

## Address of the mayor of Gdynia

A study project "Gdynia during World War II" has been implemented by Gdynia City Hall since 2007.

Among the partners in the project there are: State Archive in Gdansk – branch in Gdynia, The Institute of National Remembrance – branch in Gdańsk, Public Municipal Library in Gdynia, Gdynia City Museum, Stutthof State Museum in Sztutowo, The KARTA Foundation Center in Warsaw.



The following associations are engaged as well: Polish Nautological Association, Association of Displaced Gdynia Inhabitants, Association "Piaśnica Family", Association "Katyń Family", Association of Gdynia's Enthusiasts, Union of Associations in Gdynia. There are many volunteers, involved in this project and I'd like to express my gratitude towards them.

The aim of our initiative is to gather both objective and, if possible, complete information concerning the history of our city during the most dramatic period for Europe, Poland and Gdynia, namely during the World War II. Gdynia, the maritime capital of Poland, similarly to Warsaw, the capital of Poland, has got specific reasons to develop such initiatives.

Gdynia was founded thanks to an immense engagement of the Polish state and the people. In a record period of 13 years Gdynia developed into the biggest port in the Baltic Sea and one of the largest in Europe. A beautiful and modern city was created around the port, with a population of 120,000 citizens. This has been an unparalleled achievement in modern Europe.

The population of "Great Gdynia" consisted of Kashubians, origin inhabitants of: Gdynia, Oksywie, Obłuże, Pogórze, Chylonia, Grabówek, Cisowa, Mały and Wielki Kack, Witomino, Wiczlino, Redłowo, Orłowo and Kolibki – as well as people coming from different corners of Poland, full of initiative, bravery and openness. We feel that it is our duty to study and popularize the wartime fate of Gdynia and its citizens. People and the city dear to whole Poland.

In the tragic September 1939 Gdynia was one of the last to surrender. That was only possible because of strong patriotism of people living in Gdynia, who supported the Polish Army in a mental, financial as well as material way – before the outbreak of World War II and during the defense of Gdynia.

The civil administration, led by the State Commissioner Franciszek Sokół, created an exemplary civil defense. The Polish Army, commanded by Col. Stanisław Dąbek, together with the Polish Navy, formations of State Police, Border Guard, scouts, volunteers – among them desperate scythe-bearing

citizens of Gdynia – is a very characteristic evidence for professionalism, devotion and courage.

The civic and patriotic attitude of the citizens of Gdynia before the World War II and during the defense of the city resulted in putting many heroic people in German proscription list.

Soon after the Germans had occupied the city, repressions started against the civil population who was not protected by the Geneva Convention. Atrocious crimes were committed on 11th November 1939: in Obłuże a group of ten boys blamed for breaking a window was executed whereas in Piaśnica woods hundreds of eminent citizens of Gdynia were killed.

Citizens of Gdynia – seamen of the Polish Navy and merchant fleet had never lowered their weapons. They fought for victory from the first until the last day of the war onboard "Gdynia's" warships and merchant ships.

The citizens of Gdynia took part in active and passive resistance, weakening the occupants. One of the most meaningful participations of Gdynia's inhabitants was in the scouts "Grey Rows", Home Army and in the Warsaw Uprising. Many of them lost their lives in a heroic way.

For many citizens of Gdynia fighting in the West the victory of the Allies in 1945 wasn't a victory of free Poland. They stayed in the free world, but abroad. After the war, many of the displaced citizens of Gdynia had either no possibility to return to their hometown. Finally, they voluntarily decided to settle down outside the city.

Such great dispersion of the population of Gdynia justifies establishing contact and cooperation via internet.

On 1st September 2008 we launched the website of our project and we count on growing public interest concerning its content.

I would like to ask for cooperation with all people who are interested in our study project, own any documents or know anything about the fate of Gdynia or its citizens during World War II.

