



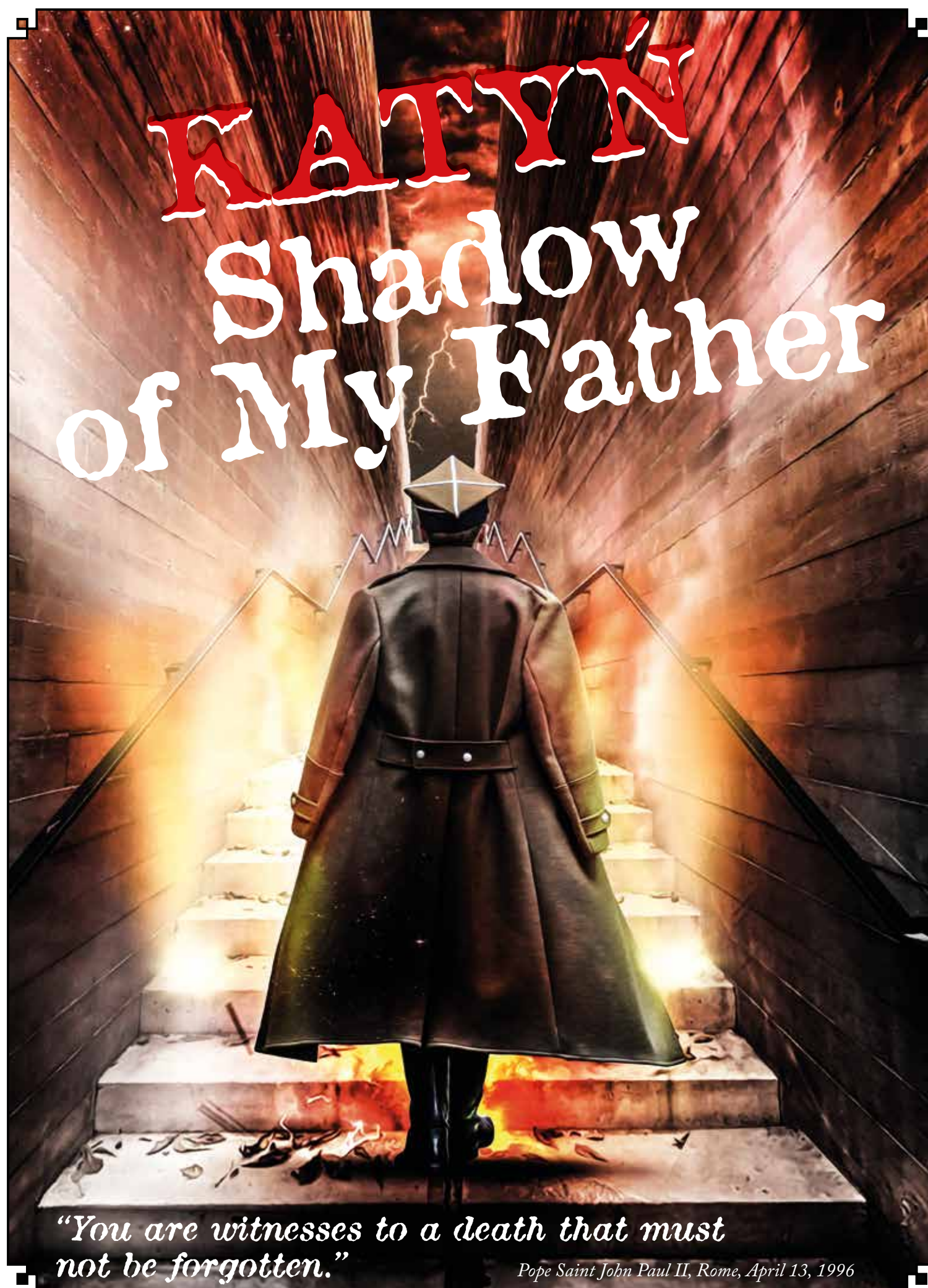
SŁUŻYMY
NIEPODLEGŁEJ

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80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE KATYN FOREST MASSACRE
10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SMOLENSK AIR CRASH

