

To the Polish politicians and the international opinion community:

We are the children and grandchildren of members and friends of the so-called "Dabrowszczacy" -- the Polish Brigade in Spain -- and the former scouts of Jacek Kuron's "Walterowcy," which was named after that Brigade's commander. We grew up proud that a handful of Polish citizens went off to civil-war-torn Spain to defend on the battlefields the democratically elected Republican government against a combined aggression by Franco, Hitler, Mussolini and Salazar. Now we deplore and protest the recent actions of the Polish government and legislature to both slander and punish the surviving veterans of the International brigades and eradicate their heroic memory from Poland's history.

We are outraged by the politicians' recourse to administrative methods in order to impose, seventy years after the outbreak of the war in Spain, their own vision of history which defames old and defenseless people and erases the sense of their lives. We demand the cessation of all legal and administrative actions assaulting their well-being and reputation, such as stripping the veterans of their pensions, renaming streets and schools named in their honor, or airbrushing the Spanish battlefield names from Warsaw's Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. This kind of Polish politics fills us with bitterness and disgust.

We remember: Polish volunteers went to Spain with the historic battle-call that had been penned on the banners of the 1830 insurgents and again in 1848: "For Your and Our Freedom."

We remember: Polish, European and American members of International Brigades fought for freedom and republican ideals and were united in Spain by a shared determination to say no to fascism in Europe.

We remember: Great poets and writers of the time -- Wystan Hugh Auden, Stephen Spender, Ernst Hemingway, Egon Erwin Kisch -- supported the Republican cause. Josif Brodskij, the cult poet of our generation, called the Spanish War the last European war for the Just City. Władysław Broniewski commemorated in a poem the last gesture of the defenders of Madrid: "with a finger drenched in blood, they scribbled on a wall *No pasaran!*"

We remember: When our own generation looked for role models in our struggle for freedom in the cold-war Europe, we found on the battlefields of Spain people who had saved the honor of Europe in the moment of the greatest danger. We chose as our guides George Orwell, Simone Weil, Andre Malraux, Nicola Chiaromonte.

We remember: The volunteers of International Brigades were the first to experience on the large scale the cruel lesson in the ambiguity of the 20th century. During the Civil War, Spain was a training ground of heroism, sacrifice and courage, as well as of political crime, deception and skullduggery. Neither should be denied. On the battlefields of Spain, the two totalitarian powers clashed, thus perverting the cause of the Republic, of European democracy and 20th-century political idealism.

Today's Spain teaches us how to live AFTER such experience. She teaches the art of forgiving, shows how to come out of a dictatorship in a dignified and peaceful way. Our politicians would do well to reflect upon all these lessons. It is unacceptable that political freedoms for which we have all struggled should be turned against our dear ones and our heroes, and be used by the present government to slander the honor of their co-citizens.

Spain's Civil War is a lesson in the history of Europe's struggle for freedom against dictatorship, and the heroes of that war belong to this history. In 1996, the new Spanish democracy acknowledged this fact by granting Spanish citizenship to all former volunteers of the International Brigades. And this royal decree was issued under the government of the conservative party of Jose Aznar -- while the Polish Fourth Republic erases them from Poland's history.

The Polish soldiers of Republican Spain are no longer among us. We succeeded in finding only three of the initial 5,000. Two of them live in Sweden and in France, expatriated in 1968 in consequence of the anti-Semitic campaign unleashed by Poland's political authorities. One of them, after Spain, survived Auschwitz; the other was imprisoned and tortured in 1952-54 by the Polish Military Information agency. Only one veteran remains in Warsaw, 94 years old and senile. Are we to believe that the veteran pension supplement paid by the Polish state to this single heroic man threatens the budget of the State and the wellbeing of the legislators? Are we to believe that this concern motivates their 'patriotic' initiative? We are concerned with Poland's honor.

We remind the Polish legislators that the most authoritative voices of our country -- those of Marek Edelman, Jerzy Giedroyc, Jacek Kuron and Henryk Wujec -- were raised in 1991 against similar attempts to strip the veterans of 1936-39 Spanish War of their titles, pension rights,

and the membership in veteran military and civil associations. At that time, the authorities had to step back under the pressure of public opinion. At that time, a handful of the former combatants was still alive.

