

The German Reich's Brutal Program of Invasion, Incarceration, and Extermination
in the Planned Destruction of Poland

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for the 2023 Polonia Institute Historical Essay Scholarship Competition

Polonia Institute, Inc.

Los Angeles, CA

10/15/2023

Introduction

Few today seem to know that Poland was the *first* victim of the Nazi German regime's ruthless campaign of ethnic cleansing—a campaign in which “every man, woman and even child was regarded as an enemy merely, or rather precisely, *because they were Poles.*”¹ What took place in Poland during the Second World War was not conventional warfare, but a “merciless and systematic campaign of biological destruction” paralleled only by that of the Holocaust.² The Nazi regime—a nationalistic political party that had captured and wooed the minds of not merely a minor contingency of the German people, but a sizeable support base—attempted to decide Poland's fate when they declared that “80-85 percent of the Poles would have to be deported from the German settlement regions in the East,” resulting in what would have been the absolute removal of “about 20 million people.”³ Had that plan been allowed to run its full course, the Polish nation would have ceased to exist by the middle of the last century. That story is nevertheless often buried under the more commonly told narrative of the Second World War, a narrative which tends to omit crucial aspects of Poland's experience and frequently fails to treat the victims of the war with equal attention. It is therefore our intellectual responsibility to seek out an accurate understanding of Poland and her experience of the Second World War. Perhaps in that process of historical research we might better understand ourselves, and so be better prepared to be the authors of an honorable chapter of human history.

I. The Ideological Justification for the Invasion of Poland : Quest for *Lebensraum* and *Generalplan Ost*

¹ Gumkowski, Janusz, and Kazimierz Leszczyński. *Poland under Nazi Occupation*. Warsaw: Polonia Publ. House, 1961, 59.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 12.

The National Socialist program for the creation of a Germanic Europe, entailing nothing short of the total Aryanization of the continent, was ambitious to a superlative degree. The ideological driving force behind such a program could have been no less maniacal. Propaganda picturing images of a Germanized Europe were in fact mirror images of what the Nazi German High Command was aiming to accomplish on the Eastern Front and elsewhere. One should not be surprised when one discovers that Nazi German ideology and policy were practically indistinguishable—the policy implemented “on the ground” during the Second World War differed very little from the theory drafted by the party’s core ideologues. Poland was implicated in that plan from the start.

Outlined in a document called *Generalplan Ost*, the Reich’s expansionist plan involved the relocation of the native inhabitants of Central and Eastern Europe; of the 31 million slated for deportation, 20 million were Poles.⁴ While the authors of the plan “decided that it would be possible to Germanize about 50 percent of the Czechs, 35 percent of the Ukrainians and 25 percent of the Byelorussians,” only 3 to 4 million Poles were found to be “suitable for Germanization as far as ‘racial values’ were concerned.”⁵ The majority of the Polish population would be deported to Siberia, where they “were to be scattered over as wide an area as possible and intermixed with the local populace;” Poland was therefore going to be completely dispossessed of its nationhood by means of political, military, and demographic fragmentation.⁶ This was the plan “on paper” before practical considerations made it clear that the deportation of millions of people was logistically impossible—more *extreme* methods would need to be employed against the Polish people in order for the Nazi Germans to meet their astronomical ideological goals. The plan was a matter of simple arithmetic: Just as one deletes an unwanted

⁴ Ibid., 16.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 17.

numerical value (say, in a mathematical calculation) and replaces it with a fresh value, so too the Germans would replace the Poles.

At the heart of the deportation program was the concept of *Lebensraum*—the biologically justifiable expansion of German territory based on nationalistic and racist principles. Hitler’s ideological vision of a Germanic Europe had been public knowledge for nearly fifteen years before the outbreak of the Second World War.⁷ The 20th century obsession with eugenics, conveniently synthesized into political theories founded on Darwinian-Nietzschean principles of competition and survival, paved the way for the national-racial system that Hitler had envisioned, not only for Germany, but for the totality of Europe. Beginning with the publication of *Mein Kampf*, Hitler had made it clear that he believed that “the superior German race was perfectly within its rights to seize territory from the racially and culturally ‘inferior’ Slavs and Jews that already inhabited Poland,” and “that the survival of a nation depended upon the racial purity of its populace and the size of the geographic area it occupied.”⁸ With the pseudoscientific supremacy of the German race for its ideological basis, the regime’s goal would be the exponential growth and expansion of Germany *at all costs*, and Hitler would stop for nothing short of his radical vision of the *Tausendjähriges Reich* and its absolute dominion over Europe.