POLSKA 4 BROJNA

Warsaw, April 2020



KATYŃ Shadow of My Father

*"You are witnesses to a death that must
not be forgotten."*

Pope Saint John Paul II, Rome, April 13, 1996

When the Warsaw Uprising broke out, Andrzej Nusbek, a 14-year-old scout of the underground Zawiszacy troop [named after Zawisza Czarny], was staying in Radość, a town near Warsaw. He was in despair when he realized he had been cut off from his fellow scouts who were fighting in the capital, but felt somewhat relieved to have heard that Polish units were approaching from the east.

The boy was convinced he would finally have a chance to meet his long-unseen father.

More, he hoped that the first officer in the four-pointed cap he would see was going to be his father – Lt Edmund Nusbek, an officer of the 44th Infantry Regiment, captured by the Soviets after September 17, 1939 and never heard of since. Unfortunately, Andrzej did not find his father in the ranks of the Polish First Army, whose soldiers arrived in Otwock at that time. Cut off from his mother, left behind in war-torn Warsaw, he was taken in by the Polish soldiers. As "the son of the Regiment," he covered the whole combat trail up to Berlin with the 2nd Howitzer Artillery Brigade. He met his mother again only after the end of the war. However, they still had no news from his father.

Andrzej was nevertheless hoping that he had managed to join the ranks of

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KATYN STILL CALLS FOR THE TRUTH

*Anna Putkiewicz, Editor-in-Chief
of the Polska Zbrojnia Historyczna quarterly*

But don't tell anyone, just for now – these words ended the first history lesson given to me by my grandfather and my parents. I asked them why they would patiently turn the radio knob every evening and listen to this irritating noise with shrieks and howls, behind which the voice of the speaker was barely audible. Until today, I can still hear in my head the sound of Radio Free Europe, broadcast for Poles from Munich and regularly jammed by Polish communist government (the RFE was founded by the United States government for the Soviet satellite countries; the Polish section was broadcasting from the beginning of 1950s until the collapse of Communism and the withdrawal of the Russian forces from Poland in 1993). That's when I first heard the word "Katyn," and it was my family who told me the story of this atrocity. At the time,

I was about nine years old. The Polish authorities – in the name of "friendship" with the Soviet Union – were silent about communist crimes of Stalin.

However, at the time, my imagination of a child couldn't contain how our friends could attack us in cooperation with Hitler, then murder our soldiers, and sentence their families to annihilation in the snows of Siberia. I couldn't accept the fact that people who spoke up about it might suddenly disappear without a trace. Nations which have never experienced Soviet occupation will never fully understand our post-war situation, just as I will never understand people, who today, at their own request, even in the times of widely promoted humanism, are asphyxiated with this most dehumanizing "ideology" – Communism.

In April of 1940, in the Katyn forest on the western border of Russia, near Smo-

lensk, the Soviets treacherously killed with a shot in the back of the head 4,400 officers – prisoners of war, about one-fifth of the entire number of prisoners sentenced a month earlier to death by decision of the Soviet Union's leaders. Over 20,000 victims, whose unmarked graves can be found on the territory of Poland, Belarus, Ukraine and Russia, were before the WWII the flower of Polish intelligentsia. Half of them were the officers of the Polish Army, uniformed services and the Police.

In the Katyn Forest Massacre died soldiers who in September 1939 were the first to rise up against Hitler's army. They were killed at the time when Poland – left on its own, without the support of its allies and bleeding to death in its effort to hold back the then most powerful army in the world – was attacked by Russia without prior declaration of war. This stab in the back sealed the fate of Poland and the fate of the officers taken captive. Most of these soldiers were the ones who 20 years

earlier, in the Battle of Warsaw, crushed the Bolshevik march towards Europe. Three and a half years later, in April 1943, their graves, hidden in a forest, were discovered by the Germans – and they pointed their finger at those responsible for the atrocity. The Soviets denied, and, in turn, planted their own evidence to shift the blame onto the Germans. Nevertheless, the world turned its eyes away from Katyn. This truth was very inconvenient in the time when Hitler's plague was treated with Stalin's cholera. Until today, this crime has been a burden on the conscience of all the silent now and then. We, the Poles, still remember.

