

# Witold Pilecki – The Unsung Hero of World War II Intelligence

## Lesson Plan 1: Under the German Nazi Occupation

### CREATE THE CONTEXT

*(for homework or in class the previous day)*

**A** | Ask students what they know about the beginning of World War II in Europe (September 1, 1939, as opposed to December 7, 1941) and the ensuing occupation of Poland. Briefly explain the course of Germany's attack on Poland on September 1, 1939, followed by the attack by the Soviet Union on September 17, 1939. Inform them about concentration camps under both occupations.

**B** | Have students read, think about, and answer the following:

- Read Background Information: Witold Pilecki paper, pp. 50–94 and Pilecki's original report from Auschwitz, pp. 2, 12–40, 191–195 ([Raport-Witolda\\_EN.pdf](#) ([victimsofcommunism.org](http://victimsofcommunism.org)))
- Think about and answer the following questions:
  1. What is the common perception of the initial years of World War II in countries throughout Western Europe and the United States?
  2. What did the German and Soviet attacks on Poland in 1939 mean to the Poles?
  3. What was the Warsaw Uprising (August 1, 1944–October 2, 1944)?
  4. What is Witold Pilecki's attitude toward his report?
  5. What did he focus on after escaping the concentration camp?

(See **Answer Key**.)

### PSA (Primary Source Activity) [5 minutes]

**A** | Distribute the Maps of occupied Poland to students. Have them locate the Auschwitz concentration camp, working individually or in pairs. Compare that map with the map of all concentration camps in the Third Reich. Check how many were located in the Reich and how many were within the area of the occupied Polish lands.

(See **Answer Key**.)

**B** | Ask students about the Nazi laws toward the Polish citizens in those parts of the occupied zone. Were they different or similar to the Soviet policies in the Polish lands annexed by the Soviet Union?

### ACTIVITY A [15 minutes]

**A** | Prior to class, duplicate, shuffle, and post around the room the descriptions of a regular day at the camp according to the monograph on Pilecki and Pilecki's original report.

**B** | Ask students to work together to establish the correct order of daily activities.  
(See **Answer Key**.)

**C** | Ask students to comment on every aspect of a working day at the camp mentioned above. Encourage students to explain their reasoning. Ask them the following:

- Are they surprised by the reality of the camp, and if so, why?
- What do they think about the nature of camp labor? How is it similar to slavery? How is it different?

### **ACTIVITY B** *[15 minutes]*

**A** | Explain to students that the Nazi state could be compared to a mafia or a terrorist organization (in line with Pawełczyńska's classification).

**B** | Distribute the excerpts with Pawełczyńska's classification to students and give them a few minutes to read and evaluate whether they would agree with her perception of the Nazi state. Ask them to justify their answer.  
(See **Answer Key**.)

### **WRAP-UP** *[10 minutes]*

Ask the class to discuss in what way the nature of the Nazi state enabled the creation of concentration camps.

### **IMMEDIATE ASSESSMENT**

**A** | Write an imaginary monologue of Pilecki explaining the reasons for his decision to volunteer for the concentration camp.

**B** | Find online cartoons from September 1, 1939, that describe the situation in Europe and depict the German and Soviet attacks on Poland.

**C** | In a well-written 3–4 paragraph essay, explain why the conditions presented in Witold's Report from Auschwitz pp. 12–40 infringed upon the personal freedom and dignity of a camp prisoner.