THE OPENNING OF ARCHIVES AND THE HISTORY OF COMMUNISM

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POLISH ISSUES IN NEWLY OPENED RESOURCES OF POST-SOVIET ARCHIVES

A condition indispensable for thorough familiarity with the recent history of the Polish nation and state is an examination of the documentation produced by the Russian, Soviet and once again Russian apparatus. Meanwhile, for decades, access was more than restricted, and that documentation which was disclosed and composed a surrogate workshop for historians was subjected to previous scrupulous and by no means scientific selection. The situation changed radically after the collapse of the Soviet Union and an attempt at building a political system bearing all the traits of a democracy pursued in the Russian Federation.

This process affected also the state archival service. As far as the Polish question is concerned it started on 13 April 1990, when Poland received the first part of documents concerning the murder of almost 22,000 Polish inmates and prisoners of war, committed by Soviet NKVD functionaries. Soon after, the two governments issued Declaration on Cooperation in the Fields of

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Culture, Science and Education, foreseeing, i.a. joint efforts as regards archival questions.

In December 1991, representatives of both central offices of the archives services signed Protocol of Intentions, implementing this aspect of the Declaration and planning an exchange of information about archival resources and complete accessibility of material kept in subordinate archives\(^2\). The resolutions contained therein were to come into force at the moment both institutions signed a suitable cooperation convention. On 27 April 1992, following brief negotiations, Poland and Russia signed Convention about Cooperation between the Main Office of State Archives and the Committee for Archival Affairs in the Government of the Russian Federation\(^3\). The convention predicted full accessibility of archival material relating to the history of both states and their mutual relations as well as — this is particularly significant — the duty of rendering available all types of assistance (catalogues, inventories, etc.), which would make it easier to conduct archival surveys. The Convention also mentioned the return of those documents whose rightful owner was the opposite party.

The Republic of Poland attached enormous importance to this agreement considering the scale of archival material of Polish origin, plundered and taken to the East in different periods. The so-called Polish Trophy Complex (Pol’skiy trofeyny fond) alone, deposited in the Centre for the Storage of Historical–Documentary Resources of the Russian Federation, contains about 1,000 archival units from the years 1914–1939 which, in accordance with international legal norms, should be returned to Poland\(^4\).

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\(^4\)They include the following complexes: the Polish Sejm; the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Poland; the Communist Party of Poland; the Ministry of Communication of the Republic of Poland; the Ministry of Military Affairs of the Republic of Poland; the second Department of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces; the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Poland; the Chief Headquarters of the State Police; the State Police Academy; the County Headquarters of the State Police (Świętochłowice, Nowy Tomyśl); State Police Headquarters (Warszawa, Kraków, Lublin, Chorzów); the Command of the Sixth Corps Region (Information Division); the Chief Headquarters of the Border Guards; the Border Defence Corps; the Ministry of Finances of the Republic of Poland; the
The realisation of the convention provided a basis for permitting Polish historians and archivists to carry out surveys in Russian archives, albeit not all of them. There is still no access to the archives of the former KGB, at present the ministerial archives of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (Tsentrall'nyy Arkhiv Fiedleralnoy Sluzhbi Biezopasnosti Rossiyyskoy Fiedleratsiil) and access to the Archives of the President of the Russian Federation, the former Archives of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Priezidientsklyy Arkhiv Rossiyyskoy Fiedleratsiil), the current archives of the Secretariat of the Apparatus of the President of the Soviet Union (Tiekushchiy Arkhiv Siekrietariata Apparata Priezidienta SSSR) and archival material from the former General Prosecutor's Office of the Soviet Union remains limited.