In the decade preceding the war, Nazi German leadership repeatedly insisted that the Reich was in desperate need of living space. In a 1937 speech addressed to key military and political leadership, Hitler reportedly argued that “85 million Germans faced a critical shortage of geographic space” and that a “‘solution to the German Question’ could only be solved through military force;” other nations would have to be converted into satellites or else be subsumed into

⁷ Noakes, J., and G. Pridham, editors. *Nazism 1919–1945 Volume 2: A History in Documents and Eyewitness Accounts*. University of Exeter, 1988, 652.

⁸ Rossino, Alexander B. *Hitler Strikes Poland: Blitzkrieg, Ideology and Atrocity*. Lawrence, KS: Univ. Press of Kansas, 2005, 3.

the territory of the Reich.⁹ The Nazi regime's goal was the exponential growth and expansion of Germany *at all costs*—whatever stood in the way was destined for destruction. The war would be a matter of nationalistic-deterministic *survival*, and the Nazis had convinced the individual German mind that *they were the fittest*. Inferior races, such as the Poles, would be trampled under the vital German force of pseudo-biological self-assertion.

After Poland's adamant rejection of Hitler's invitation to join an alliance against the Soviet Union in 1938, Hitler authorized the preparation for a full-scale invasion.¹⁰ Since Poland's noncompliance apparently posed a direct threat to Germany's existence, Hitler insisted that the matter was not a "question of right or wrong but of *to be* or *not to be* of 80,000,000 people," thereby justifying the use of force to secure *Lebensraum*.¹¹ On August 31, Hitler gave his final orders: Poland would be invaded on the morning of September 1.

II. The Invasion: Deportation of Civilians and Annihilation of Polish Leadership

Hitler's invasion of Poland was to be carried out with supreme efficiency. Because the regime did not possess an infinite supply of arms and resources, any obstacles that might impede the invasion needed to be swiftly eliminated. That included all *social elements* hostile to the Nazi regime, most notably the Polish intelligentsia, the Catholic clergy, and patriotic political organizations, all of which were likely to offer the most resistance. All of this was taken into account during the planning of the invasion:

In the weeks and months prior to the attack, the leaders of the regime, including Adolf Hitler, Hermann Goring, SS chief Heinrich Himmler, and his ruthless subordinate, Reinhard Heydrich, decided to *eliminate entire segments of Polish society*. Educators, intellectuals, political figures, noble families, Catholic clergy, leaders in the medical and

⁹ Ibid., 4. For the original, see Noakes and Pridham, *Nazism*, 681 (excerpt 503, copy of "Hossbach Memorandum").

¹⁰ Noakes and Pridham, *Nazism*, 735 (excerpt 538).

¹¹ Ibid., 737-38 (excerpt 539).

legal professions, and many others were all slated for “liquidation” as part of an overall program to *decapitate Polish society* and deter resistance to German rule.¹²

In order to ensure operational success during the invasion, Hitler approved the formation of *Einsatzgruppen*, special paramilitary groups “charged with carrying out the liquidation of the Polish intelligentsia, clergy, nobility, and political leadership.”¹³ A detailed list of individuals to be eliminated was likewise compiled for that purpose. Called the *Sonderfahndungsbuch Polen*, it contained “the names of 61,000 Polish Christians and Jews classified by the Security Police as ‘anti-German elements’... to be targeted by the *Einsatzgruppen* during the invasion.”¹⁴ The *Sonderfahndungsbuch* was itself compiled from an earlier list called the *A-Kartei*, a document which had been in project by Nazi German intelligence since 1936. Painstaking measures were carried out by the Nazi regime between its initial military preparations in April and the summer months leading up to the actual invasion.

Since the reason for the invasion of Poland was the ideologically motivated acquisition of *Lebensraum*, a public justification for the invasion had to be fabricated. The famous *Gleiwitz Incident* provided such a convenient pretense. Secret operators of the *Einsatzgruppen* dressed in Polish military uniforms staged a false attack against a German military outpost on the Polish-German border.¹⁵ The Nazi propaganda machine likewise created the mythical “figure of 58,000 ethnic Germans” purportedly being persecuted by the Polish military; that number still circulates on contemporary Neo-Nazi websites.¹⁶ These fabrications were nothing more than useful justifications for the hastening of the ‘purification’ of Polish lands for German settlement and use, paving the way for “expulsions [of native Poles] through informal terror [i.e. perpetrated

¹² Rossino, *Hitler Strikes Poland*, xiii.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁵ Gumkowski, Leszczyński. *Poland under Nazi Occupation*, 16.

