

# Institute of National Remembrance

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## Statement of the President of the Institute of National Remembrance, Dr. Łukasz Kamiński, concerning the accusations of the Russian propaganda with regard to the Polish underground resistance 1944-1945

In September 1939 Poland took up an uneven fight against two cooperating regimes – the Third Reich and the Soviet Union. Despite the defeat in protecting their country, Poles continued their struggle both in exile and at home. The swiftly developing Polish clandestine structures led to the constitution of the Polish Underground State, a unique phenomenon in the history of Nazi occupied Europe. The Union of Armed Struggle, which later became the Home Army, was its military core.

In 1939-1941, the Soviet Union occupied half of Poland's territory. Soviet occupation brought severe repressions; four mass deportations of civilians, deportations to the Gulag, mass arrests and executions. The symbol of those actions is the Katyń Massacre, during which 22 thousand Polish officers, policemen, and representatives of the Polish

elite were shot in the back of the head following Stalin's order.

Despite the great suffering and the breach of diplomatic relations by the Soviets with the Polish Government in Exile, the Home Army commander ordered to carry out the Operation „Tempest" in 1944. As the front line came closer, the Home Army units started an open war against the Germans and cooperated with the approaching Red Army units. In response, the Soviet authorities disarmed, deported to the Gulag, and in many cases also murdered the Polish soldiers. The scenario was the same even in cases where Polish and Soviet soldiers cooperated, as during the liberation of Vilnius or Lviv. Polish civil servants, who revealed their identity, suffered the same fate.

Thus, the Home Army soldiers were left with no other possibility than to return to underground and fight in self-defense. To limit the damage, in January 1945, Gen. Leopold Okulicki „Niedźwiadek" gave the order to dissolve the Home Army. A few weeks later in Yalta, the leaders of the three powers made a decision about the fate of Poland. Despite the huge injustice of the solutions, including losing half of the territory, the leaders of the Polish Underground declared readiness to discuss the establishment Provisional Government of National Unity. In response, sixteen of them, including Gen. Okulicki, the Commander of the Home Army, Jan Stanisław Jankowski, Deputy Prime Minister and Kazimierz Pużak, Chairman of the Underground Parliament were abducted by the NKVD and judged in a staged trial in Moscow.

In the following months, even after the end of war in Europe,

repressions towards representatives of the Polish underground continued. The biggest crime committed at that time was the Augustów Roundup of July 1945, in the course of which nearly 600 people were abducted and killed. They were either underground soldiers or civilians. Their burial place remains unknown to this day. The Russian side has been refusing to release the documents of the case for years.

Instead, the documents published today aim to disparage the memory of the heroes of the Polish Underground. These activities are modeled on the worst period of the Communist propaganda. They are also another example that modern Russia increasingly refers to the legacy of Stalin's Soviet Union. Instead of striving for reconciliation based on truth and remembrance, Russia chooses the path of confrontation, based on contempt for the victims of Soviet crimes.

President of the Institute of National Remembrance,  
Dr. Łukasz Kamiński

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