

## TEACHER'S GUIDE

### *Poland's Important Role in World War II*

#### LESSON PLAN 4

**Title:** *Poland helps the Allies defeat Germany; The Allies betray Poland; Enslavement under Soviet Communism for the next 45 years.*

**Learning Objectives:** Students will be able to identify key Polish military contributions to the Allied victory over Germany. Students will be able to describe how the Allies betrayed Poland.

**Learning Standards Addressed:** As determined by Teacher.

**Materials:** Computer projector; PowerPoint slides, Teacher's Guide

#### **Procedure:**

##### **1. Introduction:**

- a. Inform students that in this lesson they will learn about the following four important topics:
  - 1) Major battles in which Polish forces defeated German forces in Allied military operations.
  - 2) Polish technological achievements that contributed to the Allied victory over Germany.
  - 3) Critical intelligence Poland gave to the Allies that helped defeat Germany.
  - 4) How the Allies betrayed Poland after Poland fought and died helping the Allies defeat Germany.

##### **2. Direct Instruction:**

- a. **IDENTIFY THREE MAJOR BATTLES IN WHICH POLISH FORCES DEFEATED GERMAN FORCES IN ALLIED MILITARY OPERATIONS.**

##### **i. Introduction.**

1. *Poles provided crucial help to the Allies throughout the war, fighting on land, on the seas, and in the air. Although Hitler and Stalin together were able to defeat Poland, **the Poles never formally surrendered**. Polish authorities ordered remaining Polish forces to make their way to France and England. When France quickly surrendered to Hitler in 1940, Polish forces in France went to England, where they formed new army, air force, and naval units.*
2. *A second group of Polish forces was formed by Poles whom Stalin deported to Soviet Russia during 1939-1941. When Hitler attacked Stalin in 1941, Stalin quickly "pardoned" the deported Poles with an "amnesty" and made them form an army to help fight Hitler. The leader of the "amnestied" Poles was General Władysław Anders. However, because Stalin would not provide sufficient weapons and equipment, Anders went to Iran with 74,000 Polish soldiers and 41,000 civilians, many of whom were children.*

- a. *The Polish soldiers then went to Palestine and formed an army under the British called the 2nd Polish Corps.*
  - b. *The Polish civilians were sent to British-controlled territories that included Iran, India, New Zealand, Kenya, and South Africa.*
3. ***These two Polish military groups were called the “Polish Forces in the West” and grew to become the Allies’ fourth largest army after the Americans, British, and Soviets. As you will see, the “Polish Forces in the West”, together with the underground Polish Home Army in occupied Poland, contributed significantly to the Allied victory over Germany.***

ii. **DISPLAY SLIDE 2 (Battle of Britain – Largest Air Battle of the War).**

1. **Read summary paragraph for Slide 2 below.**

2. ***Battle of Britain.***

- a. ***Summary.*** *The Battle of Britain was a 3-month air battle fought over the skies of England in 1940. German bombers tried to soften up British defenses so the Germans could invade by land. Polish RAF fighter squadrons weren’t allowed to join the battle when it started because the British thought there would be language problems. With British pilot losses mounting rapidly, the Poles were finally allowed to engage the Germans and the performance of the 303<sup>rd</sup> Kosciuszko Squadron was extraordinary. **It was the highest scoring unit in the Battle of Britain and shot down 126 German planes in 6 weeks.** On one mission over London, it downed 14 enemy planes without a single loss. NOTE: Two Polish fighter squadrons fought in the Battle of Britain; the 302<sup>nd</sup> and the 303<sup>rd</sup>. The other fighter squadrons listed fought the Luftwaffe in later campaigns.*

iii. **DISPLAY SLIDE 3 (Battle of Monte Cassino, Italy).**

1. **Read summary paragraph for Slide 3 below.**

2. ***Battle of Monte Cassino, Italy***

- a. ***Summary.*** *In one of the most important battles of the war, Hitler’s Gustav Line blocked the Allies from advancing northward to Rome and Monte Cassino had to be taken. The Germans were fortified in an abbey atop a small mountain and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Polish Corps, led by General Władysław Anders, was ordered to attack the German position. The fighting was fierce and at times hand-to-hand but the Poles finally prevailed. This enabled the Allies to advance northward to*

*Rome and the Polish 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps went on to liberate the Italian cities of Loreto, Ancona, Faenza, and Bologna.*

