

Institute of National Remembrance

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The IPN pays tribute to the victims of the NKVD "Polish Operation" in 1937-1938 - Warsaw, 11 August 2020

“In a few days we are celebrating our greatest military triumph of the 20th century, the defeat of the Bolshevik army. Its value seems even greater in the context of today's anniversary. Were it not for the victory over the Bolsheviks, the 'Polish Operation' would have been dated 1920,” said the President of the Institute of National Remembrance, Jarosław Szarek, Ph.D. during the ceremony at the Warsaw Monument to the Fallen and Murdered in the East.















On 11 August 2020, the Institute of National Remembrance jointly with the Office for Veterans and Victims of Oppression organized a ceremony to commemorate the thousands of victims of the "Polish Operation" carried out by the NKVD in the years 1937-1938.

The following persons attended the ceremony: Deputy Speaker of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland Małgorzata Gosiewska, Head of the Office for Veterans and Victims of Oppression Jan Józef Kasprzyk, judge

Bogusław Nizieński, Director of the IPN's National Education Office
Adam Hlebowicz, Deputy Directors of the IPN's Archive Mariusz
Żuławnik and Mariusz Kwaśniak. Priest Colonel Zbigniew Kępa led a
common prayer for the victims of Stalinist terror. The ceremony ended
with the ceremony of laying flowers in front of the monument.

On 11 August 1937 Nikolai Yezhov, the People's Commissar for Internal
Affairs of the USSR (head of the NKVD) issued order No. 00485, under
which, on suspicion of belonging to the fictitious Polish Military
Organization (POW), no fewer than 139 835 people were repressed,
111 091 of which were murdered, mostly with a shot in the back of the
head.

The anti-Polish operation carried out by the NKVD was unprecedented
in the scale of crime and cruelty. Poles died almost forty times more
often than other citizens of the USSR. Moreover, under the order No.
00486 of 15 August 1937, also issued by Yezhov, the wives and
children of the convicted "traitors of the Fatherland" were subjected to
repressions.

"NKVD conducted the arrests according to special lists prepared by
local authorities. Mere shadow of suspicion - any connection with
Poland, the slightest manifestation of attachment to Polishness or
religion - was sufficient to find a person guilty. The lists were approved
by Yezhov and Andrey Vyshinsky, Procurator General of the Soviet
Union. However, this was only a formality. From the preserved
documentation we know that two thousand such approvals were issued
every day. (...) Descriptions of the arrests are no different from the

reports about German pacification of villages in occupied Poland," Jarosław Szarek, President of the Institute of National Remembrance, wrote in the introduction to the "Anti-Polish Operation of the NKVD 1937-1938 ", published by the Institute in 2017.

As he recalled, Yezhov continuously informed Stalin on the course of the anti-Polish action, to which he responded with the words: "Very good! Keep digging to remove this Polish dirt."

Despite such a huge scale of crime, the "Polish operation" of the NKVD from years 1937-1938 to this day has not functioned in collective consciousness. In the times of the Polish People's Republic, terror of the 1930s was reduced to the "period of Stalinist errors and distortions", when members of the Communist Party of Poland were the only victims. In the memory of the West, on the other hand, the Great Terror is identified only with the publicized show trials of the leading Bolshevik leaders.

Actions undertaken by the Institute of National Remembrance are designed to change this state of affairs and grant this mass murder on the Polish nation a proper place in collective consciousness and social memory. "We owe this to our ancestors who were victims of the Soviet genocide in the late 1930s. They do not even have graves, and the only trace of them are the increasingly widely discovered documents, which in a dispassionate way recorded the sentences issued in a few minutes: "shoot, and confiscate the personal property". The Institute of National Remembrance will do its utmost to ensure that these victims find their place on the Polish Golgotha of the 20th century," announced

the President of the Institute of National Remembrance.

On 11 August 2017 in Warsaw, for the first time, state celebrations of the anniversary of the Soviet genocide on Poles took place. In connection with the 80th anniversary of mass murders on Polish citizens in the USSR, the Institute of National Remembrance has prepared a special educational website operacja-polska.pl entirely devoted to the victims of the NKVD crimes. The website has been prepared in cooperation with the Center for Polish-Russian Dialogue and Understanding. It features witnesses' accounts, documentary films, popular science articles, documents from the Soviet archives, timetable of crimes, a map of memorial sites, and a database of the victims. The Institute is determined to document by name and surname the largest possible number of people executed as part of the "Polish operation" of the NKVD.

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