

Institute of National Remembrance

<https://ipn.gov.pl/en/news/1858,The-IPN-and-the-Embassy-of-the-Republic-of-Poland-in-Bern-on-final-preparations-.html>

20.04.2024, 16:49

08.05.2019

The IPN and the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Bern on final preparations of the Ładoś List

The Institute of National Remembrance and the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Bern announced the end of one of the most important stages in the work on the so -called Ładoś List - a collective list of names of thousands of Jews who were the holders of Latin American passports forged by Polish diplomats in Bern during the Holocaust.



"The archivists from the Institute of National Remembrance scrutinized 1,114 names and 12,000 pages of documents. As a result, they discovered information concerning 754 people, mainly holders of passports of Paraguay," said Dr Mateusz Szpytma, Deputy President of

the IPN. He added that the verification was made thanks to the Institute's access to the electronic database of the International Tracing Service in Bad Arolsen, a tool used for searching for victims and Holocaust survivors.

Work on the verification process of over a thousand people from the so-called Paraguayan sub-list started in September last year. The list of names was primarily created by the Polish diplomats currently working in Bern on the commemoration of Aleksander Ładoś and his coworkers (the so-called Bernese Group, also referred to as the Ładoś Group). They were also the ones who conducted preliminary research into the fate of those whose names were on the list.

„Wykorzystaliśmy zarówno znalezione w archiwach kopie paszportów paragwajskich, jak i częściowe listy ich posiadaczy. Znaczna część z nich znajdowała się na notatkach i raportach pozostawionych przez Abrahama Silberscheina, jednego z najważniejszych członków grupy Ładosia” – powiedział ambasador Polski w Szwajcarii Jakub Kumoch. Dodał, że dziękuje IPN za zaangażowanie w tę sprawę. „To była wielka operacja i wszyscy, którzy w niej uczestniczyli, dokonali rzeczy niezwyklej” – powiedział.

"We used copies of Paraguayan passports found in the archives as well as partial /fragmentary lists of their holders, many of which were among the notes and reports left by Abraham Silberschein, one of the most prominent members of the Ładoś Group," said Poland's Ambassador to Switzerland, Jakub Kumoch. He added that he would like to thank the Institute of National Remembrance for its involvement

in this matter. "It has been a great endeavor and everyone who participated in it contributed greatly " he said.

In addition to the Paraguayan part of the Ładoś List, there are also Honduran, Haitian and Peruvian lists which were prepared by the Pilecki Institute. While passports and citizenship certificates of Paraguay, constituting the majority of illegal passports, were almost entirely the work of Polish diplomats working under Aleksander Ładoś, the documents of Honduras, Haiti and Peru were obtained by Jewish organizations cooperating with the Polish legation, in particular the RELICO Committee of Abraham Silberschein. This was done with the permission and under the protection of Polish diplomats.

The Latin American passports from Bern, also known as the "Ładoś Passports", helped their owners to avoid deportation to extermination camps and thus survive the Holocaust. Their factual number remains unknown, but the serial numbers and Silberschein reports allow estimating it as over 8,000. According to Ambassador Kumoch, the work on the "Ładoś List" has enabled us to recreate about 40% of the names of these people, as well as to find hundreds of survivors.

"The work on the list will be continued and the Institute of National Remembrance will fully support the initiative. This type of research is the responsibility of historians. After all, we are talking about one of the biggest operations aimed at counteracting the Holocaust known in the history of diplomacy. Not only Polish but also world-wide, " emphasized Dr Szpytma.

Alongside the Embassy of the Republic of Poland and the Institute of National Remembrance, the Pilecki Institute, the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum, the Jewish Historical Institute as well as Polish, Israeli, American and Dutch genealogists, microhistorians, survivors and their relatives have all participated in the work on the verification of the surnames. "What we are dealing with here is an endeavor which has in one way or another helped thousands of people survive the Holocaust " said Ambassador Kumoch.

The so -called "Ładoś List" is to be published this year.

Diplomats belonging to the so-called "Ładoś Group", operating during the war in the Polish Embassy in Bern, Switzerland, saved the lives of Jews by issuing forged passports for them. Polish diplomats and activists of Jewish organizations obtained passports from Latin American countries, which were then sent to Jews in occupied Europe. These were mainly passports from Paraguay, El Salvador, Honduras, Bolivia, Peru and Haiti, which prevented their holders in ghettos from deportation to German extermination camps. Instead, their owners were sent to internment camps, where some of them lived to see the end of the war.

The members of the group were involved in the production of illegal passports from at least 1941 and continued their activities virtually until the end of the Holocaust. The "Ładoś Group" consisted of: Aleksander Ładoś, the Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to Bern, his Deputy Stefan Ryniewicz, Consul Konstanty Rokicki, as well as the Attache of the Embassy, Juliusz Kuehl. Their partners were two Jewish

organizations - the RELICO Committee headed by Abraham Silberschein and the Swiss branch of Aguda Yisroel led by Chaim Eiss.

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