

The Second World War in Poland

Short Summary



Presentation plan

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The beginning of the war



1st September 1939 - the beginning of World War II, the attack of a German battleship on Westerplatte in Gdańsk.

For the first three days, the so-called border battle lasted, which ended in the defeat of Poles. In the same way, successive attempts to detain Germans failed.

8th September 1939 - German troops approached Warsaw, fighting around it lasted until 22nd September.

The beginning of the war

17th September 1939 - the entry of Soviet troops into the territory of Poland, which was a great surprise for Poles, because the state of war with the USSR was not declared.

28th September 1939 - The Germans enter the capital and conquer it.

The last Polish soldiers laid down their arms after the Battle of Kock on October 6th.



German Occupation



The Polish lands were divided into two countries - the USSR and the Third Reich. The General Government was established on part of the lands occupied by Germany. In the General Government the power was held by the Governor Hans Frank, who was in office at Wawel Castle. According to the original assumptions, the GG was to be the agricultural background of the Third Reich, and the Poles living there were to become German slaves. The Nazis used brutal terror on Polish lands. The Nazis decided that in order to weaken the Polish nation, its elite should be eliminated. For this reason they murdered tens of thousands of Poles.

German concentration death camps

German concentration camps were set up to exterminate European Jews. They were placed in Poland for practical reasons. In this area there was the largest concentration of the Jewish population. The first camp was established in Chełmno. The next ones were located in Bełżec, Sobibór, Treblinka, as well as in Auschwitz-Birkenau and Majdanek, then in Stutthof.



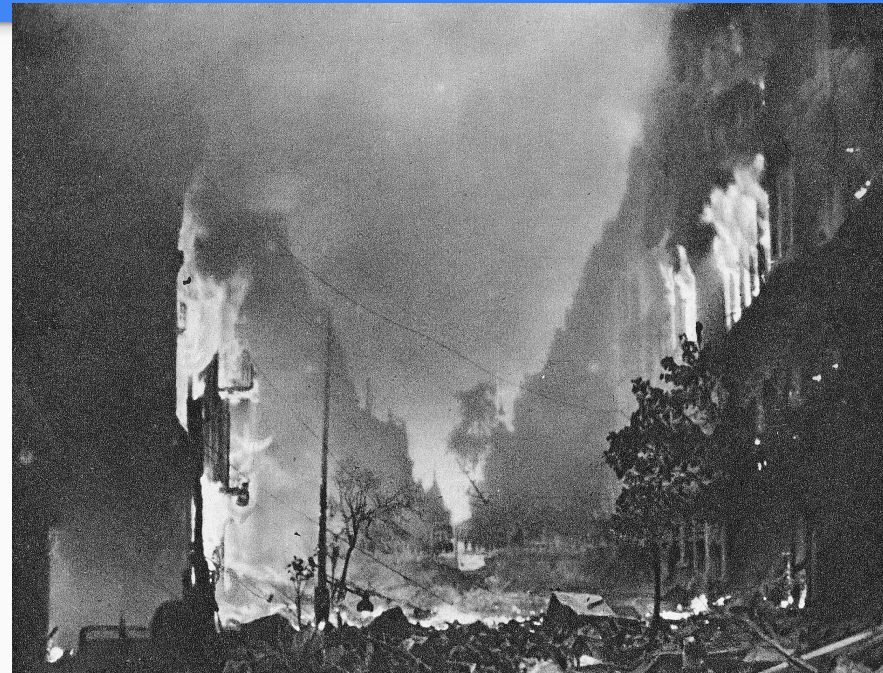
The Polish Underground State

After the defeat in September 1939. Poles did not come to terms with the loss of independence and quickly began to set up underground organizations, partisan groups. One day, before the capitulation of Warsaw, the Service for the Victory of Poland was established in the Polish capital. When the authorities in exile were taken over by General Sikorski, he appointed the Union of Armed Struggle on 13th November 1939. Then, on 14th February 1942, the Union was transformed into the Home Army, whose number amounted to about 400 thousand soldiers. The main tasks of the Home Army included propaganda and sabotage activities as well as the preparation of the general uprising.