County Starostwo Nowy Tomyśl; the Chief Headquarters of the Legionnaire Union; the Main Board of the Federation of Polish Unions of Defenders of the Homeland; the Union of Jewish Cooperatives in Poland; regional election commissions during elections to the Sejm of the Republic of Poland and the Senate of the Republic of Poland; commands of military regions and military academies; Headquarters of the Border Guard Region (Brodnica, Łomża); collections of statutes of the Republic of Poland; Commissar of the Government of the Republic of Poland for Warsaw; the Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Republic of Poland; the Ministry of Denominations and Public Education of the Republic of Poland; the Union of Polish Women Legionnaires; the Riflemen’s Union; the Delegation of the Russian Red Cross for prisoners of war in the Polish Red Cross Society; the Main Board of the Camp of National Unity Camp; the Ukrainian Scientific Institute; the Ministry of the Post and Telegraph of the Republic of Poland; Youth Organisation of the Workers’ University; the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reforms of the Republic of Poland; the Non-Party Bloc for Cooperation with the Government; the Main Statistical Office; material of the intelligence service of the Republic of Poland working against the Soviet Union; the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Regional Court in Lublin; the Main Board of the Legion of Volhynian Insurgents; the Military Academy in Warsaw; branches of the Second Department of the Chief Staff (Warsaw, Vilno, Kraków, Lwów, Bydgoszcz, Brześć on the Bug); Inspection Bureaus in the General Inspectorate of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland; embassies and consulates of the Republic of Poland abroad; the Delegation of the Republic of Poland In the Mixed Frontier Commission in the East; the Chief Command of the Polish Armed Forces; the First, Third and Fourth Departments in the General Staff of the Ministry of Military Affairs of the Republic of Poland; the Józef Piłsudski Institute for Studies into the Newest History of Poland; the Military Historical Bureau; a group of Polish state, sociopolitical and military activists; the Geographical Institute of the Armed Forces; the General Commissioner of the Republic of Poland in the Free City of Gdansk; a group of Polish national and military-diversion organisations; a group of Polish institutions and organisations from 1914 1918; the Organisational Committee of a convention of former prisoners of conscience from 1914–1921; the Kowel Branch of the Second Department of the Command of the General Region in Lublin. I based myself on: Informacja o wynikach pracy Wojskowej Komisji Archiwalnej w archiwach Federacji Rosyjskiej w okresie wrzesień 1992 — czerwiec 1993 (Information on the Outcome of the Work of the Military Archival Commission in the Archives of the Russian Federation from September 1992 to June 1993), mimeographed typescript, Warszawa 1993, pp. 45–51.
The basic central Russian archives, accessible since the autumn of 1992, which contain material pertaining to have widely understood Polish issues and Polish–Soviet relations, include the above mentioned Centre for the Storage of Historical–Documentary Collections of the Russian Federation (Tsentr Khraneniya Istoriko–Dokumental'nikh Kollektss Rossiyiskoy Federatsii), the former Central Special Archives (Tsentralniy Osobiy Arkhiv), the Russian Center for the Storage of Historical Collections and Studies (Rossiyiskiy Tsentr Khraneniya i Izucheniya Istoricheskikh Kollektss) — the former Central Archives at the Institute of Marxism–Leninism at the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Tsentralniy Arkhiv Instituta Marksizma–Leninizma TsK KPSS), the Centre for the Storage of Contemporary Documentation (Tsentr Khraneniya Sovremennoy Dokumentatsii) — part of the former Archives of the Central Committee of the CPSU (Arkhiv TsK KPSS), the Russian State Army Archives (Rossiyiskiy Gosudarstvienny Voyenniy Arkhiv) — the former Central State Archives of the Soviet Army (Tsentralniy Gosudarstvienny Arkhiv Sovietskoy Armii), the State Archives of the Russian Federation (Gosudarstvienny Arkhiv Rossiyiskoy Fiedieratsii) — the former Central State Archives of the October Revolution (Tsentralniy Gosudarstvienny Arkhiv Oktoberbskoy Revoliutsii) and the Central Archives of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation (Tsentralniy Arkhiv Ministierstva Oboroni Rossiyiskoy Fiedieratsii)\(^5\).

A similar agreement about archival cooperation, planning Polish access to post–Soviet resources, was signed with Lithuania\(^6\).

In the spring of 1992, the Main Office of the State Archives of the Republic of Poland addressed the Russian side with a request for rendering state archives available for the purpose of an organised search for material concerning the fate of Poles in the East in the wake of the Red Army invasion of 17 September

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1939. The obtained permission made it possible for the Minister of National Defence of the Republic of Poland to establish (on 29 June 1992) the Military Archival Commission entrusted with the task of an on-the-spot examination of Russian archival resources and a reprography of documents relating to Polish issues.

The Commission initiated work in September 1992, and the since obtained documents (more than 600,000 Xerox-copy leafs) were handed over to the Central Army Archives (Warsaw–Rembertów) for the purpose of their arrangement; the material is successively made available for scientific studies. In this way, an immense workshop was created for Polish historians. The resources are composed of two collections: documents concerning Polish prisoners of war in the Soviet Union during the Second World War (prisoner–of–war camps in 1939–1941, internment camps for soldiers of the Polish underground Home Army, documentation of the Board for Prisoners of War and Internees at the NKVD U.S.S.R., documentation of camp cemeteries, material relating to the Katyn massacre); documentation dealing with the intelligence and repressive activity of the Red Army and the NKVD in Polish lands (wartime crimes committed against the Polish Armed Forces and the civilian population in 1939, material about the Polish Underground, material on the Ukrainian and Belarusian staff of the partisan movement, documentation dealing with operations conducted by the NKVD–MVD U.S.S.R. in Polish lands up to 1950, documents concerning the so-called trial of the Sixteen — the deceitfully lured and arrested group of leaders of the Polish Underground state⁷, material pertaining to miners deported in 1945 from Upper Silesia and the Opole region to the U.S.S.R. (as slave labour); material about both Polish armies created in the Soviet Union during the second world war (the so-called General W. Anders Army, the so-called Kościuszko Division, the battle of Lenino); Red Army routes across Polish lands (the September 1939 campaign, activity in 1944–1945, the attitude of the Red Army Supreme Command towards the Warsaw Uprising, the activity of the so-called trofiejchiki in Polish lands and its consequences for the Polish economy); Polish political emigration in the Soviet Union; documentation pertaining to

consecutive tides of repatriation from the Soviet Union to Poland; material on assorted plundered Polish property, subjected to vindication (*Pol’skiy trofleyny fond*), looted Polish property seized by the Soviet Union from Germany, and documents on the Polish Armed Forces from 1944–1946)*8.

Truly effective work performed by the Military Archival Commission was inaugurated after 14 October 1992, when a collection of documents relating to crimes committed against Polish prisoners of war, i.a. Packet No 1, containing decisions pertaining to the Katyn massacre, was rendered accessible and handed over to Poland*9. This period is associated with the name of Prof. Rudolf Pikhoya, who from the beginning of 1996 was the head of the Russian Archival Service (*Rossarkhiv*).

Apart from the basic surveys carried out by the Military Archival Commission, Poland received collections of material selected and entrusted by the Russian side as a political gesture, purchases made by Polish institutions (chiefly scientific), material gained for joint publications prepared (or being prepared) by historians and archivists of both states, documentation presented by Russian historians and archivists, as well as the outcome of individual surveys conducted by particular researchers.

