

Institute of National Remembrance

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The IPN restores the memory of the NKVD victims

“Stalin knew that he would not transform Poles living in the USSR into Soviets despite the long lasting communist indoctrination. That was a price for being Polish, “ said President of the Institute of National Remembrance, Jarosław Szarek during the commemorative event for the victims of the Soviet Security “Polish Operation” 1937-1938 in the USSR.



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On 11 August 1937, with Joseph Stalin's approval, Nikolai Yezhov signed the top secret NKVD Order No. 00485 to start the so called "Polish Operation". At least 139,835 people were subjected to repression, and more than 110,000 of them murdered – shot at the back of the head. They were gaoled on charges of belonging to the fictional Polish diversionist and espionage groups and POW units. It was the largest ethnic cleansing during the Great Purge campaign. Until recently, the knowledge has remained limited. Our duty is to restore the 110,000 victims their rightful place in the Polish national memory.

On 11 August 2019 during the commemoration, representatives of the government and local authorities laid wreaths and flowers at the Monument to the Fallen and Murdered in the East, Muranowska Street,

Warsaw. The wreath laying ceremony was followed by special letters by President of Poland, Andrzej Duda, Speaker of the Sejm, Elżbieta Witek and Prime Minister, Mateusz Morawiecki.

In his speech, the iPN President Dr Jarosław Szarek stressed that more than a hundred thousand Poles had been murdered only because “they kept the Polish soul, they did not become communists, they did not go Soviets.” “A few words in Polish were enough, a Polish prayer was enough, and that meant a death sentence,” he added.

He also pointed that it is our duty to remember the victims and their descendants: “There where the “NKVD Polish Operation” had its bloodiest course, we hear the Polish language, we have Polish schools – Zhytomyr, Vinnytsia, Bar... We will never leave our countrymen behind the eastern border alone. We remember and will remember them!

The celebration was organised by the Institute of National Remembrance and the Office for War Veterans and Victims of Oppression.

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