

An Open Letter in Defense of Academic Freedom and the Historian Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe

We, the undersigned, protest against the state-sponsored defamatory attacks on the German-Polish Holocaust historian Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe and the ongoing campaign of intimidation against scholars and academic freedom in Poland and Germany. Following the publication of his [scholarly book](#) on Polish mayors and the Holocaust in the General Government, Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe became the target of coordinated attacks by the Polish government, the Institute of National Remembrance, the Polish Embassy in Berlin, the Kulski Foundation, the Polish Academy of Sciences and several right-wing journalists.

The campaign began in August 2024, when the Kulski Foundation demanded that De Gruyter Publishing House refrain from publishing the book because its cover includes a photograph of Warsaw's wartime mayor Julian Kulski. At the same time, the former Polish Prime Minister [Mateusz Morawiecki](#), Polish right-wing journalists and others claimed that the book sought to "blame the Poles for the Holocaust," a narrative amplified by then-Institute of National Remembrance director Karol Nawrocki, presently the Polish president, in a [post on X](#).

In November 2025, the Institute of National Remembrance published a 47-page ["review"](#) of the book, in which it repeated the claims of Polish president Nawrocki and Polish right-wing milieus. The Polish ambassador to Berlin Jan Tombiński, meanwhile, intimidated the organizers of a book talk at the Topographie des Terrors, which subsequently was indefinitely postponed by the organizers. This led to further defamation, including a [hostile video](#) by YouTube channel Kanał Zero, which has over 2 million subscribers. Hate messages and personal threats on social media against Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe followed. The situation was escalated further by the Kulski Foundation, which wrote a [public letter](#) against the book and institutions that dare to organize a book talk. After collecting over 150 signatures of academics, World War II veterans and public persons, the Kulski Foundation convinced the Polish Academy of Sciences to publish the letter on their Facebook account.

Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe's book is based on many years of thorough archival research. The book explains how Polish mayors acted during the German occupation of Poland and argues that Polish mayors collaborated with the German occupiers. Within academia, there is ongoing debate over what constitutes "collaboration" and how the concept should be defined; no scholarly consensus exists. This book offers one perspective within that broader debate. Even where one may disagree with aspects of its framing or conclusions, such disagreements must be addressed through academic discussion, not through unsubstantiated and generalized attacks. The actions of those attacking the book aim to suppress scholarly debate, intimidate researchers, and promote a nationalist interpretation of World War II and the Holocaust.

Hate mail and threats against scholars – simply because they advance a historical interpretation with which others disagree – are never acceptable. Such campaigns against academic work constitute a serious threat to academic freedom and democratic values. Regardless of one's position on the author's arguments, it is essential that the academic community stand united on this principle.

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13. Franziska Exeler, Postdoctoral Researcher, Free University Berlin
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45. Dr George R. Wilkes, Edinburgh
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275. Dr. Sylwia Szymańska-Smolkin, researcher, Stockholm
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297. Jakob Müller, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz
298. Michael Wildt, Historiker, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
299. Christian Jansen, Historiker, Professor für Neuere Geschichte, Universität Trier
300. Eva Schöck-Quinteros, Historikerin, Universität Bremen
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302. Hilda Sabato, Historian, Professor Emeritus University of Buenos Aires, Argentina.

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307. Marc Buggeln, Historiker, Europa-Universität Flensburg
308. Artur Nowak, lawyer, writer, and publicist.
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310. Prof. Carlos Sanz Díaz, University Complutense of Madrid (Spain)
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