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Archeologa Jana Bartysa pamiętnik z Kozielska

Diary of the archaeologist Jan Bartys from the prisoners of war camp at Kozielsk

SUMMARY

The paper deals with the fate of Polish officers imprisoned in Soviet POW camps in the years 1939-1940.

On the 17th of September 1939, Poland, which had already been fighting a war against the invading Germany, was attacked by the Soviet Red Army. Several hundred thousand military personnel were imprisoned by the Soviets, including over 20 thousand officers. Among the latter group, there were many representatives of the Polish intelligentsia, from a variety of professional milieus, most notably researchers, eminent specialists of international renown. Almost all of the prisoners were killed as a result of a decision by the Politburo of the Soviet Communist Party. Despite the sixty-six years that have passed since it was committed, many details connected with the atrocity, known in Poland as the “Katyń Crime”, still remain unknown. Sheets from a diary of the archaeologist Jan Bartys, held in the camp at Kozielsk, provide new information on the life of the prisoners and on the situation in the camps, and they also give an account of the activities and studies of the prisoners, including lectures delivered by university teachers and scholars in various fields of knowledge, as well as of religious rites and celebrations of religious and state holidays. The prisoners were severely punished for such activities, but these were a way of combating their longing for home and of keeping up spirits, while for the young officers they also provided a chance to continue their education.

The diaries, which were found in the Katyń graves, have made a small but valuable contribution to our knowledge of the last days of the Polish officers imprisoned at the camp at Kozielsk, in the Smolensk region.

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