

Israeli Embassy Criticises the Appointment of a Fascist Sympathiser as the New Head of the Institute of National Remembrance in Wrocław



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The Israeli embassy in Poland has issued a statement criticizing the appointment of Mr. Tomasz Greniuch as the new head of the Institute of National Remembrance in Wrocław. The man, a historian by training, is known for his controversial past as a former member of a far-right nationalist organization and a Roman salute apologist.

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Tomasz Greniuch, a historian with a PhD from the Catholic University of Lublin specializing in the history of Poland's underground National Armed Forces, has taken over the position of the director of the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) in Wrocław on February 9. Before his promotion, he was the head of the local IPN branch in Opole.

The announcement of his nomination was met with great controversy. Among others, members of the Left party and the Greens have protested the decision. The deputy mayor of Wrocław, Sebastian Lorenc, has explicitly called Mr. Greniuch a "persona non-grata", and referred to his nomination as "a slap in the face of the victims of Fascism and Nazism".

The Israeli embassy in Poland has now also taken a stance on the decision.

"We were surprised to learn that the new director of the IPN branch in Wrocław, Mr. Tomasz Greniuch, sees nothing wrong in using the Nazi salute. In Poland, a country which suffered so much under Nazi occupation, there should be no place for Nazi symbols" - reads a brief statement published on the embassy's social media account. "We encourage Mr. Tomasz Greniuch to visit the Auschwitz Museum whose mission is to remind the entire world of the dangers of Nazi ideology."

The new director and his controversial past

An old photograph showing young Mr. Greniuch wearing a T-shirt with the logo of the National Radical Camp (ONR), with his right hand extended in a Roman salute, can still be found on the internet. After the announcement of his nomination, the photograph has only drawn more attention. The picture was most likely taken in the town of Myślenice, during a demonstration Mr. Greniuch organized to commemorate a 1936 anti-Jewish pogrom.

The new head of the Wrocław branch of the Institute of National Remembrance organized such nationalist demonstrations while still being a member of the far-right National-Radical Camp and a spokesman for its local chapter in Opole.

In 2006, Mr. Greniuch posted several pictures showing ONR members with their right hands extended in a Nazi salute on his blog. The photos were taken during one of the organization's meetings at the Opole University Academic Club.

- It was just a regular Christmas-time meeting, and I was the only person in the club who performed the gesture," Mr. Greniuch told "Wyborcza" back then. – The salute is used by nationalists all over the world. Why should I be responsible for the fact that Hitler appropriated it? Already the ancient Romans used it – he argued.

- Tomasz Greniuch has been known for many years as a propagator of extreme nationalist ideology - Dr. Anna Tatar from the 'Never Again' Association has told us. She recalled that Mr. Greniuch also organized nationalist demonstrations and wrote a book entitled "The Way of the Nationalist": - In it, he praised Léon Degrelle, a Belgian SS officer sentenced in absentia to death for collaboration, or Corneliu Codreanu, the founder of the Iron Guard- a Romanian fascist group responsible for murdering Jews.

IPN defends its new director

Coming to Mr. Greniuch's defense, the Institute of National Remembrance emphasizes that during his work at its branch in Opole, Tomasz Greniuch "became known as a good organizer" who "furthered the branch's activity, and opened it up to new networks, such veterans and local governments".

The Institute points out that "the allegations directed against Mr. Tomasz Greniuch concern his behavior from the days of his youth. He admitted that some of his actions were a mistake and apologized for them on multiple occasions".

Exactly where and when Mr. Greniuch apologized for his behavior remains a mystery. We have not found any such information. Besides, a year and a half ago, when a journalist from Onet.pl asked Mr. Greniuch about his nationalist past, the historian did not apologize. He argued that his "views have nothing to do with scientific work".

Referring to the fact that his colleagues from ONR used the Nazi salute during a ceremony on St. Anne Mountain, in a 2012 interview with a local newspaper, he admitted that performing the gesture "was a mistake," but he again defended it, saying that in the nationalist circles "it is still considered to be a Roman salute that has purely national roots."

<https://wyborcza.pl/7,173236,26792065,israeli-embassy-criticises-the-appointment-of-a-fascist-sympathiser.html>