Ten years ago, our president died in an air crash near Smolensk. On the plane, there were 96 passengers including the crew, among them the highest Polish civil and military officials. On board of that plane, there was also the last Poland's president-in-exile who resigned from his symbolic office after the collapse of Communism in Poland.

They were all on that flight to pay homage to the murdered soldiers on the 70th anniversary of the Katyn Forest Massacre. And they all died. ■

Anders' Army, and that he would find them in Cracow where the boy and his mother settled after returning from the frontline. Andrzej truly cherished the last message he had got from Edmund Nusbek – a postcard sent from captivity. Lt Nusbek was a veteran of the Polish-Bolshevik War of 1920, severely wounded in the Battle of Borów, awarded the Cross of Valor for courage, so his loved ones feared the Soviets might have deported him somewhere to Kolyma out of revenge. They could not allow themselves to think about the worst scenario. When in 1943 the Germans began to print lists with names of the Katyn massacre victims, Andrzej and his mother did not find the surname Nusbek on them. There was still hope that the teenage boy would see his father return and bring the present he had promised.

Sadly, on August 29, 1949, they received a letter from the Municipal Court in Warsaw with woeful news – it said that the court "decided to consider Edmund Nusbek, the son of Józef and Władysław

wa Kuczyński, born on January 2, 1896 in Czerniowce, last domiciled in Warsaw at Śniadeckich 9, deceased. The date of death was established as May 9, 1946."

After many years, it turned out the given date was falsified in order to erase the proper one, which would make everything clear.

Here is what Andrzej found out about his father's fate already in 1939: "We received the first piece of news on October 2 or 3, from my father's subordinates: 2nd Lt Goldfeder and a platoon leader, who came to our ruined apartment in Warsaw at Śniadeckich 9/9, with my father's file. There was 1,500 zlotys inside. Due to my mother's serious illness,

for us this amount of money was worth its weight in gold. They told us a highly improbable story (next to general praises on his courage and such, and information that he walked with his back straight and a whip in his hand under artillery fire), which I more or less remember like this: my father, during a military operation, saved some personnel (from his unit) and

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*Bombardier Andrzej
Nusbek, 1944*



Families of officers murdered in Katyn during the first official visit to the cemetery where they rest, April 1989. Second from the right is Andrzej Nusbek



Boy Scout Andrzej Nusbek the day before the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising

Katyn. Truth Wins

Katyn negationism is not only vile, but also shortsighted. The truth about Katyn cannot be murdered. The whole Polish nation remember it. The term “Katyn” has even become one of the symbols of Soviet crimes.

A few days ago was the 80th anniversary of the Katyn criminal decision. On March 5, 1940, the political bureau (Politburo) of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party, that is the Bolshevik party, decided to consider in a special procedure the issue of 14,700 people in prisoner-of-war camps in Kozelsk, Starobilsk and Ostashkov, as well as 11,000 people arrested in the eastern voivodships of the Second Polish Republic, occupied by the Soviet Union, “without summoning the detainees and without presenting charges, verdicts on terminating the investigation or indictment, sentencing them to the highest punishment – shooting.”

The basis for the political office’s decision was a note written for Joseph Stalin by Lavrentiy Beria – People’s Commissar for Internal Affairs of the Soviet Union. It bears four handwritten signatures “in favour” by the members of the Politburo: Joseph Stalin, Kliment Voroshilov, Vyacheslav Molotov and Anastas Mikoyan, as well as a remark on Mikhail Kalinin and Lazar Kaganovich voting in the same way.

