

Formal translation of the letter

President of
the Republic of Poland

Warsaw, 6 March 2018

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The genesis of March 1968, one of the most dramatic "Polish months", is closely related to the Polish patriotic ethos and freedom - a value fundamental to our community. It was no coincidence that the *Dziady* performance at the National Theatre, which aroused spontaneous enthusiasm among the audience, as well as the rally at the Adam Mickiewicz monument in Warsaw triggered the events whose 50th anniversary is commemorated by us today.

I consider it deeply symbolic that it was precisely the masterpiece of our Romanticism-period poet, describing such virtues as courage, bravery, sacrifice and heroism, uniting our community in its striving for independence, which served as a sparkle to kindle the hearts of the youth. All across Poland, university and school students, as well as workers took to the streets. They wanted a new, different kind of Poland: free, based on the rule of law and just. The communist regime violently suppressed the protests. Large numbers of demonstrators were beaten up by the Militia and arrested. Participants of the demonstrations faced repressions: imprisonment, layoffs, expulsions from universities, punitive military conscriptions.

The authorities unleashed a campaign against the leaders of the movement, slandering the entire Polish intelligentsia. The propaganda attacks were aimed in particular against persons of Jewish origin. Polish Jews, a small number of survivors of German extermination, who for hundreds of years had co-created, along with Poles, the Republic of Friends, were declared to be foreign by the communists. The regime wanted to hound them out of Polishness once and for all, they denied them the right to citizenship in our community, forced them to emigrate using harassment.

Today, 50 years later, in Poland which is once again sovereign and democratic, we remember with sadness the immensity of human drama, caused by the shameful actions of the then authorities. But at the same time, we know that the lawlessness and communist manipulations defeated neither the spirit of freedom, building our community, nor the unity between Poles and Jews. May these anniversary commemorations remind us of the victory of solidarity over hatred. May they stand for strong brotherly bonds among all freedom-loving people.

Kind regards,

/-/ Andrzej Duda