



Preface

The year 2019 abounded in numerous important historical anniversaries that together make up a unique calendar of symbolic dates. The 80th anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War was conjoined with the thirtieth commemoration of the commencement of democratic change in Eastern Europe, a process which ultimately led to the fall of the Communist system in Poland. The 50 years between these two landmark dates may doubtless be viewed as the *longue durée* – a single historical period initiated by the destruction of the independent Second Polish Republic following the country's invasion by the Third Reich and the Soviet Union. The totalitarian systems existing in these two states claimed to themselves the right to annihilate the existing socio-political structure and build a “new order” on its ruins. The genesis, functioning and directions of development of this order were the subject of a scholarly conference organized by the Pilecki Institute, which was held on 17–19 September 2019 in Warsaw.

The present volume of the “Totalitarian and 20th Century Studies” yearbook comprises extended versions of the papers delivered at this conference. In its organization, we were guided first and foremost by the objective of creating an interdisciplinary and international debate concerning the first two years of the Second World War and the period immediately preceding its outbreak. The topics touched upon by the authors demonstrate the multifaceted nature of this debate. The texts published in the current volume do not include all that were sent in to the editorial office. The remainder will be printed in 2021 in the fifth edition of our periodical, thus creating a complementary image of the issues analyzed during the conference.

The subject matter of the present batch of articles is focused along a number of topical axes. As regards the period immediately preceding the German and Soviet invasion of Poland, Wojciech Łysek discusses the question of the Polish Promethean struggle in the east of Europe in correlation with the fall of the Second Polish Republic. The next author, Marek Rodzik, presents the genesis of the British guarantees for Poland of March 1939, opining that the main reason for their granting was Adolf Hitler's violation of the Munich Agreement. British-Polish co-operation – despite the non-provision of any tangible assistance to Poland once it was attacked by Germany – was continued in successive years, also in the field of special operations, and this has been described in detail by Anna Zapalec and Jacek

Tebinka. The aggression of the Third Reich against Poland was characterized by exceptional brutality, while the crimes committed by the Germans clearly showed that territorial conquest was not their primary objective, as Roger Moorhouse convincingly argues. Tomasz Ceran has conducted an analysis of one such crime, duly placing it in the context of genocide, while Mikołaj Getka-Kenig reconstructs the process of destruction of the historical architecture of Kraków under the German occupation. Our next author, Marcin Marcinko, explains that the “voluntarism” which characterized the crimes and atrocities of the occupier did not fit into international legal standards, while Stephan Lehnstaedt outlines the problem of the German historical memory of crimes committed during the invasion of Poland. When discussing the multifarious aspects of the effects of war, we cannot forget the military defeat of the Polish Army, which necessitated its reconstruction abroad. The fates of Polish soldiers were varied. Some even found themselves in South Africa, and Paulina Stanik describes how this distant country was perceived by contemporary Poles. Obviously, the Second World War was a total conflict that left hardly any geographical area unscathed. Tunisia was no exception; initially taken over by the Vichy régime, which actively collaborated with the Third Reich, it was subsequently occupied by German and Italian forces. Mohsen Hamli analyzes how the country’s Jewish newspapers viewed the anti-Semitism propagated by the Third Reich and its allies, and how this ideology impacted the situation of Jews in Tunisia itself, whereas Habiba Boumlik touches upon the memory of anti-Jewish repressions in Tunisia. The next author, Ákos Bartha, has elaborated a broad presentation of anti-Nazi policy in Hungary – a country that was officially an ally of the Third Reich. The final research article, written by Maciej Zakrzewski, concerns the discussions which took place in the Weimar Republic on the issue of coupling technological advances with the masses. The yearbook is rounded off with Agnieszka Konik’s miscellany text, which constitutes a summary of the research project conducted by the Institute. Using the context of post-memory, she discusses the data provided in questionnaires completed by members of the families of persons commemorated under the “Called by Name” project.

The Institute strives to create a space for debate, wherein the “great” historical narratives will interconnect with personal experiences of the period of totalitarian rule. It is our sincere hope that readers recognize the present volume of our scholarly yearbook as a testament to our commitment and endeavor.

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