

World War II Reparations



ZSUMOWANIE WSZYSTKICH WARTOŚCI
CZĄSTKOWYCH DAJE OGÓLNA KWOTĘ
STRAT POLSKI W WYSOKOŚCI

**6 BILIONÓW 220 MILIARDÓW
609 MILIONÓW ZŁOTYCH**

Słownie: sześć bilionów dwieście dwadzieścia
miliardów sześćset dziewięć milionów złotych

1 bilion 532 miliardy 170 milionów US

Polish Parliamentary Committee for the World War II Reparations announced on the 1st of September final report on the reparations for the damages and atrocities done by the Germans in the World War II. Arkadiusz Mularczyk, the committee chair and an envoy to the Polish parliament, announced that Poland will seek reparations in the amount of 6 trillion and 220 billion zlotys. The committee comprised of 30 economists, historians and experts, who worked on the report since 2017 and presented the most accurate numbers. The announcement on 1st of September marked 83rd anniversary of the German invasion of Poland.

German Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson stated, that „the matter of reparations is closed” and that the German government’s position did not change”. Germany holds the view that Poland waived their right to reparations in 1953.

Mularczyk commented, that he did not expect any different comment from the German government, but was interested in their argumentation: “I wish that the German government could show a document with the waiver and made it public. As far as I know, there are no documents, no notes or any official transcripts in the German archives. Simply nothing concerning the supposed waiver”.

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Three Villages, One Crime

■ Three Mazovian villages: Krasnosielc, Krasowo Cząstki and Rościszewo. Three Mazovian truths about the war and the fate of Poles and Jews. The truths contradicting stereotypes and common knowledge about the war. In my reporter's journal I described German war crimes in the villages Krasnosielc, Rościszewo and Krasowo Cząstki.



MICHAŁ MOŃKO

Krasnosielc is located in northern Mazovia. The village prides itself on being the place where the founders of the Warner Bros Entertainment Inc. came from – Sam, Harry and Albert, originally Wonsal, were Jewish immigrants from Poland.

On the third day of German invasion of Poland in 1939, Krasnosielc was taken by German armored division "Kempf". This division was made of SS-Verfügungstruppe and Wehrmacht soldiers. On the September 5th four Germans – two of them from SS and two from Wehrmacht – herded a dozen or so Jews and a dozen or so Poles into the synagogue in Krasnosielc. Then they poured a barrel of gasoline and lit the fire.

The Poles managed to escape. Jews did not. The inhabitants of the village ran to the rescue to save them from burning alive. They didn't manage to save everyone.

The burning of Jews in Krasnosielc was noticed by gen. Franz Halder, the Land Forces Chief of Staff in his war diary. On the 10th of September 1939 he wrote: "The Army fights well everywhere... Some symptoms of fatigue... Artillerymen from the SS Panzer Corps herded Jews into the synagogue and murdered them".

The 3rd Army Chief of Staff Herbert von Bockmann together with von Groben, Starosta (head) of the Przasnysz powiat (district) since September 5th, stated that the massacre in Krasnosielc was committed not by artillerymen, but by two SS members and two Wehrmacht soldiers. This version was confirmed in court after the war by the Prussian gauleiter Koch.

If it hadn't been for the Poles, all of the people herded in the synagogue surely would have been killed. Such is the common belief today among the witnesses of this war crime, the inhabitants of Krasnosielc. When the synagogue was on fire, the inhabitants of the village ran to the rescue, regardless of the danger of being shot by German soldiers. Some Poles rushed to the headquarters of the "Kempf" division on their bikes.

The German gendarmerie came to the village and arrested the drunk SS members. The Jews saved from fire were taken by Poles to their homes. Eventually the Wehrmacht medical staff took the burnt people to hospitals in Olsztyn. There Jews were treated and around the September 20th they got transported to the Soviet borderline, as was their wish.

Immediately after revealing this crime the SS members were sentenced for one year imprisonment by the German court martial. This sentence was not confirmed by general Georg Karl Friedrich Wil-



Grabarka. The Mountain of a Thousand Crosses.



The country's border in Kodeń on the Bug river.



The Bug river, currently surrounded by barbed wire.