- iv. **DISPLAY SLIDE 4 (Battle of Falaise Gap, France).**
  - 1. Read summary paragraph for Slide 4 below.
  - 2. **Battle of Falaise Gap, France**
    - a. **Summary.** *The Battle of Falaise Gap was the final battle of Normandy and was key to the liberation of France. Two German armies were surrounded by U.S., British, Canadian, and Polish forces near the town of Falaise. The only escape for the Germans was through the Falaise Gap. The Polish 1st Armoured Division, led by General Stanisław Maczek, blocked their escape with constant and accurate fire. The Germans, who were four times their size, launched fierce counter-attacks that inflicted considerable losses on the Poles. Although exhausted and dangerously low on ammunition and fuel, they managed to beat back the Germans. This collapsed the German position in France and was a crushing defeat for Germany. **The Polish 1st Armoured Division then advanced eastward and liberated the cities of Ypres, Oostnieuwkerke, Roeselare, Tielt, Ruislede, and Ghent in Belgium and the city of Breda in the Netherlands.***
  
- v. **DISPLAY SLIDE 5 (Polish Navy Fights in Major Allied Operations).**
  - 1. Read summary paragraph for Slide 5 below.
  - 2. **Polish Navy.**
    - a. **Summary.** *The Polish Navy fought the German Navy alongside the Allied navies **in Norway, the North Sea, the Atlantic, and the Mediterranean.** Polish naval vessels participated in the sinking of the German battleship Bismarck, the landings in Normandy during D-Day, and the evacuation of Allied forces at Dunkirk. The Polish Navy also sank an enemy destroyer, 6 other surface ships, 5 submarines, and 41 merchant vessels. Polish ships escorted 787 convoys in the Atlantic and Arctic oceans and participated in multiple naval battles.*
  
- b. **IDENTIFY POLISH TECHNOLOGICAL ACHIEVEMENTS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ALLIED VICTORY OVER GERMANY.**

- i. **Introduction.** *The Poles developed a number of technological innovations that were crucial to the success of various Allied military operations. These included cracking the German Enigma code, a land mine detector, a tank periscope, an aircraft bomb release system, and a high frequency direction finder for locating German submarines.*
  
- ii. **DISPLAY SLIDE 6 (Polish mathematicians broke the German Enigma code).**
  - 1. **Read summary paragraph for Slide 6 below.**
  - 2. **Summary. Breaking the German encryption machine Enigma was perhaps the greatest Polish contribution to the Allied victory.** *While the British used linguists to break codes, the Poles (Marian Rejewski, Henryk Zygalski, and Jerzy Różycki) were far ahead by using mathematics and sophisticated equations. Five weeks before Hitler attacked Poland, the Poles secretly met with French and British intelligence officers, showed their procedures for code breaking, and gave them functioning replicas of the Enigma. Using what the Poles gave them, the British built a powerful computing system that deciphered the vast number of the Enigma's permutations with considerable accuracy. **This Polish technology transfer gave the Allies a unique advantage in achieving victory in World War II.***
  
- iii. **DISPLAY SLIDE 7 (Polish land mine detector, tank periscope, bomb slip, and HF/DF system).**
  - 1. **Read summary paragraphs for Slide 7 below.**
  - 2. **Summary.**
    - a. *The British Army chose the Polish Mark 1 mine detector over their own prototype. Invented by Józef Kosacki, more than 100,000 were produced during the war. The Mark 1 mine detector was used in the Allied invasions of Normandy, Sicily, and Italy.*
    - b. *The Polish tank periscope was invented by Rudolph Gundlach. The patent was bought by the British and renamed the Vickers Tank Periscope. It was used in most Soviet, British, and American tanks and its main advantage was that the tank commander no longer had to turn his head in order to look backwards. The design was also used later by the Germans.*
    - c. *The Świątecki bomb slip was a bomb release system invented by Władysław Świątecki, who then gave his patent to the British. It was used in various British bombers and an*

*updated version was created for the American B-17 Flying Fortress.*

- d. *The Royal Navy needed to install a high frequency/direction finding (HF/DF) system on their ships that located the HF transmissions used by German U-Boats. Polish engineer Waclaw Struszyński led the British team that developed the antenna system for it. These HF/DF systems were very effective in finding and sinking U-Boats in the Battle of the Atlantic.*

