

*Guardians of the Memory
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IN A (NOT COMPLETELY) DISTORTING MIRROR. POLAND VIEWED FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE AUTHORITIES AND OF THE POPULATION OF THE SOVIET UNION ON THE EVE OF AND DURING THE SOVIET AGGRESSION AGAINST POLAND IN SEPTEMBER 1939

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Abstract. This article intends to answer two fundamental questions: 1) What kind of image of Poland was created by the authorities of the Soviet Union on the eve of and during the Soviet aggression against Poland on 17 September 1939? 2) Did Soviet society accept this image uncritically, or was it capable of creating its own image of Poland independently? This study is based on an analysis that the Soviet authorities created a false image of Poland as a fascist country which had been defeated by Germany not as a result of its military advantage but as a result of its incorrect policy towards ethnic minorities. The image of Poland was generally accepted by the society of the Soviet Union which was subject to a monopolistic propaganda of the state. Only a small minority of society rejected the image promoted by the authorities – as untrue and a justification for Moscow’s imperial policy.

Keywords: Poland; Soviet propaganda; Soviet society

The practice to denigrate the victim of the aggressor’s military attack is as old as war itself. There are not many aggressors who directly acknowledge that their aim is to conquer a land and its assets or to enslave its population. Most attackers tend to shift the “blame” for the aggression, which is not called “aggression”, onto the victim by attributing them the worst features and behavior which the aggressor was simply “forced to” address with military might.

The worst totalitarian systems of the 20th century – the German Third Reich and the Bolshevik Soviet Union – did not differ in this approach. Hitler attempted to justify the German invasion against Poland by formulating a myth of Polish “provocations” which – as he informed Vyacheslav Molotov, Soviet Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, on 16 August 1939 – “(...) Germany was

determined not to tolerate forever”¹⁾. For the sake of the aggression of 17 September 1939 against Poland in alliance with Hitler, the Soviet Union also made up such an image of the aggression’s victim which was to justify it in a convincing way for the world. The most astonishing component of the image was probably the statement that there were no victims of the invasion.

The reconstruction of the image of Poland created by the Soviet authorities during the summer of 1939 should begin with a reminder, which may be relatively obvious, that the Stalinist Soviet Union was a police state. One should not be astonished by the fact that the Soviet Political Police – the NKVD – played a significant role in the creation of the image of the Western neighboring country of the USSR. In 1939 – it is not known exactly when but probably shortly before the aggression against Poland – the NKVD itself prepared a document which was a peculiar analysis of the Polish political system. It stated that a specific feature of Poland was “(...) the diversity of parties, groupings and political movements²⁾”. The Camp of National Unity was deemed the governing party of “Polish fascism” which was used to refer to the governing fraction of Poland as a whole. The assessment of subsequent parties on the Polish political scene did not turn out well. The National Party was accused of attempting to establish a “dictatorship” of the Polish nation and of the Catholic Church in Poland. The Polish People’s Party was considered a “large party of affluent farmers and peasants”³⁾; however, it should be acknowledged that the Polish People’s Party was recognized to have adopted an implacable position against the “Piłsudski government”. The Polish Socialist Party and the Jewish BUND were treated as parties which played a “treacherous role” against the “oppressed proletariat” (additionally, the BUND Party was attributed an “anti-Soviet and Trotskyist” and anti-German orientation). As far as Polish social organizations are concerned, neither were they recognized by analysts of the NKVD. They described the Association of Settlers with particularly harsh words by claiming that nearly all members of this organization, which was deemed “chauvinistic and patriotic”, “(...) were police informers and dealt with the recruitment of agents sent to the USSR”⁴⁾. The pejorative image of Polish political parties and of social organizations, presented in the discussed document, should not actually come as a surprise: from the perspective of the one-party Soviet system none of them – the entire “diversity of parties, groupings and political movements” – were acceptable.

