

# DIFFERENT WARS

National  
School  
Textbooks  
on WWII

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# Introduction to the exhibition “Different Wars: National School Textbooks on WWII”

A comparison between the Czech Republic,  
Germany, Italy, Poland, Lithuania and Russia

Kristina Smolijanovaitė

## School textbooks and history education

The first images of the past, which are formed by school education and history textbooks, are among the strongest. Textbooks bear the knowledge that a respective society wishes to pass on to the next generation. States use them both as instruments for civic education, and for constructing narratives that foster identities, strengthen societal cohesion, or even legitimise the ruling powers. Textbooks, especially history textbooks, pursue the great questions of human history, such as 'who are we?', 'where did we come from?' and 'where are we going to?'. For a large number of students in Western societies, working with their history textbook in school will be the most intensive and lasting encounter with history that they experience in their lifetime.

As they are state-controlled, textbooks hold the reputation of being objective and reliable. However, if we pick up a textbook from the past or from another country, we soon realise that this is a delusion. Textbooks communicate the spirit of their time and express the culture they are written in.

## The project "Different Wars"

The exhibition "Different Wars" reveals the differences in the narration and perception of the history of the Second World War (WWII) in modern secondary school textbooks of the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Poland and Russia.

The choice of the subject was motivated by the fact that WWII remains one of the most painful and conflicting episodes of the European nations' memories. In Russia, the victory in the Great Patriotic War is one of the most important pages of national history. The exhibition – now also at hand in this catalogue – shows, compares and contrasts these varying historical narratives of WWII found in recent and most commonly used school textbooks. By presenting national and thematic panels, it aims to uncover significant aspects of remembrance. Visitors and readers have a chance to 'go through' the pages of textbooks and learn about history education in the different countries. The catalogue does not only reproduce the exhibition, but gives additional information on the countries' internal discussions and key aspects regarding WWII, on the curricula and the teaching methods.

The idea for the exhibition was born in October 2013, with the project itself starting in October 2014. The exhibition was produced in Berlin in December 2015 and is on tour in Russia and the European Union. It has not been a purely academic exercise, but rather a collective work of historians,

civil society activists, history teachers and enthusiasts from the six participating countries who form the working group "Historical Memory and Education" within the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum. They studied the presentation of WWII and how its aftermath is dealt with in the school textbooks of their respective countries. With the exhibition, they hope to promote an open and unbiased dialogue on some challenging aspects of WWII that are still being discussed in a controversial way.

## Differing situations and perceptions

Even the question of the starting date of WWII is answered differently throughout Europe: for the Czech Republic it is 1938 when the Munich Treaty was signed. For the Baltic countries the unofficial start of WWII is the signing of the German-Soviet Treaty in August 1939. In the German and Polish notion, Nazi Germany's attack on Poland on 1 September 1939 is seen as the first day of the war, whereas in Russia the beginning of the Great Patriotic War against Nazi Germany lies in 1941. Despite being an Axis power, Italy only entered the war in June 1940 with the invasion of Southern France and the declaration of war on Great Britain.

The perspectives also differ depending on the role the respective country played during WWII, and which side of the Iron Curtain the country found itself after the end of the war. Germany – as the warmonger – hesitantly accepted its guilt and took responsibility. The German school textbooks reflect this process by dealing in detail with the war, its victims and its aftermath. Italy, the former German Axis partner, however, is less open to accepting guilt, and therefore stressing the period after Mussolini's downfall. In Russia, the Soviet Union's role – meandering between unscrupulous conquest, forced defense and liberation – is always seen from its end: the glorious victory of the coalition against the German dictator. And in the Czech Republic, Lithuania and Poland, the experience of a 'double occupation' - and especially the postwar period under the Soviets - influences the view of WWII.

## Exhibition topics: How are different themes presented in the school textbooks?

Differences between the countries' perception of WWII, and how each of them has subsequently dealt with the conflict, can be seen when regarding topics such as the Holocaust, the German-Soviet Treaty or the remembrance of the war. They are displayed in the exhibition – and document quite distinctly that the school textbooks actually present "different wars".

## The Holocaust

Even a well-researched and widely discussed topic such as the Holocaust can still be assessed and therefore treated quite differently.

In German school textbooks, the Holocaust and its victims are a central topic. “How could this happen?” is the main question. The texts and documents clearly show the German guilt, in order to awaken in the students a sense of responsibility for the future.

As the Italian military mostly refused to hand over Jews to German authorities, and the deportations to death camps only began after the Italian capitulation in 1943, the Italian tendency is to dissociate itself from the actions. The victim's role is presented much more prominently than the Italian part as an Axis ally, who promulgated racial laws in 1938 and interned Jewish refugees living in Italy in concentration camps from 1940 onwards.

Czech textbooks describe the Holocaust as something that happened ‘somewhere else’, predominantly in Poland, and was an ‘add-on’ to the persecution and suffering of the Czech people.

In Russian textbooks the Holocaust victims are mostly described as part of the Soviet people and not distinguished as a special group.

In Lithuania, the Holocaust is seen in an ambivalent way: the description of the events, its victims and Lithuanians who saved Jews is somewhat undermined with regard to the extent of local participation in the persecution.

The recent Polish school textbooks, which dedicate several pages to the description of the Holocaust, now also try to bring up questions of Polish involvement and introduce new aspects, slightly modifying the story of the heroic Polish nation fighting the German and Soviet aggressors. They describe “smalcownictwo” – the blackmailing of Jews who were in hiding and their betrayal to the Germans, and at the same time show the lack of options for action in a devastated country under German rule. The controversially regarded pogrom of Jedwabne is mentioned in the textbooks, although described as a unique incident.

## The German-Soviet Treaty

The topic of the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Treaty also affects the narratives of each country differently.

For students in Italy and Germany it is described as only one aspect amongst a few that influenced the course of war. German students study it from different points of view and analyse its ‘secret protocols’.

Russian students, however, are mostly taught this pact to be a “forced move” due to Stalin’s fear of being politically isolated. Only two out of the seven studied Russian textbooks mention the fact that the ‘secret protocols’ were classified until the late 1980s, and only one suggests to the students that they should discuss the concealment.

For Lithuania and Poland, the German-Soviet treaty and its ‘secret protocols’ determined the fate of these two countries, and thus the textbooks focus elaborately on the consequences of the pact. The treaty is presented as the point that led to two oppressive and dictatorial regimes.

## The remembrance of WWII

Every country presented in the exhibition has a characteristic culture of remembrance, which is reflected in the school textbooks.

Above all, Poland remembers the courageous Polish soldiers and their tireless fight against the enemy. The existence of their sophisticated ‘Underground State’ is looked back upon with pride and amends the memories of a devastated country. Aspects such as Polish collaboration or Anti-Semitism stay in the background. At the same time, the feeling of having been let down by France and Great Britain in 1939 and having been betrayed in Yalta in 1945 is still present in Poland.

The Czech trauma is the Munich Treaty of 1938, when the fate of the Czech people was decided over their heads. The Czech narrative thus focuses on the heroes and the victims of WWII. The assassination of Reinhard Heydrich by Czech paratroopers is a heroic story that every student knows, and the memorial dedicated to the remembrance of the extermination of the villages Lidice and Ležáky is visited by every Czech.

In Lithuania, the remembrance of the war is somehow divided between the German occupation and the Soviet repressions and deportations. Both countries are seen as aggressors. The end of WWII in 1945 did not bring liberation to this country altogether, because the Soviet occupation continued for another 50 years.

In addition to analytical texts, German textbooks often use a personalised approach by presenting the fates of individual victims. They describe extensively the process of dealing with the Nazi past and give examples of the many commemorative plates or memorials that exist in Germany. The students also learn lessons about authoritarianism and the prevention of violence. “What can we do to prevent this from ever happening again?” – this question guides the narration on the legacy of WWII.

In comparison to Germany, Russia presents its heroic past as an impersonal cult. Human fates get lost in the big picture of the “Great Patriotic War”. There is a strong tendency to impede attempts to introduce differentiated contents and narratives into school textbooks, and instead simplify and regulate the information given out to the students.

In Italy, however, the resistance fighters receive much more attention than ‘mere’ victims. School textbooks do not mention remembrance days or memorials dedicated to the victims of war.

### Avoided aspects

Differences in the presentation of the war can not only be deduced by the aspects that are mentioned in the textbooks, but also by those which are underrepresented or avoided.

Italian school textbooks are rather focused on the events inside Italy than outside its borders. For example, to support the German ally, Italian soldiers were sent to the Soviet Union, and experienced great losses – over 80 000 people died. Some textbooks completely omit the fact, whilst others devote just a few lines to this episode of the war. This also fits better into the picture of the Italian nation overcoming the Fascist and collaborationist regime and fighting on the side of the alliance against Hitler.

Lithuanian textbooks avoid talking about the collaboration with Nazi Germany, whereas collaboration with the Soviet Union is depicted in detail, including the names and photos of those involved.

In Russia, the complicated fate of the whole generation of Soviet forced labourers in Germany (up to 5 million people, who were often treated as traitors after having returned to their homeland) is mentioned in just a few sentences. This kind of concealment is rooted deeply in the Soviet narration about the war, which still tends to exclude groups of victims whose story does not fit into the picture of a heroic and fighting nation.

In contrast to the other countries, German school textbooks consciously omit descriptions of military actions or battles. They do not reflect on German military strategies or name ‘famous’ generals. There are only a few pictures of fighting soldiers or military equipment. Weapons are only shown in connection with human suffering. This attitude relates to Germany’s acceptance of being guilty for WWII, its devastations and victims. As the main educational objective is to understand the reasons for the atrocities committed by Germans, a display of military strength or pride in military leaders – which is common for the textbooks of the countries that fought against Nazi Germany – is neither seen as appropriate nor constructive.

## Against (new) nationalisms – an appeal for openness

The past influences the present – and this applies especially to the impact WWII continues to have on societies and politics worldwide. The political situation in Europe and the world is still shaped by WWII. A ‘historic equipment’ consisting of knowledge of the main facts and perceptions can thus help to understand current political structures, decisions and developments.

A current trend in Russia and some EU countries is the instrumentalisation of history. There is a tendency towards a more national and nationalistic view of the past, instead of a broader, multi-faceted one.

The ‘Uniform History and Cultural Standard’ in Russian history education aims at a regulation of the information given out to students in order to strengthen their ‘patriotism’. WWII history is used as its most powerful vehicle – and not just in history books, but also in the whole political discourse of the last decade.

Similarly, representatives of the new Polish government elected in 2015 have been trying to ‘remodel the past’ in order to depict the country as a noble victim, besieged by enemies both past and present – and therefore suppress the events that do not fit into their current world view and political strategy. The discussion about the Museum of WWII in Gdansk, which is – in the eyes of the new government – too “international”, is just one example for these attempts. These are likely to noticeably influence the new school curriculum of 2017.

The exhibition “Different Wars” tries to counter these developments through multiperspectivity – by presenting different views of history in order to encourage discussions and reach understanding and acceptance.

If we want to develop a framework of a ‘common history’ of Europe and Russia, we need to engage in a dialogue on our respective historical memories. That does not mean that different perceptions of the past should be replaced by one ‘official’ and unchangeable European narrative – history is always a matter of construction and interpretation.

Only by talking about the difficult or uncomfortable topics, and by naming contemporary fears based on past events, can new irritations, misunderstandings and conflicts be avoided. Different narratives and ‘sore spots’ of our neighbouring countries, alongside concealed or reshaped events of the war, should be made known and be open for discussion.

Is a unified European WWII history possible and desirable? Is it possible to reconcile conflicting aspects and diverging views of the historic events? Would it help the common cause to develop integrative methods of history education for all European countries and Russia? These are among the questions the authors were asking themselves while working on the exhibition and the catalogue.

“Different Wars” does not give definite answers to these questions, but tries to initiate a discursive process by presenting the multifaceted dealing with WWII in European and Russian school textbooks. The authors invite you to jointly contemplate the complex and complicated pages of the history of WWII.

# Czech Republic

## Terezie Vávrová

The 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of WWII evoked a wave of lively interest in the wartime events. Since then, historical research projects have provided new insights, a lot of testimonies of witnesses have been recorded, and the wartime events and their aftermaths are actively discussed in Czech politics. In the Czech Republic, the celebrations of the end of war are more than just a reminder of past events. Far more than that, they tell the story of WWII which has a huge impact on Czech society and politics, even up to this day. And what kind of story is this?

For the socialist era the official narrative about the war was composed of German monstrosity, as well as Czech heroes and victims. After the Velvet Revolution, the opposition came up with a very critical narrative where the Czech society had collaborated with the Germans and had assisted guarding prisoners in Nazi camps on Czech territory. This narrative smoothly got its edges ground off and gradually became a story of decent democratic people whose fate was determined by an enemy power.

“Representatives of Czechoslovakia were present in Munich, but they were not invited to take part in the actual negotiations (Kuklík, p. 33-110). The decision to cede parts of the Czechoslovak territory along the country’s borders to Hitler without fighting shattered the society in political as well as moral terms, and is thus essential for the understanding of the course of war events in the Czech lands” (ibid.). The process and the outcome were considered as a betrayal, and were used to account for the apathy of the Czechs during the war, their cooperation with the establishment of the Protectorate, as well as for the expulsion of Sudeten Germans after the war. The behaviour of the Czechs is perceived as rather a dignified way of surviving the Nazi occupation. “Since the army had been disarmed and with regard to the geographic conditions, guerrilla warfare was out of the question; that is why the Czech people relied on their inventiveness, wit, and dexterity, conducting small-scale acts of sabotage that were difficult to be punished. “Work slowly” became a popular slogan” (Válková, p. 36). The Czech efforts were crowned by the extraordinary achievement of Czech paratroopers who assassinated Reinhard Heydrich, the relentless German “Reich Protector”.

Nowadays, this narrative of the persecuted Czech nation is the one that dominates in the textbooks, flanked by the matching facts, dates, key political decisions, and events. Stories which are off of this mainstream are missing. That concerns e.g. accounts of Czech Roma, Czech policemen supervising Nazi concentration camps or foreign forced labourers working under severe conditions for local companies. Students are supposed to passively absorb the presented narrative. The direct work with primary sources is not intended and is thus almost impossible, as the textbooks usually offer only condensed explanatory texts.

It is up to the publishers who want to produce a new textbook which topics they want to include, but the textbook itself always has to be reviewed by the Czech Ministry of Education before an official approval for the use within schools.

# History Education at schools in Czech Republic

Terezie Vávrová

Czech students in grades 6<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> (age 12-15) have 1-2 hours per week of history in class with most schools allotting 2 hours. Secondary school students in grades 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> (age 16-19) have 2 hours of class per week and have the opportunity to take an additional class focused on history.

The content of the curriculum and its expected outputs are outlined in the Educational Programme Framework (EPF). This is – quite recently – based on a new approach of teaching which emphasises key capabilities such as comprehension, problem solving, and understanding the societal context. There is an emphasis on the interaction among the aforementioned educational criteria as well as on the practical application of the knowledge acquired. The EPF defines the expected educational objectives set for all students in each grade. As a result of the EPF, history is not taught just as a cluster of facts and outcomes; the emphasis is rather on questioning. The objective of history education is not to present an unchanging collection of historical knowledge, but to cultivate a historical awareness of the student and thereby preserve the continuity of historical memory, especially for classes that address modern and contemporary history.

The history curriculum is conceptualised in a chronological fashion, which is not very common in other European countries. Students begin with prehistory and move on to the present era. In the higher grades the criteria are higher with regard to understanding history and the developing and changing factors of society, the political system, trade, and economics.

Ultimately, the school bears the main responsibility for history classes. The school decides how best to comply with the guidelines set out in the EFP for history instruction. In compliance with the EFP, schools create their own School Education Plan (SEP) in which they state the objectives for their own curriculum. Teachers are to ensure that students acquire the requested knowledge and capabilities. The SEP clarifies the teachers' tasks and allows them to focus on the main goals of the class.

The teaching approaches depend very much upon the individual teacher. With respect to the teaching of modern history, there is a new emphasis on understanding the different ways of interpreting history. The teaching of 'macro' state history is often juxtaposed against the 'micro' history of communities and families. For students, 'micro' history is always more readily accessible and enables them to see how history has impacted their own families.

History textbooks are published by private publishers on order from the state, reflecting the agreed-upon curriculum. The Ministry of Education determines whether or not the proposed textbooks are in compliance with the goals of education set by the EFP. The director of the school then decides which specific book will be chosen for teaching. Teachers are allowed to use supplementary material along with this approved textbook, provided the additional material is consistent with the EPF.

In the last few decades there has been a distinct change in the design of history textbooks among Western European nations. Expository text has been shortened in favor of more graphics, excerpted historical documents, recounting of firsthand accounts, etc. This approach is only now being reflected in Czech textbooks of history.





