



**Pilecki Institute
International
Teachers and Educators
Program 2020/21
reading materials**

 **Pilecki
Institute**





15 AUGUST 2020
DAY 1:
INTRODUCTION

TOTALITARIANISM AND THE POLISH EXPERIENCE

Jakub Mańczak

What is totalitarianism? This question has been bothering intellectuals for almost a hundred years. Until today no answer that satisfies everyone has been given, and the proposed definitions seem to capture only parts of the truth.

We would like to invite you to reflect on this concept together. We believe that Polish history in the 20th century is an important source of inspiration for this reflection, as it is marked by the confrontation with two criminal political systems - Nazism and Stalinism - which are traditionally described as totalitarian. This confrontation triggered a reaction from Polish society. Resistance against totalitarian violence took many forms - military, civil, and intellectual among them. We will try to take a closer look at those forms of resistance which in the tragic history of the 20th century - the century of totalitarianism - seem to shine delicately as a moral example for future generations. However, is such an example still needed? Is the threat of totalitarianism in contemporary societies still alive? What lessons have we learned from the past, and what else do we need to learn? We would like to find answers to these questions together at the ITEP online seminar.

Adolf Hitler incorporated the western part of Polish territory into the Third Reich, while from the remaining lands he created the General Government - an administrative and territorial unit managed by the German administration, but officially remaining outside the territory of the Third Reich.

The term „totalitarianism” comes from Latin word *totalis*, which means completeness, complete. The terms „Totalitarian” was used for the first time by an Italian. He was accusing the leader of his country Benito Mussolini of building a totalitarian system.

On September 1, 1939, the German Third Reich attacked Poland. On September 17, the Red Army of the Soviet Union invaded Poland from the East. Both countries signed a non-aggression pact, the so-called the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact. The secret protocol attached

to it included an agreement to divide Polish territory between the Third Reich and the USSR. The unequal struggle with the aggressors ended on October 6 with Poland's defeat. Polish lands became a „totalitarian laboratory” in which both aggressors carried out horrific experiments.

Hitler's intention was not only to seize new lands, but also to neutralize the Polish nation, strip it of its identity and make it a source of slave labor for the German economy. As Martin Bormann wrote in a secret note from his meeting with Hitler in October 1940: „The Führer must emphasize once again that for Poles there can only be one master and he is a German, two masters cannot stand next to each other and there is no consent that, therefore all representatives of the Polish intelligentsia are to be killed. It sounds hard, but it is the law of life. Hitler's intentions were clear from the outbreak of the war.

The Jewish minority of over 3 million people in the German occupied lands became the main target of attack by the totalitarian machine of violence. Jews were legally persecuted, marked, locked up in ghettos, and eventually - liquidated in German-Nazi extermination camps.

In the East, Polish territories were occupied by Soviet Union troops. Here, too, a policy of extermination of the Polish elite was carried out, in accordance with the communist ideology. Although communism, at least on the level of declarations, differed diametrically from Nazism, in its methods of operation it resembled Hitler's regime. In the spring of 1940, NKVD troops shot nearly 22,000 Polish citizens in the so called Katyn Massacre. They were officers of the Polish Army, policemen, as well as reserve officers: officials, doctors, professors, lawyers, teachers, engineers, clergy, writers, merchants, social activists - the intellectual and moral elite of Polish society. A terrible fate befell their families and other, less dangerous „enemies of the people”. Four large, forced deportations carried

Such great differences in estimates result from limited access to the Russian archives and inaccurate records of the deportees. Some historians argue that to the verified figure of 320,000 the deportees at least three times as many victims, whose personal details were never included in the Russian files, should be added.

As part of the Intelligenzaktion, which lasted from September 1939 to April 1940, German state officials and members of the German self-defense murdered around 50,000 people. Poles considered by the aggressor to be the intelligentsia, people who were especially involved in maintaining and cultivating Polish identity – teachers, priests, landowners, social and political activists, as well as retired soldiers. Another 50 thousand were deported to concentration camps, where most of them died from of ill-treatment, excessive work, starvation and disease. This action was coordinated in cooperation with the Soviet NKVD

out in 1940-1941, according to various estimates, affected from 320,000 up to 1.5 million people. These were not only people who posed a real threat to the imposition of Soviet domination, but also children and the elderly who were chosen ideologically to be related to the „enemies of the people”. Many of them did not survive the

harsh conditions of travel in unheated freight cars with no water and terrible sanitation. The deaths of the most vulnerable victims cannot be explained by pragmatism. Everything points to the fact that both communism and Nazism murdered people of different nationalities for ideological reasons.