Podlasie on the Biebrza river.

helm von Kuchler, as he saw it as shockingly low. The perpetrators of this crime were judged again and given long term sentences of imprisonment. It didn't change much, since they were soon cancelled, when Hitler proclaimed amnesty.

A few days after the Krasnosielc massacre Germans tried to encourage the inhabitants of Wyszaków to murder Jews living in their town. When they did not succeed, they decided to arrange pogrom themselves.

In the afternoon on the September 10th, Germans burned Jews in the synagogue and in the barn, and killed them by throwing grenades into pits filled with people. A certain Max Ring boasted that he burned 77 Jews in a barn all by himself. This time it was different. Wehrmacht didn't save the Jews and the German authorities didn't chase criminals. By then, burning the inhabitants of villages or towns in barns or synagogues was already in accordance with the German practice of treating Poles, Jews and Belarusians.

Burning people in barns, synagogues and private houses was continued in 1941 in the territories of eastern Poland. Germans learned their lesson from what happened in Krasnosielc.

Every incident of burning Jews, Poles, Ruthenians (Rusyns) near the Biebrza river and Belarusians near the river Bug followed the same pattern, where it was crucial to make the local people involved as much as it was possible. Some were to be burnt, some were to burn others, put them into fire, or watch out so that nobody could escape.

Starting from September 1939 till the end of 1943 Germans burnt down thousands of Poles, Jews, Old Believers, Belarusians and Rusyns in the Podlasie region, in dozens of villages by the rivers Biebrza and Narew. The most common place of massacre were the barns, where Germans herded usually 80 – 90 women and men. A single barn could house no more than 90 grown ups, not 1600.

Inhabitants of many villages in the entire territory of Poland were

burned and shot. Among many other villages there were Krasowo Cząstki, Kosówka, Rydzewo, Skrodzkie, Toczyłowo, Łazarze, Bogusze, Ciszewo, Kuligi, Grzędy, Jaziewo, Jaminy, Polkowo, Jasionowo, Bór, Gabowe Grądy, Rygiel. All of them in Podlasie.

On July 17th, 1943, Germans burnt 257 inhabitants of the village Krasowo Cząstki. In the barn owned by the Jankowski family Germans herded 85 inhabitants. The remaining 172 people were shot. Some bodies were thrown on the burning remains of the barn, some were buried in the pits behind the barn.

89 women, 71 men, 97 children were killed. Apart from burning the Jankowski family barn German set fire to 53 houses, 52 barns, 62 cowsheds and they took all the victims' belongings.

This is well remembered by a retired priest Józef Kaczyński, also Kazimierz Krasowski, then 21 years old (testimony from 1979).

"They gathered people, herded them into a barn and kept them

there for some time", tells the priest. "Some were told to watch, some were being watched. Every once in a while you could hear shots fired, because not all of those 257 people could fit in a barn. The Germans told the people that they're responsible for each other. So they had to keep an eye on each other, they had to push each other into the fire, herd each other, keep each other from escaping. People dug the pits themselves, they lit the fire themselves..."

Everybody hoped that maybe they will save their life if they watch the others, if they dig the pits, if they light the fire. Only one survived of the entire village population, a 13 year old boy named Jan Grabowski.

"It looks like he survived only to bear witness, to testify how cruel Germans were and how cruel Poles, Jews, Belarusians can be if they are forced to kill each other at gunpoint" tells priest Józef Kaczyński. "Cruel? Nobody will ever understand a man who's going to die, and who's suddenly given a chance to live at the cost of another man's life. And at the end he dies thrown into a pit he dug himself".

What inscription should be engraved on the monument in Krasowo Cząstki? Does it matter that the inhabitants of the village dug their grave themselves and stood the guard themselves, so nobody could escape from the burning barn? In Podlasie region hundreds of barns were burned down with people inside.

In the village Rościszewo Germans summoned fourteen village heads who at the presence and with the help of the local people were to hang fourteen fighters of the underground Polish Army under the threat that Germans will shoot and burn all the inhabitants of the 14 villages.

Gallows were made well ahead by local carpenters. The local ropemakers made respectively thick ropes and prepared loops. Under the gallows stools were put, on the stools young boys stood. The villagers created a circle and obeying the gendarmes' orders joined hands.