In the realities of the Soviet Union in the 1930s, Stalin rather than the NKVD had the casting vote in all matters. He presented a brief but meaningful profile of Poland during a meeting with his most trusted comrades at the Kremlin on 7 September 1939 (with Georgi Dimitrov, Secretary General of Komintern, among others). He started his presentation by pointing out that the former Poland had been a national state, which had caused the “revolutionists” to defend it against enslavement and partitions. The current Poland – Stalin explained further – was a fascist state which oppressed the Ukrainians and the Belarusians. Therefore, the destruction of Poland

implied the elimination of one more bourgeois and fascist state. “Why is it bad,” Stalin asked rhetorically, “if we extend the socialist system into new territories and populations by breaking up Poland”⁵⁾.

Presented on the seventh day of Germany’s aggression against Poland, Stalin’s interpretation of Poland spread all over the world like a flash. As soon as the following day, the Presidium of the Executive Committee of Komintern sent a directive to all communist parties of the world saying that the international proletariat would not defend “fascist Poland” which oppressed other nations (Niewieżyn, 2000: 82).

The article entitled “*About the internal causes of the military defeat of Poland*”, which was published in the Moscow “Pravda” on 14 September 1939, was of specific importance for Kremlin’s creating a “denigrated” image of Poland.

The diagnosis put forward in the introduction that Poland was defeated in military terms only 10 days after Germany had launched its war operations was followed by an “explanation” of the factual state. The authors of the article stated that such a fast defeat of the Polish state could not be explained by referring only to the advantage of German fire power and to the fact that Poland had not been assisted by Great Britain and France. The main cause of the Polish state’s “collapse” – as it was described – was deemed to be Poland’s nationality policy. The governing factions of Poland were reported to oppress national minorities, in particular the Ukrainians and the Belarusians, and to transform “Western Ukraine and Western Belarus⁶⁾” into a “colony deprived of any rights” to be brutally exploited by Polish landowners. This kind of policy made it impossible to consolidate the multinationalism of the Polish Army, which resulted in the military defeat. To exaggerate the allegedly deciding impact of the policy towards national minorities on the outcome of the struggle against Germany, the article provided forged data on their number: Poland was supposed to host 8 million Ukrainian citizens (in reality, there were 5 million), and 3 million Belarusian citizens (in reality, there were 1.4 million).⁷⁾ It is needless to mention that the entire diagnosis of Poland’s defeat in the struggle against Germany was pure demagoguery: in 1939, the German Armed Forces were the most powerful land army in the world and one which could not be opposed by the army of any other single state.

However, it should be pointed out that contrary to the article soldiers of non-Polish origin who had been enrolled in the Polish Army were strongly determined to fight against the Germans. There were some incidents of avoiding mobilization or deserting from the Army, but their number was limited⁸⁾.

The Polish Embassy in the Soviet Union suspected that the article published in “Pravda” was to prepare “the ground for taking a potential decision”⁹⁾. This diagnosis was not completely accurate: the decision about the invasion against Poland had already been taken, while the article was aimed at preparing the ground for its public announcement. The same objective was to be achieved – as noted by the Embassy – though the publication of news in the Moscow press on the same

day that an uprising had broken out in the Eastern part of Lesser Poland and the Belarusians had started riots in Poland to establish an independent republic¹⁰). The misleading news was – as it may be concluded – intended to depict Poland as a state which had not only been defeated by Germany in the West but was overwhelmed by “revolutionist turmoil” in the East.

During the night from 16 to 17 September 1939, Wacław Grzybowski, Polish Ambassador in the Soviet Union, was summoned to the seat of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the USSR where he was read out a note signed by Molotov concerning the justification of the decision of the authorities of the USSR to bring the Soviet troops into Poland. It stated that the Polish and German war had revealed an internal bankruptcy of the Polish state: Poland had lost all of its industrial districts and cultural centres, Warsaw as the capital city of Poland had ceased to exist, while the Polish government had disintegrated and had not shown any signs of life. This meant the end of the Polish state. It was stated in the following part of the note that having been deprived of its leadership, Poland had become “(...) an easy field for any dangerous and unexpected operations which could threaten the USSR”¹¹). The related population of Ukrainian or Belarusian origin is defenseless and left to fate. In view of such circumstances, the Soviet Government ordered the troops to cross the border and to care for the life and property of the population of “Western Ukraine and Western Belarus”.