One of the first proposals to define totalitarianism was made by Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzeziński. According to their classification, six conditions must be met for the state system to be considered totalitarian:

1. The official ideology, binding on all citizens,
2. political power is in the hands of one party, led by a dictator-leader
3. The state apparatus is subject to the ruling party,
4. mass terror against own citizens, orchestrated by the political police,
5. the ruling party's monopoly on the mass media, lack of free media, universal censorship,
7. the party's total control over the means of violence,
6. centrally controlled economy - wages, prices, allocation of raw materials, foreign trade are regulated by the party-state apparatus.

This definition allows us to recognize totalitarianism, decide whether a country is totalitarian or not. Is this knowledge enough for us? It seems that from the point of view of education, we need something more - reflection on the causes of totalitarianism, social processes that led to the transformation of the state system into totalitarianism, and also - and perhaps above all - on the structure of totalitarian thinking. Such a reflection was undertaken by Hannah Arendt, a German-Jewish intellectual who herself painfully felt the effects of Nazi policy. Arendt not only looks at the institutions themselves - the dictator, mass propaganda and violence, but also pays attention to the followers of the system. What characterized these followers? They were „redundant” people, deprived of natural social ties, lonely, not represented by any political party. Under „normal” conditions of parliamentary democracy, such persons usually remain outside the political system. Their number increased significantly in European societies after World War I, as a result of the collapse of the class system, as well as the process of industrialization and the development of capitalism. Arendt claims that „Nazi lies were effective because they alluded to certain fundamental experiences and even more so to certain fundamental desires.” So what did the adherents of Nazism and communism want? They wanted to make sense of the world they lived in, which, from their perspective, seemed to be meaningless.

After all, in Germany Hitler took power with the approval of a large part of society, while communism and its Bolshevik form in Russia also had many supporters.

“Loneliness as accompanying homelessness and uprooting is, humanly speaking, a disease of our time. Of course, one can still see people [...] holding onto each other [...]

without the help of the established channels of communication provided by a shared world, in order to escape together becoming nonhumans in a society where everyone seems redundant and is seen as such by their own companions. But what do these acrobatic achievements prove against the despair that grows all around us, which we ignore every time we simply denounce or call people who succumb to the charm of totalitarian propaganda stupid, vile or misinformed? These people aren't like that. They only escaped the despair of loneliness through dependence on its vices ". These words, written in the mid-twentieth century, may sound disturbingly familiar to a European at the beginning of the XXI century..

These uprooted, lonely people got from totalitarianism a sense of belonging in a mass movement and a sense of meaning from an ideology that winds up the entire machine of violence. According to Arendt, ideology is a belief system that aspires to a complete and absolute (total!) explanation of all reality, past, future and present. Such a system is not falsifiable by experience, it is completely insensitive to facts, and is based on a certain central axiom (eg that history is the struggle of races, or a struggle of classes) from which the rest of the „iron laws“ are derived. Such a system also turns morality upside down and forces people to murder each other en masse in the name of a „higher“ good.

Another totalitarian theorist, Kurt Voegelin, drew attention to the reference to the higher good and other religious categories. He saw totalitarianism as a kind of parareligion or political religion. Voegelin interpreted the emergence of bloody ideologies as a consequence of the process of secularization of the West and turning away from Christianity, but observed the persistence of the immanent conceptual matrix that had prevailed in Europe for centuries. Communism and Nazism continue to use religious categories, but they are distorted and confined to the temporal world. They promise the salvation of man here on Earth, as long as we follow the allegedly discovered laws of history. Releasing from injustice is just around the corner - it is enough to “only” eliminate the bourgeois exploiting class or restore the Aryan race to its rightful place among other, inferior peoples.

The above considerations are only a preliminary outline of the complex problem of totalitarianism. We hope that they will be helpful and inspiring for you in further, joint and individual searches.