Fourteen village heads approached the fourteen fighters sentenced to death. Each of them took a thick loop in his hand. And the head of the Rościszewo village had to put a loop on his son's neck. What could he do? He moved one place further and he hanged his neighbour's son and his son was hanged by his neighbor.

What inscription should be engraved on the monument to the murdered in Rościszewo? This question can be answered only in one way. The murderers were Germans.

Gold from the North

ALBERT
ŁYJAK

■ Poland is a leading exporter of amber products in the world. Almost 90% of its extraction is exported mainly to the US, Germany and Far East countries.

Amber is a fossil resin from conifer forest from the tertiary period of the Earth, which was over 1,8 million years ago. Chemical composition of amber is a mixture of several dozen compounds, mainly coal, oxygen, hydrogen and sulfur. Solidified millions of years ago, amber became one of the most beautiful jewelry gemstones.

Thanks not only to its beauty, but also magic and healing properties, jewelry made of amber was desired in the ancient Rome, Greece and Arab countries. It charms in incredible variety of colors and shades – from yellow to brown and in lesser degree white or red. Rarely, it can be found in blue.

The largest deposits of amber were found in the Yantarny region of Kaliningrad, Russian region on the Baltic Sea, where it started to be extracted from the open pit mines in the 19th century. According to the Polish Institute of Geology, there are also large deposits of amber on the Polish land, estimated in 2012 to be worth about 7 billion US dollars. We are used to find Polish amber on the beaches on the Baltic Sea, hence it is surprising to learn that the largest deposits are in the Lublin region. Polish Institute of Geology estimated in 2019 that theoretically, geological deposits in the nine regions of the Pomerania comprise less than 59 tons of amber. In comparison, deposits in one county of the Lublin region, are over 25 times bigger – almost 1,5 thousand tons. Amber deposits in that region are found in shallow grounds, hence the mining is cheaper.

There are many companies trying to obtain mining concession, but the first Polish company, that started to mine amber in an open pit mine on industrial scale, is Stellarium in the Lublin region. Mr. Henryk Ciosmak, the head director of Stellarium, in a recent interview (www.kieruneksurowce.pl), said that “the idea of starting the amber mining

was known for centuries, as single ambers were often found in the region. I learned about it on Google, trying to find out about the amber in our area. I prepared all the documentation (outside the geological ones) and in 2018 we stuck our first shovel into a ground containing quartz sand with amber. It took me two years of trials, before we started to explore the amber with the open mining dry method, but today I am proud of our achievement. I am in awe of the beauty of the amber, which after 50 million years wait time saw the daylight in our Lublin region, thanks to the industrial touch of the man. I am positive, that one day we will have here a big mining basin. Today we have just the beginning of the large-scale exploitation”.

Just like all other branches of a new developing industry, it is short of professionals. The only accessible courses are conducted by the International Amber Society in Gdansk.

The price of amber grows 10% annually – largest stones, ranging from 1 – 1,5 kg, are sold at 100 thousand zlotys each. Poland works continually to keep the leadership in that branch of industry and to make it more attractive and innovative.

Amber jewelry made in Poland traditionally was made of silver. Nowadays, there is a demand for a more sophisticated jewelry with rare amber variety. All the jewelry lovers value the magic of amber, with its infinite variety of shades and colors, allowing for unique designs. Regardless of professional preferences, everyone will find something in the w amber jewelry.

Poland hosts International Amber and Jewelry Fair – AMBERIF SPRING. It is the most important trade fair in the amber industry in the world, one of the largest in Europe and the largest in Poland, devoted to the promotion of amber. Renown jewelry companies showcase their trends, industrial semi-finished products and technology as well as ser-



vices dealing with that branch. AMBERIF SPRING is the meeting place to observe both art and the science, meet and discuss newest trends in design and technology. Renown and small jewelers as well as watchmakers, present their offers with amber design – in gold and silver, with colored stones, pearls and diamonds. Producers of machinery and tools from that industry also present their products.