All the statements included in the note, excluding the order for the Soviet troops to cross the border with Poland, were not true. Poland had its own government; its capital city had not been conquered, while the Germans had occupied only the central and Western parts of the country. The Eastern part of Poland, including the cities of Lviv and Vilnius, had not been taken by the aggressor's troops. Even if the entire country had been conquered by the Germans, the Soviet Union would have had no right to recognize Poland as a non-existing state. In accordance with international law, the Polish state would have been seen as occupied. Such a situation would have not implied that the state had been destroyed.

Nevertheless, the Soviet authorities took steps to ensure that their version of Poland as a country which had allegedly ceased to exist would reach the international community and Soviet society: Molotov's note was sent to all countries with which the USSR maintained diplomatic relations and was also printed in the Soviet central press.

The dissemination of the note was also strengthened by Molotov's radio speech of 17 September 1939. He repeated most of the note, which had been read out to the Polish Ambassador the preceding night. Molotov stated that the Polish-German war had caused the Polish state to cease to exist in real terms: the location of the Polish government was unknown; Warsaw was not the capital city of the state, while all industrial regions and the majority of large cities had been lost. Poland had become an “open field for any dangerous and unexpected operations” which could threaten

the USSR. The head of the Soviet Government stated further that the USSR could not be indifferent to the fate of their “fellow” Belarusians and Ukrainians whose nations had previously been deprived of rights and they were left to fate decide, due to which “(...) he ordered the Chief Command of the Red Army to issue an order to the troops to cross the border and to care for the life and property of the population of Western Ukraine and Western Belarus”¹²⁾.

The invasion of Poland was justified not only centrally but also locally. To exemplify, the daily “*Sowietskoi Sibiri*” of the District of Novosibirsk (issued in Novosibirsk) justified the provision of “assistance” to the Ukrainians and Belarusians by claiming that the nations of “Western Belarus” and of “Western Ukraine” had been “separated” from the Soviet Union only due to “historical injustice” (Ushakova, 2013: 68). This was an inexplicit but understandable allusion to the lost war of 1920 against Poland and to the border which had been established during the post-war negotiations.

While preparing to fulfil the arrangements of the pact with Germany in mid-September 1939, the Soviet authorities also took steps to ensure that the “correct” image of Poland would be delivered to the soldiers of the Red Army. The combat order of the Command of the Belarusian Front of 16 September 1939 presented the western neighbouring country of the USSR as a “capitalist country of landowners” governed by a “clique” which had allegedly started war against Germany¹³⁾. The order issued by the War Council of the Front two days later presented Poland not only as a country pursuing an “unfair” social system but also as a country which “illegally” governed its Eastern territories, which was expressed with the following words: “The great socialist revolution provided the Polish nation with the right to self-determination. After the suppression of the revolutionist movement of workers and peasants, Polish landowners and capitalists conquered Western Belarus and Western Ukraine, deprived the nations of their Soviet homeland and shackled them in the irons of captivity and oppression”¹⁴⁾. This “historical” introduction was followed by a diagnosis of the current condition of Poland: “Western Ukraine and Western Belarus – it was written – are overwhelmed by the revolutionist movement. Belarusian and Ukrainian peasants have started riots and uprisings in Poland. The Polish working class and peasants unite in power to break their bloodthirsty oppressors’ neck”¹⁵⁾. As results from the aforementioned order, Poland, and more exactly its Eastern territories, was presented as if the country had been in the throes of a revolution.

This image was completely distorted. Some of the Belarusian and Ukrainian population did not turn against Poland until the Red Army’s invasion of Poland. Some of the incidents were inspired by communists (Wierzbicki, 2000: 199, 206). The order issued by Michail Kovalov, Commander of the Belarusian Front, to his subordinates on the same day was similar in tone and stated: “(...) the police shoes of the Piłsudskiite has trampled the homeland of our

fellow Belarusians and Ukrainians with impunity for 20 years now. This land has never belonged to Poland. This indigenous land of Belarus and Ukraine has been appropriated by Polish generals and landowners when the Soviet Republic, defending itself against numerous counterrevolutionary forces, was not yet sufficiently strong”¹⁶). The version saying that “Western Ukraine” and “Western Belarus” had been occupied by the Polish “by force” was also promoted in the Polish press issued by the Red Army entering the territory of Poland. The magazine issued by the Political Board of the Ukrainian Front “The Soldier’s Voice” wrote (on 20 September 1939): “In 1920, supported by the Entente states the landowners’ Poland criminally invaded the territory of Ukraine and conquered Galicia and part of Belarus”¹⁷).

