

Open letter: Polish diaspora protests against an anti-Polish conference in Paris

12 February, 2019

TO:

Mr. Christophe PROCHASSON, President, School for Advanced Studies in Social Sciences (EHESS)

Mr. Philippe ALLOUCHE, General Director, Shoah Memorial Foundation

CC:

- Mr. Pierre-Cyrille Hautcoeur, President of EHESS
- Mr. Arnaud Dattola, head of the EHESS communication department
- Mr. Pierre Lévy, Ambassador of France to Poland
- Mr. Tomasz Młynarski, Ambassador of Poland to France
- CNRS: Institute of Modern and Contemporary History and Institute of Social Policy
- Center for Historical Research (EHESS-CNRS)
- University of Strasbourg
- Polish Academy of Sciences, Center for Holocaust Studies, Warsaw
- Polish Academy of Sciences, Science Center, Paris
- Association of Sons and Daughters of Jews deported from France
- Institute of National Remembrance
- Media

Open Letter regarding the “New Polish School of Holocaust History” Conference

Dear Professor Prochasson and Director Allouche,

On behalf of the International Polish Patriots Alliance, the Polonia Institute, the international anti-defamation Polish Media Issues organization, and numerous other Polish diaspora groups, we express our protest against the choice of par-

participants at the [“New Polish school of Holocaust History”](#) conference scheduled to take place at the EHESS headquarters 21-22 February 2019. The backgrounds and past actions of these panelists meet neither the EHESS’s basic standards of academic integrity and reliability, nor the international standards developed under the auspices of the United Nations. In addition, the ongoing focus of their work can be characterized as xenophobic, and anti-Polish.

EHESS has a proud reputation for producing brilliant scholars, such as the economists Thomas Piketty and Jean Tirole, the historian Lucien Febvre, and the anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss. Therefore, we are disappointed to find your prestigious institution to be the host of a conference whose participants are controversial and contentious researchers and publicists, such as professors Jan Grabowski, Jan Tomasz Gross, Barbara Engelking, Jacek Leociak and Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, Dr. Agnieszka Haska, and Anna Biknot, the editor of “Gazeta Wyborcza.” They all have a history of unreliable research and deliberate anti-Polish activism.

We are also concerned by the lack of transparency during the process of organizing the conference as well as by the selection of the panelists, who all share a one sided and blatantly biased interpretation of the history of WW2 in occupied Poland. These individuals were chosen to the exclusion of many outstanding experts in the field with extensive research and professional publications that vary from the one-sided works of the invited participants. The panelists could include representatives of such prestigious institutions as the Auschwitz Museum, the Pilecki Institute, the Institute of National Remembrance, and the Polish Historical Association, among others.

We would like to draw your attention to some facts and developments justifying our protest. Professor **Jan Grabowski** of the University of Ottawa was last year accused of blatantly falsifying the work of the Polish Jewish historian Szymon Datner. In his *Las Sprawiedliwych* (“Forest of the Just,” Warsaw, 1968) Datner said:

“I estimate the number of Jewish survivors – due mainly to the help given them by Polish people – to be around 100,000. According to further estimates, another 100,000 people were captured by the German authorities and murdered.” (1)

When referring to Datner's research in an interview with the popular Israeli daily *Times of Israel*, Grabowski deliberately misrepresents these numbers and their meaning. Instead of directly quoting the historian, Grabowski falsely states that Datner actually said that Poles had killed 200,000 Jews. The *Times of Israel* published these lies on February 8, 2018 in an [article](#) titled "According to an article published in 1970, 200,000 Jews died at the hands of their Polish neighbors". The subtitle to the article read, "New law in Poland would hinder the publication of these results today." The author of the article later admitted to the Polish ambassador of Switzerland that she was citing information obtained from Professor Grabowski. Despite protests, the Israeli journalist did not correct the falsification, and Grabowski neither corrected nor apologized for this blatant and confrontational historical lie. In response, the international anti-defamation Polish Media Issues organization has filed a complaint with the *Secretariat sur la conduite responsable de la recherche* in Ottawa, Canada. The complaint is being processed. (2)

This is only one of many such examples of prof. Grabowski's lack of professional integrity. He regularly downplays German war crimes and responsibility for the Shoah, instead assigning complicity for the Holocaust to Poles, falsifying historical data and applying slanderous and offensive rhetoric. In the March 19, 2017 [article](#) in the Israeli daily *Haaretz*, for example, professor Grabowski was contemptuously dismissive of the gravity of the death penalty in German-occupied Poland for any Pole, his entire family and even neighbors who assisted a Jew in any way. Contrary to historical facts, Grabowski has stated that although Poles were reluctant to save Jews during the war, they risked having radio receivers at home, despite the fact that they were threatened with the death penalty for that as well. (3) In fact, it was commonly known that very few Poles had a radio receiver, which could still be easily hidden, much easier than a Jewish neighbor or an entire Jewish family and did not need to be fed and cared for at the time when food rationing and severe hunger were commonplace. Courageous Poles sheltered their Jewish neighbors, sharing with them their scarce resources, risking and losing their lives. Poles constitute the largest group of Righteous Among the Nations.