The first group includes, alongside the mentioned collection of the exceptionally significant so-called Katyn documents, a collection of several score documents handed over to Poland in November 1992, and concerning the fate of Polish citizens in the East in 1939–1951. This documentation was arranged in the Institute of Political Studies at the Polish Academy of Sciences and published in *Z archiwów sowieckich (From Soviet Archives)*, divided chronologically and thematically into five fasciculae, dealing with: Polish prisoners of war (the September 1939 campaign; internees handed over by the Lithuanian authorities), and during the initial period of the normalisation of Polish–Soviet relations, after the signing of the so-called Sikorski–Mayski treaty.

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*8Acc. to: Informacja o wynikach pracy WKA (Information about the Outcome of the Work of the Military Archival Commission), pp. 3–4 (10–53).

of 30 July 1941; the organisation of Polish armed forces in the Soviet Union, the so-called General W. Anders Army and its departure for the Near East; the period from December 1942 to July 1944, which witnessed numerous mutual conflicts and was treated as preparatory for a total subjugation of Poland vs. the Soviet Union, the so-called General W. Anders Army and its departure for the Near East; the period from December 1942 to July 1944, which witnessed numerous mutual conflicts and was treated as preparatory for a total subjugation of Poland vs. its Eastern neighbour; the sombre role played by the Soviet side in the tragedy of the Warsaw Uprising; the end part of the war and the first years of an intensive Sovietisation of Poland, as well as heretofore unknown secret amnesties bearing on repressed citizens of the former Second Polish Republic (1918–1939). The most essential selected documents were published as a separate volume in English.

Another collection of documents made available to the Polish side as a political gesture, and presented in June 1990 by the State Security Committee of the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic to the Consul General of the Republic of Poland in Kiev, was composed of material concerning primarily the Soviet aggression against Poland in September 1939 and internment camps for Polish citizens, subsequently issued in “Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny.”

Three years later, the head of the Russian archives handed over to Poland the so-called Suslov collection, supposedly containing all the documents to be found in post-Soviet archives

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about the attitude of the Soviet Union to the martial law proclaimed in Poland in December 198117. A survey conducted in Moscow archives by the well-known dissident Vladimir Bukovsky, who came across a number of other documents, including records of telephone conversations between Brezhnev and Jaruzelski and shorthand minutes from sessions held by the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPSU, and pertaining to Polish issues, together with the so-called Operation X (the declaration of martial law), showed that the Suslov collection was by no means complete18.

In the wake of numerous Polish reminders, in May 1994, the head of the Security Service of Ukraine presented Stefan Śnieżko, Vice-Prosecutor General of the Republic of Poland, with a document of exceptional importance: the list of 3,435 names of Polish citizens imprisoned in so-called Western Ukraine, and murdered upon the basis of the same decisions passed by the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the All–Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) on 5 March 1940 as the prisoners of war in three so-called special camps — Kozielsk, Ostashkov and Starebielsk19. Up to now, a similar list, which should contain 3,870 names of Polish citizens, inmates of prisons in so-called Western Belorussia in March–April 1940, still remains unavailable.

A number of surveys carried out in the recently opened post-Soviet archives is financed by grants supporting work on particular topics or the supplementation of thematic documentation amassed by scientific institutes. By way of example, the grant Poles in the North–Eastern Borderlands of the Former Second Republic under Two Occupations (1939–1946), coordinated by Prof. Tomasz Strzembosz and realised by the Institute of Political Studies at the Polish Academy of Sciences, enables a synthetic survey in Belorussian archives. The History of Polish Diplomacy grant, realised by the Institute of History at the Polish Academy of Sciences and coordinated by Prof. Gerard Labuda, assists a


survey in the Archives of Foreign Politics of the Russian Federation. The Polish Science Foundation financed the Joint Site — Eastern Europe survey realised by the "Karta" Centre and the Polish Memorial programme, which produced several extensive collections of documents on the fate of Poles in present-day Ukraine, i.a. on the life of the Polish community in Ukraine during the inter-war period, and the origin, development and liquidation of the Polish National Region — the so-called Marchlewski region. In this context, it seems worth noting that thanks to numerous methods, primarily cooperation with the Russian Memorial, the "Karta" Centre was capable of including into its so-called Eastern Archives an enormous number of documents with information about the fate of Poles in the East — from the tsarist period to the turn of the 1980s; all documents are available in the Centre offices.

Copies of documents originating from post-Soviet resources, gathered in the Eastern Archives and concerning Polish issues, are composed of the following complexes: the Polish–Soviet war of 1920; the Polish National Region (the Marchlewski region) 1924–1935; deportations of Poles from the Kiev and Vinnitsa oblast' to Kazakstan; the 1933–1938 terror; Polish–Ukrainian relations 1920–1939; the Katyń massacre; Poles in Lvov 1939–1941; deportations of Polish citizens 1940–1941; Poles deported to the Komi Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic (1940–1945); the liquidation and evacuation of Soviet prisons after 22 June 1941; local representations of the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Moscow (Kuybishev) 1941–1943; the Ukrainian Partisan Staff 1941–1944; the Warsaw Uprising; the liquidation of the Polish Underground 1944–1947; Poles interned in the Riazan oblast' 1944–1947; the deportation of Poles from the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic and Ukrainians from Poland 1944–


1947; the de-Polonisation of Soviet Ukraine in 1944–1970; the trial of the leaders of Underground Poland — the so-called trial of the Sixteen. To a certain degree, Polish issues and Poles are the topics of the following complexes in the Eastern Archives: camp revolts; the dissident movement in the Soviet Union in 1954–1986; the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation (1992). The above mentioned collections differ as regards the merit of the material and the size, oscillating from 20 to 900 documents.

