

# Institute of National Remembrance

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## European Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Totalitarian Regimes: an address by the IPN's President Karol Nawrocki

In November 1925, when the New York Times quoted Joseph Goebbels comparing Vladimir Lenin to Adolf Hitler, or when two years later Adolf Hitler announced, “We are socialists, we oppose capitalism!” no one could expect that this conspiracy, the ‘pact for war’ between the USSR and the German Reich, would actually take on a diplomatic shape. It was on 23 August 1939 in the Kremlin that Joseph Stalin toasted Adolf Hitler, and Joachim von Ribbentrop and Vyacheslav Molotov signed the pact. This agreement meant the end of the independence of six, then sovereign, states. It also marked the beginning of the most horrific of all wars.

Even though the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact resembled other non-aggression agreements in its form, the four paragraphs of the annexed secret protocol became the spark which ignited World War II, the bloodiest of all wars. By the 2008 decision of the European Parliament, 23 August is commemorated as the European Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Totalitarian Regimes.

Let us remember all the people who fell victim to these two, equally criminal totalitarian systems.

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