People were fascinated with amber for ages. There are museums showcasing amber collections all over the world – Victoria and Albert Museum in London, Rosenborg Museum in Copenhagen and in New York, Museum of Natural History – all visited by admiring crowds. In Poland, the most famous amber museum is in Gdansk (Wielki Młyn), but there are smaller ones in Jarosławiec, Kolobrzeg, Krakow, Wach, Malbork, Lomza, Kazimierz Dolny and in the Earth Museum in Warsaw. The largest in the world lump of amber is displayed in The Amber Museum in Gdansk – it weighs 68,2 kg and comes from a coal mine in Sumatra. Indonesian amber, including the one from Sumatra, was forming 20 – 23 million years ago and can be found in south east Asia in Indonesia and Malesia. It is found in the primary deposits of lignite coal, formed from resins of deciduous trees, which nowadays can be found in the rainforests of Asia. That largest lump was purchased by the Polish Amber Museum, with help of a state grant from National Institute of Museums and Collection Protection – its price was 140 thousand zlotys.

There are many products made of amber for the purpose of healing. In a pharmacy with herbal products one can find a powder with antibacterial, antivirus and antifungal qualities; it also helps to heal wounds and lower the blood pressure. Amber tincture is recommended as a natural antibiotic, taken three times a day with tea or water helps body resistance. An amber oil used on skin acts as an anti-rheumatoid, heals muscle pains and lessens neuralgia. And the amber acids are supposed to help with mental efficiency.

Long time ago amber was considered to have magical properties. Amulets were made to protect against deceases, bad ghosts and every other misfortune. Amber was placed on sick areas of the body to help the healing and ease the pain. It was also burnt to clean the air and bad powers.

Ephraim Chambers, an encyclopedists, wrote in 1728 that “in times of the plague, those who worked in excavating and polishing of amber in Krolewiec, were never infected”. Luis Pasteur pointed out in 1858 the healing powers of amber acids, and in 1886 Noble price winner bacteriologist Robert Koch, checked on himself its beneficial properties.

In the Polish folk medicine, amber was not only a popular remedy, but also protected against bad charms. It was given to children during teething to lessen the pain. That magic stone was used to heal rheumatism, eyes and throat illnesses as well as infertility.

Faith in the healing powers of amber was finally proved to be justified by the results of scientific research. It was discovered, that amber acid works as biostimulator – it stimulates the nervous system, regulates kidneys and intestinal functions as well as acts as anti-inflammatory and antitoxic agent. Amber is also used as the base in creams against rheumatoid, asthma, skin ir-

ritation as well as in products healing throat, bronchitis and thyroid. Cosmetics industry uses amber acids and oils, as they destroy free radicals and can disinfect, as well as lessen skin burns and insect bites.

Since amber became known on the market for its healing properties, we can find a wide range of products with all traces of amber. There are mattress filled with amber, cushions, animal pads, shoe insoles with amber powder, back and neck support for drivers, amber incense – to name a few.

Natural medicine specialists think that each person is surrounded by an electromagnetic field. As a result of stress or sickness, too many positive charges can appear in that field. Our body functions well only when there is a balance between negative and positive charges. Using amber, we can regain that balance, as it produces good for our body negative charges.

The research has also shown that amber contains many good microelements: silicon, magnesium, iron, calcium, potassium and organic compounds combined with iodine. However, only unsanded amber has beneficial properties. Only that type has antibacterial properties, helps healing, lowers the blood pressure, calms down and regenerates the body.

Poland is a world leader in the production of amber – at least 75% of amber products comes from our country. That industry is mostly made of small companies with less than fifty employees, but 99% of them has only a few. According to the Institute of Research of the Market Economy, there are close to one thousand small firms dealing with amber mining and products. Natural resources from one's country can become a dynamic factor in developing a branch of industry.

Simplified Waterways on the Baltic Sea

■ The construction of the Vistula Spit canal is coming to an end. The new waterway connecting Gdańsk Bay with Elbląg is 25 kilometres long.

The purpose of this project is creating a new connection between Vistula Lagoon and Gdańsk Bay. The canal lets ships pass through without having to rely on the Russian Strait of Baltiysk, the only natural passage through the spit. Every ship passing through required an agreement with Russian authorities.

The maximum size of ships in the new canal are as follows: draft 4,5 m, length 100 m, width 20 m. A new, impressive drawbridge was

also built, and it can be raised in 120 seconds.