The Warsaw Uprising



The outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising was caused by the approach of Soviet troops to the capital and the will to liberate it from the Soviets, as well as the desire to retaliate against the Germans during the years of terror. Finally, the uprising broke out on August 1st, 1944, at 5 p.m., and Colonel Antoni Chrusciel was appointed as the direct commander. The Germans expected the rush, but they were surprised by the number of insurgents and their determination. Poles fought for 63 days, but in the situation of lack of help from the Allies, exhaustion of ammunition and food, it was decided to surrender on October 2nd, 1944. The uprising ended in political and military defeat.



The Russian Occupation



The policy of the Soviet authorities towards Poles differed from the actions of the Germans. A significant part of the population of the occupied lands was inhabited by national minorities, i.e. Ukrainians and Belarusians. They were hostile towards the Polish authorities and welcomed the Red Army with joy. After the incorporation of the former eastern borderlands, mass arrests of former officials and intelligentsia took place. In 1940 the collectivization of villages and the so-called passportisation, like the forced granting of Soviet citizenship, began. Acceptance of this passport for men was connected with the obligation of military service in the Red Army. The main goal of the communists was Sovietization - imposing communist ideology on the population. Many Poles were sentenced to spend many years in camps in Siberia, where they were forced to work in mines or cutting down forests in extreme conditions, lack of food and lack of warm clothing.

Katyń

In September 1939 thousands of Polish officers, policemen, soldiers of KOP, Military Gendarmerie and special services were taken prisoners by the Soviets. They were strongly connected with the Polish state and posed a threat to the new authorities. That is why they were first imprisoned in camps, and when the attempts to cooperate failed, Stalin ordered them to be murdered. Executions took place in April and May 1940 in Katyn, Kharkiv and Mednoye. In total, about 22 thousand Poles died then. The Soviets carefully concealed this fact, but the mass graves in Katyn were discovered by the Germans. The information was broadcast on April 13th, 1943 by the German radio.



The Wolf's Lair or The Wolf's Nest

The Wolf's Nest - in 1941-1944 Adolf Hitler's headquarters were located in a forest east of the village of Gierłoż (currently the area of the Warmińsko - Mazurskie Voivodeship). The quarters were built so that Hitler could command the troops conquering the USSR. On July 20th, 1940, - One of the colonels of the Wehrmacht carried out an unsuccessful assassination attack on Hitler. On November 20th, 1944, Hitler left the headquarters forever, and on 27th January 1954, it was taken over by the Polish army.



The End of the war in Poland



At the beginning of 1944, the Red Army, fighting with the Germans, crossed the pre-war borders of Poland. However, the Soviet authorities began to announce that they were liberating the Polish territory only after their troops crossed the River Bug. On July 22nd, 1944, the Polish Committee for National Liberation (PKWN) was established, which announced its establishment in the Manifesto on the Communist Radio Moscow. In it, the PKWN declared itself the only legal government in Poland, which shows that it did not recognise the legality of the government in exile. Before the Yalta Conference, PKWN was transformed into the Provisional Government of the Republic of Poland, and later into the Provisional Government of National Unity (TRJN). In January 1945 the great Soviet offensive from the Vistula River began. After a few weeks, the Red Army reached the Odra River, which brought all Polish lands under the rule of the USSR.

The End of the war in Poland



The Soviet authorities began to spread propaganda on them and effectively liquidate the independence underground. In this situation, on January 19th, 1945, General Leopold Okulicki, the Home Army Commander-in-Chief, dissolved the Home Army, recognizing its further action as unfounded. This decision was to protect the underground soldiers from the repressions of the new occupant, but further underground activities were not abandoned. Unfortunately, after the trial of sixteen, the leaders of the underground activities were arrested, which caused the forces of the Polish underground to be broken up. In June 1945, the final composition of the TRJN was established in Moscow. Within a few months, it was recognized by most countries of the world, including the USSR, the USA and Great Britain, which was a sign to the banning of the government in exile.

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