

Declaration of the Polish PEN Club

In these past two years, we have become party to feuds with our closest neighbours, with the community of allied countries and with the Polish State's strategic partners. Each successive conflict is stirred up in the name of imaginary defending Poland against an imaginary attack of the country's interests and good name, obsessively reverting to the reality of a war which happened four generations ago. Out of an aversion towards one's own State, all achievements of the past twenty five years, during which the reborn Republic of Poland participated in joint creation of a system of European alliances and with consequent determination and effectiveness turned into reality a historic reconciliation with Germans, with the Jewish nation and with the Ukrainian nation are being thwarted. Friendly relations with independent Ukraine had reached a level unmatched in our history of mutual relations and by destroying them today, we are being steered towards a "balkanisation" of Central Europe. The image of an irrationally repelling Poland deepens its ominous alienation in the world.

The supposed „politics of shame” are giving way to politics of shamelessness - too often appearing like some kind of deliberate provocation. Of a provocative nature are the concessions towards hooded patriots emboldened by impunity, who in ever greater numbers march under extreme racist slogans and the so very familiar neo-fascist symbols. It is a provocation when a member of Parliament of the Republic of Poland invites to the Polish National Day a pro-Putin Italian neo-Nazi, who was sentenced in his own country for terrorist activities. Linked for years to the British far-right nationalists negating the Holocaust, he called out in his speech which inaugurated the Warsaw Independence March to „seize the streets”.

It was a provocation to select the International Holocaust Remembrance Day (and just in the wake of the 50th anniversary of the inglorious Polish March of 1968) for the Polish Parliament and then the Polish Senate to adopt amendments to the Act of the National Remembrance Institute, with all the anti-Semitic frenzy stirred up on the occasion. Amongst the authors of this disgraceful spectacle, the director of programme 2 of Public Television particularly distinguished himself by joking about genocide on air. The negation of the truth about the Holocaust, jokes about gas chambers, all so well-known from neo-Nazi practises, bears the English name of Holohoax.

Contrary to the propaganda, the said amendment's aim is not to fight the Auschwitz Lie and neo-fascism. It is part of a grim tradition to prosecute crimes against Majesty, and in this particular case, against the dignity of the Polish State and nation. Deprivation of liberty for an arbitrary judgement about falsifying Poland's history is an idea that almost seems to arise from the legislation of Putin's Russia. At the core of this Act of Law adopted by both Chambers lies the introduction of subjective censorship, with the penalty of many years of imprisonment. It is supposed to be imposed for, among others, ascribing to Poles any war crimes whatsoever or crimes against humanity during war or even during the years 1925–1950 (as with regard to Ukrainians). This censorship ban must assume at its onset that it will instigate conflict with those nations who do remember examples of such crimes.

This censorship „machine for narrative security”, as defined beforehand by the advisor to the President of the Republic of Poland, creates a mythological picture of war which boils down to the dimension of battle scenes and the martyrology of one's own nation. Anti-

Germanism, anti-Ukrainism and anti-Semitism all serve and contribute to anti-Europe. The propaganda „narrative”, in inflaming conflicts with the outside world, presents any objections as an act of treason – like in March '68. In all of this, the split in the country becomes irreversible. And in its perverse logic, the split is deepened by calls to stand together and defend Poland against any criticism from the outside.

May independent Poland survive this suicidal paroxysm.

Warsaw, 8 February 2018