



Preface

The first volume of the *Totalitarian and 20th Century Studies* yearbook, a product of the research endeavors of the Witold Pilecki Center for Totalitarian Studies, is being published at a special time, constituting as it does an announcement of the continuation and broadening of the Center's scientific program within the framework of the newly established Witold Pilecki Institute of Solidarity and Valor – a research institution combining the experience and achievements of the Witold Pilecki Center for Totalitarian Studies with those of the Institute of Solidarity and Valor.

The Center itself was created in the spring of 2016 by a decision of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage, in the wake of intensive efforts undertaken by Magdalena Gawin. Its fundamental task was to introduce the Polish experience of confrontation with the Nazi and Communist totalitarian regimes into the international memory. First and foremost, the implementation of this objective made it necessary to develop a completely new arena for discussions and research concerning the nature and specificity of the German and Soviet occupations of Polish lands in the years 1939–1945, as also to create a modern digital archive that would provide on-line access in Polish and English to the written accounts of both victims and witnesses (in the main civilians) of this period of terror (www.chroniclesofterror.pl).

The research activities of the Center have always had a multidirectional focus and included the organization of scientific conferences and symposia, execution of research projects, publication of historical sources, as well as the elaboration of monographs, collections of essays and post-conference materials. The decision to commence publication of the *Studies* – a bilingual interdisciplinary yearbook which will hopefully develop into an important forum for the exchange of thought, the presentation of results of monographic research and synthetic writings, and, finally, a comparative methodological reflection – was the natural consequence of our involvement in these fields.

Studies into totalitarianisms and the 20th century are by no means the exclusive domain of historians. The history of the preceding century was and for decades to come will continue to be the object of interest for the representatives of many fields of science. With this in mind, the *Studies* have been modeled on the leading professional journals, opening their pages to, among others, philosophers, political scientists, sociologists, lawyers, psychologists and experts from other fields, with foremost emphasis being placed on the contentual and methodological quality of texts put forward for publication. Experience gathered in the course of interdisciplinary seminars and numerous scientific projects would seem to suggest that thinking which discards the shackles of commonly accepted patterns or habits helps inspire and motivate to pose new investigative questions, ultimately forming the basis of a quest for more satisfying tools of research and the formulation of innovative approaches to analyzed materials. In consequence, the *Studies* are presented with the unique opportunity of undertaking diverse aspects of the phenomena which together comprise the 20th century, today commonly known as the “age of totalitarianisms”, including issues that not only present the epoch’s historical determinants, but also the varied and manifold impact that it continues to have on our contemporary world.

The structure and content of the volume references the fundamental research and historiographical problems with which the Witold Pilecki Center has been involved since its inception. These encompass the very specific nature of Polish society’s encounter with the two totalitarianisms – and in particular with German occupation policy – as well as the key challenges faced by research into the Second World War and the significance of the conflict for the present day, especially as regards the culture of memory and historical education. Notably, an attempt has been made at taking up these issues in two recent scientific publications printed by the Center as a follow-up to an academic seminar and a research project implemented in the years 2017–2018, the latter financed by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education under the Dialog program: *II wojna światowa. Historia, która nie chce przeminąć. Dyskusje o polskim doświadczeniu w wieku XX i polityce pamięci* (Warsaw 2017), and *Doświadczenie dwóch totalitaryzmów. Interpretacje*, edited by Paweł Kaczorowski, Marek Kornat, Joanna Lubecka and Piotr Madajczyk (Warsaw 2018).

Examples of the criminal actions that typified the German occupation on the territories of the Second Polish Republic have been discussed in the course of two international interdisciplinary scientific conferences held in Warsaw (2016) and Vienna (2017), both of which were organized by the Witold Pilecki Center. These events were concerned with the issue of Nazi genocide, focusing on an analysis of the following key phenomena:

- 1) the genocide of the civilian population in the Wola district of Warsaw in the first days of the Warsaw Uprising, viewed from a legal-historical standpoint,
- 2) the planned extermination of the Polish intelligentsia in the years 1939–1945, examined through a European-wide comparative approach.

The discussion will be continued within a recently commenced long-term research project of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, entitled “The Input of Polish Legal and Scientific Thought into the Development of the Concept of the Crime of Genocide. Rafał Lemkin and the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and the Polish Experience of Occupation by National Socialist Germany” and headed by Piotr Madajczyk.

While undertaking a comparative analysis of the fate of the intellectual elites in Europe under German occupation, the first volume of the *Studies* at once makes exhaustive use of the output of discussions which have been held hitherto and lays the foundation for successive stages of research work.

For Nazi Germany, the crimes perpetrated against the Polish intelligentsia constituted an important element of a broader state policy, being viewed as an indispensable action preceding the eventual colonization and Germanization of the newly-conquered territories.

Maciej Janowski starts off the debate with his article *The Polish Intelligentsia: The Emergence and Transformation of the Social Group and its World View*, in which he presents the process of development of this new social stratum, grounded among others in the traditions of Romanticism, the national uprisings of the 19th century, and the “popularization of politics among the masses”. Its beginnings, however, were by no means based on a simple adjustment of the system of values of the gentry to existing reality. For the author, the process was much more democratic – and indeed “inclusive” from the very beginning.

In his essay entitled *On Polish Opinions and Deliberations Concerning National Socialism and the III Reich* Marek Kornat presents how National Socialism was perceived by Roman Dmowski, Józef Piłsudski, Władysław Sikorski and Józef Beck. These were the first analyses of Nazism to be conducted by leading representatives of the Polish political elites of the 1930s.

In turn, Piotr Madajczyk’s *The Policy of the USSR and the III Reich Towards the Polish Elites during the Second World War* emphasizes the differences between German policy as implemented in various conquered European countries. The author also touches upon the issue of the elimination of the Polish intelligentsia as part of the broader extermination policy implemented by the III Reich in the territories under its control. He further stresses the specificity of Soviet ideology, which was based on the denationalization and atomization of individuals in order to deprive them of national elites and even the simplest role models.

Tomasz Ceran’s article entitled *Anti-Polonism in the Ideology of National Socialism* attention to the vehement anti-Polonism that typified actions undertaken by the Germans during the occupation and led to the committal of mass crimes against the Polish nation directly in line with the III Reich’s official, ideologically-based hierarchy of nations intended for destruction or enslavement.

In his text entitled *The Genocidal Extermination of the Polish Intelligentsia*, Dieter Schenk explores the possibility of qualifying the crimes

committed against the Polish intelligentsia as genocide. He proceeds to explain the construct of the exclusion of conquered nations as based on the implementation of Nazi ideology into law, and further refers it to international criminal law.

Finally, in her article entitled “*Excess of Forgetting and Excess of Memory*” in *Polish, German and Austrian Narratives on World War II* Joanna Lubecka compares the distinct perceptions of history of Poles and Germans, placing particular emphasis on differences in interpreting and describing the experience of the Second World War. She also puts forward conclusions concerning the present-day ritualization of memory and the state of knowledge that it engenders in societies – as well as the myths to which it gives rise.

The next number of the *Studies* will be published shortly, focusing on a comparative analysis of the divergent experiences of the intelligentsia of countries occupied by Nazi Germany. We will seek a more comprehensive answer to the question as to why German policy towards the elites of the conquered nations varied as widely as it did.

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