Wojciech Szczurek, PhD  
Mayor of Gdynia

Gdynia, 2008

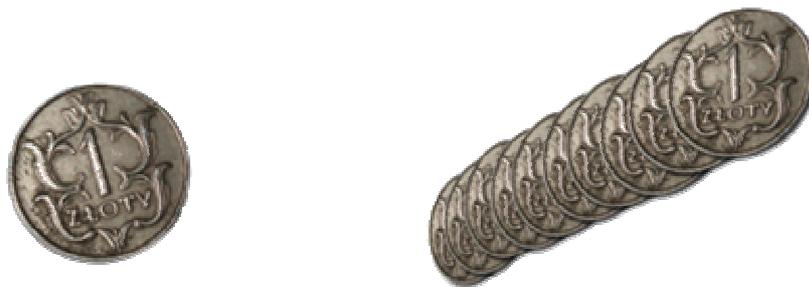
## Address of the project coordinator

Losses suffered by the city of Gdynia and its inhabitants in World War II

### A. Objectives of the research project

The general balance of World War II shows that the biggest losses were suffered by civilians, especially by the town and city dwellers. The results of the statistical estimations having been made to date reveal that from among all the countries involved in World War II the biggest human losses were suffered by Poland. They amounted to 16.07 % of the general population of the Republic of Poland.

The preliminary estimations of the material losses – ones carried out mainly on the basis of the war indemnities claims (according to prices of August 31st, 1939) – amounted to 250 billion zloties. The amount is equivalent to 10 state budgets of Poland planned for the budget year 1939/40.



From today's perspective and state of knowledge, one can however claim that the establishing of the war experiences of Poland and Polish people was carried out without elementary honesty and diligence. The communistic authorities of the Polish People's Republic failed to make any reliable estimation of the casualties and the material losses of Poland. They could not and did not want to show what had happened in Poland's territories occupied by the USSR at the beginning of the war and those occupied by the Soviet Army over the years 1944-1945.

Even today, 63 years after the war, the war-time lot of hundred thousands of the citizens of Poland has not been fully examined and described – especially that of the Eastern borderlands dwellers. The findings concerning the casualties and the material losses in the territories occupied by the German III Reich are of varying reliability levels and they do not exceed the sphere of numbers and percentage, either.

Such a situation cannot be accepted in any democratic country. It burdens the successive generations of Polish people with a guilt of negligence. The ever increasing distance from the period of World War II renders things more and more difficult to the researches: the witnesses pass away, documents

fade and even disappear. Towns and cities have their own mission in the task of revealing Poland's tragic war history as a whole – especially the important ones such as the country's capital – Warsaw, or the capital of the Greater Poland voivodeship – Poznań.

For almost a year, in cooperation with professional governmental and city institutions, active social organizations and volunteers, the mission has also been conducted by the Gdynia selfgovernment. Launching the project-related websites is a milestone in bringing the project closer to the public and reaching its aims. Therefore, besides the politic will of establishing the truth, in our researches we can make use of high technologies, public funds and the possibilities of a cooperation – at least within the area of the European Union.

The research project Gdynia in the period of World War II undertakes the task of creating the basis – the starting point for the research of the city's war experiences. We are to make it possible for all the persons interested that they can the verify the former findings with respect of their legal situation or establish such a situation basing on the official documents. We are to assist (but not to do their work) the institutions and organizations that have been created for the subject purpose and the persons immediately interested in learning the truth.

The need for the research project comes from the belief that the Borough of Gdynia cannot base its knowledge of the city's and its citizens' war experiences on the superficial, unreliable and false assessment of the consequences of World War II which was made in 1945.

It has been found that:

1. Most of the pre-war citizens of Gdynia did not have any possibility of reporting the losses, particularly the casualties, as suffered by them or their relatives. Many citizens, frequently whole families, died and nobody asked about the absent ones, unless they were well-known persons.

2. The written sources, documents informing of the repressions against the Gdynia citizens, are incomplete, dispersed and have not been worked out. No reconstruction of the documents (for instance those concerning the concentration camps prisoners) the originals of which were destroyed, or a digitalization of the survived ones, is made. At the same time, it has been found that the State Archive in Gdansk – Branch in Gdynia keeps, with due diligence, a documentation that may render the project implementation possible.

