

The Soviet Invasion of Poland during WW II

Kresy-Siberia Virtual Museum

A massive new project to honour the memory of the Polish victims of the Soviet Union during World War Two

In order to improve access to the history of the Soviet occupation of Poland during World War Two, the Kresy-Siberia Group (<http://www.kresy-siberia.org>) has undertaken to build a state of the art virtual museum which will provide a rich educational experience for all visitors.

Why a virtual museum?

Small museums housing artifacts from the Polish WW2 experience elicit strong emotions from visitors who can connect with a physical presence, however the collections are small, few documents are on display, and few people have the opportunity to visit.

In contrast, the internet is the information medium of choice for the younger generations and a huge amount of documents, photographs and memoirs can be accessed through an on-line medium by a limitless number of visitors.

Why the Kresy-Siberia Virtual Museum?

The Kresy-Siberia Group has been able to rally together the various archives from around the world to a common purpose: to tell the story of the Soviet occupation of Poland and the deportations of Polish citizens to the prisons and slave labour camps of the Soviet Union, mainly to the region generally known as Siberia, and to do so by presenting the historical proof of documents and memoirs. The deportation of Poles sympathetic to the Government-in-Exile in London continued until 1957!

The Virtual Museum concept will eventually be expanded to the full Polish WW2 experience.

In English

Many websites exist in the Polish language. However, the greatest need for knowledge is in the English speaking world. The Kresy-Siberia Virtual Museum will be bilingual.

Why bother?

We bear no animosity to the Russian people, many of whom were very empathetic and helpful to the newly arrived Polish slaves, however this chapter in the history of World War Two has been largely unknown, ignored and forgotten. As a result, the Soviet Union went down in history as an Ally of the West, while Joseph Stalin was presented as a great military leader who went by the nickname of "Uncle Joe." And today there are elements who would deny that the deportations took place, that the massacre of Katyn never happened. In memory of our mothers and fathers, we cannot let the truth be forgotten.

A vast array of important partners, advisors and sponsors has joined the Group in establishing the Museum. For example:

Mr. Ryszard Kaczorowski, former President of the Polish Government in Exile in London.

Dr. Maciej Siekierski, Curator of the Eastern European Collections at the Hoover Institute at Stanford University in California, home to the General Wladyslaw Anders papers and other important Polish WW2 collections.

Messrs. Krzysztof Barbarski, President and Andrzej Suchcitz, Curator, Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum, London, home to the records of the Polish Government in Exile.

Dr. Iwona Drag Korga, Dyrektor Wykonawczy, Pilsudski Institute in New York.

The State Archives and National Digital Archive, Warsaw

Mr. Zbigniew Gluza, President of Ośrodek Karta in Warsaw, an active historical research organization.

Dr. Andrzej Garlicki, President of the Head Executive Board of the Polish Combatants Association in Canada.

Author Norman Davies

Professor Witold Lukaszewicz

Professor Ewa Thompson

Our partners will provide archival materials for the Museum, the technology to build and maintain it and a deep knowledge of history to ensure an accurate portrayal of events.

The Kresy-Siberia Foundation/Fundacja Kresy-Syberia has been registered as a charitable organization in Poland and we can begin to accept donations towards the project, expected to require U.S.\$1,000,000 to initiate and maintain.

Please contact Henry Sokolowski to make a donation or for further information at hsokol@sympatico.ca.

New book

KAZIK's POLISH NAVY is a rare and precious account of Poland's WWII Navy in action, told by one of the men who lived it. Kazik's memoir provides an important window into this forgotten chapter of history, while the recollections of Kazik and Irene take one on an engaging trip through the ups and downs of surviving war and the bittersweet post-war period.

The book contains many never before seen photographs from Kazik's pre-war photo album, which miraculously survived the war in the care of Kazik's mother in Poland.

Order directly from the publisher's website: <http://www.terrasanctapress.com> or call 321-254-9672 (Florida).

Welcome! Witamy!

Much work is being done in post-Communist Poland to uncover and bring to light the true story of the Soviet invasion and occupation of Poland which began in 1939. Most of the published material is in Polish. It is our aim to provide some English language details on this web site.