Today, after many deaths, legislators shamelessly bring back those legal measures, and they add an attack on historical memory. Names of the Spanish battlefields where Polish volunteers fell were airbrushed from Warsaw's Tomb of the Unknown Soldier – we don't know when, on what legal bases, and by whose competence. Streets and a Warsaw school “im. Dąbrowszczaków” named in the Spanish War's heroes' honor are being renamed, without a single request in this sense coming from local residents or the school itself.

Jacek Kuron taught us the art of understanding and forgiving, and, above all, of magnanimity. In this spirit, we protest against the indecent measures unworthy of and offensive to the Polish reason of state. We appeal to the international public opinion: do not ignore what goes on in Poland, in the name of your and our freedom.

If asked by what right and from which political positions we speak, we shall answer: by the age-old right of Antigone. Politicians, let the dead rest in peace. Work on our and your future!

N.B. Children of the veterans and friends of the Dąbrowski Brigade can send their signatures in support of this Appeal to andrzej.kuron@system2000.pl

Signatures as of April 23, 2007

Marek Edelman, the last living commander of the April 1943 Warsaw Ghetto uprising, Łódź.

Lechosław Goździk, leader of the workers' protest in October 1956, Stettin.

Julia Hartwig, poet, Warszawa.

Leszek and Tamara Kołakowski, Oxford.

Krzysztof and Grażyna Pomian, Paris.

Henryk Wujec, former member of the Committee for the Defense of Workers KOR.

Children and grandchildren of „Dąbrowszczacy”:

Children of HENRYK TORUŃCZYK (1909-1966), battalions „Palafox” and “Mickiewicz” of the XIII International “J. Dąbrowski” Brigade, commander of the cluster of International Brigades after 1938:

1) Barbara Toruńczyk, publisher and writer, Warsaw. Author of this Appeal;

2) Jerzy Toruńczyk, architect, with wife Anne and sons Alek and Antoine, Aix-en-Provence.

the latter's mother, JADWIGA WEŁYKANOWICZ (1910-1989), medical doctor on the Spanish front 1937-1939.

Grandchildren:

1) Emilia Bojańczyk, graphic artist, Warsaw;

2) Sabina Toruńczyk, psychologist, Warsaw;

3) Szymon Toruńczyk, PhD student, Warsaw

Son of MIECZYŚLAW BRONIATOWSKI (1912-1989), lieutenant of the „Jarosław Dąbrowski”:

Michał Broniatowski, Warsaw.

Wife and daughter of STEFAN SALOMON FELMAN (1914-2004),

1) Danuta Felman, Warsaw

2) Dorota Felman, Paris.

Family of GRZEGORZ „GRISZA” DZIERZGOWSKI, battalion „A. Mickiewicz”:

1) son Sergiusz Dzierzowski, university professor with wife Irena;

2) granddaughter Anna Dzierzowska, teacher;

3) grandson Jan Dzierzowski, student, Warsaw.

Daughter and granddaughters of JULIUSZ HIBNER (1914-1992):

Urszula Hibner Bonnet, researcher with Sarah and Anna, Montpellier.

Son of WACŁAW KOMAR (1909-1972), commander of battalion „J. Dąbrowski”, after January 1938 commander of the 129 Brigade (Czech and Balkan):

Michał Komar, writer and editor, Warsaw.

Children of MICHAŁ BRON (1909-), member of the 129 Brigade:

1) son Michał Bron Jr, researcher, Uppsala;

2) daughter Sara Ebner, Lund

Wife and son of DANIEL KRAUS (1906 - 1981):

Krystyna Kraus and Daniel Kraus, Stockholm.

Daughter of SIOMA LECHTMAN, member of Brigade "Ernest Thaelmann" 1937-1939

Son of EMANUEL MINK (age 97) Paris, France, the last living commander of the Jewish Naftali Botwin Company in the “Dąbrowski”

Brigade:

Georges Mink, professor of sociology, Paris.