Flyer after the Munich Agreement, 1938: Following Nazi Germany's annexation of Czechoslovakian border areas, the territory, renamed "Sudetenland", became part of the Third Reich. Source: Wikimedia

## The Munich Agreement – Czech society traumatised

Events of September 1938 shook the Czech society – both politically and morally. They were perceived as the collapse of the democratic system. Even after the war, the Czech society, affected by six years of occupation, had not coped with the consequences of Munich (Čurda, p. 69).

The Munich Agreement was signed on 30 September 1938 by representatives of Great Britain, France, Italy and Germany, who agreed that Czechoslovakia must cede to Germany portions of Czechoslovak territory along the country's borders populated by Germans. Representatives of Czechoslovakia were present in Munich, but were not invited to take part in the actual negotiations. This is how the "Munich Dictate" is presented to the readers, an event which is essential for understanding the course of the war in Czech lands. The "Munich Dictate", often called simply the "betrayal", is used to account for the apathy of the Czechs during the war. Furthermore, it explains their reconciliation with the establishment of the Protectorate and Czech collaboration, as well as for the expulsion of Sudeten Germans after the war.



Occupation of Sudetenland, 1938: Sudetenland was of immense strategic importance to Czechoslovakia, as most of its border defences and many of its heavy industries were situated there. ©Bundesarchiv\_Bild-183-58507-003



Watching the German troops coming to the city of Eger: The Sudetenland was formerly inhabited mostly by German speakers. © Bundesarchiv\_ Bild\_183-H13160





Munich Agreement —  
the place of negotiations.  
© Bundesarchiv\_  
Bild\_183-H12988



Heydrich's car after  
the assassination  
attempt in Prague.  
Heydrich later died of  
his injuries. Source:  
Wikimedia

## The assassination of Heydrich – a heroic achievement with serious consequences

Reinhard Heydrich, the author of the “Final solution of the Jewish question” and Deputy Reich Protector, is the greatest Nazi demon for the Czechs, next only to Adolf Hitler. Heydrich was assassinated by Czech paratroopers in May 1942 — “one of the most remarkable achievements of the European resistance” (Válková, p. 77). Nevertheless, this action was followed by cruel repression.

“Nazi revenge was inflicted on everyone who had been even slightly suspected in connection with the attempt on Heydrich’s life. Lidice - a village of 500 inhabitants, near Kladno - was surrounded during the night of 10 June 1942 on the order of K. H. Frank <Sudeten German official> on suspicion that they had helped the parachutists. Even though nothing incriminating was found there, all men older than 15 were executed, women were transported to concentration camps and children, excluding those designated for re-education, were poisoned by gas in Poland” (Čurda, p. 82).

## In the Protectorate, the line between collaboration and resistance was razor thin

“In the regime of fear and terror with which Nazis governed occupied lands, a certain level of cooperation and adjustment was essential for survival” (Čurda, p. 79).

Alongside victims of the Nazi occupation there were three groups of people in the Protectorate. A minority of the population were informers and collaborators, motivated by cowardice, opportunism or conviction. However, most people simply tried to survive the occupation by means of passive resistance. Then there was the resistance movement; the army had been disarmed and geographic conditions made a guerrilla war out of the question. Consequently,

“the Czech people relied on their inventiveness and deftly conducted small-scale acts of sabotage that were difficult to punish” (Kuklíkovi, p. 85).



Reinhard Heydrich.  
© Bundesarchiv, Bild 152-50-10/Friedrich Franz Bauer/ CC-BY-SA 3.0



Assassination of Heydrich – special edition of the newspapers, 1942. Source: Wikimedia



Paratroopers Jozef Gabčík and Jan Kubiš. The assassination of Heydrich contributed to the exiled Czechoslovak government being recognised by the Allies, and encouraged the Allies to withdraw their signatures from the Munich Dictate. Source: Wikimedia



The perception of Stalin is a very peculiar one; he is not presented as one of the war heroes although he participated in the war on the side of the Allies. His character is the only one to undergo a fundamental development — first abjured for signing the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, then criticised because of his naivety about Hitler and his cunning when he stopped the Red Army before reaching Warsaw during the 1944 uprising. He is finally described, with mixed feelings, as “a member of the victorious anti-Hitler coalition” and as “the liberator of Central and Eastern Europe” (Kuklíkovi). Source: Wikimedia

Winston Churchill, a surprisingly dominant figure of the Czech textbooks, is described as a “proud and uncompromising politician who had the fate of the whole civilised Europe in his hands” (Kuklíkovi, p. 66). Source: Wikimedia

## Fate of the country decided at the end of the war

“During the war a division of Europe by the Iron Curtain was arranged, and since we fell into the sphere of Eastern influence we should be aware of how this happened” (Válková, p. 33).

At the beginning of the war, the opponents in the conflict were the democratic allies and Hitler’s Germany. In particular, France and Great Britain were initially described in an unflattering way as “slow, wait-and-see democracies that prefer not to interfere because they lack the moral determination, leaving Central Europe at the aggressor’s mercy” (Kvaček, p. 159).

“For Nazi Germany and its allies, the war was clearly one of terror and extermination. These aims, therefore, had characterised the war against them as a fight in the interest of humanity and civilisation, to rescue civic and democratic values. This cannot be changed even by the fact that it was the Soviet Union that became one of the main actors in the anti-Hitler coalition, a country suffering under Stalin’s dictatorship” (Kuklík, p. 110).

This clearly shows the problematic perception of Stalin by the rather anti-communist textbooks and the negative attitude to his figure which originates in the post-war development of Central Europe.



The line between resistance and collaboration is a thin one. General Eliáš, the Protectorate Prime Minister, who collaborated with the Nazis, but at the same time supported the Czech resistance movement and the government in exile. He was executed by the Nazis. Source: Wikimedia

# Germany

## Gudrun Wolff

In Germany, the guidelines for school classes are set by the ministries of the 16 different German Federal States who are responsible for education and curricula. Nevertheless, in society - and thus in school textbooks - there exists a consensus about the fact that Germany is guilty for WWII, as well as for the unbelievable, unheard-of crime of the genocide upon European Jews. The public debate on WWII is about this responsibility for the past and its implications for the present and the future. The central questions are: "How could that happen?" and "What can we do to prevent this from happening again?". The memory of the Nazi atrocities is seen as obligatory, and linked with an appeal to remembrance for the future. Therefore, the main topics treated are the Holocaust and the ideologically based war of annihilation in Eastern Europe, as well as the resistance against Hitler.

WWII is a topic within the teaching unit "The Time of National Socialism". An analysis of the conditions and requirements for the emergence of a dictatorial state, the totalitarian form of the government, the Nazi racial ideology, the systematic marginalization and persecution of Jews, and the economic and foreign policy at the time is therefore preceding the examination of WWII. The genocide of Jews, Sinti, and Roma, as well as the unleashing of WWII shall be recognised as a consequence of the ideology and characteristics of the totalitarian National Socialist regime. The choice of the teaching units within the history curriculum is determined by their relevance for the students' orientation in their (present and future) living environment. The teaching and learning content should address topics that are of importance for humanity at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The dealing with WWII shall evoke a "well-founded reflexion of the own understanding of democracy, especially against the background of cultural diversity. The question on the current responsibility remains permanently relevant when dealing with the National Socialist past" (Kernlehrplan Geschichte Nordrhein-Westfalen).

The curriculum's focus is on teaching methods that stimulate critical analysis, a self-reliant forming of opinions, and an active development of historically founded positions.

# History Education at schools in Germany

Friedrich Huneke

The majority of German students in grades 5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> (age 11-17) have 2 history classes per week. In secondary school grades 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>, students generally have either 2 or 4 classes per week. National Socialism and WWII are subject contents in 10<sup>th</sup> grade for about three months, and in the higher school grades the topics are taught for half a year. The textbook publishers follow the curriculum prescribed by the ministry of education of the particular federal state in which their books have to be approved. The teachers of a school are free in their choice of a textbook. The decision about which textbooks will be adopted for grades 5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> is taken collectively in a departmental meeting of teachers, whereas for the higher grades a teacher is free to make his/her individual choice.

All textbooks seek to have students develop their own capacity to form an independent judgment on the basis of weighing different points of view. For example, the propagandist speech of a “peaceful” Hitler is analysed in contrast to his secret speeches and memoranda. The crimes of the Wehrmacht have to be analysed on the basis of victim testimony. By contrasting different explanations for the rise of Nazism, a student has to come to an independent judgment following their analysis. Three sets of questions in a sequence comprise the teaching method that focuses on developing historical awareness:

- a) “Historical Analysis” involves a methodological exercise of reaching an understanding of facts through the competent use of sources;
- b) “Historical Judgment of a specific case” involves a systematic consideration of available facts to arrive at a judgment about cause and effect. This step requires the examination of controversial interpretations;

- c) “Historical Assessment” is the third step that follows from the above two, requiring knowledge of different points of view and normative categories. The student must learn to analyse these two factors by using historical science methodology. Having done so, the student is now in a position to draw upon the results of historical analyses (a) and judgment of the case (b) as control variables.

The questions and exercises contain verbs, the so called “operators”, which build the skills for these three requirements, that is, to describe and structure (a), to work out the facts and compare (b), to discuss in detail with arguments for and against a thesis, to check (c).

## The crucial question in all German textbooks

“Nazi Germany is a symbol of the horror a modern industrial society is capable of creating. The systematic genocide against the European Jews and the purposeful initiation of WWII cost the lives of more than 50 million people. How was it possible?” (Schöningh, p. 370)

A Wehrmacht firing squad executing Soviet civilians. When German soldiers died during attacks, many more civilians were executed as an act of deterrence.  
© bpk-image

The textbooks present the course of the war in brief facts. The most intense analysis is devoted to the subject of the Holocaust. Beyond that, the textbooks present, analyse and discuss several key topics.

## Ideological war of destruction against the Soviet Union and war crimes

The authors describe the ruthless plunders and racial politics in the occupied territories: All Jews were to be killed and the Slavic population enslaved and expelled.

“Approximately one million Russians and Poles were killed by so-called SS ‘task forces’” (Schöningh, p. 398).

The textbooks teach through historical examples. Students are asked to analyse and evaluate a case of Nazi executions of Soviet citizens and the consequent impact on the Soviet people. The textbooks present materials including Nazi internal directives, military law and Hitler’s speeches which impart the ideological and racist origins behind the brutal acts against civilians. (Klett, p.250–251)



## The Wehrmacht in the war of destruction

After the war, the myth of a “clean” Wehrmacht <German army> was maintained. For war crimes, the Waffen-SS was largely blamed. This legend was destroyed by the “Wehrmacht Exhibition” in the years 1995 and 1999. To demonstrate that the Wehrmacht was not, in fact, “clean”, one textbook uses this example:

“A troop order developed on 6 June 1941 planned to immediately liquidate commissars of the Red Army. That was against international law” (Klett, p. 257).

Schöningh’s textbook describes how it was almost impossible for the regular soldiers to stay innocent in the process of relentless repression of the occupied territories.

“The extent of involvement of the Wehrmacht in the German occupation crimes, however, is still controversial” (Schöningh, p. 398).



Execution. Ukraine, 1942.  
© ullstein bild

## The Battle of Stalingrad: turning point of the war

“The Allies finally prevailed with the defeat of the German Africa Corps in Egypt in November 1942 and the defeat of the sixth Army in Stalingrad in early February 1943” (Klett, p. 257).

In the textbooks the Battle of Stalingrad is perceived and emphasized as a turning point. Hitler’s command to Colonel General Paulus to continue with the fight (“Capitulation is out of the question”) is contrasted with the letter of a Wehrmacht soldier from the Stalingrad “pot” in January 1943. It is the farewell note to his father:

“The vast combat will not take place: Do not seek explanations for the situation from us, but from you and the one who is to blame for it” (Klett, p. 251).

“Thanksgiving” in Northern Germany. Bückeberg, 1937.  
© sz-photo



Maria Matlak, born 1928, prison number 39847, deported to Auschwitz on 2 April 1943.  
© Schöningh 1, p. 370



The soldiers of the defeated 6th Army are taken prisoners by the Soviets. About 5 000 of the 110 000 German prisoners of war returned home. The Nazi leadership kept the prisoners a secret and spread a legend about the heroic soldiers of the 6th Army who sacrificed their lives at Stalingrad. Photo from 1943, photographer unknown. © Picture alliance



Members of the resistance group "White Rose": Hans and Sophie Scholl, Christoph Probst. © akg-images

## Postwar Germany: Collapse and a new beginning in 1945

"Was the end of the war a structural break in German history — a "zero hour"? Was it only a short-term incursion in the long cycles of German history? Or, was 8 May the starting point of a long-standing period of reconstructing collapsed Germany?" (Klett, p. 300).

The authors describe the governmental and moral collapse of Germany as well as the destruction and the misery caused by the war. The crucial themes are the decisions of the Allies at the Yalta and Potsdam Conferences and their implementation as well as the Nuremberg trials and the denazification.

Allied plans for Germany — of the "four D's" — are presented as an opportunity of a new beginning, but also as a way to divide Germany.

"The Potsdam Conference (1945) proclaimed four guiding principles: denazification, demilitarisation, democratisation and decentralisation; [...] However, between the Western Occupying Powers and the Soviet Union was no consensus about the interpretation and implementation of these basic principles" (Klett, p. 410).

The textbooks mention the principal defendants and the number of convictions in the war crimes trial of Nuremberg and other subsequent trials. They are evaluated as an important contribution to informing the German society about the Nazi crimes and to democratization. The success of the denazification measures is critically reviewed.

## Resistance in National Socialist Germany

"The German resistance was a "resistance without people". Its historical relevance lies especially in the courageous and outright commitment to freedom under the most dangerous conditions" (Schöningh 1, p. 400).

The textbooks present and discuss the forms of resistance (Schöningh). They discuss the motivation for resistance and the problem of different resistance concepts (Klett).

The authors describe the best known resistance groups:

- Communist and Socialist parties and the labour movement.
- Military conspiracy: the failed attempt to assassinate Hitler on 20 July 1944, by Stauffenberg became a symbol of the German resistance (Schöningh 1, p. 403).
- The student resistance group "White Rose": in leaflets they denounced the crimes of the Nazis.



Removing the ruins in front of the Reichstag building in Berlin, 14 January 1946. Before the reconstruction could start, ruins had to be removed from the destroyed city. This was done mostly by hand; many women were obliged to take part due to a law issued by the Allied Control Council. © akg-images



The Nuremberg trials held between 20 November 1945 and 1 October 1946. © Bundesarchiv\_ Bild\_183-V01032-3

Territorial provisions of the Potsdam Agreement. As part of the Potsdam Conference, the division of Germany into four zones of occupation was finally regulated. (Potsdam Protocol, paragraph IX.B). Source: Klett, p. 293



# Italy

## Giulia De Florio

Seventy years have passed since the end of WWII and yet a lot of issues still remain to be discussed. Italy had an ambiguous role in the conflict, which is clearly underlined in most of the contemporary school textbooks.

In the textbooks, Italy is of course at the centre of the scene, but great attention is also paid to what happened in other countries: The situations in Germany, Russia, the United States, and Japan are taken into consideration insofar as it is essential for the understanding of the course of the war and its significant turning points.

While the defeat of the Italian army in the previous colonies is just briefly touched on, more pages are devoted to some fundamental events that affected the country during the war, particularly in its final phase, after the armistice of 8 September 1943. The collapse of the Fascist regime, the operations of the resistance, and the final liberation of the country are some of the crucial points the authors focus their attention on.

On the whole, the marginal role of the country in the development of the conflict is constantly emphasised. This affects the whole narration of the war, presented in the textbooks as follows: In the nineteen-thirties Mussolini and a large section of the Italian population were contemplating the idea that Italy could (re)gain a relevant position in the international area. However, the military inefficiency and the need for German backup in most of the battles where Italy was involved as an aggressor made it clear that the country was not able to rule and was forced to ask other world powers for help.

The role and the actions of the Italian resistance are part of a still ongoing debate: In many Italian regions the resistance movement is still celebrated as the heroic uprising of the population against the enemy. Some historians, however, stress the “civil war” aspect of this inner Italian conflict that divided the nation. These divergent views of a praiseworthy revolt versus a conflict where brothers fought against brothers are reflected in the school textbooks.

WWII is therefore seen and felt as a tragedy: “Few events have had such vast and deep consequences on the international order, on the history of each country, on the very psychology of the individual and the masses, as WWII.” (Giardina et.al. 2006, p. 379).

The authors of the textbooks give room for an accurate analysis of many topics related to WWII, and yet a lot of information is still left out: The actions of the Italian army in the colonies, the persecution of minorities, or the role of the women (apart from those who were engaged in the resistance) are given less importance or are totally omitted, in spite of their relevance even for today’s geo-political issues.

# History Education at schools in Italy

Giulia De Florio

Italian students have about 2 hours of history class per week. Students of humanities at the Classic High School (Liceo Classico) are the exception, spending 3 hours per week on geography and history in the first two years and 3 hours per week on history in the last two years.