16 AUGUST 2020
DAY 2:
MILITARY RESISTANCE

POLISH MILITARY AND THE STORY OF WITOLD PILECKI

Jakub Mańczak

Polish military resistance against Soviet and Nazi totalitarian regimes had various forms. The Polish Army fought the armed forces of the Third Reich from 1 September 1939. Although Britain and France declared war on Germany on 3 September, they took almost no military action to help Poland, their ally. The fate of the defensive war was sealed when the Soviet Union invaded the Polish lands from the East on 17 September. The Polish state, attacked from two sides, had no chance against the overwhelming enemy forces. Its territory was divided between the two aggressors in accordance with the provisions of a secret protocol included in the non-aggression pact which Germany and Soviet Russia had signed days before (known as the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact). The last Polish soldiers laid down their weapons on 6 October 1939. Approximately 250,000 Polish soldiers were taken into Soviet captivity, while the Germans imprisoned about 300,000 Polish POWs.

Some soldiers and the Polish civil and military authorities fled south to neutral Romania, where they were interned. Those who managed to get abroad, did not remain passive – they fought on many fronts of World War II - from the battles of Britain, Narvik, Africa, Italy, to the beaches of Normandy and Dutch towns.

Witold Pilecki's infantry division was destroyed at the beginning of September. The Blitzkrieg – a new strategy of warfare exercised by the Germans – surprised the Polish army. With a unit numbering several dozen soldiers, Pilecki led improvised guerrilla and reconnaissance activities. Eventually, he decided to abandon his uniform in favor of civilian clothes. It did not mean, however, that he was no longer a soldier. When he came to Warsaw, he initiated the creation of the Secret Polish Army – one of many underground organizations established spontaneously by Polish soldiers who escaped captivity. They did not lose the will to fight, seeking opportunities to resist the aggressors. The main political movements in Poland: national, socialist and peasant movement established their own underground military organizations. On 14 February 1942, the Polish Government-in-Exile joined the majority of them to create the new underground Polish army – the Home Army operating on Soviet- and German-occupied lands. In 1944, the

year of the Warsaw Uprising, the Home Army consisted of 360,000 soldiers.

The underground carried out sabotage and diversion operations, as well as executions of German functionaries who had been sentenced to death, collected intelligence and provided information to the Allies in the West. Pilecki took on this last function. When arrests and deportation to the Auschwitz camp of members of his organization began, Pilecki decided to take action. At that time, in September 1940, little was known about the camp, which had been operating from June 1940. After receiving permission from his commanders, Pilecki got himself arrested in one of the round-ups in Warsaw, organized by Germans on a daily basis to oppress and terrorize civilians. Arrested on the streets, Poles were immediately taken to prisons and then to concentration and death camps scattered around the occupied lands. Some were used as forced labor and taken into the Reich to work in factories, companies or German homes. Pilecki was taken to Auschwitz – the place from which people rarely came back.

Pilecki's mission had two objectives. Firstly, he was to provide information about the conditions inside the camp, activities of the Germans and all important events in the life of the camp. Secondly, he was to organize a clandestine resistance movement. Its main purpose was to give the prisoners emotional support in this "Hell on Earth" through organizing mutual aid: acquiring food, getting better jobs, and even eliminating some bloodthirsty kapos or SS men. For this purpose, the members of the resistance stealthily threw lice onto selected perpetrators, infecting them with typhus, which at the time was a deadly disease.

Having witnessed the conditions in the camp, Pilecki pressed the Allied command to organize a bombing raid. He also developed a plan to take control of the camp from the inside. His underground network numbered several hundred people! Despite having multiple opportunities to escape or be released from the camp (which happened sometimes in the first years of the camp history), he decided not to take them. He delayed his escape until April 1943, when mass arrests among the members of the camp resistance movement began and the threat of being discovered by the camp Gestapo became very real.

Having escaped Auschwitz, Pilecki wrote a report, fragments of which we will show to the ITEP participants at our workshop. To this day, it remains one of the most extraordinary sources on the crimes committed by the German invaders in Auschwitz, as well as a testimony of extraordinary spirit that in such extreme conditions was able to create an underground organization larger than some resistance groups operating outside the camp!