The goal of the canal is to stimulate economic development of the city of Elbląg and the entire Warmia-Masuria province. According to the experts, the port can potentially increase annual transshipment up to 3,5 million tons. Right now it's only about 90 thousand tons. Other positive effects include stim-



ulating lumber, paper and carpentry industry in the region thanks

to cheap and efficient shipment through the sea. The maritime transport of passengers may also benefit from it – the canal makes the sea journey from Gdańsk to Elbląg 90 kilometres shorter.

The project is almost finished by now despite the opposition's protests. As Małgorzata Kidawa-Łońska of Platforma Obywatelska

(Civic Platform) said in 2019: „Why do we need the Vistula Spit canal? If nature wanted the canal to be there, it would already be there”.

The canal lock, which separates the lagoon from the bay, prevents uncontrolled flow of water and helps to navigate the difference in water level. The official opening ceremony will take place on September 17th, 2022.

Red.

The Battle of Warsaw – part two



ANDRZEJ MANASTERSKI

The conviction about the fall of Warsaw and takeover of the Polish territories was so overwhelming, that there was a mass departure of almost all representatives of foreign countries. The only one left was apostolic nuncio of Vatican, Achilles Ratti, who later became pope Pius XI. He remained, gave hope through prayers and supported Polish clergy in that most important moment in the existence of the Polish nation. And when he was departing at the end of the war, he received in gratitude from Polish bishops a copy of the Jasna Góra Miraculous Painting. "That the nicest gift from the Polish Episcopate" – he said later and placed the painting in a chapel at the residence in Castel Gandolfo. At his departure he also received two paintings from a Lviv's painter, Jan Rosen – one depicting the famous defense of Jasna Góra against the Swedish invasion in XVII century and the second one "A Miracle by the Vistula", about the recent battle of Warsaw.

Participation of foreign volunteers during the Soviet invasion is also worth mentioning, especially the founders of Kościuszko Squadron, Merian Cooper and Cedric Fautleroy, who were followed by many other American volunteers. The first one was great-great grandson of John Cooper, who was holding dying Casimir Pulaski, fatally injured in the battle of Savannah in 1777 during the War of Independence. The Scottish immigrant to the US promised dying Pulaski, that



he and his successors will pay back to Poland his sacrifice. That moment came in 1920. And Merian Cooper, who fulfilled the wish of his grand grandfather, also became known in the history of the world cinematography. He was screenwriter and co-director of the movie "King-Kong in 1932 and in 1954 received an Oscar for his contribution to the art of cinematography. In 1939 Cooper again engaged in helping Poland by organizing charity concerts, with all the proceeds going for the purchase of arms.

Polish society yet again showed its patriotism during the time of dan-

ger. Bolsheviks propagandist as well as renegades naming themselves Polaks, formed in Smolensk a Temporary Revolutionary Committee named Rewkom, were issuing calls to join the revolution. They set up themselves in Białystok and issued a statement calling all workers and peasants to revolutionize. Without any results. They were treated as traitors and made-up people whom nobody trusted. Workers and peasants, instead of joining the revolution, were volunteering in the Polish army. That movement was achieved by politicians, mostly Wincenty Witos, who was considered a peas-

ant leader. Witos issued a call to action in 1920: *If there will be a need, we have to take up fight for life and death, as the death is better than life in handcuffs, better death than life in degrading slavery. Go away petty souls, go away doubts. The people, who are the power, are neither allowed to doubt nor to resign! We have to save our homeland, we have to give her everything – wealth, blood and life, as that sacrifice will come back hundredfold when we save the state from slavery and disgrace.*

A century and a half earlier Tadeusz Kościuszko tried to form a

military formation based on that tradition and even earlier, military regiments were formed during the 1863 January Uprising. Similarly, Piłsudski formed his Legions on the ethos of that call to action as well as later, during defense of Poland in 1920.

