

Institute of National Remembrance

<https://ipn.gov.pl/en/digital-resources/articles/7371,Under-the-red-boot.html>

27.04.2024, 21:18

10.02.2021

Under the red boot

It wasn't an "ordinary" attack, because even assuming that every aggression is unique on its own, it's hard not to notice some unprecedented aspects of the soviet invasion of Poland on September 17th, 1939. For the first time ever, one country invaded another claiming that the invaded one... didn't exist.



Narrative: abolishing of a country

This was the Soviet stance on Poland on the 17th day of the German occupation, in an infamous note handed to Wacław Grzybowski, the

Polish ambassador in the Soviet Union, on September 17th 1939. The note said, that Warsaw was no longer the capital of Poland and that the Polish government was disbanded. All this was supposed to mean that the Polish state “factually” ceased to exist.

The Soviets went even further in creating an excuse for their aggression, claiming in a shocking document, that Poland left for itself was a place where different kinds of initiatives that could be a threat to the Soviet Union could sprout from. The “final nail in the coffin” were the note’s closing words stating that the Soviet government, unable to remain indifferent to the situation of the defenceless, “brotherly” Ukrainian and Belarusian people, ordered the Red Army to cross the Polish border and take these people under its protection.

Why did Kremlin portray itself in the document as a party which wasn’t involved in the war? After all, it didn’t make a pact with Germany on the 23rd of August, 1939 to then remain neutral in the face of the German occupation of Poland. On the contrary, the very essence of that pact was the division of Poland’s territory between the Third Reich and the Soviet Union (on the line of Narew, Vistula and San rivers), which couldn’t have been done peacefully. War was the only way to achieve that. Hence, the Kremlin authorities decided to “have a cake and eat it too”, meaning they decided to invade Poland and take the lands given to them in the August pact and at the same time avoid accusations of an armed aggression. To achieve this goal, they perpetrated a propagandist thesis, that the taken territory was no man’s land, since the Polish state was allegedly non-existent at the

time.

Read the full text by Sławomir Kalbarczyk on the IPN's NextStopHistory website.

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