

Institute of National Remembrance

<https://ipn.gov.pl/en/news/10527,Open-Letter.html>

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Open Letter

In connection with the scandalous statements by Monika Olejnik (18 April 2023) and Prof. Barbara Engelking (19 April 2023) on TVN24, regarding the attitudes of Poles towards Jews fighting in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the President of the Institute of National Remembrance, Karol Nawrocki, Ph.D. has written an open letter to Katarzyna Kiela, President and Managing Director at Warner Bros. Discovery in Poland.



Dear President,

The German aggression on Poland in the fall of 1939 marked the beginning of terror on an unprecedented scale. During the occupation, the Germans carried out the mass extermination of Jews, as well as the Poles who helped them. Until the outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Poles were killed in mass, planned extermination operations, such as the Pomeranian Crime, the Palmiry Massacre, the first transports to Auschwitz, consisting exclusively of Poles, roundups in the streets of Warsaw, and public executions of innocent people. Poland and Poles entered the year 1943 bloodied and decimated.

The tragedy of the ghetto and the Holocaust, implemented by the German state in occupied Polish lands, raises questions as to the attitudes of Poles, including the structures of the Polish Underground State and the Polish elite, towards these events. These questions have become all the more relevant due to the fact that the public debate surrounding the 80th anniversary of the outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising has turned into an area of manipulation, misrepresentation of facts, half-truths, and blatant lies which contradict well established facts. Examples of these types of scandalous claims, especially when made by an academic, can be found in the interview that Prof. Barbara Engelking gave to Monika Olejnik on "Kropka nad i" (19 April 2023, TVN24).

The anniversary of the Jewish uprising, and the crimes committed by the Germans against the Jews, served as a pretext for Barbara Engelking to discuss the overall attitude of Poles towards Jews. The interview omitted important elements shaping the picture of these relations, such as the assistance of the Polish Underground State, including the Polish Home Army, granted to the Jews fighting in the Uprising. This assistance, provided, of course, within the limited possibilities of the Polish underground structures at the time, meant supplying explosives, weapons and offering training. Particularly in the first days of the uprising, Home Army units engaged in sabotage and diversionary activities. Their goal was to break the German cordon and to enable Jews to leave the burning ghetto. At that time, the structures of the Polish Underground State included the "Żegota" Council for Aid to Jews, which gathered representatives of both Polish and Jewish underground organizations. It was the only organization of this kind in German-occupied Europe.

Yitzhak Zuckerman, one of the leaders of the Jewish Combat Organization in the Warsaw Ghetto, described the attitudes of Warsaw's residents towards the uprising. He stressed their willingness to help, and also pointed out that denunciation had been a marginal phenomenon, strongly condemned by the Polish Home Army and Jewish organizations.

Instead of a thorough, research-based analysis of Polish-Jewish relations, a substantial part of the conversation was devoted almost exclusively to the issue of the alleged lack of benevolence on the part

of the Poles, their dislike of Jews, support for the liquidation of the ghetto and denunciation. I would recommend turning to the nearly 100 scholarly publications issued by the Polish Institute of National Remembrance on the topic. They present these relations and the actual attitudes of Poles in a comprehensive, multidimensional way.

Barbara Engelking's claims that "the Poles failed [the Jews]" are disgraceful, constituting a slap in the face to the victims of Germany's criminal extermination policies: Jews and Poles, as well as their relatives, who have been carrying the burden of that barbaric reality in their hearts.

Monika Olejnik spoke of Warsaw's indifference to the bleeding Uprising in a similar vein (18 April 2023, TVN24). In fact, there are numerous examples of aid given to the fighting Jews by the residents of Warsaw, who disregarded the threat of capital punishment and the omnipresent terror, devotedly helping them. According to research, the number of Jews saved in Warsaw by Poles amounted to at least 11,500.

I leave it to the conscience of the above mentioned speakers whether they would be able to look into the eyes of the residents of Warsaw who were harmed by their slander.

It is astonishing that during the solemn celebrations of the 80th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, organized by the Polish state, which were attended by the last witnesses to this heroic uprising, the TVN24 station, owned by an American media outlet, broadcasting in Poland, put so much effort into showing a skewed and

manipulated picture of events concerning the attitudes of Poles towards German crimes committed in the ghetto. The inadequate focus on pathological circles elevates them to the status of an authoritative representation of the entire society enslaved by Germany. At the same time, also by way of omissions and leading public attention astray, the scale of the German state's responsibility for the Holocaust is being automatically and consistently diminished. This is, in fact, a method of falsifying history.

The great Pole, Saint John Paul II said: "Seek this truth where it is really to be found! If necessary, be resolved to go against the current of popular opinion and propagated slogans! Do not be afraid of the love that places clear demands on people." I hope that you will find at least a little courage, giving testimony of respect to the victims of German crimes.

Yours sincerely,

Karol Nawrocki, Ph.D.

*President of the Institute of National
Remembrance*

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