Whom we should thank for the plans of the Battle of Warsaw? The disputes are ongoing since the end of the battle. The most accurate opinion seemed to be mentioned in the earlier commentary by British historian, Norman Davis: *who made the details of the battle – Piłsudski, Rozwadowski, Weygand, all of them, or even somebody else – does not matter. The basic decision is not about the details, but moral judgement: could we dare to regroup all the army in one week or can we risk infringement of the combat formation in the situation when the enemy is knocking on our doorstep? That decision could belong only to the Military Leader and the one who made it was Piłsudski.*

What was the Battle of Warsaw? Defeated Lenin wrote about its international significance: *the matters took such a turn, that with only few more days of the Red Army offence and not only Warsaw would have been destroyed, but also the Treaty of Versailles.*

Edgar Vincent D-Abernon, a friend of the Poles and of the Marshall Piłsudski, in his book "Eighteenth decisive battle in the world history near Warsaw" commented: *A present history of civilization knows little events of bigger importance than the Battle of Warsaw in 1920. And we do not know any less appreciated. If the Battle of Warsaw would end with the victory of Bolsheviks, we would have had a turning point in the history of Europe, as we have no doubt that with the fall of Warsaw, Central Europe would be open to the communist propaganda and the soviet invasion. In many historical events Poland was the bulwark of Europe against the Asian invasions. However, in no events, the contribution paid by Poland was bigger and the danger was as evil.*

STILL VALID

– words by late Kornel Morawiecki

Its about memory

If any government or president of Poland demanded from Germany war reparations, president Obama would have never used in any speech the term „Polish death camp”.

26 years ago, Poland signed a treaty with Germany disregarding the memory of our Heroes and Victims. A significant detail is the asymmetrical treatment of German minorities in Poland and Polish minorities in Germany.

Our losses.

In the treaty, there is no mention of war reparations for over 6 million killed Polish citizens, for enormous moral, spiritual and material losses we suffered as a result of the war unleashed by Germany.

We lost over fifty percent of our everlasting land. Our territory was diminished by 20 percent. The hand over of Wrocław, Szczecin and Olsztyn by the Germans was only a gesture towards Soviet Union, which forcefully took from Poland Lviv, Vilnius and Grodno.

Lower quality of life, that Polish people experience till today, is a consequence of the assault and occupational destruction. The renunciation of the



German reparations by Bolesław Bierut, a Moscow agent, is mockery of justice.

Political mistake

Renunciation of the war reparation is a political mistake, far more important than financial detriment. That hundreds of billions of dollars for the burnt cities and villages we could have had, we generously forgave the "poor Germans". Their comparable to those amounts' contribution towards economic improvements of the former NRD, would have been appreciated.

It's about friendship

We live and want to live a unifying Europe. In the long-lasting perspective of development of the European civilization, as underlined by the creators of the treaty after 26 years of its adaptation, it is not about particular interests. It is about the friendship between two great nations – Germany and Poland. And friendship is born and grown in truth.

German's fault

Germany bears the main collective guilt for the results caused by World War II. For the fascist crimes and decades of communist reign in Central Europe. For the unimaginable collective tragedies. For the suffering of people and nations that resulted during and after that turmoil. And for the torments of their countrymen, who lost their lives, estates, homes. We, the Polish people, were not and we are not guilty of that pain.

Out duty and obligation

And that is the reason, for that moral clarity, which in the future will enlighten our common achievements, not only we have the duty, but also an obligation to demand gratification from Germans. Just like the Jews from Israel. Three million Polish Jews exterminated in the action „Endlösung der Judenfrage”, were the citizens of the Polish state.

It is the media and the elite's fault

Unfortunately, the treaty is missing all this. Responsibility for those basic faults bears the „round-table” establishment, that governed at that time, indiscriminately supported the elites and media. Personal responsibility bears collectively the then Prime Minister Krzysztof Bielecki and his government, together with the late Minister of Foreign Affairs, Krzysztof Skubiszewski as well as president Lech Wałęsa and his office.

For over 26 years I neither heard from them, nor from their successors, about any explanations or justifications of that political negligence. On the government level, there was no trial of its correction. The estimates of the war losses of city of Warsaw, prepared by late Lech Kaczyński when he was its president, were never continued.

The image of Poland

And this is about much more than money. It is about our ancestry and our image in the eyes of the Europeans. It is about memory. As the blessed John Paul II summoned – without it nations lose their identity.

Wrocław, June 2011

True Voice from Poland

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