Since 2000, scholastic institutions that are part of the state educational system have acquired a greater degree of autonomy in terms of administration, organisation, and teaching. Each school is obliged to create a document called “3-year Plan for an Educational Proposal” (PTOF), which represents the education programme the school seeks to implement. At the same time, however, there are general norms and directives that are dictated by the Ministry of Education.

The last year of secondary school (age 18-19) is devoted to the study of contemporary history, beginning with the study of the causes of World War I up to the most recent events. With respect to methodology, in addition to being required to know and critically discuss the most important events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, students are expected to clearly understand the difference between history, historiography and chronicle, between facts that have been thoroughly analysed and facts that have not (yet) been verified. In addition, students are expected to understand that the historic debate is never finished and historical assessments change throughout time.

The topics that cannot be omitted in any class of history during the last year of secondary school are the following: the beginning of society in the Western world; the epoch of Giolitti; World War I and its aftermath; the Russian Revolution and the USSR from Lenin to Stalin; Fascism; the crisis of 1929 and its impact on the United States and on the world; Nazism; the Holocaust and other genocides of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; WWII; Italian history from Fascism to the Resistance and the evolution to the Republican democracy. The framework for teaching the history of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has to address three major eras:

1) The Cold War to the end of the century: the creation of the United Nations; the German question; the division between Western and

Eastern blocs; the period of Khrushchev and Kennedy; the collapse of the Soviet Union; the creation of the European Union; globalization; the technological revolution; and new conflicts in a global world.

2) Decolonisation and the struggle for development in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America; the new State of Israel and the Palestinian conflict; the resurgence of China and India as world competitors; the conflict in Vietnam.

3) The history of Italy since the end of WWII: the economic boom; the reforms of the sixties and seventies; terrorism; “Tangentopoli” (a corruption scandal involving government ministers, industrialists and businessmen); and the crisis of the political system in the nineties.

An interdisciplinary approach has become more and more important with an emphasis on analysing subjects in conjunction with others, such as sociology, literature, biology, etc. Italy does not have a specific, mandated way of teaching. Teaching depends on the teacher. These days, teachers no longer just lecture in front of the class, but integrate different materials in the analysis of various topics from different points of view. This is further complemented with trips to historically important sites, videos and movies, or L.I.M. (Multimedia interactive desk) – a tool to visualise texts or elaborate conceptual maps. Another useful method is the oral narration of recent historic facts – videos and documentaries which can be found online or the accounts of the grandparents of the students who can share their personal history with the new generation.

The textbooks themselves have been changing in the last few years. Facts are written about in a more engaging style; analyses include images, documents, original sources, boxes with keywords, and important concepts. Usually the textbooks place the analysis of works of art and films along with the explanation and narration of events. The approach is both across time and one point in time, underscoring the importance of placing historical facts in the correct sequence and at the same time to see them as related and interconnected.

## Fascism in Italy – from collaboration to resistance

At the outbreak of the war, Italy held a position of neutrality, but had secretly confirmed an alliance with Germany. Mussolini joined the war in June 1940. In July 1943, the Fascist regime collapsed and Mussolini was arrested. On 3 September 1943, the Italian government capitulated. In southern Italy the King and the antifascist parties collaborated with the Allies; in the north, the fascist Repubblica di Salò became a satellite state of Germany. Towards the end of war Italy was a secondary front. On 25 April 1945, the National Liberation Committee (Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale, CLN) ordered a general revolt against the retreating enemy. Mussolini was captured and shot by partisans.



Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler. © USHMM Photograph #89908

## The strategy of a “parallel war” failed

After the declaration of war Mussolini tried to develop an independent strategy (the so-called “Guerra parallela”), hoping to maintain some autonomy from Germany. The catastrophic results (Italy was unable to defeat the Greeks and had to abandon its eastern part of Libya in 1940–41) showed Italy’s military weakness.

From 1941 Italy had to abandon the “parallel war”. In the spring of 1941, Italy collaborated with Germany in the attack on Yugoslavia. German armed forces became the backbone of the Axis army in northern Africa.

“Mussolini had to accept the help of the German army [...]. The failure of the Italian initiatives in the Balkans facilitated the massive intervention of Germany as well” (Giardina, p. 357).

The Italian army was sent to Russia in order to maintain the military prestige of the country but it suffered great casualties (1942–43). Since this Russian “episode” played an important role in Italian collective memory, its absence in the narration of the textbooks is striking.

## Racism was a part of the Fascist ideology

In the Italian collective memory there has always been the myth of the “good Italian people”. That stands in striking contrast to the violence and massacres perpetrated by the Italian army in its colonies and to the aggressive behaviour of the Fascist government towards national and other minorities in the interwar period. But this is very rarely mentioned in Italian textbooks, with some providing only minimal information.

Banti describes how the Italian popular propaganda imagery in Ethiopia was charged with sexual allusions:

“Evidence of this is shown in the song *Faccetta nera* (Little Black Face), a very famous song at that time, which invited the Ethiopian girls to wait for the arrival of the white ‘liberators’” (p. 417).

In 1938 Italy joined Germany in creating their own anti-Jewish laws. On 13 July 1938 the *Manifesto della razza* was published, “a document approved by the Ministry of Popular Culture and signed by Fascist scholars and professors of the Italian universities [...] It openly declared that Jews did not belong to the Italian race” (Banti, p. 417).





## Italian war crimes are partly ignored

In April 1941, Italy occupied the middle-southern part of Slovenia, the coast of Dalmatia and Montenegro.

“Since 1941, Italian police and military forces had been combing the territory in Greece and Yugoslavia, executing civilians suspected of supporting partisans, carrying out aggressive campaigns and bombing whole villages that, as a result, were ultimately destroyed”

(Banti, p. 455).

The Italian public is barely aware of these facts. However the Foibe — karst sinkholes where the Yugoslav communist partisans killed Fascists, collaborationists and opponents of the new communist power at the end of the war — have received a lot of attention in recent years.



Mario Roatta, the Italian general responsible for cruel and repressive actions in Yugoslavia. Source: Wikimedia

## The significance of the Resistance movement is disputable

The impact of the Resistance is still controversial in Italian historiography. Some historians suggest that it should be called “civil war”, “patriotic war” or “class war” since Italian partisans were fighting against Italian Fascists.

The importance of the Resistance is stressed or diminished in accordance with the general political views on a given period and consequently with the tendency to underline or omit certain facts:

“From a military point of view the impact of partisan actions was not crucial, but it doubtlessly was a nuisance for Nazi-Fascist troops. Moreover it constituted an important element of political legitimation for the CLN and for their government; it could be seen as the political projection of a popular rebellion, though it was clear that the majority of the population, in central and northern Italy, kept an attitude of fearful patience without openly siding with either the partisans or the Fascists” (Banti, p. 464).



The High Command of Freedom Volunteer Corps (Corpo Volontari della Libertà, CVL) marches in Milan, 6 May 1945. © Insmli, fondo Venanzi, serie 26, doc 39

## The end of Fascism: Italy split in two

The Anglo-American landing in Sicily marked the end of the Fascist regime.

“The news about the collapse of regime is met with enthusiasm: many men and women think that it is the prelude to the end of the war. [...] Badoglio’s government, on the one hand, declares its commitment to Mussolini’s ideals, on the other it starts secret negotiations with the Anglo-Americans [...]. Negotiations bring an armistice, signed on 3 September 1943, but announced five days later, on 8 September” (Banti, p. 458).

Meanwhile German troops occupied the middle-northern part of Italy. The King and the government abandoned Rome and escaped to the South; the Italian army, left without command, disbanded.



The 43 martyrs of Fondotoce. Lakefront in Verbania, 20 June 1944. Source: Wikimedia

# Lithuania

**Kristina Smolijanovaitė**

The research for the exhibition “Different Wars” concentrated on the history textbooks for the 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Renewed Lithuanian school textbooks as published from 2011 as part of the national General Programmes of Secondary Education were consulted, as well as the most popular textbooks currently used at secondary schools; the latter were chosen from various publishing houses to have a more thorough overview. Lithuanian history teachers prepare their classes based on the General Programmes issued by the government, and in agreement with their school’s administration. During the school year, they can include excursions to places relevant to historical events (Bitautas, p. 111-144).

In Lithuanian secondary school textbooks, a lot of attention is given to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact as well as to the Soviet predatory goals. The textbooks contain many caricatures on the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, where both Stalin and Hitler are shown as aggressors. “It may seem that this [the defeat of the Germans] was the victory of democratic forces over dictatorial aggressors. But the victory was mostly dictated by the Stalinist Soviet Union which before and at the beginning of the war had no less predatory goals than A. Hitler’s Germany” (Tamošaitis, p. 205-206).

The presentation of the Holocaust in the textbooks is quite distinctive. Tamošaitis’ textbook provides reasons for the Holocaust which lead to the conclusion that the Lithuanian people did not determine the tragic fate of Jews:

- a) the presence of a criminal element;
- b) revenge for crimes during the first years of the Soviet occupation;
- c) contradicting geopolitical interests of Jewish and non-Jewish Lithuanians (supporting either the Soviet Union or Germany);
- d) anti-Semitism which had grown due to the conditions of the war and the Nazi occupation;
- e) fascist and Nazi ideas which had become especially strong before the war. It is important to stress that it was not the locals who determined the tragic fate of the Jews. Nazi Germany is to blame for the war” (Tamošaitis, p. 188).

In Lithuania, it is still seen as painful to remember the Holocaust, and the question of local involvement in the crimes is an ongoing issue. The national and official political line is that of a self-victimisation that denies a historical responsibility and the participation in the Holocaust. Reinhard Koselleck explains this tactic: “If all are victims, there are no perpetrators” (p. 213-222, 216).

The authors of the Lithuanian textbooks have their difficulties with the question of collaboration. Lithuanians who cooperated with the Soviets are openly named collaborators. The textbooks present many illustrations and give the names of the ‘traitors’. Collaboration with the Nazis is presented in a more reluctant, indirect, or even apologetic way.

In the Lithuanian textbooks, both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union are presented as aggressors. While for some countries the end of WWII was a liberation from the Nazi occupation and aggression, for the Baltic countries it meant the annexation to the Soviet Union for the next 50 years. Therefore, the remembrance of WWII beyond Nazi Germany’s crimes is heavily focused on the Soviet deportations and mass executions, which were disastrous for the Baltic states. “The Soviet genocide takes a central place in Lithuanian national memory: the Museum of Genocide Victims dedicated to the Lithuanians who suffered and to the Soviet perpetration is the most important and best developed political and educational institution of the country” (Makhotina, Die Unsrigen - Die Holocaustdebatte in Litauen, available at: <https://erinnerung.hypothesen.org/671>).

# History Education at schools in Lithuania

Algis Bitautas

In Lithuanian schools, since the 1992-93 academic year, the subject of WWII is taught to students three times: in the 5<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade, from age 10-11 to age 17-18. Taking into consideration that the 5<sup>th</sup> grade level is introductory, this brief summary of history education in Lithuania will focus on history textbooks for the 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade. History lessons are usually twice a week. In secondary school grades 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>, the quantity depends on the level (enhanced A or standard B): Students select the number of history classes, which range from 2 to 4 classes per week.

Education is regulated by the General Programmes of Elementary and Basic Education for the secondary school grades 5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>, which were approved by the Ministry of Education and Science in 2008. The General Programmes of Secondary Education for the secondary school grades 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> were revised and adopted by the Ministry of Education and Science in 2011.

The standard set by the General Programmes of Elementary and Basic Education expects students to acquire knowledge and analytic skills in order to be able to determine the reasons and characteristic features of WWII; to formulate their own views on the crimes against humanity that were committed during WWII; to compare the Soviet and Nazi occupation of Lithuania during WWII; and to develop their own understanding of these crimes, especially the Holocaust.

The history courses in secondary school place an emphasis on the Soviet and Nazi crimes committed during WWII, in particular the Holocaust and Stalin's deportations. Students are expected to be able to describe the international situation on the eve of WWII; to be able to analyse the influence of WWII on states and societies; and to formulate their view on the Soviet and Nazi occupation of Lithuania and the impact on the Lithuanian society.

Each Lithuanian history textbook has a separate chapter dedicated to WWII, but the books vary in terms of how many other topics are covered. In addition to a careful study of the causes and context of WWII, most of the textbooks also address the first Soviet occupation of Lithuania, as well as life in Lithuania under German occupation and the crimes committed against humanity. In general, the narrative in the history textbooks is dominated by the struggles and sufferings of the Lithuanian people.

Exhibition material →

## Trapped between failing western democracies and communist expansion

Lithuanian school textbooks have varied in their focus of attention when describing the beginning of WWII. Numerous causes have been identified: the deterioration of international relations in the 1930s, aggressive policies resulting from rising fascist movements and the predatory goals of the Soviet Union. In some textbooks the blame for the war is not only attributed to the “aggressors”, but also to the western countries.

“In the second half of the fourth decade the democratic states of the West adhered to the attitude which is known as the politics of “appeasement”. Its essence is an indulgence towards Germany led by Hitler in the hope that this would stop the expansion of communism in Europe and would become a counterbalance against the Soviet Union. To Western states, communism appeared a bigger evil than National Socialism” (12<sup>th</sup> grade textbook by Navickas, Svarauskas, p. 79).

## Lithuania’s reaction to the 1940 occupation — cowardice, helplessness or pragmatism?

President Smetona’s behaviour in the wake of the Soviet occupation is presented in a critical manner.

“On 15 June President Smetona, having temporarily transferred the presidential powers to Prime Minister Merkys, escaped with his family to Germany without warning the people about the imminent danger. The same evening Soviet troops crossed the Lithuanian border and soon seized control over the country’s territory” (10<sup>th</sup> grade textbook Tamošaitis, p. 154).

The Bakonis textbook presents a poem about the disappointment of the Lithuanian people, who felt betrayed by their former president and the Soviets:

“Although we all have promised to die for our Motherland, We have broken our promises” (p. 81).

On the same page the authors reflect that the previous compliant politics of the government can be acknowledged as reasonable under the conditions Lithuania lived in 1939-40. Students are asked to reflect on these two interpretations.



Soviet Lithuanian satirical magazine cover “After 15 June”: A Street cleaner sweeps away Lithuanian patriots. Source: 10<sup>th</sup> grade textbook Tamošaitis, p. 160



In this pit in Paneriai near Vilnius inmates were forced to burn and dig graves for Lithuanian and Polish Jews murdered by the Nazis. Source: 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbook Tamošaitis, p. 189

## Antisemitism – still a sensitive topic

The persecution of the Jewish population is often evasively described as ‘the Jewish tragedy’. Although the Lithuanian Activists’ Front (Lietuvos Akyvistų Frontas, LAF) had an explicit anti-Semitic programme, only Tamošaitis’s textbook identifies them as anti-Semitic. To quote one passage:

“Therefore the Lithuanian Jews have to bear responsibility for the attempts to diminish the Lithuanian people’s culture. [...] until their fate is finally decided they should be immediately brought into camps for forced labour so that they don’t eat our bread but at least in some way participate in restoring what the fathers of the red spirit have destroyed using them as their tools” (p. 187, excerpt from “To Clean the Lithuanian Nation from Fungus”, issued in Kaunas by the LAF on 5 July 1941).

On the other hand the textbooks also emphasise that there were people who saved Jews.



A “Righteous Among the Nations”: Ona Šimaitė organised help for the children from the Vilnius ghetto; she provided them with food, medicine and forged documents (10<sup>th</sup> grade textbook Kapleris et al., p. 118). © Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania



The priest Bronius Paukštys, a “Righteous Among the Nations”. During the war he saved 150 prisoners from the Kaunas ghetto. Later, the priest was arrested by the Soviets who occupied Lithuania and sent to a Siberian camp. © Yad Vashem

## Collaboration — only half a story told

Lithuanians who cooperated with the Soviets are openly named collaborators. The textbooks present many illustrations and give the names of the ‘traitors’.

“The puppet government led by the journalist Justas Paleckis has become the state’s grave digger” (10<sup>th</sup> grade textbook Kapleris et al., p. 109).

Collaboration with the Nazis is presented in a more reluctant, indirect or even apologetic way.

“Although the [Provisional Lithuanian] government had adopted some discriminating decrees, it still was not a German collaborationist. It first of all protected Lithuania’s interest” (12<sup>th</sup> grade textbook Navickas, Svarauskas, p. 101).

During the Nazi occupation, the first General Advisor General Petras Kubiliūnas signed several decrees on the forced mobilisation of men for the German army. But his name is only mentioned in textbooks by Tamošaitis and Navickas.