3. Numerous acts of violence on the part of the occupants (like property forfeiture) were used by the communist authorities in their taking over the "former German property" in Gdynia (!). The obvious damages or war losses – especially those affecting natural persons or private companies – were not revealed.

One of the most important publications concerning Gdynia – “Dzieje Gdyni” (“History of Gdynia”) by Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich (Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk 1980), edited by prof. R. Wapiński, contains the following estimation of the casualties of the city:

"The exact number of the murdered or lost citizens of Gdynia can hardly be estimated. The source data do not cover all the people and they are full of inaccuracies, so the extent of the losses is difficult to be estimated. Therefore, we can quote it solely as an example that among the victims of the Nazi terror there were 15 councillors of the Industry & Commerce Chamber, 12 teachers, 14 catholic priests, 65 members of Polish Western Union, 24 officers of the State Investigation Police, 10 employees of the Maritime Chamber, 10 boys from the Obłuże neighbourhood and 31 merchants”.

In total – 191 persons

B. Findings resulting from the hitherto implementation of the project

I. Damages and losses suffered by the citizens of Gdynia

Following the order of the Mayor of Gdynia dated July 26th 1945, the War Indemnities Section of the Gdynia City Administration started a registration of the war damages. The registration covered those war damages which occurred in relation to movable properties and workshops owned by natural or legal persons as well as the non-material damages.

The registration had to be completed and the collected data sent over to the office of the district authorities (starostwo) till the date of August 20th, 1945. The evidencing of the war damages was carried out by the registration commissioners who used special ‘Questionnaires concerning the war damages to towns and cities’.

The Questionnaires were filled up by the harmed persons by way of their listing the material and non-material damages suffered by them.

The non-material damages covered:

1. physical impairment (permanent disability, serious health violence, hard body injury, rape);
2. mental impairment (permanent disability, serious mental impairment);
3. loss of life of a breadwinner (resulting from war activities, murdering, staying in prison, concentration and penal camps etc., forced labour, injuries, diseases, exhaustion, hiding out),
4. moral losses (resulting from the loss of life of the next of kin, physical or mental impairment of the closest relatives, loss of the closest relatives, forced separation, race and ethnic persecution etc.).

Collecting the Questionnaires was conducted for (only) 24 days.

Over that period (July – August 1945), the number of the inhabitants of Gdynia amounted to 30,000, i.e. 30 % of the number of the permanent residents in June 30th, 1939 (98,775) and 24 % of total of the inhabitants (127,300).

Many of the 30,000 persons completing the Questionnaires had not lived in Gdynia before the war. Some Questionnaires related only to the lot of one family as they were submitted by several members of such a family.

There are 7716 Questionnaires in the State Archive in Gdansk – Branch Office in Gdynia. Therefore, the extent to which the evidencing of the damages and losses suffered by the citizens of Gdynia in World War II was intended to be representative, as well as the knowledge of the scale of the repressions against its pre-war citizens, is very low. The data in the Questionnaires placed in Gdynia were not updated with the data in the Questionnaires submitted by the Gdynia citizens at their new places of residence. No other documentation, e.g. the one concerning the extermination of Jewish people or the actions of mass displacing of civilians off Gdynia, was used.

The first mass displacing of the Gdynia citizens took place without any prior announcement. On 12.10.1939, the police president SS Brigadeführer Christoph Diehl ordered that the evacuation of the people from the Polish district of Orłowo had be completed by 9 a.m., Thursday, 12th October 1939.

1. People are to gather in front of the Civilian Administration building at Orłowska St., at 9 a.m.
2. The apartments should be left open. The keys should be left in the doors of the rooms and apartments. Any entering the apartments after 9.00 a.m. shall be considered as an act of sabotage.
3. One can basically take only a hand luggage (clothes, underwear, cutlery and personal precious belongings). Furniture as well as other equipment belonging to the apartment should be left inside.
4. Any damages to the apartments or equipment will be considered as an act of sabotage.
5. Everybody who has been found guilty of sabotage or – against the ban – possesses arms, shall be executed.

