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## **“Reduta Dobrego Imienia” (The Polish League Against Defamation) Responds to Historian Jan Grabowski’s Law Suit**

Eighteen months ago, The Polish League Against Defamation published a statement questioning the methodology used by historian Jan Grabowski. The professor at Ottawa University in Canada, researching the Holocaust, has now brought legal action against the Polish organisation. The Law suit does not specify why it has been filed now. “Reduta” has prepared a thorough reply to the law suit selective ways in which Jan Grabowski treats researched and quoted sources.

In our opinion, Mr Grabowski treats historical sources selectively and chooses only those which are in line with his theses. He also ignores the historical context of the events he describes. It is particularly unjust towards the Polish nation, that in his publications he belittles the fact that during WWII in occupied Poland, the punishment for just helping any Jew in any way, let alone hiding one, was death, stressed “Reduta’s” President, Maciej Świrski.

“Reduta” has also started to raise funds to cover the legal process, the work of lawyers, historians and other scholars who will work on verifying the statements spread by Jan Grabowski.

On the 7th June 2017, “Reduta Dobrego Imienia” published a statement which gave a negative view of the reliability of Jan Grabowski’s research work (full text of the document is available on: [https://www.prchiz.pl/pliki/RDI\\_Grabowski\\_stanowisko\\_EN.pdf](https://www.prchiz.pl/pliki/RDI_Grabowski_stanowisko_EN.pdf)). The statement was signed by numerous Polish scholars and was published in 2017, directly after the media had spread Jan Grabowski’s thesis stating that allegedly “200,000 Jews were killed by Poles”.

We do not know why it has taken Mr Grabowski 18 months to bring an action against us, but we have prepared a reply to the law suit, where we present academic statements verifying that Jan Grabowski’s theses are unjustified. For a long time now, many academics and historians have questioned both Mr. Grabowski’s research methods, as well as the ways in which he presents facts. While analysing this particular situation, as well as in any further discussion, we would like to draw everyone’s attention to the fact that, it is Mr Grabowski who has brought a legal action against us, in order to censor our opinion about his research. I am extremely surprised that someone researching the Holocaust, who expects the right to freedom of speech and discussion, denies the same right to others. However, we are not the only ones, whom Mr Grabowski denies the right to critically assess his work. An example of this is, Mr Grabowski criticism on Facebook of Mr Tomasz Domański, the author of the Polish Institute of National Remembrance’s study devoted to Jan Grabowski’s book entitled, *Night Without End* says Maciej Świrski, “Reduta’s” President (the post shared on Twitter by Jakub Kumoch, Polish Ambassador to Switzerland can be read on: <https://twitter.com/JakubKumoch/status/1100379771345588225>).

Jan Grabowski is the author of a controversial thesis stating that “Poles contributed to the death of 200,000 Jews”. He claims that we Poles are “at the global forefront of national conceit”. His theses were presented, amongst other places, on Polish radio TOK FM ( the article and broadcast – in Polish – are available here: <http://www.tokfm.pl/Tokfm/7,130517,23152084,polska-edukacja->

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[tosamouwielbienie-wiekszosci-mowi-historyk.html](https://www.1944.pl/archiwum-historii-mowionej/zbigniewgrabowski,1177.html)). In the said interview, Jan Grabowski also stressed that in pre-war Poland, anti-Semitism was a general phenomenon functioning across political divides and it cannot be associated only with nationalists and the support for National Democracy (Polish nationalistic political movement established at the end of the 19th century). In its reply to the law suit, “Reduta” explains that in the 1930s, anti-Jewish campaigning was fought against and pursued by the Polish authorities. Moreover, anti-Semitism was not widespread or a prevailing phenomenon. Evidenced of this comes from an interview with Jan Grabowski’s own father, Zbigniew Grabowski, a well-known Polish chemist of Jewish origin, who survived the Holocaust. In one of his interviews, Zbigniew Grabowski directly said that he never experienced anti-Semitism before the war (full interview – in Polish – is available: <https://www.1944.pl/archiwum-historii-mowionej/zbigniewgrabowski,1177.html>).