Witold Pilecki continued to support the resistance against totalitarianism after the escape by using his extraordinary organizational and military skills in the Warsaw Uprising. In this great, tragic uprising, which began on 1 August 1944, about 18,000 Home Army soldiers and over 150,000 civilians perished. The hecatomb of the Polish capital, which lasted a little more than two months, was part of one of the largest military resistance

actions carried out by the Home Army – Operation “Tempest”. The aim of the operation was to provoke a nationwide uprising and, in the face of the advancing Red Army, to drive the Germans out of the Polish territory and to address the invading Soviet troops as the de facto hosts of the Polish lands. However, the Polish troops which came forward and often fought side by side with the Red Army against the German forces (e.g. in Vilnius), were then arrested and murdered or sent to Siberia upon refusal to lay down their arms and join the Communist-controlled army.

Witold Pilecki was captured by the Germans and deported to a POW camp in Murnau, where he lived to see the end of the war. After World War II, Pilecki was active in Communist Poland controlled the Soviet Union, collecting information about the political situation, contacting members of the armed resistance against the Communist political police, and writing down more reports. Despite the increasing danger posed by the Communist security services, he did not leave the country. He was arrested in May 1948. The Communist prosecutors accused him of, among other things, espionage and intelligence-gathering activities for Western countries. During the 10-month investigation, he was held in horrible conditions in the infamous communist prison at Rakowiecka Street in Warsaw. He was subjected to inhuman torture during endless interrogations: his nails were torn off, he was beaten unconscious and exposed to long hours without sleep. Sentenced to death in a show trial, Witold Pilecki was executed on 25 May 1948, in the basement of the prison on Rakowiecka Street, with a shot to the back of the head. His body was tossed into a pit which served as a mass grave for political prisoners. An extensive search for Pilecki’s remains, which began in 2012, continues to this day.

47 years old on the day of his death, Witold Pilecki was survived by his wife and two children.



17 AUGUST 2020
DAY 3:
CIVIL RESISTANCE

Civilian resistance in Poland during world war II

Kacper Kempisty

The realities of German and Soviet occupation in Poland

In 1939, the armies of the Third Reich and the USSR took over the Polish territories, commencing a six-year-long period of occupation. The policies and regulations introduced by the two totalitarian regimes were founded on intimidation and terror. While the occupations differed as far as ideological premises and methods are concerned, their implications were equally tragic for the average citizen.

Germany's main objective was to destroy the Polish society. To that end, the system of higher education in Poland was eliminated, and the teaching of Polish history and language was banned in elementary schools. Representatives of the Polish intelligentsia were physically exterminated by means of executions and deportations to camps. As part of the *Intelligenzaktion* and *AB-Aktion*, Polish teachers, doctors, lawyers, engineers, scholars and members of other professions most capable of preserving Polish patriotism and organizing the resistance movement were killed. In addition, economic terror introduced on a large scale involved the practice of closing down Polish companies or moving them to the Third Reich. Large numbers of young Poles were deported to Germany and forced to labor in factories and on agricultural farms. More than half of the food produced in the occupied territories was taken away as quota designated for the military. In the territory of the General Government, the Germans introduced a new weak currency, so-called *młynarka*. Under such circumstances, the Poles had no other choice but to engage in the black market. The situation of Jews was even harder: imprisoned in ghettos, separated from the rest of the world, and deprived of the means to fulfill their basic human needs, they were dying of starvation and disease in large numbers. Polish citizens of all nationalities were deported to concentration camps and exterminated

through heavy labor and starvation as part of the German racial policies. The Jews – one of the largest minorities, constituting 10% of the population of the occupied territory – were subject to the most intense forms of persecution, while providing them with help was punishable by death.

In the Soviet-occupied territories, individuals considered as “enemies of the people”, i.e. members of the intelligentsia and the upper classes, were sent deep into the USSR in mass deportations, and forced to perform backbreaking labor in Siberia and in the steppes of Kazakhstan. Four mass deportations resulted in almost complete denationalization of the Eastern Borderlands of the Second Polish Republic occupied by the USSR. The most infamous crime committed by the Communist regime – the Katyn Massacre – claimed the lives of nearly 22,000 Polish officers, policemen and representatives of other professions, who were murdered with the shot to the back of the head and buried in mass graves. After the war, the Soviet authorities denied their involvement in the massacre, trying to frame Germany for the crime.