¹⁶ Noakes and Pridham, *Nazism*, 935-936.

by the *Einsatzgruppen*] [which] coincided with official deportation programmes organized by the SS.”¹⁷ With the private killing squads at Hitler’s aid, it was clear that the invasion was not a conventional war—it was a *conquest*.

a. Operation Tannenberg

Operation Tannenberg was the code name given to the “pacification” effort to be carried out by the *Einsatzgruppen*. Whilst the army was under the basic orders of invading and neutralizing *military targets*, the *Einsatzgruppen* were given separate instructions: their goal was to eliminate the regime’s political enemies, the bulk of which were civilian and *non-military* figures residing in the Polish intelligentsia. Their operation involved “killings [which] were to be conducted as part of an effort to neutralize centers of potential resistance in occupied Poland and to destroy the *classes of society thought to be carriers of Polish nationalism*.”¹⁸ By the end of December 1939, “the SS and their ethnic German auxiliaries had slaughtered as many as 50,000 people... The roughly 4 to 1 ration of Polish Christian deaths to Polish Jewish deaths suggests the decidedly *anti-Polish*, and not anti-Jewish, animus of the killing program of the SS in those early months of the war.”¹⁹ *Operation Tannenberg* was therefore an explicitly anti-Polish maneuver, the primary intention of which was to clear occupied Poland of its *native leadership*; once Poland’s former government was toppled, the next step would be to remove the land’s *native populace* and replace it with the ethnically German citizens of the expanded Reich. Territories thus seized by the Reich were slated for a wave of *mass deportations* of native Polish inhabitants. These deportations would be “carried out district by district” with the aid of “trains

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Rossino, *Hitler Strikes Poland*, 14.

¹⁹ Ibid., 234.

[carrying] 900-1000 persons...provided with an escort unit composed of six police officials and thirty self-defence people [German *Selbschutz* squads],” often in the very dead of winter.²⁰

The majority of the Polish deportees would be detained in a large centralized zone called the *Generalgouvernement* (the complete name of which is *Generalgouvernement für die besetzten Polnischen Gebiete*, meaning, *The Central Government for the Occupied Polish Territories*). According to the words of Hitler recorded in a memo sent to *Generalgouvernement* chief Hans Frank, “the General Government is a *Polish reservation, a great Polish labour camp;*” in that camp, “the Poles may only have one master—a German. Two masters cannot and must not exist side by side, and that is why *all* the representatives of the Polish intelligentsia *must be murdered.*”²¹ The above quotation provides the succinctest summary of the policy instituted by the Nazi German regime during and after the invasion. Polish leadership had to be eliminated in order to install German hegemony; effective German control would require a cost-effective labor force, provided for nearly *gratis* by the Poles who had been deported from their homes and replaced by ethnic Germans; parts of Poland not incorporated directly into the Reich, namely the *Generalgouvernement*, would function as a *massive Polish labor camp* that temporarily powered the expansionist Nazi German quest for *Lebensraum*; after the enslaved labor force was no longer of any use, it too would be conveniently eliminated.

Deportations affected every region of Nazi German occupied Poland. By the close of 1940, “261,517 Poles had been deported to the General Government from Warthegau (Poznań region), 17,413 from Upper Silesia, 31,000 from Danzig-West Prussia, and 15,000 from Zichenau (Ciechanów region)—an overall total of nearly 325,000;” by the end of the war “another 400,000 or so Poles in the incorporated territories were driven from their homes and