Acting president Justas Paleckis, often referred to as the “Soviet puppet” (left) and Vladimir Dekanozov in Moscow. 3 August 1940. Source: 10<sup>th</sup> grade textbook Tamošaitis, p. 159



Theodor Adrian von Renteln and Petras Kubiliūnas in Kaunas, 1943. © Lithuanian Central State Archive



Lithuanians on Liberty Avenue communicate with Wehrmacht soldiers. Source: 10<sup>th</sup> grade textbook Kapleris et al., p. 111



Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact through the eyes of the caricaturist, 1939. Source: 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbook Tamošaitis, p. 8

## The Second World War in a global dimension

In the Lithuanian textbooks, attention is given to Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact as well as the Soviet predatory goals. In this regard, Nazi Germany and the communist Soviet Union are identified as the countries that started WWII, whereas Japan and its aggressive politics are not even mentioned or referred to very briefly.

## Different anti-Nazi resistance organisations

In the textbooks different weight is placed on the various anti-Nazi resistance organisations. Only Tamošaitis's 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbook gives a detailed description of the Lithuanian Freedom Army. In contrast to this, all the textbooks give detailed description of the three main organisations.

Only in the Kapleris et al. textbook for the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, the Lithuanian-Polish conflict is depicted in more detail.

“Armed clashes of the Armija Krajowa with Lithuanian police battalions and the local squadron had begun, which mostly affected the peaceful local residents. Using the tactic of “divide and rule” the Nazis pitted nations against one another, instigating Lithuanians and Poles to fight” (p. 114).

### The main underground organisations in Lithuania



#### VLIK — Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania

Goal: resistance using peaceful means.



#### Armija Krajowa

Goal: armed resistance to both the Nazis and the Lithuanian “puppet”-government; to restore Poland’s pre-war borders.



#### Soviet partisans

Goal: armed resistance to both Nazis and the Lithuanian government to restore the Soviet rule.

# Poland

Alicja Wancerz-Gluza

Polish teachers are allowed to freely choose the textbook for their classes from a pool of officially approved schoolbooks. The three books chosen for closer examination for the exhibition “Different Wars” are amongst the most popular history textbooks published after 2009 in Poland. The timing is very important in this case, as during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the whole system of education in Poland underwent a radical reform. The changes especially concerned the teaching of history, and were initiated and accompanied by discussions about the role of history itself within the contemporary Polish society. Polish media were full of emotional discussions over interpretations of the past. WWII was in the centre of the debates, as it is the crucial event for the Polish historical memory and identity. Among other topics, the following were particularly discussed: the significance of the Warsaw Uprising; the attitude of the Polish people towards the Holocaust; the compensation for losing Vilnius and Lviv – the so-called “Eastern Borderlands”; the expulsion of ethnic Germans; the Volhynia Massacre of 1943 where Ukrainian nationalists killed tens of thousands of ethnic Poles; and the Polish-Ukrainian relations before and after WWII.

These debates and changes of the curriculum could take part, however, only after the transformation of 1989. The fall of the communist system enabled the process of dealing with the history of the last 55 years and filling in the blanks. Topics that had so far not been part of the official teaching programmes were added to the school curriculum: the Soviet aggression on 17 September 1939 (as a consequence of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact); the Soviet occupation of Poland with its massive deportations; the gulags; and most of all, the “Katyn” massacre of 1940, where more than 20 000 Polish soldiers, officers, and generals were shot by members of the Soviet NKVD and buried in anonymous, collective graves. Since 1989, the subject of the two aggressors – Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union – attacking Poland in September 1939 and the comparison of the two occupations has become compulsory in Polish schoolbooks. The most dominant topics presented are: the war crimes and the death of 6 million people; the devastation of the country; ‘exterminated’ villages and executions; as well as the biggest genocide ever – the Holocaust. The narration included the picture of heroic and courageous Polish soldiers

fighting alone (betrayed by the French and English in 1939, then again by the Allies in Tehran and Yalta in 1944-45), but able to create an Underground State on the occupied territory of Poland with its own army. The image presented was that of a Polish nation that could be proud of the common resistance and the fact that it had not collaborated with the enemy.

In 2000, a book was published that forced the Polish public to question this narration. ‘Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland’ (Jan T. Gross) gave the account of the murder of Jewish Poles killed by their Polish neighbours. The book stirred up the collective view of history and evoked fervid discussions over the German involvement in the crime, the number of victims and the reasons for the crime, culminating in questions about Polish anti-Semitism. The textbooks examined for the exhibition contain information on the Jedwabne case and the re-evaluation of the Polish attitude towards the Holocaust that took place after the publication.

The question if there was more reluctance and indifference towards Jews or compassion and help, or maybe just pure powerlessness, has become the benchmark in a conflict that divides society, politics, and historical science. The dividing line is between ‘criticism’ and ‘independent views’ on the one side, and ‘patriotism’ and defence of the ‘national honour’ on the other. Different arguments are raised in this dispute – from the number of Yad Vashem trees (Poland has the largest number of citizens recognised as Righteous Among the Nations – 6 620) to the fact that Poland was the only country where capital punishment was enforced for any kind of help offered to Jews, executed in a form of collective responsibility (including family members or even the whole community of a village).

Due to the upcoming changes in the educational system, announced by the new Polish government at the end of 2015, it can be presumed that the textbooks examined in the exhibition “Different Wars” are the last ones so openly dealing with the difficult, complicated, and not always heroic past of the Polish society during WWII. And even though the current schoolbooks are not perfect, they present history in a way that allows critical analysis by both teachers and students.

# History Education at schools in Poland

Sylwia Bobryk

Since the reform of 2008, Polish students learn history first in primary school, then in lower-secondary school called *gimnazjum*, and again in high school.

In primary school, students have a subject called 'History and Society', which is an introductory history class that introduces basic facts about the war, the Soviet and Nazi occupations, the fate of various nationalities and groups of people, including the Jews, the resistance, and the Warsaw Uprising. Students have one hour of history class per week.

In the *gimnazjum* and in the first year of high school, students take a chronological history class for about two hours per week. In the *gimnazjum*, students learn about history through the year 1918. When entering high school, students choose between two different levels. They can learn at a basic or an advanced level. At both levels they are expected to be able to understand and use historical chronology, analyse and interpret historical events, and construct narratives about historical processes.

If they choose the basic level, as most students do, in the first year they continue the chronological course started in the *gimnazjum*, covering the period from 1918 to the present. In the second year students no longer learn history in a chronological way and instead have a subject called 'History and Society' which they study for approximately two hours per week. History is taught thematically, and teachers choose three out of eight proposed themes. It is obligatory to teach the topic 'National Pantheon, National Disputes'.

The curriculum for the basic level divides the content on WWII into world and Polish history. Students are expected to understand the bigger context: the causes of the war, the Holocaust, and the conferences in Yalta, Potsdam, and Tehran. They should also be able to describe the Polish situation, compare the Soviet and Nazi occupations, and explain the Polish and Jewish resistance as well as the the politics of the Allies towards Poland. Each teacher decides on the number of hours devoted to teaching world and

national history, but it is required that students learn what is mandated in the curriculum.

Textbooks for the basic level are also divided into Polish and world history. Some textbook authors use separate chapters to address them. Between 50 and 100 pages are dedicated to WWII. This means that the war, in an average textbook covering the period from 1918 to the present, accounts for about 45 per cent of the content. The curriculum specifies clearly what topics should be addressed, but textbook authors can present various opinions and debates on controversial topics, such as the Jedwabne massacre or the Warsaw Uprising.

If students choose to continue at an advanced level, they undertake the chronological course from antiquity to the twentieth century in the last year of high school. The course aims to prepare students for the *Matura* exam, leading to the study of humanities at college level. At this level, students in their second and third year of study have about four hours of history per week.

## The Polish September Campaign of 1939 — alone against two invaders

Germany attacked Poland on 1 September without prior declaration of war. Poland's allies — Great Britain and France — eventually declared war on Germany on 3 September but did not immediately start military operations. On 17 September the Soviet Army crossed Poland's eastern border, thus fulfilling the terms of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Textbooks contain only indirect references to Poland's desperate situation — the shock from the treachery and the feeling of isolation.

“On 31 August, German Secret Police (SD) functionaries, dressed in Polish uniforms, captured a radio station and broadcast a speech urging an anti-German revolt [...]. This event came to be known as the ‘Gliwice Provocation’ and provided Hitler with a pretext for military action” (Roszak, Kłaczekow, p. 124).



Border barrier being dismantled by Wehrmacht soldiers on 1 September 1939. Source: Wikimedia



Polish propaganda poster — calling for the fight with the German aggressor. "Wara!" means a menacing "Away!" © Archive of KARTA Centre (First illustration)

Soviet propaganda poster. After the entry of Soviet troops to Poland on 17 September 1939 propaganda for the liberation of the oppressed Ukrainian and Belorussian peasants intensified: "Our army is an army that frees the workers", signed "J. Stalin". © Archive of KARTA Centre (Second illustration)

"The Soviet attack came as a surprise to Poland's civil and military authorities. The Commander-in-Chief issued a directive forbidding action against the Soviets unless they tried to disarm Polish units. This decision, as well as the failure to officially recognise the USSR as an aggressor, proved to be a major political blunder. [...] Gen. Władysław Langner, commanding the defence of Lviv against the German attack, surrendered to the Soviets, who guaranteed that prisoner-of-war rights would be respected, and he gave the city into 'Slavonic' hands. [...] As soon as the city was occupied, a considerable number of policemen were murdered, and members of the military were sent to prisoner-of-war camps" (Roszak, Kłaczkow, p. 127).

## Similarities and differences between German and Soviet repressive tactics

Wide-ranging descriptions of repressive methods meted out against Polish citizens in territories occupied by Hitler and Stalin often appear under the joint title "Polish lands under two occupations." There are frequent accounts of similar methods applied by both occupying forces. Differences in the scale of the repressions are also shown, together with those resulting from underlying ideologies and aims.

"The Soviet occupants applied methods which had proved successful during the Revolution. They inflamed the age-old class and ethnic conflicts and made use of them to destroy the existing order. They encouraged looting and revenge, set up the poor against the rich, small-holders against landowners, and Ukrainians, Belorussians and Jews against the Polish people" (Stola, p. 51).

"The Germans introduced the death sentence for all attempts to help Jews, prisoners-of-war, escapees from camps and prisons, and members of the resistance movement. [...] In territories occupied by the USSR, NKVD <secret police> functionaries were as brutal as the Gestapo. In the autumn of 1939, a wave of arrests took place. The arrested Poles were sent to forced labour camps, detained in prisons or murdered" (Roszak, Kłaczkow, p. 194).

## The Polish Underground State — a unique resistance movement

Poland was conquered but, despite the declarations of the occupying forces, it did not cease to exist. By 30 September 1939 a government-in-exile was formed and work began on the creation of the Polish Armed Forces. The uniqueness of the Polish Underground State, however, laid in its military, political and civil administration structures. Delegates, responsible to the Government Delegate for Poland, had their own underground resistance departments — equivalent to pre-war ministries. The Underground Army known as the *Armia Krajowa* (literally: 'Home Army', or 'AK Underground Army') — was the most numerous underground organisation in the world. By the end of the war it had more than 400 000 sworn members.

“The resistance movement set up by the Polish people and subject to the [Polish] government in London, was responsible for almost all aspects of public life. Apart from the battle against the occupying forces, sabotage operations, propaganda and intelligence programmes, there were also underground courts which could sentence traitors or German functionaries. Court orders were published in the underground press, and sentences were carried out by special units of the underground army. Entirely unique in Europe was the underground press which included not only journals of a political nature but also military journals, women's magazines, and literary and satirical publications. In the territory of the 'General Government' there were over 2 000 clandestine high schools, as well as institutions of higher education, teaching some 10 000 secret students during the war” (Roszak, Kłaczkow, p. 190).



Katyń, 1943: Exhumation of a mass grave of Polish officers murdered by the Soviets in April 1940. Source: Wikimedia



The German occupation in Poland. German soldiers are strip-searching a group of men. © Polish Institute and Museum of gen. Sikorski in London







“Families looking for the bodies of their relatives among the victims murdered by the troops of the UPA and Ukrainian peasants in Volyn”. Source: Wikimedia

## The Ukrainian-Polish “war within a war”

Taking advantage of the defeat of the 2nd Polish Republic, the Ukrainians attempted to establish their own independent state — without national minorities. The greatest stumbling block in the realisation of the Ukrainian nationalist goals were the Poles, living in the territories of today’s western Ukraine.

“In 1943, the UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army) began an ‘anti-Polish’ campaign, with an objective to cleanse the disputed areas of Volyn and Eastern Galicia of Poles. This was a genocidal operation: Ukrainian units attacked Polish villages, torching them and mercilessly murdering men, women and children. Approximately 100 000 Poles lost their lives, a further 300 000 fled the area. The UPA operation caused a civil war — a Polish-Ukrainian “war-within-a-war”: Revenge actions by armed Polish units also affected innocent Ukrainian civilians” (Stola, p. 70).

“Polish self-defence and revenge actions by the AK Underground Army contributed to the deaths of several thousand Ukrainians. Some of them, however, died at the hands of the UPA, mostly as a punishment for giving shelter to Polish Neighbours” (Roszak, Kłaczekow, p. 199).

# Russia

## Nikita Lomakin

WWII is one of the most key events in Russian history. There is not a single family in the country that was not affected by the war or by events directly connected to it. The total fatalities – more than 26 million people dead – constituted about 13% of the population of the country in 1941 – every seventh person died. Millions of civilians were forced to flee their homes and were evacuated, almost three million people were deported by the Soviet regime, while between three to five million people were brought into the Third Reich as forced labourers. Ten million people found themselves within the territory of a cruel occupation regime with a continuous guerrilla war under way, and the Germans pursuing their genocide policy in occupied cities. The main topic of frontline journals and memoirs of soldiers behind the lines is the survival in extreme circumstances. The war and its consequences raised a lot of ethical and existential issues that determined the development of the Russian society, politics, and culture for the next several decades.

The dimension and importance of the war for the Soviet Union therefore turned its memory almost inevitably into a part of state ideology. From the early post-war period the authorities strictly filtered the information published on the twists of foreign policy (hiding, for instance, secret agreements with Hitler within the framework of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact). From the mid-1960s on, the “Cult of the Victory” has been dominating the official memory, thus blocking the memory of the victims and the burdens of the wartime. The victory unites everybody and justifies everything – the mistakes of the military commanders, the sufferings of the ordinary people, the crimes of the Communist regime.

The narrative shaped in this spirit determined the content of the history schoolbooks, as well. With insignificant changes, it still dominates the way how the history of WWII is presented in modern Russian textbooks. Eventually released archival records and new topics slightly changed the general outline of the history of war, but these changes are not of a fundamental nature. The main features of this narrative are the following:

- The domination of the “big” history over personal fates of people;
- The dominance of authors’ speech over sources – history is rather told than records being analysed;
- The stories of the war victims are subordinate to the stories of “glorious” victories of the army. A soldier’s death in a battle is in the first instance perceived and portrayed as a heroic deed committed for the fatherland;
- The effort to avoid complicated topics: collaboration and its preconditions, everyday life in the occupied territories, interethnic relations, crimes of soldiers in liberated territories;
- The ambiguous attitude towards the events concealed by the authorities up to the end of the Soviet Union (the secret protocol of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the execution of Polish prisoners of war), and towards the actions of the USSR between 1939 and 1941 on the whole;
- The ambivalent approach regarding Stalin’s internal policy: the repressions in the army, the deportations, the oppressive legislation concerning the general public.

The aspiration to glorify the Soviet past determines the main idea of this narrative: that the USSR played a crucial role in fighting and finally defeating Nazism. The relations with other countries and nations and their respective fates during WWII are not seen as that important, and are thus not considered as significant for the narrative of Soviet and Russian history and its presentation in schools. In this respect the exhibition “Different Wars” is an important step – it allows to look at the war from different points of view.

# History Education at schools in Russia

## Nikita Lomakin

Russian students study history from grades 5<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> (age 10-11 to 17-18). History classes focus on both Russian history and World history. Students usually have two lessons a week.

Students study the history of WWII from both the Russian and world perspective. While teaching, teachers use both Russian history and World history textbooks intermittently. Russian history textbooks focus mainly on the Great Patriotic War (1941-45). The events of 1939-41 are included in the chapter about the 1930s under Stalin.

WWII is studied in depth by students in 9<sup>th</sup> grade (age 15-16) and 11<sup>th</sup> grade (age 17-18). Teachers can decide how many lessons they will devote to the history of WWII. Based on the curricula published online, most teachers assign approximately the same number of lessons: 8 in 9<sup>th</sup> grade and 7-8 in 11<sup>th</sup> grade.

The State Educational Standard for History (adopted on 5 March 2004, restated on 23 June 2015) requires that students acquire an understanding of WWII. The requirements are of a general nature, which include: an understanding of the reasons for the war; the participants in the war; the stages of the war, and the outcomes; knowledge of the anti-Hitler coalition; and the major leaders during this time, such as Franklin D. Roosevelt, J. V. Stalin and W. Churchill. Students are also required to know about the German 'New Order of Europe' which the Nazis sought to impose on the territories they occupied. Likewise students are to have knowledge of the Nazi genocide policy, the Holocaust, and the various examples of civilian resistance.