It is beyond any doubt that the statement that the Eastern territories of the Republic of Poland had been appropriated by Poland “criminally” did not correspond to the reality. The incorporation of the territories into Poland did not take place through any armed annexation but was based on an act of international law – the Peace Treaty concluded between Poland and the Soviet Union on 18 March 1921 in Riga. The Polish Eastern border was also recognized by Western superpowers: the respective decision had been taken by the Ambassadors’ Conference on 15 March 1923.

The Command of the Red Army also created a mystified image of an attacked country for the non-Polish population of the Republic of Poland, gloomily depicting its fate during Polish governance, in order to justify and legitimate the “liberating” mission of the Red Army. Thus, the manifesto of “Our Fellow Belarusians”, which was issued by the aforementioned Commander Kovalov on 17 September 1939, claimed that the Belarusian population living in Poland had been oppressed by Polish landowners and capitalists for twenty years. They had taken away Belarusian land, pastures and forests and done all they could to drive them into poverty. The landowners had closed down all Belarusian schools and deprived Belarusian children of the possibility to have classes in their native language¹⁸). To comment, it may be added that although land properties (called the “properties of landowners” in Soviet nomenclature) covered approximately one fourth of land in so-called Western Belarus, their area shrunk progressively during the entire period of the Second Republic of Poland due to their division into smaller plots of land and transfer to peasants. The poverty of the population living in these regions, not only in the Belarusian ones, was not driven by – as demagogically described in the appeal – the fact that Polish landowners “were sucking the last drop of blood” out of the Belarusians. It resulted from the backwardness driven by the policy of the Russian occupant, poor soils, war damages and poor harvests¹⁹).

Disseminated by the Red Army, the fictitious image of Poland was also addressed to soldiers of the Polish Army. On the day of the aggression, they were beseeched

by Commander Kovalov not to offer resistance to the Red Army. The appeal was justified by creating an image of Poland governed by landowners and capitalists for whose interests the Polish soldiers should not shed their blood. This obviously repeated the leading motif of the Soviet propaganda that Poland oppressed the non-Polish nations living in its territories, while the Polish governing fractions stirred up disagreement between the Poles, Belarusians and Ukrainians²⁰.

The anti-Poland campaign conducted by the Soviet authorities since mid-September 1939 was crowned by a first-page article published in "Pravda" on 29 September 1939. Its authors presented Poland, which they called "artificially overblown, living from plundering foreign lands" and additionally the "gentry", as a tool of the British and French policy of "antagonizing" the Soviet Union (Ushakova, 2013: 69).

It is worth pointing out the anachronistic view of the Poland revived after the First World War as a state dominated by the gentry. As early as the Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 17 March 1921, it was explicitly stated (Article 96) that "the Republic of Poland does not recognize ancestral or status privileges or any coats of arms, family and other titles, excluding scientific, official and professional ones"²¹). This regulation meant the factual abandonment of the gentry class in Poland.

The image of the "gentry" Poland was promoted not only by the Moscow "Pravda" but also by local magazines. To exemplify, on 24 September 1939, the aforementioned "Sowietskoi Sibiri" of the District of Novosibirsk published an article entitled "The liberation fight of the Ukrainian nation against the oppression of the Polish gentry and the incorporation of Ukraine into Russia" which presented the history of the Ukrainians as a never ending struggle against the "eternal enemy – the Polish gentry" (Ushakova, 2013: 69).

How did the Soviet population view Poland? Was the image of Poland a simple copy of the image promoted by the omnipresent propaganda? Or, did the society of the USSR create a different image of the western neighbouring country?

Analysis of the problem cannot ignore that little is known about the opinions of Soviet society. The Soviet Union respected neither the freedom of the press nor freedom of speech: even if expressed privately, opinions differing than those imposed by the authorities were treated as "anti-Soviet campaigning" and subject to criminal sanctions (usually being sent to a forced labour camp for several years). Most information about the moods and views of the population may be found in NKVD reports: the Political Police carefully followed "the population's reactions" to the policy of the party and of the Government and was extremely careful in registering "anti-Soviet" statements.

