Dear Editor

FALSE CLAIMS BY DISMISSED CHARITY EXECUTIVE

The recent Letter to the Editor (17 October 2014) from former Kresy-Siberia executive, Miss Eva Szegidewicz, contained a multitude of knowingly false and therefore defamatory claims. Miss Szegidewicz was removed from her position of trust by the Kresy-Siberia Foundation, in accordance with its Code of Conduct, following personal conflicts of interest in the management of the non-profit charity's government grants.

These defamatory claims demand a published defence of Kresy-Siberia and its reputation so that we can continue our non-profit mission to preserve, promote and honour the memory of the citizens of Poland who fought for freedom and survival against Soviet Russian, Nazi German and Nationalist Ukrainian forces in eastern Poland and in exile during World War II.

Miss Szegidewicz's claims that Kresy-Siberia's very successful GENERATIONS REMEMBER 2014 conference in Warsaw on 17-19 September, left “participants who had travelled from around the world disappointed and unhappy” because “numbers attending the 3-day event were inaccurate, no senior government members attended and key speakers dropped out” are false and defamatory. The fact is that over 150 enthusiastic delegates attended from 8 countries. Numerous senior government officials attended – including the Deputy Foreign Minister, Senate Deputy Speaker, Senate Committee Chair and Deputy Chairs, and senior staff from the IPN Institute of National Remembrance, the Senate secretariat, the Army Museum and the Office of Veterans and Oppressed Persons. Prestigious key speakers included Katyn Museum Director, Sławomir Frańczak, historian Roger Moorhouse, Pulitzer-winning author Anne Applebaum and acclaimed film director Wanda Kosúa.

Her claims that “recently six Executive Committee members either resigned or were dismissed by the self-styled Founding President… because they questioned his autocratic management of Foundation business and lack of financial clarity” are false and defamatory. The fact is that, after many years of service, one executive resigned due to health reasons, 3 resigned following an ill-conceived attempt to force leadership changes, and 2 were dismissed for refusing to sign a Code of Conduct designed to ensure a high standard of integrity and behaviour in the best interest of Kresy-Siberia.

Her claims that “UK Charity Commission is investigating a personal conflict of interest and financial irregularities arising from his misuse of a $10,000 grant” are false and defamatory. The fact is that, although a spurious, anonymous complaint has been lodged and responded to, there is no announced investigation and no mention of Kresy-Siberia (UK) on the Commission’s website, where it posts all of its official investigations.

Her claims that “Mr Wisniowski removed monies which were used to stage the Navy Exhibition… by his life-partner whom he himself appointed and paid for her work” are false and defamatory. The fact is that Kresy-Siberia (UK)’s Board of Trustees, including Miss Szegidewicz, approved the Navy Exhibition project plan and detailed budget proposed by the Foundation’s Project Manager, including her honorarium. The Trustees unanimously agreed that this Project Manager was the most qualified
person to run the Navy Exhibition project as she was the writer and champion of the grant application, a history graduate, a marketing professional and the impassioned daughter of a Polish Navy sailor.

Her claims that “As a result of Trustees’ objections Mr Wisniowski called an Extraordinary General Meeting intended to dismiss them all single-handedly and without warning” are false and defamatory. The fact is that the Kresy-Siberia Foundation called the GM in accordance with all proper procedures and with the clearly stated purpose of submitting all Trustee positions to new elections. This was done to restore the legitimacy of the Board of Trustees itself. As noted previously, several incumbent Trustees had challenged the legality of their own appointments, going as far as to cite incorrect or misinterpreted legal advice, which was later corrected and reversed. These quixotic Trustees then resigned in frustration or astonishingly failed to meet qualification criteria for re-election at the GM.

Her claims that “UK taxpayers’ donations and grants have been transferred to the Foundation in Warsaw on Mr Wisniowski’s orders” are false and defamatory. The fact is that these funds originated from non-UK as well as domestic grants and donations. All payments were recorded as grants in keeping with the charity’s objects, all were approved by the UK charity’s Trustees and all were used to support the Kresy-Siberia Virtual Museum, including its IT costs, Survivor Interview processing, exhibition development, and photograph and document management. This is precisely what the UK charity was established to support and what these specific grants and gifts were intended to fund.