Civilian resistance in Poland

Although the Polish citizens tried to resist the terror introduced by the occupier in various ways, it is the military resistance involving armed struggle and sabotage operations that comes to mind first. However, we should not forget about the acts of resistance undertaken by the Polish civilians, both in an organized, institutionalized manner, and in the form of spontaneous actions. The latter prove most problematic in terms of research.

The Directorate of Civil Resistance, subordinate to the Government Delegation for Poland (the highest authority in occupied Poland acting on behalf of the London-based government-in-exile), coordinated the civil resistance and cooperated with the Main Command of the Home Army. Some of the Directorate’s tasks included: printing and distributing the underground press in order to provide the Poles with accurate information and messages from the government, sabotaging the occupier by slowing down work in factories, organizing sabotage operations, propaganda actions such as writing slogans on the walls, tearing down posters and flags put up by the occupiers. Despite the fact that all of these forms of resistance were punishable by death, these actions were undertaken by many people, and their results were very visible in the public space. Another important form of resistance involved clandestine education on all levels: from elementary schools (with the prewar curriculum) through middle schools to universities. Many postwar professors had taken their exams illegally during the occupation. The same was true for middle school students who passed their school-exit exams during that time. Among important civilian organizations was the “Żegota”

Council to Aid Jews, founded for the purposes of helping the Jews imprisoned in ghettos by supplying them with food, medicine and documents offering a chance to escape, often provided by the Catholic clergymen who forged certificates of baptism.

During the occupation, civilians also engaged in ad hoc resistance actions. Taking part in clandestine classes alone was an act of resistance. So was the spontaneous act of tearing down German posters and boycotting the businesses which collaborated with the Germans. One of the most difficult forms of resistance, which required immense courage, was providing help to Jews – the group earmarked for death on the grounds of their ethnicity. Many instances of such help were spontaneous. People were hiding their prewar neighbors as well as strangers who had fled from the ghettos and from transports to extermination camps. Every attempt to aid Jews – and even failure to report such attempts to the German authorities – was punishable by death.

Called by Name

In the course of the “Called by Name” project, the Pilecki Institute honors and commemorates those who were murdered for aiding Jews. Many stories of such unsung heroes are known only to their families. We pay our respects to these courageous individuals by joining the local communities in recalling the tragic circumstances of their deaths, and creating visible symbols of their sacrifice – commemorative stones with inscriptions.

The first individuals commemorated as part of the project were members of the Lubkiewicz family. The married couple Marianna and Leon Lubkiewicz owned a bakery in the village of Sadowne, a dozen kilometers away from the extermination camp in Treblinka. In the winter of 1943, they gave bread to two Jewish women who had escaped from a transport to the camp. The German functionaries from a penal expedition captured the Jewesses, forced them to turn the Lubkiewiczs in, and murdered the two women. Following a brutal interrogation, the Germans murdered Marianna, Leon and their son Stefan. In March 2019 in Sadowne, we unveiled a commemorative stone honoring the Lubkiewicz family. Subsequently, the Institute organized the unveiling of another 11 commemorative monuments, and continues working on the verification and commemoration of other similar stories.

It is important to note that the terror inflicted by the Germans in occupied Poland was unique in the scale of Europe. According to the Nazi policies, Jews were not even considered second-class citizens. In the time of food stamps, when gathering supplies was hardly possible, sheltering Jews was a very difficult challenge. On top of that, the Germans made sure that the information about Poles murdered for aiding Jews was spread widely to terrify the public. The murdered Poles and the captured Jews were

buried in ditches on the execution sites, often next to the house of the victims who had aided Jews, while their own families and neighbors were often forced to dig their graves.

Considering all of these circumstances, any attempt to provide such help was a unique decision which required great courage and determination.

GLOSSARY

SŁOWNICZEK / GLOSSARY

Dzień dobry! Cześć! Siema!

Would you like to know some really useful phrases that will help you survive first weeks in Poland? Well here you are.

Top 10 of the most needed expressions during the first days:

1. Nie rozumiem. *I don't understand.*

2. Nie mówię po polsku.
I don't speak polish.

When you say 'nie mówię po polsku' to a Pole and they start speaking Polish even faster 🇵🇱



3. Proszę...

English	Polish
Pardon?	Proszę?
Please.	Proszę.
Go Ahead.	Proszę.
Here you are.	Proszę.
You're welcome.	Proszę.
Not at all.	Proszę.
Well, well!	Proszę, proszę!