Time for fulfilling the order – 20 minutes.

Until 26th October 1939, over 50,000 citizens of Gdynia, i.e. most of the permanent city dwellers had been displaced. The action (being continued during the whole occupation period) concerned those who after the re-gaining of the Pomeranian region by Poland in 1920 came to Gdynia to build and develop the town. The local people (autochthons) could stay in the city, but they were displaced from the central districts to the outskirts of the town. The dwelling conditions as well as the general living conditions in the town

became dramatically worse. The property of the persons being displaced or replaced – movables and real properties – were confiscated.

From the first day of the occupation of Gdynia, i.e. 14th September 1939, there was conducted an action of mass arresting of the persons who might offer or organise resistance (e.g. those entered in the so-called "black book" – Sonderfahnungsbuch Polen).

The arrested ones were put to collective camps (also in Gdynia), in the Stutthof concentration camp or murdered (in the forests of Piaśnica). Many citizens of Gdynia who had been called up by the army in August 1939, were killed or found themselves in prisoner-of-war camps. Their property was left without any protection – most often it became the spoils of the German authorities or the Germans who came to Gdynia.

There has not been found any of elaboration of the Questionnaires featuring the volume of the damages to the health or lives of the citizens of Gdynia, or the war damages to the property of those citizens.

## II. Damages and losses suffered by the Borough of Gdynia

The registration of the war damages suffered by the self-government, state institutions, and the damages to buildings was carried out by Powszechny Zakład Ubezpieczeń Wzajemnych [General Establishment for Mutual Insurance].

1. It was determined that – as a result of the destroying or taking away of the property owned by the municipal enterprises – the city suffered losses, ones reckoned according to the prices as of 31st August 1939, totalling 12,884,174,00 zloties. The ordinary budget for the year 1938/1939 amounted to 9,950,000,00 zloties (approx. 74 % of the losses amount).

The cost of recovering the city's possessions of August 1939 – according to current prices (February 1946) amounted to 227,656,263 zloties. The ordinary city budget for the budget year 1946 amounted to approx. 168 million zloties (approx. 74 % of the reconstruction costs).



*Marine Terminal before the war and nowadays*

The information of 'reconstructing' the state of the possessions held by the city in August 1939 was untrue. Examples: the railway station – destroyed during the bombing of the city – was replaced by a new one only in the year 1950. The Marine Terminal has not been reconstructed till today.

In practice, all the cultural properties of Gdynia – museum pieces, libraries, collections, owned by municipal or private collectors, often very precious ones, have been lost for ever.

No calculations were made, even rough ones, concerning the lost advantages of the State, the city and its citizens, i.e. the advantages resulting from the economic, cultural or educational activity, which had been carried out before the war and stopped by the war. The consequences of the health or life losses, and the disabilities suffered by citizens of Gdynia, i.e. the cost of medical treatment, disability benefits have not been estimated, either.

There has not been found any collective elaboration featuring the volume of the losses suffered by the state institutions in the city (i.e. those outside the area administered by the Maritime Office in Gdynia – this especially including the sea port) and the damages to the buildings.

2. Convoled by the Minister of Industry in 1945, The Marine War Losses Indemnity Commission carried out the registration of the war losses in the field of the maritime industry. The Commission determined the damages and losses in the Ministry of Shipping sector over the years 1939-1945 (according to the value of Polish zloty on 31st August, 1939) to amount to 839,947 million zloties.

To Gdynia, there fell not less than 34 % of the amount (item 4 refers to Gdansk and Gdynia):

1. the merchant sea port in Gdynia.....	118,375,000 zloties
2. the naval port at Oksywie.....	11,160,000 zloties
3. the shipping business (merchant vessels).....	96,858,000 zloties
4. the port enterprises (of Gdynia and Gdansk) .....	20,000 zloties
5. the sea fishery.....	27,888,000 zloties
6. the shipyards in Gdynia.....	4,462,000 zloties
7. various offices and institutions of Gdynia.....	10,089,000 zloties
8. special costs (removing the damages) .....	18,947,000 zloties.
TOTAL.....	297,771,000 zloties

The Marine War Losses Indemnity Commission consisted of numerous specialists who had been employed in the maritime industry of Poland.