Her claims that Kresy-Siberia internet discussion group participants “pay an annual membership fee but have no voting rights” are false and defamatory. The fact is that, although some people do pay a voluntary charitable donation to help support Kresy-Siberia’s mission, there is no cost to join in the discussion group. Making fees mandatory or giving charity voting rights or any other benefits in exchange for voluntary donations would be improper and would jeopardise the charity’s legal status.

Her claims that “only the sole Member, Mr Wisniowski, has a vote and total power and control over the UK charity” are false and defamatory. The fact is that the Kresy-Siberia Foundation is the sole Member that established Kresy-Siberia (UK) as its UK charity to help raise funds and other support for Kresy-Siberia’s mission. By law, only Kresy-Siberia (UK)’s Trustees have a vote and total power and control over the UK charity. These all-powerful Trustees are named by the Foundation’s Executive Committee, of which the Foundation President is not a member.

For over a decade, Kresy-Siberia has worked as a friendly and mutually supportive worldwide group of over 1,200 members, avoiding the bitter infighting that other groups have fallen victim to. The quantity and quality of its work is beyond compare. Since 2001, Kresy-Siberia has formed funding and collaboration partnerships with over 50 organisations and agencies around the world. It has won over two-dozen grant competitions worth over half a million pounds. Its Honorary Patrons include Poland’s Senate Speaker Bogdan Borusewicz, Parliament Speaker Radosław Sikorski and Poland’s last President-in-Exile, the late Ryszard Kaczorowski. Its group of eminent supporters includes leading authors such as Norman Davies, Anne Applebaum and Zbigniew Brzeziński. It has won two-dozen grant competitions worth over half a million pounds.

These important collaborative connections have enabled Kresy-Siberia to develop a unique internet Virtual Museum, featuring 9 historical galleries, 29 permanent exhibit rooms and 7 specially curated displays. Kresy-Siberia members have filmed and exhibited interviews with over 700 Survivors from all around the world, scanned and catalogued over 13,500 historical photos and documents, and listed over 65,000 names and profiles of Sybiraks, Kresovians and military and civilian exiles on the Virtual Wall of Names. Kresy-Siberia’s media presence also includes a Facebook page with over 2,000 “friends”, a Twitter feed with over 1,700 followers and a dedicated YouTube channel. Kresy-Siberia has held over 50 film screenings around the world and even co-produced a multi-award-winning documentary. It has exhibited at a dozen shows and festivals around the world and mounted physical stand-alone exhibitions in Warsaw, Melbourne and Monte Carlo. Kresy-Siberia convened its first international conference in 2014 at Poland’s Senate and Katyn Museum.
More personally, Kresy-Siberia has helped Survivors gain recognition for their experiences, including sponsoring awards of the “Cross of Siberian Exile” medal. It has helped Descendants to learn about their family’s often-painful wartime experiences. It has helped reunite Kresy families divided by the ravages of war and vast spans of time and distance. It has broken down ethnic and racial stereotypes, and helped Survivors inside and outside Poland to learn about their former Kresy neighbours’ goodness and evilness. In recognition for its work, the Kresy-Siberia Foundation has been awarded the “Pro Memoriam” Medal from Poland’s Office for Veterans and Oppressed Persons and has been nominated for the Senate’s “Guardian of the Republic’s Heritage” award.

Unfortunately, the need to manage significant financial resources to build and maintain this extraordinary Virtual Museum, including interviewing Survivors and promoting our history, has led to the kind of internal jealousies and power struggles that have damaged many other worthy organisations. However, we refuse to let such invidious personal agendas damage Kresy-Siberia’s core mission or demoralise its leadership. We will strenuously defend our reputation by all means available and have put ourselves at the disposal of anyone who seeks to know the true facts about our non-profit work.