Secondly, students are expected to understand the role of the USSR in WWII, or as it is referred to in Russia, 'The Great Patriotic War' (1941-45). This includes knowledge of the different stages of engagement, and the major battles, such as: the battle of Moscow; the battles of Stalingrad; and Kursk - which were crucial turning points in the war. Students are to understand the contribution of the USSR to the liberation of Europe and the role of Soviet General Georgiy Zhukov. Knowledge of the Soviet rear position during the war is required as well as that of the guerrilla

movement, and of the role of the USSR in the anti-Hitler coalition. Students are to understand the outcomes of the war from the Soviet perspective. The State Educational Standard for History outlines objectives for learning history. These include:

- 1) the development of patriotism, respect for the history and traditions of the Motherland, for human rights and freedom, and the democratic principles in public life;
- 2) the development of values while learning about the historically formed cultural, religious, and ethnic traditions of the nation;
- 3) the skills for historical analysis, including working with different sources of historical information.

The quality of teaching history and the material used depend almost completely on the teacher, who may choose one of several officially approved history textbooks, which vary significantly. The list of history textbooks for grade 11 approved by the Ministry of Education for 2013-14 includes 19 titles.

At present, the 'Uniform History and Cultural Standard' is being discussed. This Standard is aimed at regulating the information that should be included in textbooks. One of the requirements in the writing of history is to 'fight the perversion of history'.

## Molotov- Ribbentrop Pact: opinions diverge

“Modern historians believe that the treaty of 23 August 1939 is easy to understand once we accept the assumption that Stalin wanted to avoid the Munich situation of 1938, when the USSR got excluded from world politics” (Kiselyov, Popov, p. 126).



The signing of the Molotov-  
Ribbentrop pact. Source:  
12<sup>th</sup> grade textbook  
Tamošaitis, p. 137

“The USSR’s policy in the spring-summer of 1939 remains a subject of intense debate among Russian history specialists, who still have not agreed upon a unified position on the issue.” (Zagladin, Kozlenko, p. 210–211).

“The Kremlin dictator was exerting every effort to assure the Nazi leadership of that [that their eastern border was secure]. The German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty from 28 September 1939 as well as several trade agreements served the same purpose: they provided extra-large supplies of strategic raw materials and provisions to Germany, and facilitated naval operations under the guise of neutrality.” (Levandovsky, Schetinov, p. 182).



The textbooks use the word “incorporated” for the territories merged with the USSR in 1939–1941 (for other countries it is “occupied” or “annexed”). Words “aggression” or “annexation” do not apply to the USSR’s actions. Source: Textbook Danilov, Barsenkov, p. 328–329

## Repressions and deportations under Stalin

They are sometimes criticised, sometimes omitted or carefully justified.

“Numerous uprisings burst out in the Chechen-Ingushetian ASSR when German troops reached the North Caucasus. In Crimea more than 20 000 Crimean Tatars voluntarily joined anti-guerrilla squadrons to massacre those fighting against the Nazis. These actions became a pretext for mass deportations of the nations accused of aiding and supporting the enemy (Danilov, Barsenkov, p. 393).

“It is a well known fact that some of the ‘small’ peoples were ‘punished’ because some of their representatives had collaborated with Nazi occupation authorities. In 1943 and 1944, the Kalmyks, the Karachays, the Chechens, the Ingush, the Balkars and the Crimean Tatars were deprived of their status as nations and were displaced from their native territories. In August 1941, the same fate had befallen the Volga Germans” (Levandovsky, Shchetinov, p. 216).



Carts with food.  
“To the Victory fund”.  
1944. ©TASS

## The narration of the heroic home frontline has hardly changed since the Soviet era

An increased importance of the church’s role has been added to the textbooks, and there are more detailed accounts of deportations and repressive laws in Russian post-Soviet textbooks. Besides that, the narration sticks to the image of the unflinching Soviet home front line.

## Life in occupied territories – confrontation between collaborators and partisans

The policy of economic plunder and merciless terror was maintained in the occupied territories; people that were deemed fit for work were forcefully sent to Germany (overall about 5 million people). The conditions of labour in factories, mines and railroads were back-breaking (Levandovsky, Schetinov, p. 207).

The scale of the collaboration and partisan-movement are still disputable.

Number of collaborators	Number of partisans
Kiselyov, Popov 550 000	Izmozik, Rudnik 250 000
Izmozik, Rudnik up to 1 mln	Levandovsky, Shetinov 1 mln
Danilov, Barsenkov 1.5 mln	Kiselyov, Popov 1.3 mln

Life in occupied territories is seen as a constant confrontation between the collaborators and the guerrillas.



Former Soviet citizens wearing Wehrmacht uniforms. Source: Textbook Kiselyov, Popov, p. 156



A group of partisans.  
© Textbook Izmozik, Rudnik, p. 222



This photo is often used to illustrate the shooting of Russian partisans. Actually the victims are Polish civilians, 1939. © IIA Russia today

## Executions in Katyn

The majority of textbooks write about the execution of the Poles. One of them (Danilov, Barsenkov) explains it as a vengeance for the events of the Polish-Soviet War.

## Fate of Soviet war prisoners in USSR – is rarely discussed

For those who had once been surrounded, had escaped captivity or had just fallen behind their unit, there was no mercy. Most of the officers who were able to break out of an encirclement were condemned by court martials. A soldier who broke out of captivity or encirclement to find his unit could be condemned to death on suspicion of espionage, desertion etc. [...] Former war prisoners and “encirclees” were put into special camps where they were forced to work in mines, pits, the metal industry, logging camps (Kiselyov, Popov, p. 155–156).

## The account of the Red Army liberating Eastern Europe almost always “stumbles” over the Warsaw uprising

Why was there no support for the rebelling population of the Polish capital? One answer:

“From the very beginning the uprising was doomed, especially since its leaders did not ask the Soviet leadership to approve its timing and terms. The Red Army that had just driven the enemy out of Belarus needed a break. [...] During the Cold War another version emerged: Allegedly, the Soviet command interrupted an offensive so that the supporters of the “London” government did not gain control in Warsaw. This point of view, however, is not backed by facts” (Zagladin, Kozlenko, p. 251).

## Different calculation methods applied to the Western matériel aid determine evaluation of the Allies’ contribution

“The anti-fascist coalition was unequally weighted throughout the entire WWII. People of one of the members — the Soviet Union — bled on battlefields while other coalition members’ (Great Britain and especially the USA) efforts were limited to providing arms, supplies and provisions to the USSR up until the turning point in the course of the war. After the war was over, however, they tried to take advantage of the victory and even separate treaties with the enemy were not beneath them” (Danilov, Barsenkov et al., p. 424).

“The alliance between the USSR, Great Britain and the USA was an important factor during the war against the German fascist aggressors. The lend-lease supplies of warfare material, cars, ammunition and provisions to the USSR turned out to be a significant contribution. It amounted to approximately 10% of all military Soviet aircrafts, 12% of tanks and 70% of cars” (Zagladin, Kozlenko, p. 260).



Studebaker Company goods.  
Source: Textbook Kiselyov,  
Popov, p. 163



Signing the Treaty, August  
1939. © Bundesarchiv,  
Bild 183-S52480 /  
CC-BY-SA 3.0

# The German- Soviet Treaty

Moscow, 23 August 1939

In Germany the treaty is known as the  
Hitler-Stalin Pact, in other countries as  
the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact



## Germany: Evaluation from different perspectives

The authors present the facts and interpret the intentions of the two dictators: Hitler wanted to avert a two-front war and dissolve the Polish state with the aid of Stalin. Stalin suspected the Western powers would

“intentionally direct Hitler’s expansionism against the Soviet Union. After the destruction of Czechoslovakia, Stalin demanded that all Eastern European countries beyond Poland should be protected from Germany. The Western powers considered this demand to be Soviet hegemonic ambition and refused. Stalin concluded the pact with Hitler to find time for their own armament” (Klett, p. 248).

In Klett the text of the contract as well as the secret protocol can be found (p. 245, 246). Students are asked to evaluate it from the perspective of Hitler, Stalin, the Polish people as well as the Western powers.



National Socialism is turning its back on the Russians... like this! A caricature from the French satirical magazine *Marianne* commenting on the treaty in August 1939. ©akg-images



Stalin and Ribbentrop after signing the Treaty, August 1939.  
© Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-H27337 / CC-BY-SA 3.0

## Italy: Astonishment and indignation

“The world welcomed the announcement of the treaty between two regimes that were on opposite sides from an ideological point of view with a mix of astonishment and indignation” (Giardina, p. 351).

Banti shows the relations between the treaty and the general diplomatic situation:

“In April 1939, France and Great Britain guaranteed to the Polish government their will to help Poland in case of a German attack. Germany makes its countermoves. In May 1939, Germany and Italy sign the “Pact of Steel” [...] insufficiently reassuring for the Germans. [...] Counting on the tensions between the USSR and the Western powers (the latter have not accepted the Soviet proposal of a common participation to an eventual anti-Nazi war) the German and Soviet diplomats started negotiations that led — causing general surprise — to the signature of a “non-aggression treaty” between the USSR and Germany on 23 August 1939” (p. 439).

It has to be stressed that both textbooks give little attention to the reasons that led the USSR to sign a treaty with Germany. Only Giardina speaks about the Soviets’ surprise when the “Operation Barbarossa” began in 1941.

## Poland: The fourth division of Poland

In Poland, the German-Soviet non-aggression treaty is also known as the "Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact". Special attention is paid to the secret protocol attached to the Pact (quoted in its entirety in textbooks as source material), whereby the territories of Poland were 'divided' between the two countries. The secret protocol is regarded as a key document to an understanding of the course of the war. It also serves as a proof of the cynical game played by the USSR which at the first phase of war matched that of the Third Reich's as enemies and aggressors.

"The German-Soviet Pact signalled yet another partition of Poland. [...] The Soviets also carried out an annexation of Poland although they did so under the pretence that it was carried out at the 'request' of the peoples of the conquered lands. [...] Widespread, aggressive propaganda presented the occupation as a friendly act, enslavement as liberation and criminal acts as the meeting out of justice" (Stola, p. 50).

### Hołd pruski w Moskwie



STALIN. – Pakt my tobie, Ribbentropie podpisali. Ty w rączkę nas pocałuj, pakt bierz, a co my zrobimy dalej, to jeszcze podumajem.

"The Prussian Tribute in Moscow". Satire of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. Cartoon printed on 8 September 1939 in "Mucha" weekly, Warsaw. Source: Wikimedia

## Russia “Forced move”

All Russian textbooks give the same interpretation of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact as a forced step taken by Stalin in fear of finding himself in international isolation.

“In order to free his hands to launch his aggression against Poland, Hitler decided to neutralize the USSR. Stalin, having lost faith that it was possible to make a treaty with Great Britain and France, but being convinced of the proximity of an imperialistic war, ventured upon a collusion with Hitler” (Volobuyev, p. 78).

“The Soviet-German non-aggression treaty was a forced step by the USSR after all its initiatives on organising a joint rebuff to the aggression had run into the solid wall of opposition of the Western politicians of the time” (Plenkov, p. 92).

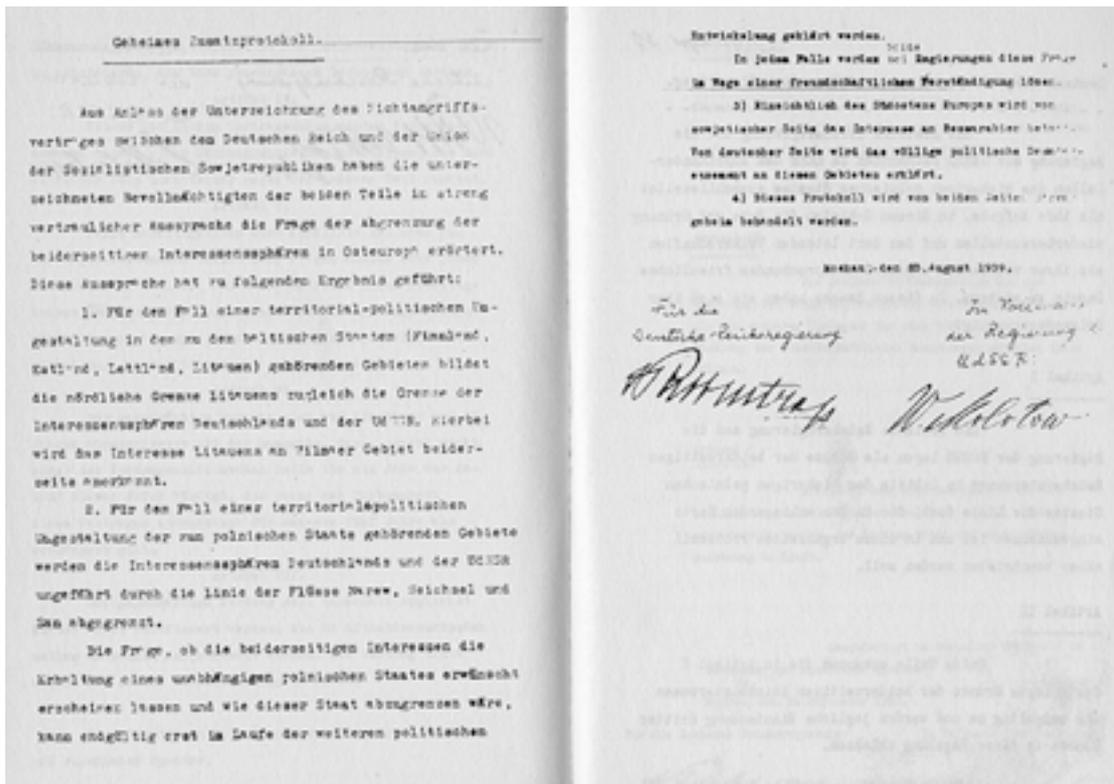
Only two modern textbooks mention the fact that the Soviet party concealed the ‘secret protocols’:

“Soviet authorities blankly denied the fact of making a secret agreement with Germany, although its text was available for foreign scholars” (Zagladin, Kozlenko, p. 209).

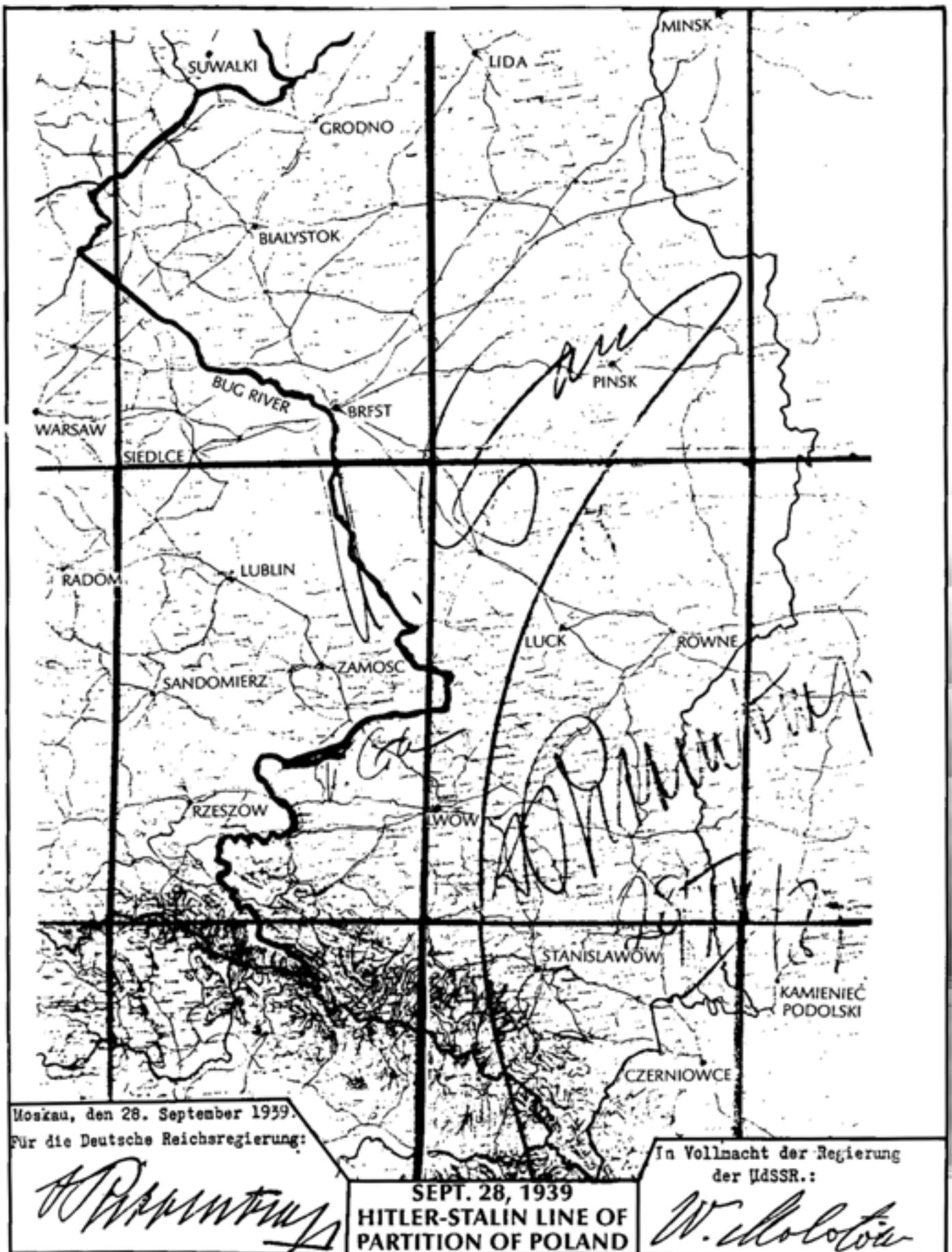
None of the authors mentions the fact that the Soviet Union gave economic and military aid to Germany (although this information was present in the textbooks published in the 1990s).

