



24th February 2014

H.E. Donald Tusk
Prime Minister
Republic of Poland
Al. Ujazdowskie 1/3
00-583 Warsaw
POLAND

Dear Prime Minister Tusk,

As British parliamentarians, we have celebrated Poland's emergence as a vibrant democracy and strongly support the close relationship between our two countries. We have followed the welcome efforts by previous Polish governments over the past two decades to adopt a private property restitution law and were disappointed by your government's decision to cease such efforts. We write to urge your government to provide restitution to ageing Holocaust survivors and their families and to other victims whose property was unjustly taken during the Holocaust and its aftermath.

Poland has a responsibility to elderly Holocaust survivors, their heirs and other victims to return their property which was seized by the Nazis or subsequently nationalized by the Communist regimes. The remnant of these victims and their heirs has waited more than seventy years for a small measure of justice and compensation. While property was confiscated during the occupation of Poland or during the Communist period, democratic Poland continues unjustly to benefit from the victims' private property. Many of these victims and their heirs – both Jews and non-Jews – are British citizens.

Unfortunately, Poland stands out in its failure to fulfil – or even recognize – its responsibility to victims. As you know, Poland was the country in which many of the worst cases of Nazi genocide and theft and the harshest Communist property expropriation occurred. Of 3,500,000 Polish Jews, about 90% – over 3,000,000 innocent men, women and children – were murdered in the Holocaust by the Nazis. Despite this tragic history, Poland is the only member state of the European Union and the only major country in the former Soviet bloc without a law to restore or compensate for private property taken by the Nazis or nationalized by Communist governments from Jews and non-Jews alike.

We respectfully urge a strong, democratic and prosperous Poland to honour its commitment to the foundational democratic principle of property rights and provide some degree of remedy for the great injustices of the past. In the two and a half decades since the end of Communism, Polish leaders have repeatedly pledged to pass legislation for real property restitution or compensation. The Terezin Declaration on Holocaust Era Assets and Related Issues and the Guidelines and Best Practices for the Restitution and Compensation of Immovable (Real) Property Confiscated or Otherwise Wrongfully Seized by the Nazis, Fascists and Their Collaborators during the Holocaust (Shoah) Era between 1933-1945, including the Periods of World War II have been adopted by over forty countries and are now accepted as international principles regarding how property confiscated by Nazi and Communist authorities should be handled.

We urge you to play a leadership role in promoting comprehensive legislation on private property restitution. Now is the time, while some of the elderly victims are still alive and many of them desperately require financial and medical assistance, for Poland to fulfil its obligations to these Jewish and non-Jewish victims.

Yours faithfully

The Baroness Deech and other signatories attached

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Lord Anderson of Swansea
Lord Beecham
Lord Bew
Lord Carlile of Berriew
Lord Collins of Mapesbury
Lord Dholakia
Baroness Eaton
Lord Fink
Lord Finkelstein
Lord Gold
Lord Goldsmith
Lord Grade of Yarmouth
Baroness Greenfield
Baroness Greengross
Lord Haskel
Lord Kalms
Lord Kestenbaum
Lord Leigh of Hurley
Lord Levy
Lord Mendelsohn
Lord Mitchell
Baroness Neuberger
Lord Palmer of Childs Hill
Lord Pannick
Baroness Ramsay of Cartvale
Baroness Richardson of Calow
Lord Sacks
Lord Singh of Wimbledon
Lord Smith of Clifton
Lord Sterling of Plaistow
Lord Turnberg
Lord Wills
Lord Winston
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House of Commons

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