The information on this site is wrapped around the stories of Bronisław and Anna Sokolowski, former residents of the eastern Kresy (borderland) region of Poland as it existed during the period between the First and Second World Wars. Their story has been compiled by their sons, Henryk and Brunon, who were born and raised in Canada, from various sources which include the personal recollections of aunts and uncles, personal papers, photos and documents and archival materials retrieved from the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace at Stanford University in California, The Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum in London, England, the British Ministry of Defence, also in England, the Memorial Society based in Moscow, Russia and the Centrum Archiwum Wojskowy, in Warszawa, Poland.

We are actively:

Collecting survivor biographies and autobiographies in any form (written, typed, scribbled, audio or video), in any language, in any condition, regardless of whether they have been completed or not.

Translating the vast amount of material available in Polish into English.

Collecting documents, notes, books, pamphlets, medals, militaria, photos and memorabilia for donation to archives or museums.

Educating the children and grandchildren of the survivors and the general public about the full Polish experience during WW2. Much of the story is unknown.

What the world does not know about Poland and WW2:

Portions of Poland were one of the few German occupied territories in Europe where helping a Jew was punishable by death; often entire families were executed for the crime. It took phenomenal courage for a Pole to reach out to a Jew under these circumstances and many did.

The Soviets invaded Eastern Poland on September 17, 1939, dividing the country into two halves in a deal with the German Reich and promptly began deporting

citizens to Siberia, beginning with prisoners of war.

According to documents signed by Stalin and his senior staff and revealed to the world by Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviets condemned to death some 22,000 captured Polish officers, militia and police for the crime of being dangerous to the Soviet State. Most of these men (and women) were murdered in and around the forests of Katyn in early 1940. The mass graves were later discovered by the Germans but the British and American governments, by then allied with the Soviets, ignored the massacre. The largest grave contained 800 bodies. Grave sites of mass murders continue to be uncovered.

Deported Poles in Siberia and those languishing in Soviet jails were officially freed by the Soviet dictator shortly after the German invasion of the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941. Due to the need for slave labour, many camps were reluctant to let their Polish prisoners go and did everything they could to stop them. Of those who could get away, many of them (men, women and children including many orphans) headed south to escape the Soviets and join the Polish Army being formed on Soviet soil. This army would later become known as the Polish Second Corps which fought under the British 8th Army in Italy. Many of those who could not get away in time, joined the Soviet army and fought in Polish units against the Germans on the eastern front.

Polish soldiers, citizens and refugees were devastated when the British and American leaders handed over post war control of Poland to Stalin, the Soviet dictator who had invaded their country. He assembled a puppet government from amongst Polish communists while the true Polish Government-in-Exile in London was excluded.

The Polish Armed Forces in the West remained poised and ready to boot the Soviets out of Poland as late as 1945. However the British government, tired of war and anxious not to upset Stalin, demobilized them instead. Even worse, following protests by Stalin, they did not allow these allied soldiers to participate in London's Victory parade.

The Re-invasion of Poland by Soviet Forces in 1944-45

Standard history texts and articles continually refer to the "liberation" of Poland by the Soviet Red Army towards the end of World War Two. There was no true liberation but merely the replacement of one brutal regime by another. The Soviets literally occupied post-war Poland, with the aid of Polish troops and Communist puppets installed by and loyal to Stalin, until the late 1980s.

A quote from Neal Ascherson's book, *The Polish August*, summarizes this fact: "The Stalinist epoch in Poland was at once sinister and grotesque, a period in which the party ruled through open police terror... Poland was opened to almost uncontrolled Soviet economic exploitation, through one-sided terms of trade, while the bureaucracy was in some areas thoroughly penetrated by Soviet advisers. All this was accompanied by deafening propaganda devoted to imaginary successes and to equally imaginary espionage or subversion plots against the regime."

The Polish August, Neal Ascherson, Penguin Books, 1981

Our Plan



We ask all Survivors and their children to consider their heritage to be worth saving for posterity. We ask that they contact us to arrange to have their historical documents or artifacts donated to a major archive (if they are not to be passed on to the next generation).

Despite our focus on the survivors of Siberia (Sybiraks), we are also trying to account for all Poles who perished during the war. □

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