Important rank is attached to post-Soviet documentation concerning the battle route and activity of the Red Army in the so-called Polish campaign of September 1939, purchased by the Army Historical Institute. This documentation focuses on the military and political-diplomatic aspects of Soviet aggression against Poland. Two copious volumes, out of the planned three-volume edition, have already appeared. Upon the basis of sources and material obtained by the Military Archival Commission, one of the volumes discusses preparations for, and the consequences of the appearance of Soviet armed forces in Polish eastern territories, the second — operations conducted by the Soviet army in the south-eastern territories of the Republic of Poland, and the third — the campaign carried out by the Red Army and the NKVD in the north-eastern parts of the Republic.

of Poland. A large part of this documentation was made available previously in "Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny".

The above edition of documents about Soviet aggression is supplemented by smaller selections or even individual documents, published in specialised periodicals or as appendices to larger works. Among the numerous publications of sources found in post-Soviet archives we would like to draw attention to the original sketches of the activity of certain Red Army units, operational documentation supplementing the chronology prepared by Czesław Grzelak, and important documents from the Regional State Archives in Lviv, illustrating the little-known problem of administrative counteraction against the spread of so-called defeatist moods in the eastern borderlands of the Republic of Poland in the course of the September campaign, as well as the minutes of a session of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), held on 1 October 1939, which discussed extensively the technical and organisational course of the absorption and Sovietisation of the newly seized lands — including such details as the price of a kilogramme of salt.

In the above context, a mention should be made of a sui generis paradox connected with the newly won access to post-Soviet archival resources. I have in mind the disclosure in the former Special Archives (today: the Centre for the Storage of Historical-Documentation Collections) of material of the Second Department of the Chief Staff of the Polish Armed Forces, lost in September 1939, and the Branch of the Second Department of the Chief Staff of the Polish Armed Forces (fondi 308 and 461). This material, initially captured in 1945 by the Germans and stored in archives in Gdańsk-Oliwa, was seized by the Red Army. Part was returned to Poland in 1954 and 1963; the other part, in

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the form of so-called reserved secret collections, remained inaccessible to historians up to 1992. At present, both are available and first publications based on the documents have been already issued.\(^3^1\)

Finally, an issue considered by historians upon numerous occasions,\(^3^2\) but so far without a source basis. I have in mind the appearance of the first, greatly superficial and indirect documents concerning anti-Polish cooperation between the Soviet and the German political police — the NKVD and the Gestapo.\(^3^3\) The whole issue still remains unclear, and it will be probably difficult to resolve it without access to the so-called Rudolf Hess archives, kept in the United Kingdom and to be opened in the year 2020.

An important document relating directly to the Polish campaign of September 1939 (the so-called liberation march of the Red Army across Polish lands) is composed of shorthand minutes from a session held in December 1940 by Red Army high commanders.\(^3^4\) The topic of the debates were conclusions stemming from the 1939–1940 campaign, and in particular the wars against Poland and Finland. This specific material, dealing primarily with military operations, indubitably possesses great cognitive merits.

A number of newly revealed documents from the extremely inaccessible archives of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (formerly, the KGB) is presented in a source-material study by Antoni Przygocki, who analysed the attitude

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\(^3^2\) Cf. e.g. A. Bregman, Najlepszy sojusznik Hitla. Studium o współpracy niemiecko-sowieckiej 1939–1941 (Hitler’s Best Ally. A Study on German–Soviet Cooperation in 1939–1941), London, no date of publication.


\(^3^5\) A. Przygocki, Stalin a Powstanie Warszawskie (Stalin and the Warsaw Uprising), Warszawa 1994.
of Stalin towards the Warsaw Uprising. A parallel study by historians from the Army Historical Institute, concerning a similar topic, is intent on capturing all heretofore available documents associated with the sudden halt of the Red Army offensive in July 1944 along the Vistula. This publication includes documents from July to October 1944, part of which were obtained from the Central Archives of the Ministry of Defence of the U.S.S.R. in Podolsk before the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The documentation is arranged in chronological–thematic order within three groups: sources from the Chief Headquarters of the Supreme Command of the General Staff of the Red Army and central institutions of the People’s Defence Commissariat of the U.S.S.R.; material of the command and staff of the First Belorussian Front; material of the command of the 47 Army of the Red Army, the First Army of the Polish Armed Forces, and the 16 Air Force Army of the Red Army.

Other publications include first joint presentations of documents from post–Soviet archival resources relating to Poland. Particularly high rank is attached to the joint four–volume edition of documents associated with the Katyn massacre, realised by the head offices of the Polish and Russian archives: the origin and functioning of prisoner of war camps; crimes against Polish prisoners of war; the fate of officers who survived the operation; and echoes of the Katyn massacre. The first two volumes of the edition have already appeared. The inaugural volume contains 220 most important documents from resources of, for all practical purposes, every pertinent post–Soviet archive. Thanks to this documentation we know the moment of the passage of the


37 Furthermore, two additional volumes will be published only in the Polish edition: the letters and diaries of prisoners of war; verified lists of murdered prisoners of war from three special camps and prisons in so-called Western Belorusssia and Western Ukraine.