“The signing of the secret protocol decided the fate of the Baltic States [...], as well as Poland, Finland and Bessarabia. According to the official statement, this [Polish] population was ‘being protected’ by the Red Army. Tens of thousands of Polish officers were taken prisoner. In the spring of 1940, about 22 000 of them were executed in Katyn (near Smolensk), near Kharkov and Ostashkov (near Tver) by NKVD <secret police> troops, upon the decision of the Politbureau” (Izmozik, Rudnik, p. 192–193).

Traditionally, the textbooks dispel the myth of Stalin intending to attack Hitler first. The fact that the signing of the treaties led to the war is one of the most painful spots of the ‘official’ memory. Characteristically, the style of narration changes in these accounts in most textbooks. Instead of a dry and concise citation of facts, their authors go in for lengthy speculations aimed at reconstructing Stalin’s logic.



The secret protocol to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact defining the German and Soviet spheres of interest. The document is signed by Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov and German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop. Source: Wikimedia



The map from the secret appendix to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact showing the new German-Soviet border. Source: Wikimedia

**AUSCHWITZ I**  
**OSWIECIM**  
**25 AUGUST 1944**

COMMANDANT'S HOUSE

CAMP HQ

CAMP ADMIN

GAS CHAMBER AND CREMATORIUM I

(MAIN CAMP)  
POLAND  
1944

# The Holocaust

Some textbooks treat the Holocaust as a main topic, whereas others reduce the relevance of the Jewish victims



## Czech Republic: The Holocaust is out there

The Czech textbooks describe the Holocaust as a horrifying novelty, often quoting the book of Zygmunt Baumann, "Modernity and Holocaust". They tell the story of the marginalisation of compassionate instincts as one of the effects of society's bureaucratisation, industrial development and modern technologies. In these textbooks, the Holocaust is happening somewhere else, predominantly in Poland. The only connection with Czech lands is the concentration camp in Terezín (Northern Bohemia),

"a station from which the Czech Jews were deported further to the East" (Kuklíkovi, p. 109).

So the Holocaust story in the textbooks is not perceived as a story that concerns Czech memory and political culture.



First prison yard in Terezín/Theresienstadt.  
© Archive of Antikomplex

## Italy: Collective responsibility

The textbooks indicate the SS chiefs promoted the "final solution" of the Jewish question, describe the deportations and everyday life in the camps and conclude with a description of gas chambers and crematories.

Moreover Banti includes an in-depth analysis about the Holocaust. He critically investigates the reasons for the tragedy and discusses the terminology that is used to talk about the historical event: Holocaust, Shoah, genocide.

The critical pages put the emphasis on the "ordinary men" that took part in the genocide. They show that the main reason for the extermination was not the desire to free space in the East for the "Germanic race", but to carry out a radical elimination of the Jews.

## Germany: Unprecedented crime in world history

"The Holocaust [...] marks the singular character of the crimes committed by the Nazi regime in the history of the world" (Schöningh 1, p. 398).

The Holocaust is an essential subject in all textbooks. They describe the ideological causes of the genocide, the system of extermination camps, the mass exterminations, the bureaucratically organised industrial murder. They focus on numerous groups of perpetrators, who have been involved in the genocide alongside the SS. The indifference of the majority of Germans is mentioned critically.

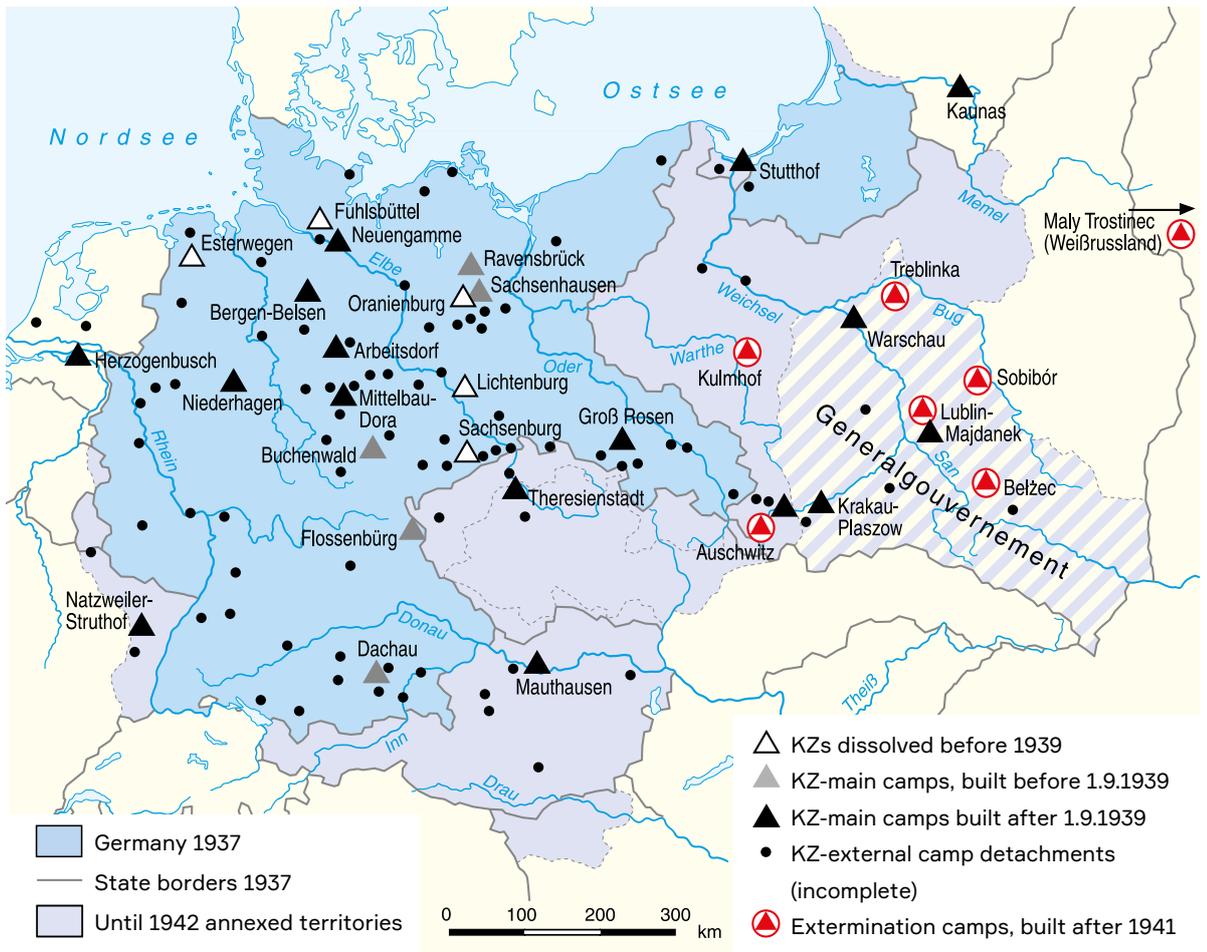
The sources convey the concrete reality of the organised terror in the extermination camps: power hierarchies, forced labour, violence and death, selection procedures, as well as mass exterminations (Schöningh). They confront the report of one of the survivors of the massacre in Babi Yar with the memories of the chief commander of Auschwitz Rudolf Höß giving a cold-blooded description of the extermination of Jews in the gas chambers (Klett).

Students are asked to make an analysis and evaluation of the reasons of the Holocaust based on texts by historians and sociologists.



Hungarian Jews on the platform of the railway station in the extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau, 1944. Usually 70–75 % of the transported people were sent directly to be killed in gas chambers. © akg-images

The system of concentration camps. The map shows the main concentration camps (KZ) and extermination camps. Additionally, there were hundreds of secondary camps, which were linked to the main concentration and extermination camps. © Klett Verlag



Inmates of the Buchenwald concentration camp. Source: Wikimedia



## Lithuania: The question of participation

In Lithuanian school textbooks a large part is dedicated to the persecution of the Jews and the Holocaust. Tamošaitis's textbook for the 12<sup>th</sup> grade provides in detail the reasons for the persecution of local Jews during the occupation:

“a) presence of a criminal element; b) revenge for some crimes during the first years of Soviet occupation; c) contradicting geopolitical interests of Jewish and non-Jewish Lithuanians (supporting either the Soviet Union or Germany); d) Anti-Semitism which had grown due to favourable conditions of war and Nazi occupation; e) fascist and Nazi ideas which had become especially strong before the war. It is important to stress that it was not the locals who determined the tragic fate of Jews. Nazi Germany is to blame for the war” (p. 188).

The main Holocaust perpetrators are named. For Lithuania, it is Joachim Hamann who led a squad of “Flying Slaughterers” (German: Rollkommando). It is also worth mentioning that only one Lithuanian “Jew killer” is named in Baltos Lankos textbook. In Lithuania it is still a very sensitive issue, and the history textbooks rarely provide the names of Lithuanian co-perpetrators.

Digging of graves prior to an execution by members of a German Einsatzgruppe in the Kuziai Forest, Lithuania. Source: 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbook Navickas, Svarauskas, p. 104



## Russia: Jews or “Soviet citizens”?

The Holocaust is seldom described or even named in Russian history textbooks. In their accounts of the occupation regime the authors unanimously emphasise that ethnic purges in Eastern Europe were targeting Jews and Slavs equally. Very seldom Jews are singled out as a specific group of victims.

Danilov, Barsenkov et al. describe Jews as being amongst the victims of the occupation policy:

“Overall, 13.5 million of Soviet citizens (excluding war prisoners) were purposefully exterminated by the Nazis and their accessories in occupied territories. [...] Amongst these casualties about 3 million Jews fell victims of the Holocaust” (p. 391).

Plenkov describes the persecution as such:

“The Nazi criminals designed and implemented a bureaucratic machine to exterminate people based on their race, an unprecedented event in human history. [...] Antisemitism was a cornerstone of the National Socialist ideology. The persecution of Jews began with declaring a boycott on 1 April 1933. A systematic extermination of this nation took place in 1939–45” (p. 77–78).

## Poland: Victims, betrayers and perpetrators



Polish historian and social activist Władysław Bartoszewski in a photograph from Auschwitz, 1940. Bartoszewski was arrested in 1940 on the streets of Warsaw and sent to the concentration camp Auschwitz. After his release from Auschwitz, Bartoszewski became one of the active members of the resistance and a participant of Jewish movement.  
© Archive of KARTA Centre

The systematic exclusion of Jews from public life is described in great detail: from the revocation of civil rights through the tragedy of the ghettos to the “final solution” in death camps such as Auschwitz-Birkenau, Sobibor or Treblinka.

Extermination is analysed within a wider context, as the result of “Hitler’s ideology”. Poland’s place is seen as very specific — in view of the number of Jews living here before the war and the number of Polish Jews who were murdered. It was in Poland that the Germans established 400 ghettos and death camps. Extermination accounted for 5.5 to 6 million people, i. e. two thirds of the European Jews, and 3 million of those murdered were Polish Jews.

The slightest help offered to Jews in Poland could lead to capital punishment or collective penalties. The textbooks also describe the fact of “szmalcownictwo” — the blackmailing of Jews who were in hiding and their betrayal to the Germans.

“For a single Jew to survive the German occupation, it involved the help of many — usually dozens — of people. And yet just one “szmalcownik” could cause the death of many Jews” (Stola, p. 45).

The participation of the Poles in the pogrom of Jedwabne, which is still controversially regarded in Poland, is also mentioned, although it is shown as a unique incident.



Warsaw ghetto.  
Source: 10<sup>th</sup>  
grade textbook  
Tamošaitis, p. 180



# Special Emphasis on Victims of War

All textbooks place special emphasis on war victims, supporting varying national narratives

## Czech Republic: Victims of two occupations

In Czech textbooks, victims of the war genocide were not only Jews and Romanies, but people from Baltic states as well.

“After the annexation of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to the USSR in 1940, a persecution started there focusing on a purging of the anti-Soviet forces which concerned not only members of democratic parties, but their family members including children. It was not a political suppression, it was a nation’s elimination” (Válková, p. 41).

The Soviet occupation was a shock for the locals; therefore this experience is presented as a reason why these countries joined the German side. After the second occupation by the USSR in 1944, persecutions were even more severe.

But there are other groups of victims mentioned, especially amongst civilians. The longest paragraphs are dedicated to the bombing of Dresden. Victims of Nagasaki and Hiroshima are described with remarks that the use of atomic bombs was due to the acceleration of the war and an opportunity to try a new weapon.



Sinti and Roma people about to be deported by the Nazis.  
© Bundesarchiv, R 165 Bild-244-52 / CC-BY-SA

## Germany: “Subhumans” and political opponents

“Other victims of the Nazi-Regime” is a sub-heading in the chapter “The Genocide on European Jews” (Klett, p. 264).

Students learn:

“The victims of the Nazis were not only the Jews but also up to 500 000 Romanies, as well as the Slavic peoples, especially Poles, Czechs and Russians, who were regarded as ‘subhumans’ in the Nazi classification” (Klett, p. 264—265).

“Around one million Russians and Poles were killed by so-called task forces of the SS” (Schöningh 1, p. 398).

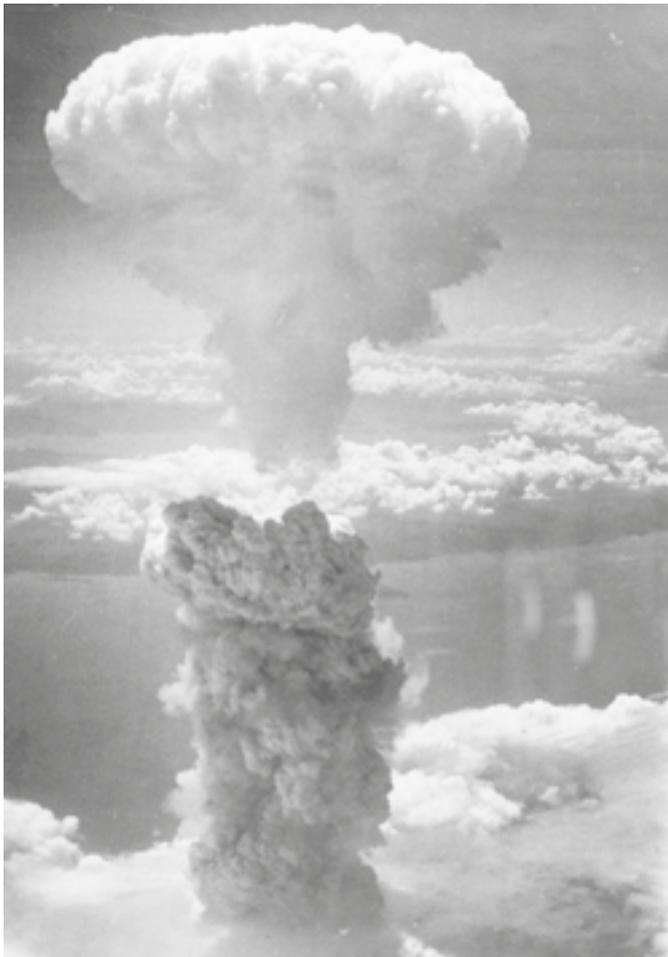
“About three million members of the Red Army died in camps for prisoners of war” (Klett, p. 257).

Other mentioned groups of victims are homosexuals, mentally ill and people with disabilities. The “Jehovah’s Witnesses” were deported to concentration camps because of their consistent refusal to perform military service (Klett p. 263, 264, 265).

“As a result of the war, citizens of other European countries were also deported to concentration camps. As a rule, these Europeans, as well as many Germans, were political prisoners” (Klett, p. 264–265).



Victims of the bombings.  
© Bundesarchiv, Bild 146-1981-055-34 / CC-BY-SA 3.0



Atomic bombing of Japan.  
Source: Wikimedia

## Italy: The war against civilians

Giardina claims that the main victims of WWII were the civilian population and the Jews:

“The most horrible and cruellest persecution was against Jews. [...] They were deported to prison camps (German: Lager) often located in Poland and Germany, whose names have become infamous (Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Dachau and many others)” (p. 361).