It may carefully be concluded, based on these reports, that the pact with Germany triggered different reactions within the population of the Soviet Union: from the uncritical acceptance of the "party line", surprise or even shock, to sharp

criticism of the agreement with the “fascists”. In this context, opinions were also expressed about Poland. For example, Associate Professor Grinfeld of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic, who enthusiastically supported the agreement, used to emphasize that the signing of the pact with Germany was an excellent move because it implied Poland’s isolation²²⁾. The critics of the treaty, including typesetter Kukharchuk from Kiev, argued that the pact with Germany was an act of selling Poland to Germany, no different from Britain and France’s betrayal of Czechoslovakia to Germany in Munich²³⁾.

Further opinions on the agreement with Germany and on Poland emerged immediately after the Third Reich’s invasion of the Republic of Poland. They were split once again. Those accepting the pact with Germany pointed out that the Soviet Union would otherwise be bound to fight “(...) for some Poles, our former enemies”²⁴⁾. Some interpreted Hitler’s desire to conquer Poland in a positive light – it was to result in the establishment of a common border with Germany and in the merger of two most powerful countries in Europe. On the contrary, others were of the opinion that although Poland was a “nasty nation”, the German neighbour would not be better at all; they even went on to claim that the annexation of Poland was a step towards Hitler’s planned attack against the Soviet Union²⁵⁾. Disoriented and unaware of the anti-Poland conspiracy agreement between Germany and the USSR, Soviet society sometimes even expressed the opinion that the fact that German troops had approached the border with the USSR resulted from the decision of Great Britain and France to give Poland to Germany and to cause Hitler’s state to clash with the Soviet Union.

The German attack of 1 September 1939 against Poland stirred up compassion for the victims of the aggression within Soviet society. Konstanty Simonov, a young war correspondent (24 years old) in Mongolia (later a well-known Soviet writer) used to recall September 1939 with the following words: “When German declared war on Poland, my entire sympathy along with the sympathy of my fellow editors of the editorial office of the war magazine, where we all worked, was with the Poles due to the fact that a more powerful country had attacked a weaker one and because, irrespective of the non-aggression pact, who of us would like fascist Germany to win a war started in Europe or even an easy victory?” (Simonov, 1988: 79). More words of sympathy for Poland, which are worth mentioning, were expressed by agronomist Galimski, employed in the People’s Commissariat for Land of the USSR, who commented on Poland on the 8th day of the German-Polish war with the following words: “What a poor and miserable land. It had not been able to build its independence. Finally, it managed to do so. [Poland – S.K.] has built its life for 20 years and now is fading away. How wretched is the Polish nation. It was damaged by the former war [i.e. the First World War – S.K.] and is now being ruined by the new one”²⁶⁾.

Even the staff of the Red Army expressed their sympathy for Poland. The political report of 13 September 1939 on the situation in the 13th Rifle Corps stated

that many of its commanders could not understand the international situation, which was exemplified by a (rhetorical) question by Colonel Boloznev, Chief Commandor of this unit: “Whom do we have more sympathy for – for Poland or Germany?”²⁷).

As seen above, Soviet Society “did not catch up with” the policy of the state authorities to a large extent. Brought up in the anti-fascist spirit in the preceding years, it remained hostile towards the Third Reich which it deemed the main enemy of the Soviet Union – along with Japan. Although an average citizen of Stalin’s state did not like Poland either – the propaganda hammered into his or her head that Poland was a threat and a component of the “capitalist circle” around the Soviet Union – his or her hostility towards their Polish neighbours did not reach the same level as towards Germany.

We do not have any data on how society viewed the aforementioned article “*About the internal causes of the military defeat of Poland*”.

What we do know is that the most persuasive element of Molotov’s radio speech of 17 September 1939 from the perspective of Soviet society was the argument about the need to provide assistance to their “fellow Belarusians and Ukrainians” (Ushakova, 2013: 68).