genocidal decision; the persons responsible for the course and supervision of its implementation, as well as the exact number of the victims (21,857). It has been possible to recreate in great detail the earlier fate of the Polish prisoners of war — the course of their adaptation to Soviet captivity, the organisation of transitory, selection and labour camps, and the three so-called special camps. The same holds true for the time of the decisions about the handing over of the prisoners by the Red Army to the Ministry of the Interior (the NKVD); the creation for this purpose of a special institution within the GULAG: the Board for Prisoners of War at the NKVD U.S.S.R. (from the very onset headed by Piotr Spurienko) and its local network, based on NKVD Boards in the western regions of the Soviet Union. We have information about the taking over of Polish prisoners of war interned in Lithuania by the NKVD, as well as the handing over to the Germans of Polish prisoners of war, predominantly rank-and-file soldiers from territories annexed in 1939 by the Third Reich. Newly obtained material recreates the chancery system and the mechanism of decisions pertaining to prisoners of war within the entire Soviet mechanism of power as well as the NKVD. Work on the equally extensive second volume is nearing completion. The widely delineated survey conducted for this purposes provided (in the form of Xerox copies) diverse and rich material, including several hundred leaves concerning the fate of Czech and Slovak soldiers of the so-called Czech Legion, organised alongside the Polish Armed Forces, who in September 1939 were taken into Soviet captivity.

The second volume of the edition in question offers post-Soviet source material dating from March to June 1940, and a wide discussion about the execution of the genocidal decision made on 5 March 1940 by the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks). The documentation concerns not only the murder of 21,857 citizens of the Second Republic, inmates of the three so-called special camps (Kozielsk, Ostashkov and Starobielsk) as well as prisons in Western parts of Belorussia and Ukraine, but also the deportations of the families of the murdered prisoners of war and prison inmates, as well as labour camps intended for prisoners of war. The contained material testifies that the Katyn massacre was not

an isolated crime, but comprised the most important link in a whole chain of undertakings performed by the Soviet authorities as regards the so-called Polish issue. Furthermore, it forms unambiguous evidence of the fact that the most significant criminal decisions were not an arbitrary act of the NKVD, but the consequence of a strict realisation of decisions made at the supreme level — the Political Bureau of the All-Union Communist Party and the Council of People’s Commissars of the U.S.S.R.

Three testimonies by the direct executors of the Katyń genocide, comprise shocking documents, created ex post and of varying value, reprinted in the second volume of Katyń. Dokumenty zbrodni (Katyń. Documents of a Crime).

Particular significance belongs to the copious testimony by Dmitri Tokarev, former chief of the NKVD in Kalinin (Tver), published in extenso and concerning the murder of 6,300 internees from the Ostashkov camp, committed in the cellars of the headquarters of the regional NKVD Board. This evidence contains the pedantically recalled course of the crime as well as its organisational and technical details. Similar material in the possession of the General Prosecutor’s Office of the Republic of Poland and the independent Historical Committee for Studying the Katyń Crime can be found in five protocols of interrogations of Mitrofan Syromiatnikov, former guard in the NKVD prison in Kharkov. In contrast to Tokarev, this witness testified evasively, in an attempt to obliterate his role in the murder; nonetheless, this document too makes a great contribution to our knowledge about the last days and hours of the prisoners of war from the Starobielsk camp, as well as the place and circumstances of their burial. Two most essential protocols of the testimonies — the first and the fourth (with the participation of the Polish prosecutor Stefan Śnieżko) have been published. The military prosecutor, Colonel Andrei Trietietski, was unable to conduct a similar interrogation of Piotr Soprunienko, head of the Main Board of

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Prisoners of War at the NKVD U.S.S.R., and thus restricted himself to noting down vague responses to earlier presented 19 questions, which add little to our knowledge about about this heinous institution. A more exhaustive account was not obtained up to the death of Soprunienko (23 June 1992).

A monumental edition of documents about Soviet crimes against the Estonian nation, published in Tallinn, includes material pertaining to the creation and liquidation of so-called Polish national regions, as well as major documents about the Katyn massacre. The author included them into the publication predominantly due to their shockingly spectacular qualities as well as their cognitive merit for Poles living in Estonia.

Owing to its dimension and a half a century of odious manipulation, intent on concealing the true perpetrators, the Katyn crime stirs highly emotional reactions in Poland. The documents presented in the above mentioned editions were frequently reprinted in brochures, the press, historical and veterans' periodicals as well as published as appendices in scientific monographic studies. New material from the post-Soviet resources, disclosed and issued, supplemented details of the image produced by this basic documentation. Due to the enormous number of such publications, it is simply impossible to mention


them all in our study\textsuperscript{45}. At the same time, new documents produced by the Board for Prisoners of War and Internees of the NKVD U.S.S.R. pertain to other repressions of Polish citizens, performed by the apparatus of this institution\textsuperscript{46}, especially in the wake of the liberation of Vilno by the Polish Home Army together with the Red Army — the so-called Ostra Brama Operation\textsuperscript{47}.

A volume containing documents from 1944–1949, throwing light on the mechanism of the subjugation of the Polish state and the ruling party (the Polish Workers’ Party — the Polish United Workers’ Party) to Moscow, is an important joint edition\textsuperscript{48}. It contains material from that part of the central apparatus of the Communist Party of Russia which steered foreign communist parties and associated organisations (apparatuses of power). The volume, which was issued parallel in Poland and in Russia\textsuperscript{49}, possesses additional rank due to the fact that access to part of the documentation contained therein is now prohibited (the so-called zakritiye fondi) as a result of changes among the top rank staff of the Russian archival services (the dismissal of Rudolf Pikhoy).


A correlating publication is a copious volume of documentation, prepared by an Italian–Russian team of authors, based predominantly on the archives of the former Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties (Cominform, Informbureau) from the early period of the functioning of the centres, with whose assistance Moscow disciplined particular communist parties and realised its policy towards the West, in which, as is shown by the sources, Poland occupied an essential place. The second edition was expanded by a number of new findings upon the basis of an archival survey continued in Moscow, significant also from the viewpoint of the interpretation of the available documentation and new factography.

