves:

There is an opinion among us that antisemitism gained in strength during the War, that the majority of Poles are content with the misfortune that befell Jews in Polish cities and towns, etc. An observant reader of our materials will find hundreds of documents proving otherwise. In many reports from towns, you can read about the cordiality of the Polish population towards Jewish refugees. You can learn about hundreds of cases in which farmers for many long months harboured Jewish refugees from the surrounding towns and kept them well fed.

“Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto” Emanuel Ringelblum Warsaw 1943

We urge Jan Grabowski to stop slandering the Polish Nation and adopt an attitude befitting a researcher, which is to serve the truth. Jan Grabowski 's activity not only does not contribute to finding the truth, but is a carrier for lies in the international public and academic life, and thus runs against the principles of the academic vocation.

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