Another selected panelist is Jan **Tomasz Gross**, a retired Princeton University professor of sociology. Gross has for years been perpetuating lies about the July 10, 1941 massacre in Jedwabne. claiming that “1,600 Poles, half the inhabitants of the city of Jedwabne, murdered the 1,600 Jews... the other half of Jedwabne residents. The Germans, according to T. Gross, were present at the scene of the crime only to film it. An unfinished exhumation in Jedwabne, a town under brutal German occupation during the war, according to an investigation and research by the IPN shows that a maximum of 350 Jews were killed and about 40 Poles were involved in the crime. Historians such as American Professor Richard Lukas, the Italian Professor Aleksander Rosini and the Polish-American Professor Marek Chodakiewicz have pointed out that Gross did not even visit the essential German or Belorussian archives for his book on the topic. Besides, it has been conclusively proven that the German criminal Hermann Schaper is responsible for a series of pogroms on the route that included Jedwabne and the surrounding area. Schaper was in fact found guilty of these pogroms against Jews and received a prison sentence in 1976 by the German court in Gießen. (4)

Another conference invitee, a Polish journalist **Anna Bikont** (MA in Sociology) has replicated Professor Gross’s historical lies about the crime in Jedwabne in her book *We from Jedwabne*. Amateurish and unscientific, it has even recently been published in Chinese, by the department of Communist Sociology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Another panelist, **Joanna Tokarska-Bakir**, granted the German Gerda Henkel Foundation an interview a few days ago. Gerda Henkel was a sister of Jost Henkel, a German industrialist who helped Hitler come to power. In the interview, Tokarska-Bakir blames Polish civilians for the 1946 Kielce pogrom, despite current knowledge based on research drawn from historical sources. These sources reveal that the attack was a planned provocation, created by the Soviet Russian authorities, bent on establishing control in the newly “liberated” Poland. The objective of these provocations was to direct the world’s attention away from the falsification of the election taking place in Poland at the time. The Soviets wanted to depict the Poles as brutal criminals not worthy of the world’s protection or empathy for being sold out to Stalin by Roosevelt and Churchill in Yalta, in exchange for Stalin’s support in defeating Hitler. The documented

truth is that Communist policemen, not civilians, shot at the religious Jews in Kielce. The Jewish communist collaborators who lived in the same building as the victims survived the massacre unscathed.

The panelist Dr **Agnieszka Haska** made disparaging and unprofessional comments in an article published by *Haaretz* on December 24, 2018, describing the great Jewish historian Daniel Blatman as “a poster boy for Poland’s brutal deception of the Holocaust.” (5) Similarly, slanderous and ethnocentric statements discrediting Poles are repeatedly disseminated by the other speakers, professors **Jacek Leociak and Barbara Engelking**.

Although we fully support the freedom of expression in accordance with Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, this cannot mean consent to the falsification of history, discrimination, stigmatization, and racism, all violating several UN resolutions including art. 4 of the 1965 Convention on the Prevention of Racism. (6)

We would like to point out that the Polish general Stanisław Maczek participated in freeing occupied France from Germany and that Poles were amongst the nations that suffered most during the Second World War. Poland lost 6 million citizens, including 3 million Polish Jews, constituting 20% of its prewar population, a loss incomparable to a loss experienced by any other nation in occupied Europe. Many Poles lost their lives for giving aid to their Jewish fellow citizens. The Republic of Poland and the Polish Government-in-Exile actively fought the genocide and never in any way assisted German forces in the extermination of Jews. The same cannot be said of many other countries and governments. Unfortunately, the French state railways sent about 80,000 Jews to extermination camps for money. President Macron has so far been unable to distance himself from Marshal Pétain and the Vichy regime.

This type of conference is not the proper answer to the demands of the Stockholm Declaration, which is supposed to “sow the seeds of a better future in the soil of the bitter past,” and to which France is also a signatory. (7)

As descendants of Poles who fought and perished in the fight against Nazi Germany on all fronts, died in concentration camps and as forced laborers for the Third Reich, we cannot accept the fact that the prestigious EHESS would lend its scientific authority to anti-Polish, unreliable participants. We appeal for the cancellation and re-organization of the conference, which will ensure the selection of participants who offer an objective and scholarly approach to the subject and are worthy of the prestige of EHESS.

We all thank you for your attention to this matter. The current form and the content of this conference created a great stir and reaction among members of the Polish diaspora around the world, and we all await your response to our protest.