According to Banti, the main victim was the civilian population in all countries:

“The numbers [...] suggest that this is a war against civilians and not only a war between armies” (p. 456).

Banti also mentions the oppression of the Polish people by the Soviet Army and the Nazis. Banti stresses the deportations from Eastern Europe:

“During the war from these areas [...] 13.5 million people were recruited as forced labourers or deported (8 million civilians, 4 million prisoners of war, 1.5 million Jews)” (p. 457).

Banti pays great attention to the topic of post-war vengeance, with a particular attention to women.

Another interesting fact is how the two textbooks deal with the war in the Pacific: Banti stresses the hard occupation by the Japanese army:

“The population of the occupied territories is more brutally exploited than under the Western colonial domination” (p. 449).

Giardina emphasises the first atomic bombs, with the testimony of a Japanese survivor from Hiroshima.

### Victims of WWII

German soldiers killed in action	3 000 000
German soldiers missing in action	1 300 000
German civilians	500 000
German losses due to expulsion and deportation	2 250 000
Japanese soldiers	1 200 000
Japanese civilians	600 000
Chinese and Southeast Asian forces and civilians unknown US soldiers	229 000
Western Allies	610 000
Civilians of Western Allies	690 000
Soldiers of the East and Southeast European countries	1 000 000
Civilians of the East and Southeast European countries	8 000 000
Soviet soldiers	13 000 000
Soviet civilians	6 700 000
<b>Victims total (about)</b>	<b>55 000 000</b>

(Schöningh 1, p. 394)



Warsaw ghetto. Source: 10<sup>th</sup> grade textbook Tamošaitis, p. 180



Dresden after bombing. February 1945.  
© Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-08778-0001 / Hahn / CC-BY-SA 3.0

## Russia: Tragedy as “price of Victory”

Almost all national history textbooks recommended by the Russian Ministry of Education attribute the information on the losses in the chapter to “the price of Victory”. This partially removes the issue of responsibility for the colossal death rate of civilians, soldiers and prisoners of war.

The absence of validated official data on human losses during the war or on its consequence leads to discrepancies in the numbers (the textbooks’ authors use different calculations by historians).

All textbooks mention the German policy towards Jews (from one sentence to two paragraphs), quoting the total number of the Holocaust victims, Sinti and Romanies (usually just mentioned), Slavs (quoting details of “Generalplan Ost”).

Victims among the population of territories occupied by the Wehrmacht and its allied troops are usually mentioned in passing. The victims of the forced labour are reduced to one sentence.

“The population was subjected to restrictions, was deprived of many rights, was taken to work in Germany by force, often fell victim of ethnic persecution. All resistance attempts were suppressed” (Plenkov, p. 111).

All National History textbooks mention the victims of Soviet repressions: Soviet citizens, deported ethnic groups. Many textbooks also mention victims in the republics and territories annexed in 1939-41.

### Soviet combat losses

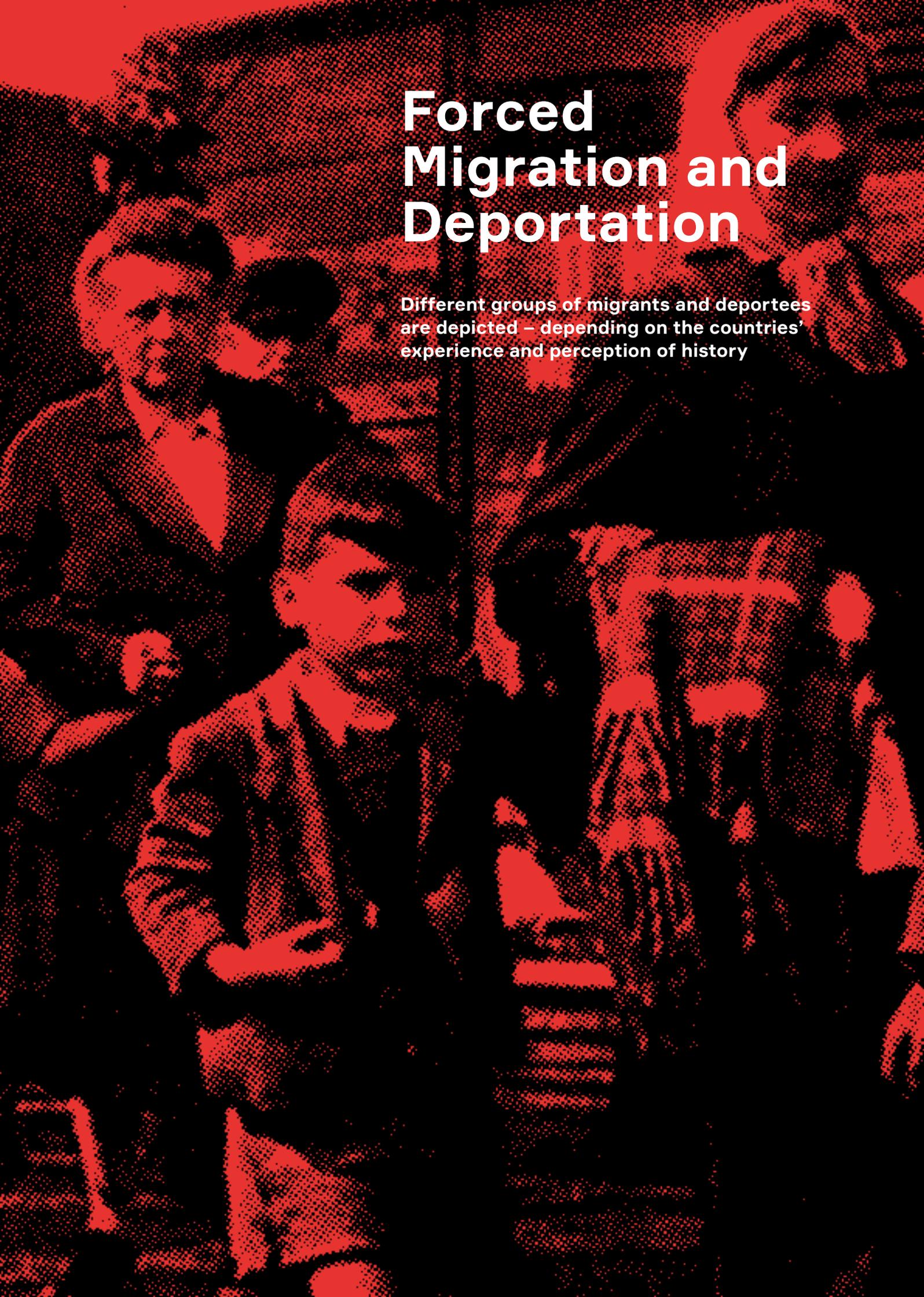
Textbook	Total losses	Combat losses
Izmozik, Rudnik	27 000 000	11 500 000
Kiselyov, Popov	27 000 000	9 200 000
Levandovsky, Shchetinov	27 000 000	11 400 000
Zagladin, Kozlenko	27 000 000	12 000 000
Danilov, Barsenkov, Gorinov (ed. Filippov)	27 000 000	8 649 500



Among specific hostilities, emphasis is usually put on the story of the Siege of Leningrad, in which about one million civilians died.  
© IIA Russia today



The expulsions from Czech lands took place in two phases – 800 000 people were displaced during the disorganised expulsions (May-August 1945), with an estimated 15 000-20 000 people falling victim to acts of violence. After the Potsdam Agreement, the expulsions took place in an organised manner. Source: Wikimedia



# Forced Migration and Deportation

Different groups of migrants and deportees are depicted – depending on the countries' experience and perception of history

## Czech Republic: “No place in our country”

At the end of the war, German-speaking people were expelled from their homes in a disorganised manner accompanied by acts of violence.

“These actions were not only immediate reactions to the end of the 6-year occupation and to the information about the Nazi atrocities, brought by people returning from concentration camps, but they were also acts of personal revenge and an effort to become rich by stealing property” (Válková, p. 47).

Nevertheless the expulsion is presented matter-of-factly as a part of the war events. Readers are to gain the impression that after the experience of the Nazi occupation, a peaceful coexistence of Czechs and Germans in one state was not possible anymore. The collaboration of some of the Sudeten Germans (K. H. Frank, K. Henlein) with Hitler served as an argument for the application of the principle of collective guilt. Only one of the textbooks describes the “death march” of 25 000 German citizens of Brno to the Austrian border.

“Directly after 1945 a period of “wild expulsion” started. Despotism and mass violence was a “tax” charged for the nations’ hatred against Germans. However, the hatred (that could be understood taking into account the very particular Czech experience) has affected Czech political culture in a clearly negative way and showed a dark side of the Czech democracy” (Kuklík, p. 127).



The Sudeten Germans destroying Czech name of the city Šumperk, October 1938. Source: Wikimedia

## Germany: Flight, expulsion, integration

The theme “Flight and Expulsion” is not explored in the textbooks. They inform about the most important facts: the refugees fled from the advancing Red Army in 1944-45 or from Polish and Czechoslovakian units. Those who were forced to leave their homeland in eastern Germany and neighbouring settlements, according to Article 13 of the Potsdam Agreement, were called “expellees”. The Poles who had been expelled by Germans before returned to their homelands. Those who were forced to leave their homeland in eastern Poland, now Soviet territory, were resettled to the former German provinces. The integration of refugees and expellees is referred to as one of the greatest post-war achievements of the German society.

**Between 12 and 15 million Germans had to leave their homes in eastern Germany and the neighbouring settlements.**

Refugees trekking over the frozen Vistula Lagoon, February 1945. The dangerous journey over the frozen Lagoon in the Baltic Sea was the only westward route from East Prussia that had not yet been cut off by the Red Army at that time. Source: ullstein bild



## Russia: Crimes of Stalinism

Russian history textbooks mention ethnic deportations in the USSR and in occupied territories mostly in association with Stalin regime policies. Among the forcibly displaced peoples, they mention the Poles, the Germans, the Chechens, the Ingush, the Balkars, the Kalmyks, the Karachays, the Crimean Tatars, the Kurds, the Meskhetian Turks and the Greeks.

“It is a well known fact that some of the ‘small’ peoples were ‘punished’ because some of their representatives had collaborated with Nazi occupation authorities. In 1943 and 1944, the Kalmyks, the Karachays, the Chechens, the Ingush, the Balkars and the Crimean Tatars were deprived of their status as nations and were displaced from their native territories. In August 1941, the same fate had befallen the Volga Germans” (Levandovsky, Shchetinov, p. 216).

Most textbooks call deportations a crime of the Stalin regime. However, there are textbooks that do not at all mention the deportations that affected millions all over the country.



Russian textbooks rarely have pictures associated with the subject. The evacuation of agricultural tools to the East, 1942. Source: Textbook Kiselyov, Popov, p. 165

Map: Flight and Migration (Schöningh 2, p. 85–86)



## Poland: Mass deportation under inhumane conditions

On 28 September 1939, while the German and Soviet invaders were still engaged in combat with the remaining Polish units, the Third Reich and the USSR signed a friendship treaty. The treaty introduced new borders, thus partitioning Poland.

“In the lands directly annexed to the Reich, the Germans began to carry out their systematic ethnic policy. At this time, approximately 900 000 Poles were deported. Most of them were assigned to the territory of the German General Government, whilst others were sent to the depths of the Third Reich as forced labourers. [...] The settlement of some 360 000 German colonists brought here from territories belonging to the USSR, the Baltic States and Romania was intended to ensure swift Germanisation of these Polish territories”

(Roszak, Kłaczkow, p. 182).

“Prisons filled up with crowds of suspects and accidental victims — in total, more than 100 000 people were arrested. And yet more — over 320 000 — fell victim to mass deportation into the very depths of the USSR. [...] Thousands of deportees, particularly children and frail people, did not survive the many days of long travel in inhumane conditions” (Stola, p. 51).

After the war Stalin and the Communist authorities in Poland were intent on creating an ethnically homogenous state.

“Approximately 3 million Germans were expelled from the territories of the “Regained Lands”, while 300 000 Ukrainians, 36 000 Belorussians and several thousands of Lithuanians were deported from the border territories in the East to the USSR”

(Roszak, Kłaczkow, p. 230).



The inhabitants of Warsaw after the fall of the Warsaw Uprising marched on foot to the camp in Pruszkow. Source: Wikimedia

Deportees in Siberia — women working during the felling of the forest, around Sverdlovsk (now Yekaterinburg) in the Urals, November 1940. © Archive of KARTA Centre



Mass expulsion of Poles in 1939 as part of the German ethnic cleansing of western Poland annexed to the Reich. Poles are being led to the trains under German army escort. Source: Wikimedia





Churchill, Roosevelt,  
Stalin on Yalta  
summit, 1945.  
Source: Wikimedia



# Consequences

The Yalta conference resulted in the political partition of Europe and marked the beginning of the Cold War. The controversy surrounding this event is presented differently across Europe

## Czech Republic: How the country became the East

The main presented geopolitical consequence of the war is the change of the political map of Europe. This change concerns mostly Eastern Europe and is described as a forced arrangement, yet there is clear denial of the “myth of Yalta” that the division of Europe was negotiated in advance. The textbooks focus mostly on who was present at which conference, stress the very last one in Potsdam where the Allies approved the expulsion of Sudeten Germans from the eastern territories.

The war is presented as the starting point for division of Europe by the Iron Curtain.

“Since then the Czechs fell into the sphere of eastern influence; therefore we all should be aware of how this happened” (Válková, p. 33).

The occupation of the Czech lands sets the foundation for the remembrance narrative, which focuses on victimhood.



Dr. Edvard Beneš, the exiled President of Czechoslovakia, with Czechoslovak Air Force personnel and troops in the Eastern Command, who had recently returned from the Middle East to Britain. Source: Wikimedia

## Germany: At the centre of the Allies' conflict

The decisions of the conference of Yalta are considered a compromise initially concealing the clash of interests between the Western Allies and the Soviet Union. After the war, however, they led to the division of Europe. In particular the territorial reorganisation of Europe relating to Germany and Poland posed a potential for conflict. With the expulsion of the Polish population from eastern Poland, the USSR had already altered the political landscape before the Potsdam Conference.

When interpreting the causes of the conflict, the authors show both the perspective of the USA and the USSR:

“The military and economically dominant United States were interested in creating a free world market and in establishing a global peace and security system. The Soviet Union had been extremely weakened and partially destroyed by the war. They wanted to protect their spheres of influence by satellite states that they dominated and at the same time compensate their economic losses by dismantlement” (Klett, p. 408).

“The result of the reorganisation after the war: the United States and the USSR became the leading global powers. France and England were no longer able to pursue world power policies” (Schöningh 2, p. 12).



“You shouldn't accept anything from that uncle!” Caricature of the Marshall Plan drawn by Mirko Szewczuk. © Ilona Szewczuk-Zimmer

## Italy: End of an old order

Giardina stresses the fact that the end of WWII also brought an end to the European supremacy, substituted by two new superpowers, the USA and the USSR. A new bipolar international balance of power was established.

“The creation of the UN (1945) was the most important result in the attempt of creating a new international order capable of preventing new conflicts (p. 398).

“The hostilities did not end in Europe and Asia and the contrasts in the approach to peace between the two major winners were already emerging. The United States, having an overbearing economic supremacy and fewer losses

caused by the war paid more attention to the reconstruction and the establishment of a stable world order than to the punishment of the losers. The USSR, having suffered tremendous losses and devastation, thought about the price of victory in political, economic and defense terms” (Giardina, p. 381).

“As is well known, another war, an ‘atomic war’ as people say after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, could be the last war for all. [...] During 1946 the leaders of the two alliances openly accused each other that they would not respect the treaties signed during the war and that they would create their areas of influence” (Banti, p. 490).



Establishment of people's democracies in Europe. Formally there were various political parties in what is referred to as "satellite states". However, these parties were forced by the Soviets to form coalitions led by the Communist party; this is what differentiated the people's democracies of the Western type. © Klett Verlag

## Lithuania: Triumph of “the Soviet dictator”

The 12<sup>th</sup> grade textbook published by Baltos Lankos writes about the consequences of WWII accentuating the Soviet Union’s aggressive politics:

“What are the most important consequences of this war? First, Nazi Germany, fascist Italy and Japan have been destroyed. [...] It may seem a victory of democratic forces over dictatorial aggressors. But the victory was mostly determined by the Stalinist Soviet Union which before and in the beginning of the war had as many predatory goals as Hitler’s Germany”

(Tamošaitis, p. 205–206).