The intention of a publication series, written in Russian–German co-production, is to render available archival sources concerning so-called difficult topics. A markedly Polish aspect belongs to documentation included in the first volume of the edition, dealing with the military cooperation of the Reichswehr and the Red Army, whose basic link, as is known, was mutual hostility towards Poland. Numerous documents, published earlier in Russia and originating from post-Soviet resources, show the anti-Polish edge of Soviet–German military cooperation, based on the so-called Rappalo Treaty and the Berlin Treaty signed in April 1926.

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Indirectly, Polish issues are discussed in a number of recently available documents about the dissolution of the alliance and the beginning of the Soviet–German war\textsuperscript{54}. A number of editions of post–Soviet sources about Poland, prepared by Russian researchers, appeared in Russia. They include, i.a. two volumes of newly disclosed documentation relating to the Polish–Soviet war of 1919–1920\textsuperscript{55}. This edition contains about 250 documents from three central archives, pertaining to assorted aspects of the conflict, i.a. the communist movement in Polish lands; the activity of Polish communists in the Soviet Union; the sociopolitical situation in Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine; information of the Soviet intelligence services about the situation in Poland; propaganda and diversion against Poland; the course of armed struggle; the organisation of the so–called Polish Red Army; the activity of the Communist Provisional Revolutionary Committee of Poland in 1920; prisoners of war; the attitude of the Polish population towards the Bolsheviks; truce negotiations; and international aspects of the Polish–Bolshevik conflict.

An important supplementation to this edition is the selection of documents published in “Niepodległość i Pamięć”, and originating from the \textit{Polish Bureau of Agitation and Propaganda at the Central Committee of the All–Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in 1917–1931}, deposited in the Russian Centre for the Storage of Historical–Documentation Collections\textsuperscript{56}. Originally chosen from the viewpoint of biographical portraits of leftist activists, the presented selection of documents functioned as an important cornerstone of sources for the history of the so–called Polish revolutionary left. They demonstrate the anti–state and anti–national activity of Polish communists, accentuating their participation in the 1920 campaign on the Bolshevik side.


Another highly attention-worthy collection is the *Special Stalin Folio*, stored in the State Archives of the Russian Federation, and including a wide array of material about Poland. Its inventory has been made available in print, facilitating the work of historians and archivists interested in a survey\(^{57}\). A similar publication, also of great help for studies focused on material concerning Poland and found in post-Soviet archival resources, is an inventory of sources published in Russia and relating to the military aspects of Polish-Soviet relations in 1941–1945\(^{58}\).

Significant cognitive value belongs to documentation about mass-scale deportations and re-emigrations of Poles, published by Nikolai Bugay upon the basis of a survey found in the *Special Stalin Folio*\(^{59}\). This documentation is composed of 76 documents from January 1936 to January 1959, illustrating chiefly three mass-scale repressive operations in relation to the Polish population: the liquidation of Polish national regions during the second half of the 1930s — the so-called Marchlewski and Dzierzhinsky regions; four mass-scale deportations of the population of annexed Polish lands in 1940–1941; and the campaign of deporting so-called specialist-settlers from the liberated terrains. The documents in question include reports by heads of resorts, resolutions and decrees, orders, letters, official

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correspondence of the NKVD-MVD U.S.S.R. centre with its local network, statistical tables, etc. The publication is supplemented by documents from the former Archives of the October Revolution and as well as the NKVD archives in Minsk, i.a. lists which for the first time reveal the scale of the consequences of the liquidation of the so-called Dzierzhinsky region, exceeding 14,000 fatalities. Numerous Polish accents are to be found in the extensive documentation from the NKVD archives in Kharkov and Kiev, published in Ukraine and concerning repressions affecting Ukrainian NKVD activists during the second half of the 1930s, associated, i.a. with the Polish–Bolshevik war of 1920, peace negotiations in Riga, and the liquidation of the so-called Marchlewski region. Polish accents in the newly disclosed documentation from Ukrainian security organs are much more numerous.

Another NKVD source is a document of the Third Department of OGPU from the second half of the 1930s, dealing with a diagnosis by the Soviet intelligence service and concerning the internal political life in Poland, including the degree of the organisation of national minorities. In the autumn of 1939, operational activity in the vanquished Second Republic was probably conducted upon the basis of exactly this document.

We received an important selection of documentation illustrating the degeneration of Soviet nationality policies in relation to Poles and Jews in Lithuania. Soviet documentation published by Grzegorz Mazur accents the little–known fate of Polish

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61 Dokument z istortyil NKVD URSR, “Nashe Minulye”, Ns 1(6), Kfiv 1993, pp. 39–150.
64 N. W. Iwanow, Litości ... Represje w obwodzie wilejskim w dokumentach 1939–1941 (Have Pity... Repressions in the Vilno Region in Documents 1939–1941), prep. by W. I.Adamuszko, N. W. Iwanow, Warszawa 1996.
refugees in Lithuania prior to the fourth mass-scale deportation (June 1941)\textsuperscript{66}.

The publication by Albin Glowacki, who upon the basis of a laborious survey carried out in Russian and Ukrainian archives established the composition of NKVD authorities in 1939–1941\textsuperscript{67} can be regarded as a highly ranking document. The same holds true for his reconstruction of the complete composition of the personnel of the Soviet apparatus of repression in Eastern Little Poland and Volhynia. The victims included many local Poles and refugees from territories captured by Germany\textsuperscript{68}.