Children of MARIA GOTHELF-MELCHIOR (1914-1964) and ROMAN MELCHIOR (1914-1998), both “Dąbrowszczacy”:

Małgorzata Melchior, sociologist, Warsaw, with brothers Krzysztof in Sweden and Karol in France.

Daughter of LEON RUBINSZTEIN (1915-1960):

Halina Rubinsztajn-Dunlop, professor of physics, Australia.

Son of ALEKSANDER SZUREK „Alek” (1907-1978), [aide-de-camp](#) of gen. Świerczewski „Walter.”

Jean-Charles Szurek, sociologist, Paris.

Daughters of LEON WINTER-ZAGORSKI (1910-1984):

Joanna Winter, Sweden and Stefania Jagodski, Frankfurt.

„Walterowcy,” members of Jacek Kuroń’s scout organization named in honor of gen. “Walter”, and friends and sympathizers of the “Dąbrowszczacy”:

Wife, brother and son of Jacek Kuroń:

Danuta Kuroń, Andrzej Feliks Kuroń and Maciej Kuroń, Warsaw.

Piotr Amsterdamski, physicist, Warsaw.

Halina Bortnowska-Dąbrowska, catholic social activist, Warsaw.

Józef Chajna, scoutmaster in „Walterowcy,” Warsaw.

Danuta Chajna, journalist, Warsaw.

Izabella Cywińska, theater director, former minister of culture in T. Mazowiecki’s government, Warsaw.

Mirka Dąbrowska, Argentina.

Kazimierz Dąbrowski, Warsaw.

Małgorzata Dehnel-Szyc, Warsaw.

Wiktor Drukier, Denmark.

Jerzy Duszyński, Warsaw.

Barbara Gadomska, translator, Warsaw.

Ludwik Wincenty Gadomski, Belgrade.

Lucyna Gebert, professor linguistics, Rome.

Irena Grudzińska-Gross, professor of literature, Boston.

Jadwiga Jabłońska, former Solidarność activist, Warsaw.

Elżbieta Janicka, professor of humanities, Warsaw.

Jacek Kleyff, musician and singer, Warsaw.

Jerzy Kubowski, Warsaw.

Roman Kurkiewicz, editor, Warsaw.

Ewa Kuryluk, artist and writer, Paris.
Barbara Łaszczevska-Majewski, France.
Kurt I. Lewin, New York. Served with former „Dąbrowszczaki” 1944-45.
Bogdan Łaszczevski, Warsaw.
Magda and Piotr Łazarkiewicz, film directors, Warsaw.
Marcel Łoziński, film director, Warsaw.
Piotr Mankiewicz, Warsaw.
Jan Meretik, Warsaw.
Wiktor Osiatyński, citizen of Polish Republic, Warsaw.
Julian Osiek-Ruszowski, Łomianki.
Barbara Passini, Warsaw.
Marta Petruszewicz, professor of history, New York and Cosenza.
Ewa Petruszewicz-Ziajka, Warsaw.
Aldek Ramer, Amsterdam.
Jakub Ruiz, lawyer, Warsaw.
Wanda Sadowska, Warsaw.
Paula Sawicka, chairperson of Open Respublica, Warsaw.
Mirosław Sawicki, former minister of National Education, Warsaw.
Olga and Janusz Stokłosa, Pęcice Małe.
Iwona Szpakowicz, writer, Ottawa;
Stanisław Szpakowicz, computer scientist, Ottawa;
Błażej Szpakowicz, historian, Ottawa.
Piotr Szulkin, film director, professor of Film School in Łódź.
Agnieszka Taborska
Andrzej Titkow, documentary film director, poet, Warsaw.
Stefan Ulman, Sweden.
Zenon (Dani) Tracz, Izrael.
Krzysztof Wagner, computer scientist, Warsaw.
Dov Bronisław Wajnryb, Rzeszów.
Zofia Winawer, Warszawa.
Natalia Woroszyńska, translator and radio editor, Warsaw.
Krzysztof Wyrzykowski, Warsaw.
Ewa Zarzycka-Bérard, sociologist of culture, Paris.
Marek Żelazkiewicz, California.