



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**November 24, 2014**

## **An Open Letter to the U.S. Congress and President of the United States**

The Polish American Congress expresses its deep concern over the recent military and political acts of aggression of the Russian Federation towards its European neighbors. We are alarmed by the violations of territorial integrity of its contiguous sovereign states and the blatant impudence of the information warfare conducted by the Russian Federation worldwide.

We object in strongest terms to the recent attempts by President Vladimir Putin to justify the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact of August 23, 1939 pursuant to which Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union secretly agreed to "a territorial and political rearrangement of the areas belonging to the Polish state" and left a decision as to "whether the interests of both parties make desirable the maintenance of an independent Polish state and how such a state should be bounded" to be determined by the two aggressors. The Nazi-Soviet Pact led to the joint Nazi-Soviet aggression on the sovereign Polish State in September 1939. The two aggressors divided Poland between themselves and closely cooperated in combating Polish resistance, in particular the extermination of Polish elites. Those treacherous pacts led to the unprecedented genocide committed on the Polish civilian population by both Nazi Germany's Gestapo and the Soviet Union's NKVD.

While crimes committed by the Nazi regime have been disclosed, adjudicated and condemned, the crimes committed by the Soviet regime have not been fully disclosed and were never properly adjudicated and condemned by the international community. To this day, no justice has been served for the Katyn Massacre crime, one of the most heinous crimes of WWII, when an estimated 22,000 Polish intellectuals and leaders were mass murdered by the Soviet NKVD secret police by a pistol shot to the back of each of their heads and buried in unmarked secret mass graves.

Today's Russia uses historical propaganda as an effective weapon to regain the status of a world power once again at the expense her Central and Eastern European neighbors. Today's Russia denies the historic reality of Soviet responsibility for its trademark crimes of WWII and attempts to justify the annexation of half of Poland, occupation of the Baltic States, and the Katyn Massacre, just to name some of the Soviet Union's unaccounted for liabilities.

In light of the traumatic experience of the Polish people subjected to massive extermination by both Nazi and Soviet regimes in the aftermath of the Nazi-Soviet Pact of August 23, 1939, the recent statement by the Russian President that "there is nothing wrong with the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact" is not only offensive but also very dangerous to the peace and security of today's world. Such a statement sends a message that criminal practices symbolized and viciously implemented by the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact are acceptable.

The people of Europe unequivocally condemned the criminal Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact by designating August 23 as the Black Ribbon Day commemorating the victims of Nazi and Soviet totalitarian regimes. The Black Ribbon Day was introduced in the European Parliament by a resolution on European Conscience and Totalitarianism on April 2, 2009. A similar resolution establishing August 23 as the Black Ribbon Day was adopted by the Parliament of Canada on November 30, 2009.

The Polish American Congress strongly condemns in unequivocal terms this 21st century Russian attempt to justify and rehabilitate the immoral Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact that led to the mass extermination of millions of people in Europe. The lessons of Poland's tragic past must not be forgotten. We shall honor the victims of the Soviet oppression, condemn the perpetrators, and lay the foundation for reconciliation based on truth and remembrance.

Accordingly, we urge the United States Congress to designate August 23 as "Black Ribbon Day" so to never forget the Soviet terror experienced by millions of people of Central and Eastern Europe during the 20th century. We must remember, honor, and learn from the experience of the people subjected to the Soviet Union's ruthless military, economic, and political repression through mass exterminations, arbitrary executions, mass arrests, deportations, the suppression of free speech, confiscation of property, and the destruction of cultural and moral identity and civil society, all of which deprived the vast majority of the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe of their basic human rights and dignity.

We must ensure that this cruel history never repeats itself and that the memory of these crimes is never forgotten.

Sincerely,  
Frank J. Spula,  
President  
Polish American Congress