One of the least examined themes in the domain of the martyrology of Polish citizens in the East during the Second World War is the evacuation of front-line prisons in June–July 1941. At that time, the NKVD murdered an inestimable number of citizens of the former Republic of Poland, imprisoned in so-called Western Belorussia and Western Ukraine. The scarce disclosed documents include publications issued by “Karta”, which demonstrate that the victims of this operation totalled at least 42,776\textsuperscript{69}. Other normative and executive documents linked with the evacuation of Soviet prisons as well as witness accounts are contained in Drogi śmierci (Routes of Death), published by the “Karta” Centre as part of the so-called “White Series”\textsuperscript{70}.

Yet another important publication is the first volume in the documentary series Stalinizm w Europie Wschodniej 1944–1953 (Stalinism in Eastern Europe 1944–1953), prepared upon the


basis of the above mentioned archival collection — the *Special Stalin Folio*, supplemented with materia from the affiliated *Special Molotov Folio*. The gathered accounts present the struggle waged by the NKVD against political and armed forces which opposed the Red Army sweeping across Polish territory, and tried to resist the subordination of the country to Soviet control. The redominating documents are on-the-spot reports, dispatches about "operation-Chekist" actions, letters and notes by Beria, addressed to Stalin and Molotov, information from the Chief of the Soviet military counter-intelligence, reports by NKVD plenipotentiaries along front-lines crossing Polish territories, reports by Soviet advisers in the Polish Ministry of Public Security, testimonies and protocols of interrogations, etc. Translations of certain documents from the volume *NKVD i pol'skoye podpole* appeared in the press and specialist periodicals.

An essential supplementation of the above volume, compiled in an artificial manner suggesting a comparability of the culpability of both sides, are consecutive publications about the Soviet destruction of the Polish Armed Underground. The first consists of documentation from the NKVD archives in Minsk, published by Halina Martinowa. The study in question shows the most abominable symptoms of the liquidation of the Polish armed Underground in the former Eastern Borderlands of Pre-war Poland, predominantly the deceitful snaring and murder of 80 members of a detachment led by Antoni Burzyński—"Kmicic", tortured by the NKVD to death. The second publication supplements material from a conference held by the Central-Eastern

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72See, e.g.: NKWD i polskie podziemie (materiały z 'teczki Stalina') (NKVD and the Polish Underground (material from the "Stalin Folio")), prep. by A. Kastory, "Arcana", N° 6, Kraków 1996, pp. 120–126 (117–126).


Europe Forum at the S. Batory Foundation and the “Karta” Centre on: *The Soviet Union, Poland. Within the Empire*, and discusses the activity of the NKVD in Polish lands during the early aftermath of the Second World War. A publication closely corresponding to it consists of a selection of documents from the Command of a Joint Division of Interior Forces of the NKVD U.S.S.R. (from January 1946 known as the 64 Division of Interior Forces), active in Poland in 1944–1946; Xerox copies of 42 folios from this collection, kept in the Central State Army Archives in Moscow, were deposited in the Central Army Archives in Rembertów (including the documentation of the Command of the Interior Forces of the NKVD U.S.S.R.); the resultant selection was based on this material.

Material from the above mentioned conference, organised by the Forum, was published also in Russian in a version expanded by means of several new texts containing valuable information.

The most important part of the documents included in the volume *NKVD i pol'skoye podpole 1944–1945* (42 documents) became part of a publication prepared jointly by Polish and Russian archivists and historians, and dealing with the operational activity of NKVD troops in Poland, chiefly — the pacification of the Polish Underground in 1944–1947. All the documents contained therein, relating to issues connected with the stationing of NKVD troops in Poland, originated in the chancery of Lavrenti Beria, People’s Commissar of Internal Affairs; these are copies of documentation systematically supplied to Poland and, at present, available in the State Archives of the Russian

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76Istoricheskiye sborniki “Miemoriala”, 1: Riepriesit protiv polakov i polskikh grazhdan, ed. by A. Y. Daniel et al., Moskva 1997. The new, supplementary texts comprise, i.a. information about post–Soviet archival resources dealing with the Polish Armed Forces in the U.S.S.R., the so-called General W. Anders Army (N. S. Lebiedieva) and archival material from the Soviet Ministry of Defence pertaining to the transportation of Polish citizens interned by the Soviet authorities in 1944–1945 (coll.).

A copious volume on the activity of the Soviet security apparatus in the region of Nowogródek, Grodno and Vilno in 1944–1948 forms specific publication, basically composed of two documents\textsuperscript{78}. The above mentioned documents are arranged by the Ministry of the Interior of the Belorussian SSR: \textit{The Outcome of the Agency–Operational Activity of Organs of the MVD of the Belorussian SSR as Regards the Liquidation of the anti–Soviet Nationalist Underground, its Groups and Other Counterrevolutionary Underground from 1 January 1944 to 1 March 1947}, and parts IV–VII of an untitled study on the destruction of the Polish armed Underground in the former Grodno Inspectorate of the Home Army (only its extensive fragment, parts IV–VII, was obtained). Those summary documents are accompanied by forty appendices, closely corresponding to the former and endowing them with an exceptionally dramatic character. The resultant whole demonstrates that despite treacherous arrests of the staff of the Vilno–Nowogródek Region of the Home Army and the internment of several thousand members of the Home Army in the wake of the “Ostra Brama” Operation, the struggle waged against the new aggressor did not come to a halt. Its intensity was considerable, and the ruthlessness and brutality of the NKVD forces stifling it was even greater than in Central Poland. Up to now, knowledge about this combat, continued to the end of the 1940s, was slight, and only newly accessible documentation opened a field of further research for historians interested in Polish pro–independence endeavours.