**c. IDENTIFY CRITICAL INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION THAT POLES PROVIDED TO THE ALLIES.**

- i. **Introduction.** *Polish intelligence services provided a wide range of invaluable information to the Allies. Extensive intelligence was provided by the Home Army, agents inside occupied Poland, and networks in other European countries.*

**ii. DISPLAY SLIDE 8 (Poles Provide Critical Intelligence to the Allies).**

**1. Read summary paragraph for Slide 8 below.**

**2. Summary.**

- a. *Poland's underground Home Army gave the British crucial information on Germany's secret-weapons projects, including the V-1 and V-2 rockets, which enabled the British to set these programs back by bombing the launch sites. The Home Army also recovered a V-2 rocket from a test launch and secretly shipped it to Britain. In addition to providing daily intelligence on German troop movements, railway transports, and ammunition depots, the Home Army gave the British extensive intelligence about Hitler's preparations for his surprise invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941.*
- b. **Auschwitz.** *Captain Witold Pilecki allowed himself to be captured by the Germans and become a prisoner at Auschwitz. He was there nearly three years gathering intelligence and forming a resistance network. His reports were the first that described how the Germans were killing Jews in what would later be called the "Holocaust". Pilecki escaped from Auschwitz and fought in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising. After the war, he was arrested by the Communist authorities and executed.*

**iii. DISPLAY SLIDE 9 (Jan Karski, "Brutus", and "Rygor").**

1. Read summary paragraphs for Slide 9 below.

2. Summary.

a. **Warsaw Ghetto.** Jan Karski was a secret courier who was directed to report on German atrocities in occupied Poland. He was twice smuggled into the Warsaw Ghetto to observe the horrifying conditions there. He was also smuggled into the Izbica Lubelska transit camp where Jews were confined awaiting transport to the Treblinka and Majdanek extermination camps. Karski reported his findings to President Roosevelt, Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, and British Foreign Secretary Eden, all of whom acted with indifference. He remained in the U.S. and after the war became a professor at Georgetown University.

b. **Spy Networks in Other Countries.**

i. **France.** A network of Polish agents, called **Interallie**, was established in occupied France that provided accurate information to the British on German troop movements, landing fields, naval bases, and radar sites. The director was a double agent with the codename **Brutus** who convinced the Germans that he would spy for them in England. He actually worked for the British and passed false information that **convinced the Germans the Allies would invade at Pas de Calais instead of Normandy.**

ii. **Algeria.** Another network, called **Agency Africa**, was established in Algiers. The intelligence this network provided was key to the success of Operation Torch, the Allied invasion of French North Africa, which was launched against the German forces in French Morocco and French Algeria. The intelligence this network provided enabled the Allies to seize the entire French part of North Africa within 24 hours.

d. **IDENTIFY FOUR TIMES WHEN THE ALLIES (U.S., BRITAIN, AND FRANCE) BETRAYED POLAND.**

i. **Introduction.** Throughout the war, Poland fought and died for the Allies in key military actions. Poland gave the Enigma to the Allies, which shortened the war. Poland gave the Allies highly valuable intelligence that helped defeat the Germans. Poland gave the Allies important technological innovations that were used in many military actions. Despite Poland's sacrifices for and contributions to the Allies, the Allies betrayed Poland and subjected the Poles to Soviet Communist rule for the next 45 years.