²⁰ Noakes and Pridham, *Nazism*, 935-936

²¹ *Ibid.*, 988 (excerpt 700)

farms to make way for ethnic Germans without actually being deported.”²² Replacing the dispossessed Polish citizens, “almost 800,000 ethnic Germans had arrived from the East, of whom 408,000 had been successfully re-settled in the incorporated territories and 74,000 in the *Altreich* [German territory before the invasion and expansion into Poland],” and “a total of 30–50,000 people were ‘regermanized.’”²³ Later between 1942 and 1943, a deportation effort was organized against the Polish population in the Zamość region, during which “the Germans evacuated about 110,000 people from 297 villages” in an attempt to incorporate lands from the *Generalgouvernement* into the main body of the *New Reich*.²⁴

b. A-B Aktion

In addition to regular deportations, Polish civilians faced brutal expressions of Nazi violence in the form of round-ups and ‘reprisal’ killings. In 1940, the *A-B Aktion* (“Extraordinary Pacification Plan”) was put into effect in order to hasten the process of eliminating Poles who still offered staunch resistance to the occupation. Hans Frank is reported to have stated that strict penal measures were the only way to deal with “old Polish criminal instinct” and that “many thousands of Poles [would have to] pay with their lives, particularly the most notable representatives of the intelligentsia;” the action would be put into effect not only to punish ‘Polish misbehavior’ but also “to prevent the Polish nation from ever again offering any resistance.”²⁵ The “the main sufferers were *civilians* who were shot for various kinds of ‘political’ offences, when the actual culprits could not be found.”²⁶ The Polish prisoners of the *New Reich* and *Generalgouvernement* were being punished by their German ‘masters.’

²² *Ibid.*, 944-45.

²³ *Ibid.*, 947.

²⁴ Gumkowski, Leszczyński. *Poland under Nazi Occupation*, 163.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 117.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 118.

III. Polish Victims of German Concentration and Extermination Camps

The initial solution to the statistical dilemma of the *Generalplan Ost* was remediated by the use of concentration camps, the purpose of which “was to drive the prisoners to a “natural” death after first having exploited them as slave labour.”²⁷ The four primary concentration camps were Auschwitz-Birkenau, Majdanek, Stutthof, and Gross-Rosen (Rogoźnica), each controlling “a total of 160 sub-camps throughout Poland.”²⁸ The entire nexus or “system of Nazi camps in Poland had one joint aim: to destroy the prisoners after having extracted the maximum benefit from their labour.”²⁹ The Nazi regime targeted *Polish men* (including priests), *women*, and *children* in the institutionalized system of camps, indiscriminately terrorizing *all segments of the Polish population*.

The Stutthof concentration camp was located near Danzig (Gdańsk) and served as the main location for the detainment and eventual elimination of deported Polish inhabitants in Pomerania (Pomorze region); it was the very first camp to be built in Poland. Rounded up by ethnic German *Selbschutz* (the so-called “self-defense”) personnel in the very first days of the war, 1,500 Poles whose name appeared on the *Sonderfahndungsbuch* were sent to the camp and became its first prisoners. Over the course of the war, some additional 65,000 Poles would die or be killed in Stutthof.³⁰ The early existence and creation of Stutthof is proof that the tactics employed by the German terrorist *Einsatzgruppen* would persist in the systematically planned nexus of camps throughout the *Generalgouvernement* and the Reich.

KL Auschwitz “was established in late 1939 *specifically for Poles* who were the initial prisoners,” and “...in 1942, a new sub-camp, Birkenau, was built as a killing camp and used *first*

²⁷ Ibid., 60.

²⁸ Ibid., 61.

²⁹ Ibid., 64.

³⁰ Semków, Piotr. “Martyrologia Polaków z Pomorza Gdańskiego w Latach II Wojny Światowej.” *Biuletyn IPN*, 8–9, no. 67–68 (2006): 42–51.

for killing of Poles.³¹ Over the course of the war, “it is estimated that a total of 130-140 thousand Poles were sent to Auschwitz in direct or collective transports;” the camp itself did not receive its first Jewish prisoners until 1942.³² The fact remains that the camp was first built in line with the murderous campaign of ethnic cleansing against the native Polish population. Witold Pilecki was the heroic Polish soldier and resistance fighter who secretly infiltrated Auschwitz in an effort to gather intelligence about the atrocities being committed there.

A significant number of Polish victims was also claimed by the Mauthausen-Gusen camp. Like the two former camps, the purpose of the Mauthausen “was *political*, i.e. constant persecution and imprisonment of actual or alleged political and ideological opponents of the Third Reich,” and “*most* of the people deported to Mauthausen were Poles.³³ It is reported that of the 190,000 prisoners that had circulated through the camp during the war between 90 to 95,000 died; of those only 14,000 were Jewish. There is no doubt that the camp was firmly intended to be used in the expedient and brutal solution to the “Polish Problem” and the German quest for *Lebensraum*, a continuation of the racial policy of ethnic cleansing that began with the invasion.

