

# Institute of National Remembrance

<https://ipn.gov.pl/en/news/8908,The-opening-of-the-An-American-in-Ukraine-Photographs-by-Julien-Bryan-1930-1958-.html>

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The opening of the An American in Ukraine. Photographs by Julien Bryan, 1930-1958/ An American in Warsaw. Photographs of Julien Bryan from September 1939 exhibition, Kiev, 21 September 2021



Виставка

# Американець в Україні.

Фотографії Жульєна Брайяна  
1930–1958 рр.

Парк Володимирська гірка біля пам'ятника  
Володимиру Великому  
Volodymyrska Hill Park next to the monument  
to Volodymyr the Great

21.09.–31.10. 2021

Exhibition

# An American in Ukraine.

Photographs by Julien Bryan  
1930–1958



Організатори / Organizers



INSTITUTE OF  
NATIONAL  
REMEMBRANCE



Embassy  
of the Republic of Poland  
in Kyiv

Підтримка / Support



КИЇВСЬКА  
МІСЬКА  
ДЕРЖАВНА  
АДМІНІСТРАЦІЯ













The opening of the *An American in Ukraine. Photographs by Julien Bryan, 1930-1958/ An American in Warsaw. Photographs of Julien Bryan from September 1939* exhibition took place on 21 September in Kiev. The exhibition was prepared by the IPN Archive and the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Kiev, with the support of the Kiev City State Administration.

The opening of the exhibition was attended by the Polish Ambassador in Kiev, Bartosz Cichocki, the Director of the IPN Archive, Marzena Kruk, and a representative of the Kiev authorities.

The event gathered numerous guests, including representatives of the Embassies of France, Slovenia, Kazakhstan, Vietnam and Uzbekistan,

as well as prof. Oleksandr Lysenko and Prof. Yuri Shapoval from the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine and Andrij Kohut, the Director of the Sectoral State Archive of the Security Services of Ukraine (HDA SBU), and Katerina Burduwalis, Director of the Khmelnytsky State Regional Archives.

The bilingual, Ukrainian-English exhibition presents Bryan's photos from Poland and Ukraine from 1930-1958, as well as their author's profile along with his ties with both countries.

The collection of photographs from the trip to the Soviet Union, which is the basis of part of the exhibition, is at the disposal of the son of the photographer, Samuel Bryan. The IPN Archive, as the only institution in the world, has copies of these exceptional photos.

The two-part exhibition will be on display in Kiev until 31 October 2021.

**Julien Bryan** (1899–1974), an American documentary filmmaker and photographer was accredited as the only foreign correspondent in Warsaw at that time. He arrived in the capital on 7 September 1939 just as all foreigners, diplomats and government officials were fleeing from Warsaw. He entered Poland through the border with Romania and soon witnessed the first bombings. He reached Warsaw after a few days of traveling by train. He was convinced that the war would be slow and that it would take many days for the German army to reach the Vistula. Surprised by the city blockade, he was forced to stay in the bombed Polish capital for two weeks. During this period, he decided to continue his job as a press photographer, often putting his own life



at risk. Day after day, his admiration for the courage of the Polish population, mercilessly bombarded by German air force, increased. He contacted the Mayor of Warsaw, Stefan Starzyński, who provided him with a car, a guide and an interpreter so that he would be able to travel across Warsaw and document German methods of total war and the bombing of the city by the Luftwaffe. In the two weeks between 7-21 September, he managed to take hundreds of photographs documenting the siege of Warsaw and to shoot a few hours of film material of bombings, collapsing houses and hospitals, human bodies lying in the streets, the building of barricades, the tragedy of civilians, the German strength and arrogance. Stefan Starzyński granted him special permission to photograph everything that was happening in the capital under attack. Thanks to this, he was able to move freely around the city. He took photos of the city centre, the Wola district, and above all the poor neighbourhoods of Praga.

Bryan's photos from this period became legendary, and with the help of the American press they were seen all over the world. On 21 September 1939, he left Warsaw, taking with him rich material documenting the lives of civilians and the brutality of German soldiers. The film tapes were then used to produce the film "Siege", depicting the heroic struggle of Warsaw's inhabitants. The film was screened in American cinemas in the spring of 1940. It received the American Film Academy Oscar nomination in 1941 in the 'best short documentary' film category. Interestingly, during his stay in Warsaw, Bryan used, among others, Kodak's color films, which he took with him to test this innovative solution. The pictures taken by Julien Bryan are the only



color photographs that show the siege of Warsaw in September 1939 from the point of view of a benevolent observer, showing the despair of Varsovians, the rubble, the wounded and the homeless. Other well-known color photographs depicting these events were taken by the German propaganda units. They, however, show a completely different story - instead of rubble and despair, they portray German dominance and military strength.

After the war, Bryan returned to Poland several times: in 1946, 1958, 1959 and 1974. He managed to find many of the people he photographed in 1939. The story of this search was included in the book "Warsaw. 1939 Siege. 1959 Warsaw Revisited ". He died in New York on 20 October 1974, shortly after returning from Poland.

Thanks to an agreement concluded in 2010 with the son of the photographer Sam Bryan, the Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance is in possession of digital copies of Julien Bryan's photos.

More:

[A discussion on the book "The Most Mysterious of Countries. The Soviet Union in the Photographs and Writings of Julien H. Bryan 1930 -1959" - Warsaw, 28 September 2020](#)

[The opening of the "Siege of Warsaw 1939. Photographs by Julien Bryan" exhibition - Warsaw, 3 September 2019](#)



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