1. **DISPLAY SLIDE 10 (Allies Betray Poland).**
2. **Read summary paragraphs for Slide 10 below.**
  - a. **Betrayal 1:** Britain and France.
    - i. *Britain and France signed military alliances with Poland in 1939 to come to her aid if attacked. When Hitler and Stalin attacked Poland, neither Britain nor France came to Poland's aid.*
  - b. **Betrayal 2:** U.S. and Britain at Tehran.
    - i. *Roosevelt and Churchill secretly met with Stalin in Tehran in 1943. They agreed that:*
      1. *Stalin will keep the eastern half of Poland he captured when he invaded Poland in 1939.*
      2. *Poland's border will be moved westward into Germany to compensate for the loss of its eastern half that was given to Stalin.*
  - c. **Betrayal 3.** U.S. and Britain at Yalta.
    - i. *Roosevelt and Churchill met with Stalin at Yalta in 1945. They agreed that:*
      1. *Stalin will hold free elections in Poland after the war. Stalin didn't.*
      2. *Poland must remain under Soviet control and accept a communist government.*
      3. *As a result, Poland remained under Soviet rule for the next 45 years. Poland ejected communist rule in June 1989 after holding partially free elections. Note that the Berlin Wall fell five months later in November 1989. People often cite the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 as the beginning of the fall of communism in Eastern Europe. This is false. It was the partially free elections in Poland in June 1989 that triggered the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe.*
  - d. **Betrayal 4.** U.S., Britain, and Soviet Russia at Nuremberg.
    - i. *At the 1945 Nuremberg Trials, the U.S., British, and Soviets only investigated Germany's war crimes.*
    - ii. *Stalin's war crimes against Poland at Katyn were completely ignored by the U.S. and Britain.*
    - iii. *The U.S. and Britain suppressed all evidence submitted by Poland on Stalin's massacre of 22,000 Polish officers at Katyn.*

iv. In 1990, the Soviet Union admitted it committed the Katyn war crimes.

3. **Guided Practice:**

- a. Have students identify the Allied betrayal that:
  - i. Allowed Stalin to annex the eastern half of Poland to the Soviet Union (**Betrayal 2** – Roosevelt and Churchill secretly met with Stalin at **Tehran** and agreed to his demand that the Polish territory he occupied in 1939 will become part of the Soviet Union.)
  - ii. Allowed Stalin to impose Soviet Communist rule on Poland for the next 45 years (**Betrayal 3** – Roosevelt and Churchill met with Stalin at **Yalta** and agreed to his demand that a Communist government will be installed and Soviet troops remain in Poland.)
  - iii. Allowed Stalin to suppress the truth for the next 45 years about the war crimes he committed with the massacre of 22,000 Polish officers at Katyn (**Betrayal 4** - At the 1945 **Nuremberg Trials**, the U.S., British, and Soviets suppressed all evidence submitted by Poland on Stalin’s massacre of 22,000 Polish officers at Katyn. The truth about Stalin’s war crimes remained hidden for the next 45 years.)

4. **Independent Practice:**

- a. Have students name one of the three major battles in which Polish forces contributed significantly to the defeat of the Germans.
- b. Have students name two technological innovations Poland provided to the Allies and how they gave the Allies a definite advantage in fighting the Germans.

5. **Teacher Assessment: Recommended Essay Topic.** Have students write about the intelligence Witold Pilecki or Jan Karski provided to the Allies and how this information could have changed the course of Hitler’s genocide of Jews if the Allies had chosen to act.

6. **Teacher Reflection:** As applicable.

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**Reference information for Lesson 4 Slides**

**SLIDE 2: Poles Defeat Germans in Major Allied Battles**

**Battle of Britain – Largest Air Battle of the War.** The Battle of Britain was a 3-month air battle fought over the skies of England in 1940. German bombers tried to soften up British defenses so the Germans could invade by land. Polish RAF fighter squadrons weren’t allowed to join the battle when it started because the British thought there would be language problems. With British pilot losses mounting rapidly, the Poles were finally allowed to engage the Germans and the performance of the 303rd Kosciuszko Squadron was extraordinary. It was the highest scoring unit in the Battle of Britain and shot down 126 German planes in 6 weeks. On one mission over London, it downed 14 enemy planes without a single loss. In addition to the Fighter Squadrons shown, there were four Polish Bomber Squadrons (300<sup>th</sup>, 302<sup>nd</sup>, 304<sup>th</sup>, and 305<sup>th</sup>). There was also the 145<sup>th</sup> RAF Squadron, known as “Skalski’s Circus”, that fought in Northern Africa. From Wikipedia; article titled “Polish contribution to World War II”; paragraph titled “Air Force”.

**SLIDE 3: Poles Defeat Germans in Major Allied Battles**



**Battle of Monte Cassino, Italy.** In one of the most important battles of the war, Hitler's Gustav Line blocked the Allies from advancing northward to Rome and Monte Cassino had to be taken. The Germans were fortified in an abbey atop a small mountain and the 2nd Polish Corps, led by General Władysław Anders, was ordered to attack the German position. The fighting was fierce and at times hand-to-hand but the Poles finally prevailed. This enabled the Allies to advance northward to Rome and the Polish 2nd Corps went on to liberate the Italian cities of Loreto, Ancona, Faenza, and Bologna. From Wikipedia; article titled "Battle of Monte Cassino"; Polish sources cited therein.

