

# Portfolio

## The Pilecki Institute



2023

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# ABOUT US

## MISSION

The Pilecki Institute started its activity in 2016 as the Witold Pilecki Center for Totalitarian Studies. The following year the Polish Parliament established the Pilecki Institute which incorporated the Center for Totalitarian Studies. Started as a small cultural institution, now the Pilecki Institute is a 150 employees team acting in Poland, Germany and Switzerland.

The Pilecki Institute has been established to facilitate the interdisciplinary and international analysis of issues and developments that were of key importance for the political history of the 20th century, namely the Nazi-German and Soviet totalitarian regimes and the global consequences of their actions.

An important element of our mission focuses on honoring persons who gave aid and succor to Polish citizens and Poles who were citizens of other countries in those difficult times. Their efforts are recognized by the award of



the *Virtus et Fraternitas* medal, which is bestowed by the President of the Republic of Poland acting on a motion of the Director of the Institute.

We also gather and make available documents concerning selected aspects of the 20th century, provide support for scientific research programs, and help

disseminate knowledge about the period through educational projects and events which straddle culture and history.

The 20th-century history is made up of thousands of stories waiting to be discovered. Accounts and testimonies stored in archives are ready-made plotlines. The Institute aims to build bridges between academia and culture by inspiring and initiating cultural projects which present the 20th century by means of various forms of expression – music, visual arts, theater, painting, and others.

## RESEARCH



The Center for Totalitarian Studies of the Institute gathers researchers who specialize in political science, sociology, history and Jewish studies. This unique milieu of scholars both initiates and participates in interdisciplinary research projects devoted to

totalitarianism and the history of Poland in the 20th century. Their studies are concerned primarily with the World War II, its consequences, and the cultivation of memory by the second and third postwar generations.

## ARCHIVES

The Pilecki Institute Archives gather digital versions of documents that describe the fates of Polish citizens who experienced two totalitarianisms – the German and the Soviet – in the 20th century. In this way documents from the collections of numerous Polish and foreign institutions, such as the Bundesarchiv, the United



Nations Archives, the British National Archives and the Polish State Archives, are all available in one place. We are building a knowledge base and a hub for research on the World War II and the dual occupation of Poland – for scholars, journalists, people of culture, families of the victims and witnesses to the crimes, as well as all history enthusiasts.

At the end of 2022 our Archives held 13,469 documents, 3,130,814 pages of documents, 460 photos.

Visit our website: <https://archiwum.instytutpileckiego.pl/dlibra>

## CHRONICLES OF TERROR

*Chronicles of Terror* is one of the largest collections of civilian testimonies from occupied Europe and features hundreds of accounts submitted by Polish citizens, who suffered immense hardship at the hands of the German and Soviet totalitarian regimes during World War II. These materials reflect the personal experiences of thousands of Polish victims of totalitarian crimes, and also of their families and loved ones.

Until recently, witness depositions made before the Main Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland were scattered and locked away in archives. The accounts of Poles – both soldiers and civilians who left the Soviet Union with General Anders' Army – were gathered from 1943 on in the Middle East, while after the War they were deposited in the American Hoover Institution. The depositions concerning Poles who helped Jews during the occupation were collected from 1999 on by the Committee for the Commemoration of Poles who Saved Jews.

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Today, for the first time, they can reach a much wider audience – both in Poland and around the world. On our website you can find 13,254 testimonies in Polish (4,462 of them had been translated in English) on the 14,058 pages of source material.

Visit our website: <https://www.zapisyterroru.pl/dlibra>

## **SCHOLARSHIPS**

We run a scholarship program which allows researchers from Poland and abroad to use the material collected in the archive of the Institute. We are hoping that the unique experience of East Central Europe will be a starting point for new research on the 20th century which will demonstrate the complexity of this period, as well as the events, ideas, and mechanisms which determined the course of history.

## **EDUCATION**

Workshops, lectures, location-based games: our educational projects are aimed at youth and adults alike. We show our complicated history on the basis of archival and source materials, presenting the fate of the witnesses of the 20th century against the background of historical processes. Their experiences, dilemmas and choices allow us to demonstrate the realities of the previous century from the perspective of individuals.

The Pilecki Institute participates in international projects, such as Online Teaching in the Visegrad Region in cooperation with Euroclio - European Association of History Educators and other partners. In transnational teams of experts and teachers from Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland we develop

eLearning Activities for blended learning concerning different aspects of socialism in comparative perspective and a guidebook for teachers.



We had also initiated an International Teachers and Educators Program, which is a professional development course for teachers, educators employed at museums and places of memory as well as all those involved in historical and civic education of the youth. The main subject of the program is teaching about totalitarianisms and resistance to them in the 20th century. So far there were 3 editions of the Program which consisted of an online conference, a post-conference task and a study trip in Poland. 64 participants from 29 countries have participated in ITEP.

## CULTURE



The wide-range activities of the Pilecki Institute include public events in Poland and abroad, most notably conferences dedicated to discussing 20th century totalitarian regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, but also current tragic events in Ukraine and the challenges of prosecuting and documenting war crimes. We invite a

group of international experts from various fields of the humanities to participate in online and live discussions.

In 2018, we began recording the recollections and reminiscences of people who lived through World War II, and also of those who remember the postwar period.