Sincerely,

Marek Wasag, International Polish Alliance

Dr. Marek Błażej, Polish Media Issues

Leszek Pawlik, President & CEO, Polonia Institute

Mirosława Woroniecka and Jadwiga Lepiepec, Treasurer, Gazeta Polska Club, Paris Notre-Dame

Andrzej Woda, President and Urszula Morawska, Secretary, Polish Club of Gazeta Polska

Dr. Jerzy Barankiewicz, California

Dr. Marek Baterowicz, Publicist, Sydney

Marek Bielak, London

Andrzej Burghardt, President, Polish American Congress of New Jersey

Małgorzata Chwilczyńska, Gazeta Polska Club, Stockholm

Dr. Mirosława Dulczewska-Miller, Coalition of Polish Americans, Honorary President of the Association Polonia for Poland

Adam Gajkowski, President of the Federation of Polish Organizations in New South Wales, Australia

Monika Gąsiorowska, Président d'honneur de l'Association Polonaise à Genève

Wiesław Gołębiowski, President of the World Research Council on Poles Abroad, President of the Polish American Congress of Western Florida, Vice-President of the Coalition of Polish Americans

Jerzy Jankowski, President, Union of Norwegian Poles

Edward Wojciech Jesmian, President, Polish American Congress of Southern California

Natalia Kaminska, Polish Radio Hour, Los Angeles, California

Jacek Kawczyński, Commander, Katyń Rally Association, Memory and Identity, Illinois

Danuta Knapp, President, Polish Veterans Association of Sweden, Gazeta Polska Club

Dr. Witold Lukaszewski, Member of the Board, Polish American Council of Texas

Dr. Jim Mazurkiewicz, President, Polish American Council of Texas

Paweł Miller, Coalition of Polish Americans, Polonia for Poland

Dr. Mira Modelska-Creech, Club de Gazeta Polska Paris Notre-Dame, Association Polonaise des Auteurs, Journalists et Traducteurs en Europe (APAJTE), Paris, President of the Association Wars and Sawa, Warsaw

Aleksander Oczak, President, Association of Our Polonia, Australia

Ryszard Ostrega, CEO, Free Phone Wireless Inc., Torrance, California

Andrzej Prokopczuk, President, Polish American Congress of Northern California

Maria Barbara Póltorak, Professeur d'histoire à l'école polonaise à Paris

Jerzy W. Rozalski, Realizator i Producent, Radio Polskie Rozmaitości, Detroit

Dariusz Rutka, Polish Americans of South Carolina, Charleston

Lidia Sokołowska-Cybart, Canadian Polish Parents Council

Dr. Chris Stanibula, The Kosciuszko Polish-American Citizens of Fall River

Mark Szydlak, Melbourne

Dr. Stanisław Śliwowski, President, Coalition of Polish Americans

Dr. Maja Trochimczyk, President, Moonrise Press, California

Wiesław Wierzbowski, President, Polish American Congress of Massachusetts Division; Vice-President, Polska Gazeta Club of Boston

Marek Wasag, President, Sunday Discussion Club of Berlin

Monika Wiench, Committee for the Defense of Poland, Melbourne

Grzegorz Worwa, President, Polish American Congress of New York, Long Island Division

Dr. Krystyna Zamorska, Coalition of Polish Americans, American Council for Polish Culture

Anna Zawadzka, Coalition of Polish Americans

Halina Zawadzka, Coalition of Polish Americans

Artur Zysk, London

References:

1) Bulletin of the Jewish Historical Institute, 1970, No. 75, pages 28-29,
<https://cbj.jhi.pl/documents/765183/29/>

2) <https://polishmediaissues.online/uottawa-ignores-fraudulent-activities-of-professor-jan-grabowski/>

3) <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/premium-no-poland-s-elites-didn-t-try-to-save-the-jews-during-the-holocaust-1.5449663>

4) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermann_Schaper

5) <https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/the-israeli-scholar-who-s-a-poster-boy-for-poland-s-distortion-of-the-holocaust-1.6768946>

6) "... justifier ou encourager toute forme de haine et de discrimination raciale, à déclarer délits punissables par la loi toute diffusion d'idées fondées sur la supériorité ou la haine raciale, toute incitation de la discrimination et à déclarer illégale interdire les organisations ainsi que les activités de propagande organisée et tout autre type d'activité de propagande qui incitent à la discrimination raciale et qui l'encouragent et à déclarer délit punissable par la loi

(https://www.gouvernement.fr/sites/default/files/contenu/piece-jointe/2014/09/convention_internationale_du_21_decembre_1965_-_elimination_de_toutes_les_formes_de_discrimination_raciale.pdf)

7) <https://holocaustremembrance.com/fr/node/17>