4. Dziękuję. **Thank you.**

5. Przepraszam. **Excuse me / I'm sorry.**

6. Proszę piwo. **Beer please.**

7. Proszę dwa piwa. **Two beers please.**

8. Gdzie jest toaleta? **Where is the toilet?**

9. Zgubiłem się! Gdzie jest...? **I'm lost! Where is...?**

10. Polska jest bardzo ładna. **Poland is very beautiful.**

Komunikacja

- Co słycać?

(This is not just a polite question. Remember that in response we will tell you the true. And we really like to complain ☺)

- świetnie/ dobrze/ źle / jako tako/ stara bieda/ szkoda gadać/ fatalnie (uwaga dla grafika: tutaj warto dodać odpowiednie emotikony)

- Jestem Ania. *I'm Ania.*

- Miło mi! *Nice to meet you!*

- To jest pan Tomek. To jest pani Kasia. *This is Mr. Tomek. / This is Ms. Ania.*

- Jak jest po polsku „...” ? *How to say „.....” in polihis ?*



- Co to znaczy...? *What does it mean?*

- Mam pytanie! *I have a question!*

- Słucham! *Halo! / I'm listening.*

- Słucham? *I beg your pardon?*

- Co to jest? *What is it?*

- Kto to jest *Who is it?*

- Czy mogę panią zaprosić na kawę? *Can I buy you a coffee?*

For those who collect *I love you* in different languages of the world:

KOCHAM CIĘ





Na mieście In the city

Gdzie jest Stare Miasto? *Where is the Old Town?*

tutaj/tu *here*

tam *there*

ulica *street*

plac *square*

park *park*

hotel *hotel*

muzeum *museum*

restauracja *restaurant*

kawiarnia *cafe*

pomnik *monument*

zamek *castle*



Transport



autobus *bus*

tramwaj *tram*

taksówka *taxi*

metro *metro*

samolot *plane*

pociąg *train*

przystanek *stop*

stacja metra *metro station*

dworzec *train station*

lotnisko *airport*

When your uber app is down, you can do it the old fashioned way

Na lotnisko proszę! To the airport please!

bilet *ticket*

Proszę dwa bilety! *Two tickets please!*

Gdzie mogę kupić bilet? *Where can I buy a ticket?*

kasownik *validator*

W restauracji / *In the restaurants*



Smacznego! *Enjoy your meal!*

Co może pan/pani polecić? *What can you recommend me?*

Proszę żurek. Żurek *please.*

Proszę rachunek! *Check please!*

bez glutenu *without gluten.*

bez laktozy *without lactose*

be alkoholu *without alcohol*

bez kofeiny *without caffeine*

wegetariański *vegetarian*

wegański *vegan*

W sklepie/ *In the shop*

- Ile to kosztuje? *How much does it cost?*
- Ile kosztuje kawa? *How much is coffee?*
- Kartą. *I pay by card.*
- Gotówką. *I pay by cash.*
- Proszę torbę. *Plastic bag, please!*
- Gdzie znajdę mleko ? *Where can I find the milk?*

Polskie smakołyki / *Delicacies of Poland*

You really have to try some!

żurek *soup made from fermented rye flour*

barszcz czerwony *beetroot soup*

ogórkowa *cucumber soup*

pierogi *dumplings*

kopytka *dumplings made of mashed potatoes, served with mushroom sauce.*

placki ziemniaczane *potato pancakes*

bigos *Special dish made with cabbage, mushrooms, sausage and red wine.*

gołąbki *meat-stuffed cabbage*

szarlotka na ciepło z lodami *warm apple pie with vanilla ice cream*

lody ice cream

gorąca czekolada *hot chocolate*

The best you will find in Wedel's Pijalnia czekolady.

makowiec *poppy-seed cake*

pączek *donut*



zygmuntówka



Zyguntówka is named after King Sigismund III Vasa, the one who made Warsaw the capital of Poland. You can see him at the main symbol of the city, the King Zygmunt Column in the Old Town. It's not really a traditional cake. The recipe was invented in 2009 for the contest of the official dessert of Warsaw. ***Zyguntówka*** is made with a combination of chocolate mousse, almond pastry, cranberry jam, whipped cream and meringue crown on the top.