

# Institute of National Remembrance

<https://ipn.gov.pl/en/news/4454,The-European-Day-of-Remembrance-for-the-Victims-of-Totalitarian-Regimes-23-Augus.html>

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## The European Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Totalitarian Regimes, 23 August 2020

On 23 August 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union signed an agreement that opened the way to World War II along with all its consequences, including concentration camps, crematoria, gulags, and in its aftermath the long years of "Cold War" – which entailed further oppression for many countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The European Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Totalitarian Regimes is celebrated on the anniversary of the signing of the Molotov – Ribbentrop Pact.



The European Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Totalitarian Regimes was proclaimed by the European Parliament in 2008. The ceremonial celebrations of this day were organized for the first time in 2011 in Warsaw. The signatories of the "Warsaw Declaration" drew public attention to the necessity of cultivating the memory of totalitarian regimes and called on the European Union to collect documentation and investigate matters related to these crimes. In subsequent years, celebrations with the participation of EU justice ministers were held in Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland.

‘The purpose of the activity of the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity, of which the IPN is a member, is to analyze, document and propagate the history of 20th century, a century of wars, totalitarian dictatorships and the suffering of civilian populations, the

victims of wars, persecution, conquest, forced expulsions and nationalist, racist and ideologically motivated repression'. The Network members are : Germany, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania. Austria, Latvia, Albania and Georgia have the status of observer countries.

Moreover, for years, the Institute of National Remembrance has been carrying out its statutory mission of researching and documenting totalitarian crimes as well as commemorating their victims. The IPN is one of the 21 founding members of the Platform of European Memory and Conscience established in 2011, whose aim is to cooperate in spreading knowledge on totalitarian systems. The most important tasks of the organization include the creation of a free and fully accessible documentation database on communist crimes, and work for education on totalitarianism in Europe.

The European Remembrance and Solidarity Network marks the European Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Totalitarian Regimes by carrying out an educational campaign "Remember. August 23". The aim of the project is to cultivate memory of the victims of Nazism, Stalinism and all other totalitarian ideologies, whom we strive to portray not as an anonymous collective, but individuals with their own distinctive stories and fates. By doing so, we also want to increase public awareness of the threats posed by extremist ideologies. This year's campaign sheds light on the story of Milada Horáková and Kazimierz Moczarski and presents infographics on the Molotov - Ribbentrop Pact.

# THE MOLOTOV-RIBBENTROP PACT

Also known as the Treaty of Non-Aggression between Germany and the USSR  
**25 August 1939**

The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was a non-aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union, signed on 23 August 1939. It was a significant event in the lead-up to World War II, as it allowed Germany to invade Poland without fear of Soviet intervention.



## CIRCUMSTANCES



## KEY FIGURES

**Soviet side**

**Vyacheslav Molotov**  
 Soviet Foreign Minister

**Joseph Stalin**  
 General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union

**German side**

**Joachim von Ribbentrop**  
 German Foreign Minister

**Ernst Dietrich Graf von Helldorf**  
 German Ambassador to the Soviet Union

## THE AGREEMENT

**The secret protocol**

The secret protocol of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact divided Eastern Europe into German and Soviet spheres of influence. It stipulated that Germany would have a sphere of influence in Central Europe, while the Soviet Union would have a sphere of influence in the Baltic states and Eastern Europe. The protocol also outlined the division of Poland between the two powers.

## AFTERMATH

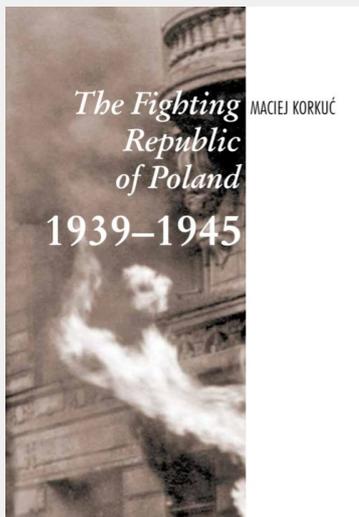
**Germany**

Germany's invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, marked the beginning of World War II. The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact had allowed Germany to do so without Soviet intervention.

**Europe in August 1939**



We would like to take this opportunity to recommend reading "The Fighting Republic of Poland 1939-1945" – a popular publication for young people authored by Maciej Korkuć Ph.D., available in numerous languages. The publication, addressed primarily to young people and foreigners, provides the reader with the most important information on the fate of the Polish state during World War II in an accessible and concise manner.



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## Downloads

["The Fighting Republic of Poland 1939-1945" \(pdf, 26.76 MB\)](#)

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