The relatively easily available archives of the three Baltic republics, and in particular the Lithuanian archives, contain numerous documents pertaining to Poles, mainly, albeit not exclusively, those with Soviet citizenship. By way of example, the complex dealing with common crimes (fond ugolovnikh diel) in the former KGB archives in the Lithuanian SSR includes documents about Poles who were the objects of KGB operations —


protocols of interrogations, verdicts, evidence; the infiltration collection \textit{fond filtratsyonnikh diel} includes dossiers of, i.a. persons who during the Soviet period left for Poland or planned to do so as well as those who arrived from Poland\textsuperscript{79}. In this archives one may come across documentation of the Command of the Vilno–Nowogródek Region of the Home Army, seized by the Soviet authorities\textsuperscript{80}.

The National Archives of the Republic of Belarus contains extensive and little studied documentation about Polish issues. It includes, i.a. 20 complexes (\textit{fondi}) with more than 3,000 folios of material about the activity of the Union of Armed Struggle, and then the Home Army, in Belorussia\textsuperscript{81}.

It is precisely the Belarussian archives which provide the basic core of documents issued in the heretofore fullest source publication about Soviet occupation in the Eastern territories of the Second Republic in 1939–1941, prepared by a team of researchers headed by Tomasz Strzembosz\textsuperscript{82}. The seventy documents presented therein are the outcome of a survey conducted in the National Archives of the Republic of Belarus in Minsk, the State Archives of the Grodno Region, the State Archives of the Brest Region, and the Russian State Army Archives in Moscow. Documentation classified for this collection concentrates on the following themes: the construction of the foundations of Soviet power in occupied territories; the function-


ing of the occupation system; socio-economic transformations in rural terrains; repressions after the Skidel incident (18–19 September 1939); the farcical elections of deputies to the People’s Assembly of (so-called) Western Belorussia; symptoms of civilian and armed resistance against the Soviet occupant. Other published documents depict so-called first Soviet occupation (1939–1941) on a much narrower scale, namely in the region of Ciechanów.

The post-Soviet archival legacy concerning Polish issues, and available in the archives of Belarus, Lithuania and Ukraine, comprises a separate, insufficiently appreciated field of survey. At the end of the Soviet period, some of the documents from the republican archives, in particular the local KGB archives, were selected by a special commission and handed over to Moscow; the overwhelming majority, however, remained behind, and now is available with no restrictions whatsoever. Initial research shows that it could provide numerous important data, especially as regards the fate of the population of territories belonging to the former Second Republic, annexed by the Soviet Union in September 1939 and once again at the end of the war, sanctioned

86 See, e. g. Litość: represje w obwodzie wilejskim, op. cit.
by a convention signed by the Polish Committee for National Liberation and the Council of People’s Commissars of the U.S.S.R. on 27 July 1944. Up to now, wider documentation has been issued only sporadically; as a rule, the publications are composed of individual documents or contributions illustrated by fragments of sources.

Only publications from the past few years contain, albeit sporadically, documentation on the fate of Poles in the Soviet Union after 1944. Nonetheless, those questions too are sometimes reflected in source material published in the particular republics of the former U.S.S.R., chiefly on the margin of material about repressions aimed against the population of a given post-Soviet republic, e.g. the Lithuanian Underground.

A number of important documents on the situation in Poland and the whole region of Central Europe controlled by the U.S.S.R. is to be found in a volume of documents from post-Soviet resources, prepared by historians from the Institute of Slavonic and Balkan Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences. This volume, together with the earlier mentioned study: NKVD i pol’skoye podpole 1944–1945 inaugurated the series: Stalinism in Eastern Europe 1944–1953, under the auspices of the Institute of Slavonic and Balkan Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences; the next volumes will discuss, i.a. Transylvania in Soviet–Romanian–Hungarian relations and the mission of Andrei Vyshinsky in Bucharest in 1944–1946.

Polish motifs appear indirectly in copious multi-volume editions issued in Russia and dealing with the attitude of the


Comintern to the second world war\textsuperscript{89}, the Nürnberg trial, and, in particular, the Katyń crime\textsuperscript{90} as well as Soviet foreign policy in 1939\textsuperscript{91} and 1940\textsuperscript{92}.

The presence in scientific circulation of post–Soviet source material relating to mutual relations and the history of the People’s Republic of Poland — from the 1950s to the inauguration of systemic transformation — is slight\textsuperscript{93}. Let us hope that in time this documentation too will be made available for researchers.

Apart from material accessible in Russian archives, post–Soviet sources about Poland at our disposal at the moment — both those published and available in the Central Army Archives and the “Karta” Centre (Eastern Archive) — constitute an enormously important scientific workshop for historians specialising in newest history. A total of more than one million Xerox–copy leafs and microfilm frames enable, to a considerable degree, to fill so–called blank pages in the history of Poles in the eastern territories of Pre–war Poland, the history of Polish–Soviet relations, Polish communist organisations (formations), and the origin and early period of the People’s Republic of Poland. These resources continue to be expanded, although the best period as regards access to post–Soviet archives is, unfortunately, already a thing of the past\textsuperscript{94}.

(Translated by Aleksandra Rodzińska–Chojnowska)


\textsuperscript{94}Cf. Archivi snowa zakrivayutsa, “Izvestilya”, № 182, 25 September 1997 [Interview with A. S. Prokopienko, consultant of the Commission of the President of the Russian Federation for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Political Repressions].