Polish Catholic priests were also targeted by the German camps. Dachau is the prime example of German anti-clerical brutality. While “it remains unclear precisely how many clergy were arrested in the ‘*Action for the Destruction of the Polish Church*’ ... of the more than 2,700 clergy from across Europe imprisoned in Dachau, *two-thirds* were from Poland.”³⁴ The Polish clergy imprisoned in Dachau “amounted to 83 percent of the priests who died there,” a level of persecution “of an entirely different magnitude than that of German clergy or other clergy from

³¹ Moor-Jankowski, Jan. “Holocaust of Non-Jewish Poles during WWII.”

³² “Poles in Auschwitz.” Auschwitz.org (Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum). Accessed October 10, 2023.

³³ “Concentration Camp.” KZ-Gedenkstätte Mauthausen. Accessed October 10, 2023. <https://www.mauthausen-memorial.org/pl>.

³⁴ Huener, Jonathan. *The Polish Catholic Church under German occupation: The Reichsgau Wartheland, 1939-1945*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2021, 174.

other countries.”³⁵ Just as the “*Einsatzgruppen* had executed priests in the fall of 1939 because they were regarded as *insurgents and the bearers of Polish national identity*... at Dachau, the SS sent hundreds of Polish clergymen to be gassed to death because they were no longer economically viable and were therefore a drain on resources.”³⁶ The priests were also frequently subjected to “medical experiments” in which they were “[infected] with bacteria” or exposed to malaria, and they were often referred to by the Dachau ‘physicians’ as “‘*Versuchskaninchen*’ (‘guinea pigs,’ or, literally, ‘experimental rabbits).”³⁷ In the end, out of “the 1,700 [Polish] clergy imprisoned there, almost half did not survive the war.”³⁸

The horrific treatment of Polish children at KZ Litzmannstadt—a German camp designed specifically for the processing and detention of Polish youth—is further evidence of the Nazi German plan for the total Germanization of the Polish population. According to the official directives of Himmler’s *Main Department for Race and Settlement (RuSHA)*, the “Germanizing action consisted of illegally *abducting children* from parents, guardians and orphanages or adopting children of parents who had been arrested or shot and handing them over to German parents or institutions in Germany and the annexed territories.”³⁹ The majority of the Polish children kidnapped for Germanization came from the region around Łódź in the *Generalgouvernement*. By the end of the war, “an estimated 1,600 Polish children went through this camp.”⁴⁰ According to files found in the *Occupation Youth Office* in Łódź, “about 12,000 children [were] put under its legal custody,” of which “at least 1,200 were deported to Germany, not counting children put in homes or handed over to German families” and children abducted

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 178.

³⁷ Ibid., 177.

³⁸ Noakes and Pridham, *Nazism*, 956.

³⁹ Gumkowski, Leszczyński. *Poland under Nazi Occupation*, 166

⁴⁰ “The Camp for Polish Children: Przemysłowa Street (Gewerbestrass).” Łódź Ghetto, Litzmannstadt Ghetto. Accessed October 10, 2023.

during the forced takeover and dissolution of Polish orphanages.⁴¹ It is clear that the anti-Polish occupying forces did not shy from targeting the most defenseless members of Polish society.

Polish women were likewise the victims of the brutal Germanization policy. The largest center for their persecution was at KL Ravensbrück, a camp established more than six months before the invasion. Over the course of the war “a total of more than 100,000 women were brought to the camp throughout its operation (some estimates put the number at 120,000),” of which “the largest group, nearly 40,000, were Polish women.”⁴² At Ravensbrück, Polish women underwent the torture of medical experimentation at the hands of Nazi ‘doctors;’ far from being scientific, these were more properly called “bestial pseudo-medical experiments.”⁴³ In the final year of the war, over 5,000 women were put to death in the camp’s gas chambers.⁴⁴ The actual number of Polish women killed at Ravensbrück is sure to be higher.

IV. The Destruction of Warsaw and Conclusion

The concentration camps built by the German authorities were not the final solution to the “Polish Problem.” As the regime grew impatient in carrying out the objectives of the *Generalplan Ost, an accelerated process of systematic extermination* began to replace the original program of resettlement and deportation. The atrocities that took place during the Warsaw Uprising in 1944 clearly demonstrate the German occupying forces’ true intention toward the Polish civilian population. The words of Hitler spoken just weeks before the invasion in 1939 make that intention perfectly clear:

⁴¹ Gumkowski, Leszczyński. *Poland under Nazi Occupation*, 177.