A resident of Moscow recalled: “When the Soviet troops entered the Belarusian and Ukrainian territories of Poland, we did not have any doubts as to the official version of the party claiming that the action had been launched to protect residents in these territories” (Leder, 2001: 162). The aforementioned writer Konstanty Simonov reacted similarly and accepted with a “feeling of absolute joy” the information that following “Poland’s collapse” the Soviet troops entered the territory of “Western Belarus and of Western Ukraine”, as he wrote himself (Simonov, 1988: 80). How did he justify his attitude? In general, he blamed Poland for the poor relations between Poland and the Soviet Union in the 1920s and in the 1930s. He deemed it “fair” that the Red Army had entered the aforementioned territories and had “liberated” them, all the more since if they had not been occupied by the Soviet Union, they would have been occupied by Germany. The prevalence of such reactions is confirmed by an annotation made by mineralogist and geochemist Vladimir Vernadsky, member of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, from which it would seem that “everybody” accepted the occupation of “Western Ukraine and Western Belarus”. The great Russian and imperialist ideology may be heard in his commentary: (...) the policy of Stalin – Molotov – Vernadsky wrote – is realistic and seems to be correct and to support the Russian state” (Vernadsky, 2006:56).

However, not all citizens of the USSR unquestioningly accepted the view disseminated by the state authorities that the Polish state had ceased to exist and the occupation of Poland’s territory by the Soviet troops was not an armed aggression but a humanitarian mission to protect the local population.

Thus, Dragomanov, a translator working in the editorial office of the Publishing House “The Art” in Kiev, argued that the fact that the Red Army had entered the

territory of Poland was “the fourth partition in Poland in fact, carried out based on the agreement between Stalin and Hitler”²⁸⁾. A similar assessment was shared by Aspirant Lanovoy, Institute of Folklore of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, who stated: “What will the entire world say? They will say that we divide Poland with the fascist Germany”²⁹⁾. Another statement of engineer Kevlich working in the Central Post Office in Kiev, who completely rejected the official interpretation of the “liberation” of the Ukrainians and of the Belarusians: “The annexation of Western Ukraine and of Western Belarus by the Soviet Union was agreed with Germany as early as upon signing the pact [the Non-aggression pact – S.K.]. This is not an act of providing mutual assistance but rather the annexation of a foreign territory”³⁰⁾. As seen, more insightful individuals could work out that there was a secret agreement with Germany regarding the division of Poland. Taking into consideration the fact that the USSR was a police state, it should be pointed out that opinions of those criticizing the entrance of the Soviet troops into the territory of Poland as aggression and annexation of a foreign land were relatively frequent.

Many statements of citizens of the USSR included in the reports of the NKVD corresponded to the official “line” of the propaganda saying that thanks to the “liberation” Polish citizens would be able to live in a land of freedom and prosperity. However, contrary opinions were equally prevalent. The statement of a student of the Kiev Medical Institute called Homerbart may serve as an example because on 24 September 1939 he stated that: “It would have been better not to liberate the nations of Western Ukraine and of Western Belarus from the oppression of [Polish] lords because the situation in our county is not better at all. They will feel it one day”³¹⁾.

This article may be summed up in the following points:

1. The essence of the image of Poland created by the Soviet authorities during the analyzed period was to present it as a state which had been defeated by Germany and “had ceased to exist” not as a result of the military advantage of the German Army but because of its internal weaknesses – above all the oppression of national minorities;

2. Promoted by the authorities of the USSR since 14 September 1939, the version that Poland had ceased to exist as a state and the Soviet Union should provide assistance to the fellow Ukrainians and Belarusians living in Poland did not correspond to actual facts. It was purposefully created in order to prevent the Soviet Union from being blamed for the military invasion. This was explicitly confirmed by Molotov who openly stated during a talk with Werner von Schulenburg, German Ambassador in Moscow, on 10 September 1939 that “(...) the intent of the Soviet Union is to make use of the further march of the German troops to declare that Poland is falling apart and the Soviet Union should provide assistance to the Ukrainians and Belarusians who are “threatened” by the Germans. This pretext

will make the intervention of the Soviet Union noble for the masses and will save the Soviet Union from being treated as an aggressor”³²).