The textbook for the 12<sup>th</sup> grade published by Briedis points out the crimes committed by the communist USSR:

“In 1940 the NKVD <secret police> killed about 26 000 Polish citizens in Katyn and other cities of the USSR under a special Politbureau decision. [...] About 1.5 million Poles and Balts were exiled to Siberia in the summer of 1941. During the war between the USSR and Germany whole nations were falsely accused of collaborating with the Nazis and exiled [...]. After the Red Army crossed the borders of the USSR, it often behaved not like a liberator, but like an occupant prone to rob and abuse civilians” (Kapleris et al., p. 147).



Vorkuta camp was one of the major Soviet GULAG labour camps established by NKVD. Source: 10<sup>th</sup> grade textbook Tamošaitis, p. 177

## Poland: Ally without the right to vote

Throughout the years of war, Poland stood on the side of the Allies and yet, when it came to establishing a post-war order, Poland was excluded from the decisions concerning its fate. Border changes in Poland became the currency of negotiation in talks with Stalin.

“As Soviet victories multiplied, and the Germans were pushed out of Eastern and Central Europe in 1944, the importance of the USSR in international relations increased, while that of the Republic of Poland diminished. [...] Roosevelt and Churchill had already agreed that the USSR would have to be rewarded for its enormous contribution to the war with Hitler, and Stalin made no secret of his appetite for the territories he had occupied in 1939. [...] In exchange for the lands occupied by the USSR, Poland was to be given the former German lands which lay to the east of the Oder and Neisse Rivers. The Polish Government in London was not even informed of this decision” (Stola, p. 67).

Polish textbooks emphasise the drama Poland experienced after the war: although victorious, it was abandoned by the West and fell into dependence on the USSR. The Eastern Borderlands, with Vilnius and Lviv, areas of importance for the Polish culture, were lost.



Nuremberg Trials. Defendants in their dock: Goering, Hess, von Ribbentrop and Keitel in the front row. © U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

## Russia: Survival amid losses

Russian textbooks name the collapse of Hitler's regime and the formation of the bipolar world the greatest political consequences of the war. They mention the foundation of the UN and the system of international law, the Nuremberg and the Tokyo Trial. Among social consequences, they name the colossal numbers of victims in European countries, first and foremost, in the USSR, and the demographic consequences associated with that. Another grave consequence they name is the general devastation.

"The vast losses of the Soviet Union were caused by the purposeful policy of the Nazis intended to completely destroy the Russian sovereignty and people. A sad role was played by the fact that Soviet political and military leaders often unnecessarily wasted the lives of their compatriots" (Levandovsky, Shchetinov, p. 224).

"The victory in the Great Patriotic War proved that the model of state and society, which was created by the Bolsheviks, in spite of everything proved viable and that it was a well-coordinated mechanism, which was in the condition to defend itself at the cost of enormous losses" (Izmozik, Rudnik, p. 239).



Eugeny Khlaldehy. After the Victory Parade. 1945. © TASS



# Remembrance

Although both the victims and the postwar reconciliation process are emphasised, they are at times eclipsed by narratives focusing on national heroes and triumphs



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## Czech Republic: “Brave resistance and ingenious sabotage”

The occupation of the Czech lands sets the foundation for its national memory, which focuses on the assumption of a Czech victimhood. Therefore, the main subjects, events and figures of memory presented in the textbooks deal with the resistance and the burnt-out villages.

The Czech resistance is presented as a role model for the students, something they can be proud of — a ‘ray of light’ in the ‘darkness of the war’. That is why jokes about the occupation period are printed as well as stories about the witty Czechs organising acts of sabotage. The authors also mention the favourite saying “PP — pracuj pomalu!” meaning “work slowly” — to undermine the efficiency of the German regime.

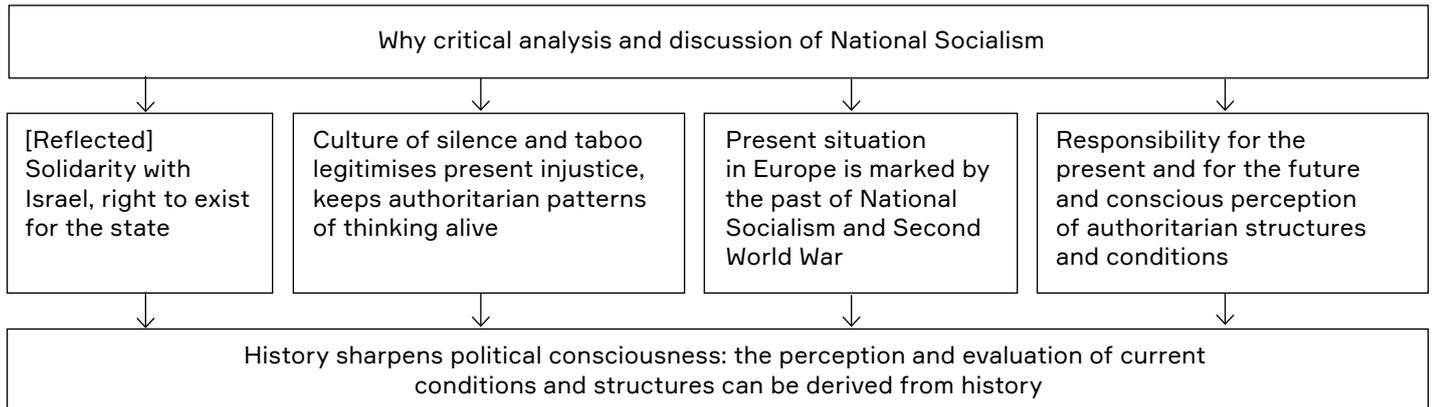
The extermination of Lidice and Ležáky is probably the most remembered event of WWII, often used in cinema and literature. Problematic issues like the collaboration are not directly mentioned or remembered. The Munich Agreement serves as a general excuse: the feelings of inferiority weakened liberal and democratic elements within the Czech society and prevented a different, more courageous or less cooperative approach.



Memorial to the children of Lidice — each of the murdered children has one's own portrait in this bronze sculpture by Marie Uchytlová. © Archive of Antikomplex

## Germany: Culture of remembrance and responsibility

The discussion about the unprecedented break with civilisation by Nazi Germany is a fundamental subject in all German textbooks, not only in history. The guiding questions used are focussing on the issue: What role does the Nazi past play in the present? Klett gives a summary of the most important answers (p. 409):



An air-raid shelter used as a memorial room on the premises of the Gymnasium Schwertstraße (built in 1943-44)



A "stumbling stone" outside the main school entrance (laid on 26 August 2005 at the initiative of a students' study group). "Gerd Adolf Friedberger studied here. Born 1925, deported 1941, Lodz. Murdered 6.5.1942 in Chmelno"



A commemorative plaque on the air-raid shelter (installed after long discussions in 1979 at the initiative of teachers). "At this place stood the synagogue of the Jewish community in Solingen, inaugurated on 8 March 1872, destroyed by National Socialists in the night of 10 November 1938"

## Lithuania: Torn between Soviet and German repression

Stories about the Soviet deportation of Lithuanians in 1941 and the burning-down of whole villages during the Nazi occupation, has a special place in the school textbooks and Lithuanian public memory. Examples are given in the textbooks, like the punishment for the actions of Soviet partisans in 1944 when the Nazis burned down Pirčiupiai village with all its 119 residents — including babies and old people.

The textbooks also mention people who tried to save people persecuted by the Nazis.

A picture published in Bakonis' 10<sup>th</sup> grade textbook deals with the remembrance process: it shows the German Chancellor Willy Brandt kneeling in front of the Warsaw ghetto monument. The students are asked to judge Brandt's gesture, also in order to develop their own system of values (p. 108).



A locomotive was built on the site of the last stop where Lithuanians were deported to Siberia. Source: Wikimedia



Pirčiupiai: "The Mother", a monument in the memory of the village burned down by the Nazis (sculpturer G. Jokūbonis). Source: Lithuanian Central State Archive



## Poland: Heroism in national tragedy

In the Polish national memory, the beginning of the war is historically linked with the partitions of Poland in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The German and Soviet attack led to the 'Fourth Partition' of the country: It kept alive the idea of a 'lonely Poland' resulting from the oft-bemoaned military passivity on the part of the Western Allies.

The heroism of the Polish soldier during the September Campaign is glorified particularly in the light of the technological inferiority of the Polish army. It is ranked as equivalent to later military campaigns such as the Warsaw Uprising and the service of Polish soldiers in the British army, especially the Royal Air Force. The Battle of Westerplatte, with which the beginning of the war is associated, and the sign of anchor — Fighting Poland, referring to the Polish Underground State and their fight, are also symbols of heroism. The concentration camp at Auschwitz and the Katyn massacre stand for the tragic annihilation of the Polish elite and are sites mentioned in every school textbook.



The emblem of the Polish Underground State: the letter P stood for Poland and the W for Walka — fight; both were combined into the symbol of "anchor".  
© Archive of KARTA Centre



German Chancellor Brandt kneeling in front of the Warsaw ghetto monument, 7 December 1970.  
© ullstein bild

## Italy: Omission of remembrance

In the textbooks, remembrance days and memorials dedicated to the victims of the war are not mentioned. The official remembrance day in Italy is 25 April: on that day the National Liberation Committee (CLN) proclaimed the general insurrection against the Nazis. However, the fact that Italy proclaimed this day as the Commemoration day of the Liberation is not mentioned in the textbooks, neither in text nor images.

The textbooks do not deal with the topic of denazification in Germany. At the same time nothing is said about the way the new democratic Republic of Italy dealt with the difficult fascist legacy. The topic of how the post-war debates between the antifascist parties influenced the culture of remembrance is also missing.

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## Russia: Unnamed but not forgotten

The memory of WWII is scarcely covered in Russian history textbooks. A rare exception is a mention of the 'people's memory', which retains the names of commanders and heroes of the war (Kiselyov, Popov, p. 143). At the same time, pictures play an important role. All the textbooks contain the iconic images of the most well-known Soviet monuments and paintings about the war. Through them, students are supposed to learn about the most significant symbols of the war and the Soviet victory.



One of the iconic post-war monuments — Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Moscow.  
Source: Wikimedia

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Algis Bitautas is a PhD student at the Lithuanian University of Educational Science in Vilnius. At present, he's writing a PhD thesis on the topic "Multiperspective approaches in Lithuanian history textbooks for the secondary school grades 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>." Algis is doing research on history text-books, controversial historical topics, and the political history of the 20th century. He has published scientific articles referring to the topic of his thesis, and is one of the co-authors of the book "Biographical dictionary of the ministers of the Lithuanian Republic's government between 1918-40" and several history school textbooks and exercise books.

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## Štefan Čok

Štefan Čok, born in Trieste in 1983, is a member of the Slovene minority in Italy. He achieved a Master in History in Trieste and a PhD in History of Europe and the Mediterranean at the University of Primorska in Koper, Slovenia. Former President of the Trieste-Koper section of the ISHA (International Students of History Association), he has been collaborating with the Slovene Research Institute since 2012, and from 2015 with the historical and ethnological department of the Slovene national and study library, both in Trieste. In recent years he contributed to many projects related to the transmission of historical remembrance and awareness to the young generation.

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## Giulia De Florio

Giulia De Florio is a PhD student in Russian literature, and has a master's degree in Russian and English language and literature. She teaches Russian language at the State University of Parma and works as a freelance translator for various publishers. Member of Memorial Italia since 2013, she is actively involved in the projects of the association. In particular, Giulia was one of the translators and contributors of the exhibition "Vivere o scrivere. Varlam Šalamov" ("To live or to write. Varlam Shalamov") held in 2014 in various Italian cities. Together with Memorial Italia, she gave lectures about the role of media propaganda in the Ukrainian conflict in two different secondary schools in Milan in 2016.

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## Friedrich Huneke

Friedrich Huneke is a teacher at St. Ursula Gymnasium, Hanover, since 2005, and since 2008 a lecturer at the Department of History, Leibniz University, Hanover. He is also a Research Fellow at the Faculty of Historical Sciences, University of Bielefeld (1989-91), subject editor for History at Schroedel Educational Publishers, Hanover (1991-2003), and Research Fellow at the Georg-Eckert-Institute for International Schoolbook Research, Braunschweig (2007). Since 2011, he conceptualised binational summer schools with students from Germany and Russia on the subject of a shared European culture of memory. Additionally, he is the editor, author and co-author of many history books, e.g.: *Der 8. Mai 1945 in Reden deutscher Bundespräsidenten*, Schwalbach/Ts. 2012. At present, he co-authors the binational, Polish-German History Textbook: *Europa – Unsere Geschichte (Europe – Our History)*, Wiesbaden, with 4 volumes appearing subsequently from 2017.

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Nikita Lomakin, PhD (2013), is an archive researcher and project coordinator at Memorial International in Russia. He publishes archives of organisations, including the collections of the Oral History Center ([tastorona.su](http://tastorona.su)) and GULAG memoirs. Nikita contributed to several of Memorial's media, exhibition, and publishing projects such as "Monitoring of History politics" (2012-13, media project about modern state policy), "Dad's Letters" (2014, book and exhibition about letters that fathers wrote to their children from GULAG camps), "The Right of Correspondence" (2014, book and exhibition about letters from GULAG camps from the 1930-50s), and the Russian national competition of history research papers "Man in History. Russia in 20th Century" (2010-15). Besides his authorship, he edited the Russian version of the exhibition "Different Wars" (2016).

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## Kristina Smolijanovaitė

Kristina Smolijanovaitė is a Deputy Director at the Secretariat of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum in Berlin. Since October 2011, she has contributed to several CSF projects, including the European Forum for Young Professionals "Pilorama Lab" (now "Europe Lab"), "Visa Experts Focused on Visa Facilitation and Liberalisation" and "Youth Exchanges". Since 2015 Kristina has been leading a capacity building programme and a grant programme for Forum members. Following her personal interest in the dealing with conflicting memory, its relation to the political structure, and democracy building in Russia and the EU, Kristina initiated the Forum's Working Group "Historical Memory and Education" in 2013 that launched the exhibition "Different Wars". She has been coordinating the work of the group till January 2017. Kristina studied cultural heritage studies and languages in Lithuania, Germany, and Turkey.

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## Terezie Vávrová

Terezie Vávrová is currently the director of the NGO Antikomplex in Prague, which is active in the field of history and citizenship education. She graduated from the Faculty of Social Sciences of the Charles University in Prague with a degree in international relations and political science, and studied modern history at the Free University in Berlin. Tereza led international educational projects working with local and oral history methods, and worked as a trainer of intercultural and experiential learning for educational NGOs and schools. She has experience participating in theatre, intercultural counselling, and soft skills lecturing. She is working on her PhD thesis "The perspectives of citizenship education through modern history".

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## Alicja Wancerz-Gluza

Alicja Wancerz-Gluza, a teacher of Polish cultural heritage and languages by profession, was actively involved in the Polish opposition movement “Solidarnosc”. In the 1980s, under Martial Law in Poland, she founded (with her husband Zbigniew Gluza) the anti-regime magazine KARTA, from which The KARTA Center Foundation later emerged. It is an independent non-governmental organization primarily focused on mapping modern history in Poland and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Alicja is member of the Board of KARTA. She contributed especially to educational projects focused on young people in Poland and the surrounding states. Since 1997 she is organising an annual history research competition for secondary school students and runs the website “Learning from history”, which has a Russian counterpart: “uroki istorii”.

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## Gudrun Wolff

Gudrun Wolff studied Slavic studies, Eastern European history, and art history in Tübingen, Vienna and Münster. She worked as a history, Russian, and art teacher at a German secondary school. Since 1979 she has led study trips to Russia and initiated school exchange programmes with Russian students. As a co-founder, chairman, and board member of the association for the encouragement of German-Russian relations (Gesellschaft zur Förderung der deutsch-russischen Beziehungen Münster/Münsterland e.V.) and vice-chairman of the Federation of German West-East Associations, her interest lies in intercultural understanding and networking, and the encouragement of civil society structures in Russia. She is the author and co-author of “Frauen in Georgien. Erzähltes Leben”, Tiflis 2009, and “Der Zeit voraus. Grenzgänge im Ural”, Ludwigsburg 2011.

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Julia Volmer-Naumann, PhD, is a freelance collaborator of the Geschichtsort Villa ten Hompel in Münster. She studied history, German, English, Dutch and educational science at the University of Münster. Before moving to the French-Swiss border near Geneva in 2006, she worked as a scientific researcher at the University of Münster and the Villa ten Hompel. Julia was a Fellow at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., in 2003. She curated the exhibition “Wiedergutmachung als Auftrag” about the compensation for Nazi victims after WWII. Her thesis published in 2012 had the same topic: “Bürokratische Bewältigung. Entschädigung für nationalsozialistisch Verfolgte im Regierungsbezirk Münster”. She has written and edited texts and books dealing with WWII and its aftermath, and contributed to several exhibitions, e.g. “Les résistances au nazisme à Münster et dans le Münsterland”, Orléans 2010, or “Geschichte – Gewalt – Gewissen”, Münster 2015.

# Imprints

## Exhibition

### Different Wars: National School Textbooks on WWII

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