

British sportscasters have more of a claim on pontificating on stadium manners than German journalists pontificating on the issue of tolerance. If I may cite Jacek Kaczmarski [singer and composer, *Ed.*], “There are still people here who wake up during the night screaming.” We Poles saw three of our generations wasted because of German aggression in 1939. We saw our educated classes wiped out. I wish we could easily remove from our collective memory the unprecedented bestiality and aggression directed at us by the *Herrensvolk*. We are still coping with the corruption and demoralization that inevitably take root in a brutalized nation. We are still shouldering—and will shoulder for a long time—material losses that foreign occupation has caused. Should not a nation that three generations ago built its totalitarian system so perfectly learn a bit of humility? Yes, Germans are now engaged in building a perfectly democratic system, but shouldn’t humility be a part of their historical memory and of that system? Perhaps Germans will soon begin to teach us how to combat the kind of anti-Semitism that leads to extermination camps for millions.

Speaking of which, in recent years Germans have become all too willing to share the responsibility for the Holocaust with the rest of Europe. During her interview Ms. Lesser waved a periodical published by a society of professional antiracists, *Nigdy więcej*, demanding that Polish authorities take stringent measures against the alleged cases of racism described therein. The fact that a number of these cases were shown to have been staged is of no interest to Ms. Lesser. She only listens to one side; the other side is by definition racist. Ms. Lesser’s performance seems to have one goal: present Poles as being somewhere at the humanoid level and requiring the magnificent German journalists to teach them what tolerance really means.

I am far from maintaining that as a community we Poles are free of blemish, or that as individuals we do not sin, but with all our sins and blemishes we have avoided the totalitarian temptation in the twentieth century. Our streets are not as clean as German streets and our citizens are not as law-abiding as German citizens, but our political conscience is clean. We do not have to castrate our family histories and rewrite national history to show that, in fact, we were a brave anti-Nazi nation. By and large, the Polish educated classes had the courage to oppose both German and Soviet totalitarianism—oppose it not only intellectually but also physically. They did not fall for a primitive

mythology and they maintained their Christian identity. The Polish educated classes turned out to be wiser than their counterparts in Germany. Perhaps they continue to be wiser?

Therefore, even though we Poles have many shortcomings, Ms. Lesser ought to take advantage of the occasion to keep silent and abstain from teaching tolerance of one’s neighbor to Poles, especially since her comments on Polsat, deeply steeped in tactless and aggressive *Hochmut*, have the potential of harming Polish-German cooperation. Δ

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Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855) competes with Juliusz Słowacki, Cyprian Norwid, and Zygmunt Krasiński for the title of the greatest poet of Polish Romanticism.

Ferdinand A. Ossendowski (1876–1945) traveled widely in Russia and Asia. His most popular book, *Beasts, Men and Gods* [1922], had many English editions.

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