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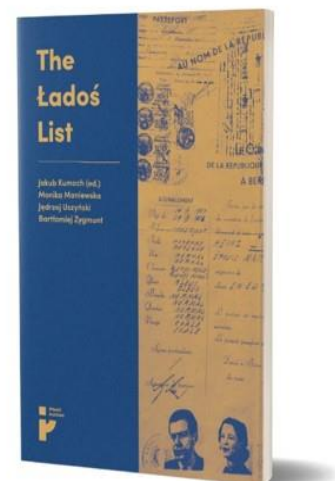
Our archive of oral history comprises 1242 video materials. We have more than 93 000 subscribers on YouTube. We also created 10 feature documentaries.

The Pilecki Institute organized multiple exhibitions, both indoor and outdoor. Our exhibit “Lemkin. Witness to the Age of Genocide” travelled to the UN headquarters in New York, among other locations. Raphael Lemkin was a Polish-Jewish lawyer, who created the concept of genocide.

We continue to explore new forms of popularization of public history – in 2022, following the Russian invasion we held performative readings of war testimonies from Ukraine, collected by our Raphael Lemkin Center for Documenting Russian Crimes in Ukraine.

## PUBLISHING

A well-written story captures the attention of the reader and remains etched in memory. The Institute publishes collections of depositions made by victims of Nazism and Communism, as well as academic works penned by authors representing various disciplines, who explore issues that so far have been neglected or barely touched upon in research on the 20th-century history of Poland. We also translate into Polish the most important works on totalitarianisms.



## AUGUSTÓW

In 2021 we established our branch in Augustów, a town in Eastern Poland, where we intend to open a museum dedicated to the Soviet crimes in Poland



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after World War II. We work with local communities, organizing public events in the region and encouraging guests to actively participate. The Pilecki Institute aims to engage with public memory in a variety of ways, from concerts and thematic walks to exhibitions and festivals. We are in the process of renovating the former NKVD headquarters where we plan to create a museum and educational center.

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# INTERNATIONAL BRANCHES

## GERMANY

In 2019 the Pilecki Institute established its first international branch in Berlin, the aspiration of which is to create a place for interdisciplinary and international reflection on key issues of the 20th century: its two totalitarian regimes, the German and the Soviet, and their consequences.

The Pilecki Institute seeks to reconcile historical sciences and the humanities with social and political sciences. Archival, research, educational and cultural projects create infrastructure for discussions about history. The Pilecki Institute collects, digitizes and disseminates documents from the archives of Poland, Germany, and other countries; we support research; conduct educational projects; invite scholars and artists, students and teachers to participate.

We want to better understand the history of the 20th century and its significance for the present. Our Berlin branch is both a Polish and a Berlin institution – not an external observer, but a central participant in the debate about history – with Berliners and for Berliners.

Read more: <https://berlin.instytutpileckiego.pl/en>

## SWITZERLAND

The Pilecki Institute is the owner of the Schwanen complex in the Rapperswil. The Polish government commissioned the Institute to acquire the property, primarily to secure and provide operational space for the Polenmuseum that, in the summer

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of 2022, had moved out from the Rapperswil Castle. Schwanen will enable the Pilecki Institute to carry out substantive projects in Switzerland. In the coming future, the Polenmuseum should use a part of the "Schwanen" for its permanent exhibition. In the meantime, we intend to display the collections of the Polenmuseum in smaller projects, as we have done with the "Magna Res Libertas" exhibit currently available in the "Schwanen."

Working closely with the Rapperswil-Jona authorities and honoring our agreement, the Institute will strive to bring the "Schwanen" back to life and restore its hospitality operations to the possible degree. Soon we will be announcing lease opportunities. Over the past months, we have been working hard to embrace the complexity of the building, with its vast historical significance and technical and architectural challenges.

## **USA PROJECTS 2019-2022**

The Pilecki Institute inaugurated its activity in the U.S. in 2019 with the opening of the Rafał Lemkin exhibition in New York. We continued sharing our historical research by presenting another mobile exhibition, this time on the Ładoś Group – Polish diplomats who together with Jewish activists issued illegal passports for Jews in wartime Europe. The exhibition travelled to Florida and Los Angeles in 2021-2022.

In the following years we expanded the scope of our educational programs, organizing the Pilecki Project – cooperation with the students and teachers of Williamsburg High School for Architecture and Design. As a result, within 2 years



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students prepared their own projects inspired by the story of Witold Pilecki.

In 2021, the Pilecki Institute started the Graduate Academy – a scholarship program for students and young researchers from the U.S., interested in learning about the 20th century’s totalitarian regimes in Central-Eastern Europe. Students from across the U.S. signed up to participate in the program which consisted of



activities ranging from scientific workshops and debates to visiting Polish museums and memorials. The Graduate Academy culminated in a conference at Valdosta State University, where the participants presented their projects and listened to lectures by distinguished scholars.

The Pilecki Institute organized the program with support from Valdosta State University, GA, and the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Washington. The project was co-financed by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage under the “Inspiring Culture” Program.

We believe in the importance of exchanging views and perspectives on historical events which changed the world. That is why in 2021 the Pilecki Institute and The National World War II Museum in New Orleans organized jointly a three-part webinar *World War II: Witnesses and Memory*.

The researchers from the Pilecki Institute participate in the annual convention of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies, the leading international organization dedicated to the advancement of knowledge about Central Asia, the Caucasus, Russia, and Eastern Europe in regional and global contexts.

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## CONTACT INFORMATION

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