With 2015 marking the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II, we will not let toxic personal campaigns distract us from honouring Poland’s citizens who fought for freedom and survival in the eastern Kresy and in exile during this horrific war. While the last of these unsung heroes still walks amongst us, we will pay homage to them by:

- Assisting their descendants’ to research and preserve their family’s wartime experiences;
- Recording Polish wartime Survivor interviews;
- Digitising Survivor's personal documents and memoirs;
- Presenting these Polish wartime histories in our online Virtual Museum, www.Kresy-Siberia.org;
- Promoting these histories to the public in events such as the “Who Do You Think You Are? Live!” genealogy show from 12-13 April 2015 in Birmingham;
- Holding reunions for Survivors and their descendants to pass on these histories;
- Helping to launch the new Katyn Museum in Warsaw on 17 September 2015.

All people of good will who are interested in our mission are warmly invited to join Kresy-Siberia’s mutually supportive global network of over 1,200 volunteer members and supporters, including hundreds in the United Kingdom. Working in partnership with museums, associations, universities, filmmakers and funders, we will take forward and develop the exciting initiatives that emerged from our very successful GENERATIONS REMEMBER 2014 members’ conference. We will continue to back all of this with the fundraising power and expertise of our foundation, registered in Poland, and our supporting charities registered in the UK and other countries.

By adhering to our values of inclusiveness, integrity and mutual support, we will continue making a difference in preserving and promoting the memory of our beloved families and of all our countrymen who heroically fought for freedom and survival during World War II.

Sincerely,

STEFAN WISNIOWSKI
Kresy-Siberia Foundation
President
Kresy-Siberia (UK)
Chairman of Trustees

ANNA PACEWICZ
Kresy-Siberia Foundation
Executive Committee Chairperson
Kresy-Siberia (UK)
Trustee

TIM BUCKNALL
Kresy-Siberia Foundation
Executive Committee Member
Kresy-Siberia (UK)
Secretary-Treasurer
Sir,

Readers should be aware that the seemingly successful picture painted by Barbara Dembinska, her glowing endorsement of Stefan Wisniowski and his life-partner Anna Pacewicz in "Kresy-Syberia Pamiec Pokolen" 12 października 2014 should be put in context. The reality we are told was somewhat different: numbers attending the 3-day event were inaccurate, no senior government members attended and key speakers dropped out, leaving participants who had travelled from around the world disappointed and unhappy.

The international Kresy-Siberia Foundation is in crisis: recently six Executive Committee members either resigned or were dismissed by the self-styled Founding President Mr Wisniowski who resides in Sydney, Australia because they questioned his autocratic management of Foundation business and lack of financial clarity. This critical problem impacts on the charitable institutions Kresy-Siberia (UK), (USA), (Canada) and (Australia). He has already been removed from Kresy-Siberia (USA) and relations with his Foundation have been suspended.

The UK Charity Commission is investigating a personal conflict of interest and financial irregularities arising from his misuse of a $10,000 grant won by the UK Trustees from the EMC Digital Heritage Trust. Mr Wisniowski removed monies which were used to stage the Navy Exhibition (mentioned by Ms Dembinska) by his life-partner whom he himself appointed and paid for her work.

As a result of Trustees' objections Mr Wisniowski called an Extraordinary General Meeting intended to dismiss them all single-handedly and without warning unless they signed a contract promising to obey him. The Charity Commission is investigating the legality of this meeting and its outcome. He appointed two new inexperienced Trustees and himself as the third. One has since left and been replaced by his life-partner. This leaves just one UK-based Trustee running the charity together with two living in Australia.

Since 2009 £41,000 of UK taxpayers' donations and grants have been transferred to the Foundation in Warsaw on Mr Wisniowski's orders. This money represents many hours of loyal, dedicated, voluntary work by the recently dismissed long-serving Trustees.

Members of his Yahoo discussion group pay an annual membership fee but have no voting rights. Only the sole Member, Mr Wisniowski, has a vote and total power and control over the UK charity.

Yours faithfully,

Eva Szegidewicz on behalf of worried current and ex Kresy-Siberia members
0161 445 6904
Manchester
Polska poczta

Propozycja: Pochwała poczty Polskiej

Pochwała pochwała po słynnych. Poczta Polska, podobnie jak inne firmy, które są w odniesieniu do pracowników, pracowniców i klientów, jest w stanie wyróżnić jako model swego działania, jest w stanie wyróżnić jako model swego działania. Poczta Polska jest w stanie wyróżnić jako model swego działania.

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Wartość poczty

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