The calculations made by them may therefore be considered to be reliable.

C. Current project tasks

In view of the circumstances presented above, the research project Gdynia in the period of World War II is aimed mainly at integrating Gdynia's citizens around the important and highly necessary goal – establishing the war experiences of the Gdynia citizens.

We want to achieve the goal by popularising and using the Internet. We hope that the attractiveness and availability of the project websites designed by Konrad Niżnik and by one of the volunteers – Maciej Chmielarz who also made the website, will help to achieve the project's objectives.

It was the citizens of Gdynia, not their city, who were the main target of the occupant's repression. The project is mainly devoted to them.

The research project is implemented in several scopes:

1. Establishing the full complement of the Gdynia society on the basis of the official documents: the residence entry certificates and the Book of Addresses; creating a computer data base of all the Gdynia citizens registered as permanent residents as of 31st August, 1939.

Making the necessary analysis of the society of Gdynia – this including its state of possession, professional, social and political activity, economic, social, sports or religious organizations. Getting to know the state of the society of Gdynia as of the year 1939 is the key to learning the scale of the destruction made by the war.

These actions have led to the reconstruction and verification of Gdynia's Book of Addresses (the last one that was published at the turn of the year 1937). Its fragment concerning the city dwellers allows one to use a computer technique in conducting researches focused on the structure of the city settlement, the labour activity of its inhabitants, the organization of the life of the city.

The Book of Addresses (the part of it concerning the Gdynia citizens), which is published in the bookmark 'The Gdynia Book of Addresses', will successively be supplemented with other parts of the elaboration. The copying of the Book of Addresses enabled one to make many corrections in it – mainly by unifying the names of the streets and job categories. Also, the alphabetic order was introduced.

A researcher dealing, for instance, with the structure of the settlement in a specific neighbourhood or a street has now at his disposal a unified nomenclature of the streets or job categories (and not – as in the original of the Book – different names of the same street or a job). This is a matter of a great significance where a computer technique is being used.

2. The residence registration documentation is being copied – the one supplementing and verifying the information contained in the Book of Addresses. The documentation shall be successively published on the project websites.

3. The Questionnaires concerning the war damages to towns and cities are being elaborated with a view to supplementing the List of casualties in Gdynia in World War II. Then, the data concerning the other non-material losses (except for the loss of life) will be elaborated.

In collaboration with the project partners, there will be developed a project aimed at creating the digital reserves of the cultural heritage (archival files on the World War II period) – as part the programme titled 'Cultural heritage' of the Ministry of Culture. Within the framework of the project, a preliminary research of the archives is to be carried out, one aimed at finding out if they contain the 1945 Questionnaires and other documents concerning the dislocated Gdynia citizens.

4. The project has taken over the initiative of the Union of the Gdynia Associations: GDYNIA CITIZENS – a list (not full as yet) of casualties in Gdynia during World War II – the civilians.

The initiative, which was started in 1999 by the publication of a list of 700 names, was carried out till the year 2008 when a list of approx. 2400 full names was collected and published. Due to the participation in the project of the State Archive in Gdańsk and the involvement of Ms. Katarzyna Wojciechowska – a probationer in the Gdynia City Hall and Mr Andrzej Szerle – a student and a trainee in the Gdynia City Hall, a publication of a list featuring over 3,000 names is quite possible.

5. Public (open) meetings with the citizens aimed at popularising the project are organised, a recruitment of volunteers and gaining information sources are also being conducted.

6. Placing the designs of the materials to be used in teaching history at schools on the project website is being planned as well.

7. The English version of the project website will successively be developed.

Ryszard Toczek  
Project Coordinator, Head of the City Development Office

Gdynia, 2008