

Institute of National Remembrance

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The European Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Totalitarian Regimes, 23 August 2021

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'.

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 Jaan Kross, an acclaimed Estonian writer, several times nominee to the Nobel Prize in Literature, who suffered persecution and imprisonment by both Nazi German and Soviet totalitarian regimes.

Jaan Kross (1920–2007) was an Estonian writer, a symbol of resistance

against totalitarianism and the 'conscience of the Estonian people'. His promising lawyer's career was thwarted by the war and Estonia's incorporation to the USSR. In 1944, during the Nazi occupation, he spent half a year in jail, and after the country was re-occupied by the Soviet Union, he was sentenced to slave labour in the Gulag (1946-1952). Kross managed to survive despite all odds and once back in his hometown Tallinn in 1954 he devoted himself to literature. Although he was also a translator and poet, international acclaim (crowned with several nominations to the Nobel Prize in Literature) came to Jaan Kross thanks to his historical novels.

Another important aspect of the campaign is commemorative pins with a black ribbon. Over the years, the ENRS has distributed them at museums and memorial sites across Europe. This year, given the risks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, we recommend downloading the e-version of the pin in the form of a Facebook profile photo frame. It can be found on the ENRS fanpage: www.facebook.com/enrs.eu or using the following link: <https://cutt.ly/23August-join-us>.

Watch the IPN's production: 'The Unconquered' - an animated film that shows the fight of Poles for freedom, from the first day of World War II to the fall of communism in 1989.

We would also like to take this opportunity to recommend reading "The Fighting Republic of Poland 1939-1945" – a popular publication for young people authored by Maciej Korcuć 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.

More:

[Statement by the Institute of National Remembrance in connection with the attempts to manipulate history on the anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact](#)

[A statement in connection with Russian attempts to distort the truth about Soviet crimes](#)

[Polish-Soviet diplomatic relations from the Peace of Riga to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact](#)

[Soviet aggression on Poland from 17 September 1939](#)

Downloads

["The Fighting Republic of Poland 1939-1945" authored by Maciej Korcuć Ph.D. PDF \(pdf, 26.76 MB\)](#)

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