In its reply to Jan Grabowski’s law suit, “Reduta Dobrego Imienia” points to the very selective way in which this scholar treats historical sources. It is pointed out, that a great part of his book entitled “Judenjagd Polowanie na Żydów 1942-1945” English title, Hunt for the Jews: Betrayal and Murder in German-Occupied Poland, is based on the files of court cases, which were carried out following the “Decree of the Polish Committee of National Liberation (Communist) of 31 August 1944 concerning the punishment for Nazi criminals guilty of murdering and oppressing the civilian population and prisoners and for traitors of the Polish nation”. This decree included a list of war crimes and some crimes against humanity. The decree's provisions were applied for the crimes committed between 1 September 1939 and 9 May 1945. The said case-files were created by the Stalinist “criminal justice system” (Poland came under Communist rule after the Second World War) and as such must therefore be examined with a critical approach, taking into account the historical context. Yet, Jan Grabowski does not do this. It should also be stressed that case-files will always provide specific historical accounts, showing only a fragment of reality – the one associated with crime and pathology. In case of the above mentioned files, we must also remember about the reality of life in Poland under Communists rule, in the wake of the Second World War. This opinion was emphasized by, the renowned historian and researcher of occupied Poland, Professor Bogdan Musiał in his critical study of “Judenjagd”. Other historians have also expressed very negative views regarding Jan Grabowski’s work, his choice of sources, manner of presenting facts and changing words in the descriptions of events. For instance, Tomasz Domański, PhD, has recently prepared a publication for Poland’s Institute of National Remembrance entitled in Polish “Korekta obrazu?” [English: “Image Correction?”], constituting a review of “Night Without End” (a book co-written by Jan Grabowski). In this publication, Tomasz Domański demonstrates a range of methodological, material and substantial mistakes made by Jan Grabowski in the said book. Mr Grabowski claims that he is being criticized only by “right wing historians” and Polish nationalists. However, this is not true. In fact, his work is being questioned by a group of researchers, who have devoted their time to study the Holocaust and its course in Poland under German occupation during the Second World War.

Canadian historian Mark Paul presented a very comprehensive and critical analysis of Jan Grabowski’s book “Hunt for the Jews”. In it, he points out that Mr Grabowski is misinterpreting the words of Jews, who survived the Holocaust (<https://www.coursehero.com/file/30253496/Grabowski-Hunt-Critique-3doc/>). Moreover, last year Jakub Kumoch, PhD, Polish Ambassador to Switzerland, exposed serious methodological mistakes made by Jan Grabowski. “Five minutes of meticulous reading is enough to understand the genesis of

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an extremely serious distortion of the source,” he wrote (full commentary – in Polish – is available here: <https://www.facebook.com/kumoch/posts/10156301474149917>).

Nevertheless, Jan Grabowski ignores these findings as he selectively chooses his sources and decides whom to believe and whom not.

**“It is my belief, that in this case it is a question of assessing a historian’s reliability and that this should be done by academics with methodological proficiency. This does not only concern history. The issue of presenting research results in a reliable way is universal for all academic purposes, regardless of the field. What is more, in the case of a professor of history, the level of requirements concerning his methodology is naturally higher than if it were towards an average history expert,” stresses Maciej Świrski.**

Due to this law suit, Reduta has launched a collection for funds in order to be able the fight this law suit and cover the work of historians.

**“Our current funds allow us only to carry out activities opposing any slander against Poland’s good name, such as the monitoring of the Internet and legal action on current and new cases. Such a law suit is a huge challenge, hence we have decided to launch a public collection. I hope we’ll collect part of the required funds this year,” says Maciej Świrski.**

Donations can be made via the PayPal system or directly to the organisation’s account. Moreover, there is also a possibility to support “Reduta” on Facebook. Details can be found on the Reduta official Facebook fanpage (<http://facebook.com/RedutaDobregoImienia> – in Polish). Information concerning the details of the payments as well as the numbers of bank accounts are also available on the Reduta Dobrego Imienia website (<http://rdi.org.pl/>).

*Reduta Dobrego Imienia – the Polish League Against Defamation was established by Maciej Świrski to initiate and support actions aimed at correcting false information on Poland’s history, in particular World War II, the role of Poles in the war, Polish people’s attitude to Jews, and German concentration camps. In addition, one of Reduta’s objectives is to promote knowledge on Polish history and culture and contemporary life in Poland. Reduta’s goals also include counteracting racism and xenophobia against the citizens of the Republic of Poland, regardless of their origin.*

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