3. The objectives set out by Kremlin upon creating and disseminating the aforementioned image of Poland were only partially achieved. The thesis about the non-existence of the Polish state was recognized neither by Great Britain nor by France. By its declaration of 19 September 1939, the government of the United Kingdom “categorically” rejected the statement that the Polish state did not exist. In a note submitted to the Soviet authorities on the following date, the French government accused the authorities of the USSR of infringing neutrality against a state in war (Beshanov, 2008: 70-71). The thesis gained more recognition with Soviet society, although the propaganda-resilient minority was not convinced and upheld its position that the USSR had committed an act of aggression against an existing state by entering Polish territory.

NOTES

1. Missing pages. The USSR and Germany 1939 – 1941. Documents and materials on Soviet and German relations from April 1939 until July 1941, Vilnius 1990, p. 37.
2. The Polish Underground in the territories of Western Ukraine and Western Belarus in the years 1939 – 1941, Warsaw-Moscow 2001, p. 37.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
5. The Origins of the Hitler-Stalin Pact. Facts and propaganda, Bogdan Musiał and Jan Szumski (ed.), Warsaw 2012, p. 195.
6. The Soviet nomenclature used this name to refer to the Eastern Regions of Poland. The name suggested that the land constituted the “Western” part of the Soviet Ukraine and Belarus.
7. Missing pages..., pp. 86 – 88.
8. For more information, comp. M. Rezmer, The position and participation of the Ukrainians in the German and Polish Campaign of 1939, [in:] Poland and Ukraine: difficult questions, vol. 4. Materials of the International Historical Seminar “Polish and Ukrainian relations during the Second World War”, Warsaw, 8-10 October 1998, Warsaw 1999, pp. 25-26.
9. The Polish Diplomatic Documents: September-December 1939, Warsaw 2007, p. 80. It was obviously about the decision concerning the position of the USSR to the ongoing war.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
11. The Soviet aggression against Poland of 17 September 1939 in the light of the documents. The origins and consequences of the aggression, vol. 1, Warsaw 1994, p. 156.

12. Missing pages..., p. 94.
13. The Soviet aggression against Poland of 17 September 1939 in the light of the documents. Operations of the troops of the Belarusian Front, Warsaw 1995, p. 27.
14. Ibid., p. 50.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., p. 356.
17. Cited after: Gogol, B. (2000). The Red Flag. Reflections on the Sovietisation of the Eastern Regions of Lesser Poland from September 1939 until June 1941, Gdańsk, p. 310.
18. "Western Belarus" 17.IX.1939 – 22 VI 1941. Events and people's histories. Year 1939, vol. 1, Warsaw 1998, p. 91.
19. For more information, comp. K. Jasiewicz, The extermination of the Polish Eastern Borderland. The Polish landed gentry in the North-Eastern Borderland of the Republic of Poland under Soviet occupation in the years 1939-1941. A study on the history of the extermination of the former political nation, Warsaw 1997, pp. 37 and following, and The Belarusian, Lithuanian and Polish society in the North-Eastern regions of the Second Republic of Poland (Western Belarus and Eastern Lithuania) in the years 1939 – 1941, Małgorzata Giżejewska and Tomasz Strzembosz (ed.), Warsaw 1995, pp. 57 and following.
20. "Western Belarus"..., p.94.
21. The Second Republic of Poland. A selection of documents. Aleksander Łuczak, Józef Ryszard Szaflik, Warsaw 1988, p. 113.
22. Radjański orhany derżawnoji bezpeky u 1939 – czerwni 1941 r. Dokumenty HDA SB Ukrainy, W. Danylenko, S. Kokin (ed.), Kiev 2009, p. 968.
23. Ibid., p. 970.
24. Ibid., p. 975.
25. Ibid., pp. 982, 986.
26. Ibid., p. 994.
27. The Soviet aggression against Poland of 17 September 1939 in the light of the documents, volume 2 The military operations of the Ukrainian Front, Warsaw 1996, p. 30.
28. Radjański orhany..., p. 999.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid., p. 1000.
31. Ibid., p. 1055.
32. Missing pages..., p. 83. The protest of the authorities of the Third Reich resulted in the removal of the note that Germany posed a "threat" to the Belarusians and to the Ukrainians.

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