⁴² IPN. “Funeral Ceremonies of the Polish Female Prisoners from KL Ravensbrück” Institute of National Remembrance (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej), September 6, 2022.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ “1939-1945 Ravensbrück Concentration Camp.” *Stiftung Brandenburgische Gedenkstätten*. Accessed October 10, 2023. <https://www.ravensbrueck-sbg.de/en/history/1939-1945/>.

Genghis Khan caused the *death of millions of women and children deliberately and without any qualms*. But history sees him only as a great founder of a state. I do not care what the helpless civilization of Western Europe thinks about me. I have issued orders to shoot anyone who dares utter even one word of criticism of the principle that the object of war is ... physically to destroy the enemy. That is why I have prepared, for the moment only in the East, my 'Death's Head' [Totenkopf] formations with orders *to kill without pity or mercy all men, women and children of Polish descent or language.*"⁴⁵

The atrocities of the Uprising five years later proceeded in that same genocidal spirit. Warsaw was razed to the ground; no one was to be spared. During the German attack on Warsaw, Himmler, supreme head of the SS, stated that the "[Polish] nation which has blocked our path to the east for seven hundred years... *has always been in the way.*"⁴⁶ The goal of the German invasion, and its continued operations to the end of the war, was thus the *complete and utter destruction of the Polish nation.*

Since Warsaw was Poland's "centre of the national and political consciousness and the heart of the conspiratorial political, cultural and intellectual life of the whole nation," Hitler immediately "issued orders that [the Uprising] was to be crushed ruthlessly and that Warsaw was to be razed to the ground."⁴⁷ What ensued during the German response to the Uprising was a ruthless operation that aimed to brutalize and demoralize the entire Polish population. Reprisal killings, round-ups, hospital bombings, and other atrocities rampantly abounded—the victims of which "were mostly innocent civilians, regardless of age and sex, who had taken no part in the partisan operations."⁴⁸ Eye-witness accounts of the German brutality report seeing executions of hundreds of innocent civilians at a time, and the streets of Warsaw were littered with mounds upon mounds of human corpses; an eye-witness from the St. Lazarus hospital reported seeing

⁴⁵ Noakes and Pridham, *Nazism*, 996.

⁴⁶ Breitman, Richard. "Hitler and Genghis Khan." *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 25, no. 2/3, 1990, 337.

⁴⁷ Gumkowski, Leszczyński. *Poland under Nazi Occupation*, 181

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

“5,000 bodies from all over the buildings, even from the beds and operating tables,” and later “6,000 bodies” in Sowiński Park in Warsaw’s Wola district.⁴⁹

The blood-curdling examples from the *Wola Genocide* are only the beginning of what occurred in Warsaw during its systematic annihilation. By the end more than “200,000 civilians were killed in the Uprising and ninety per cent of the city was destroyed.”⁵⁰ The German killing machine withheld nothing from its effort to extinguish the soul of the Polish nation. As evidenced by the quotations from Hitler and Himmler, the entire German project in Poland was a *pseudo-spiritual* conquest aimed at asserting German racial dominance over the Polish nation. In that process, “no less than 6,028,000 Polish citizens lost their lives,” 90 percent of which were killed “*as a result of the terror unleashed by the Nazis.*”⁵¹ While the economic losses of the war are still a topic of frequent political debate, the human losses sustained by Poland at the hand of the Reich are unfathomably irreparable. Nothing can make up for her loss.

Hitler’s ideological vision of a Germanic Europe had been public knowledge for nearly fifteen years before the outbreak of the Second World War. That the world did not have the foresight to thwart such a murderous genocidal plan is difficult to explain. Nevertheless, we are able to prevent similar occurrences in our own times so long as we are wise enough to learn from the disastrous mistakes of the past. The world acts as if it has sufficiently understood the crimes of the Nazi regime—yet, atrocities not dissimilar to the ones discussed in this paper are occurring in the world we live in today. The world *still* stands to learn a great deal from Poland and her suffering in the Second World War. Let us not shy away from the opportunity.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 208. A more complete account of the Wola Genocide can be found in Gumkowski, Leszczyński *Poland under Nazi Occupation*.

⁵⁰ Noakes and Pridham, *Nazism*, 996.

⁵¹ Gumkowski, Leszczyński. *Poland under Nazi Occupation*, 215-16

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