#### **SLIDE 4: Poles Defeat Germans in Major Allied Battles**

**Battle of Falaise Gap, France.** The Battle of Falaise Gap was the final battle of Normandy and was key to the liberation of France. Two German armies were surrounded by U.S., British, Canadian, and Polish forces near the town of Falaise. The only escape for the Germans was through the Falaise Gap. The Polish 1st Armoured Division, led by General Stanisław Maczek, blocked their escape with constant and accurate fire. The Germans, who were four times their size, launched fierce counter-attacks that inflicted considerable losses on the Poles. Although exhausted and dangerously low on ammunition and fuel, they managed to beat back the Germans. This collapsed the German position in France and was a crushing defeat for Germany. The Polish 1st Armoured Division then advanced eastward and liberated the cities of Ypres, Oostnieuwkerke, Roeselare, Tielt, Ruislede, and Ghent in Belgium and the city of Breda in the Netherlands. From Wikipedia; article titled "Falaise pocket", paragraph titled "Encirclement". Also from Wikipedia, article titled "Stanisław Maczek"; paragraph titled "To Germany".

#### **SLIDE 5: Polish Navy Participates in Major Allied Naval Operations**

**The Polish Navy fought alongside the Allied Navies with distinction.** The Polish Navy fought the German Navy alongside the Allied navies in Norway, the North Sea, the Atlantic, and the Mediterranean. The Polish Navy participated in the landings in Normandy, North Africa, Greece, and Sicily. Polish naval vessels participated in the sinking of the German battleship Bismarck and the evacuation of Allied forces at Dunkirk. The Polish Navy also sank 1 enemy destroyer, 6 other surface ships, 5 submarines, and 41 merchant vessels. Polish ships escorted 787 convoys in the Atlantic and Arctic oceans and participated in multiple naval battles. From Wikipedia; article titled "Polish contribution to World War II"; paragraph titled "Navy".

#### **SLIDE 6: Polish Technologies help Allies Defeat Germans**

**3 Polish mathematicians broke the German Enigma code.** Breaking the Germans' encryption machine Enigma was perhaps the greatest Polish contribution to the Allied victory. While the British used linguists to break codes, the Poles (Marian Rejewski, Henryk Zygalski, and Jerzy Różycki) were far ahead by using mathematics and sophisticated equations. Five weeks before Hitler attacked Poland, the Poles secretly met with French and British intelligence officers, showed their procedures for code breaking, and gave them functioning replicas of the Enigma. Using what the Poles gave them, the British built a powerful computing system that deciphered a considerable number of the Enigma's permutations with substantial accuracy. This Polish technology transfer gave the Allies a unique advantage in achieving victory in World War II. From Wikipedia; article titled "Marian Rejewski".

**SLIDE 7: Polish Technologies help Allies Defeat Germans**

**Mark 1 Mine Detector; Vickers Tank Periscope; Świątecki Bomb Slip; HF/DF Antenna System.** From Wikipedia; article titled “Polish contribution to World War II”; paragraph titled “Technology”.

**SLIDE 8: Poles Provide Critical Intelligence to the Allies**

**Polish Home Army (Polish: Armia Krajowa, AK) Intel Actions.** From Wikipedia; article titled “Polish contribution to World War II”; paragraph titled “Resistance”. Also from Wikipedia; article titled “Witold Pilecki”.

**SLIDE 9: Poles Provide Critical Intelligence to the Allies**

**First to inform Allies of Warsaw Ghetto’s horrible conditions.** Source: *Story of a Secret State: My Report to the World* by Jan Karski, Georgetown University Press, 2013. **Spy network “Agency Africa” in Algiers.** From Wikipedia; article titled “Polish contribution to World War II”; paragraph titled “Intelligence”. **Spy network “Interallie” in occupied France.** From Wikipedia; article titled “Roman Czerniawski”.

**SLIDE 10: Allies Betray the Poles**

Source: “World War 2 History Short Stories” by Colonel Susan R. O’Konski, US Air Force, Retired; at <https://www.ww2history.org/war-in-europe/the-katyn-forest-massacre-and-five-betrayals-of-poland-by-its-wwii-allies/>