Soldiers and policemen taken prisoner on Polish territory as they fought to defend their homeland were shot to death. Officials and intelligentsia, whose only fault was that of being Polish citizens, were shot to death.

The Soviet Union for 50 consecutive years lied to the public about the perpetration of the massacre. It confessed to the crime less than two years before its collapse. In turn, the Russian Federation – the legal continuator and, unfortunately, increasingly the ideological continuator of this totalitarian state – has not decided to (even symbolically) punish those responsible for the Katyn massacre. On September 21, 2004, the Supreme Military Prosecutor’s Office of Russia discontinued the investigation in this case “due to the death of the perpetrators.” Their names were not officially published, and the decision to discontinue the investigation, as well as a lot of its documentation, were kept secret. The Russian authorities have recognized (and continue to do so) that for the sake of Russia’s *raison d’État*, it is better to keep the names of the perpetrators secured with the Seven Seals. Moreover, the criminals in the Bolshevik Politburo, responsible not only for the Katyn massacre, but also for millions of victims among Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians and other nations of the Soviet empire, are still patrons of Russian streets or even cities – such as Kaliningrad neighboring with Poland. A dozen kilometers from the Katyn forest, at the railway station in Smolensk, there is a plaque dedicated to Kalinin, an “outstanding Soviet Party and State activist.”

This is not the only reason for our sorrow. So far, the victims of the Soviet murder have not been rehabilitated, and in recent years we have been observing increasingly intense attempts to re-

vive this crime, and thus to, indirectly, justify it. In the media controlled by the Kremlin, voices questioning Soviet perpetration are becoming more and more frequent. Attempts are being made to remove a commemorative plaque from a former NKVD Building in Tver, reminding that Polish prisoners of war were executed there.

In 2017, an open-air exhibition dedicated to the Polish-Bolshevik War of 1920, and in 2018 – a permanent museum exhibition on Polish-Russian and Polish-Soviet relations in the 20th century, were opened at the memorial complex in Katyn. The exhibition parallels the deaths of [Soviet] prisoners of the 1920 war who died due to an epidemic or as a result of poor sanitation in POW camps, with the coldblooded decision of the highest state authorities of the USSR to execute nearly 26,000 innocent people and citizens of another state, most of whom were in fact murdered. It is not reported though, that Polish POWs in Bolshevik captivity were also dying of similar reasons. This analytically false and simply filthy equation aims to create false symmetry between the two events.

The historical policy of Putin’s Russia – based on manipulations, the cult of criminals, and, increasingly, also on evident lies, offends not only Poles, but all other nations – victims of communist totalitarianism, including Russians themselves. Fortunately, many professional Russian historians or representatives of the Russian intelligentsia, distance themselves from it, while some – including our friends from “Memorial” [a Russian NGO] – openly criticize it. Meanwhile, Katyn negationism is not only vile, but also shortsighted. The truth about Katyn cannot be murdered. The whole Polish nation remember it, especially the relatives and friends of the victims of the crime. It is remembered by many persons and important circles abroad. The term “Katyn” has even become one of the symbols of Soviet crimes. It is certainly also remembered by the Polish State. Ten years ago, the late President Lech Kaczyński was planning to say the following words during a ceremony at the Katyn cemetery: “Truth – this ultimate weapon against violence – wins. Just as the Katyn lie was the foundation of the People’s Republic [Communist State] of Poland, the truth about Katyn is the foundation of the free Poland.” These are very wise words, applicable not only to the truth about Katyn. ■



**Piotr Gliński,
Prof.**

First Deputy
Prime Minister
Polish Minister of
Culture and National
Heritage

Message of President of the Republic of Poland Andrzej Duda

on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the Katyn Forest Massacre
and the 10th anniversary of the Smolensk tragedy

In tribute to the victims of the Katyn crime – prisoners of war
and political prisoners who were genocidally killed by the NKVD:
generals and officers of the Polish Army,
soldiers of the Border Protection Corps,
officers of the State Police, officials
and other members of the elite of the reborn sovereign state
who sacrificed their own lives for allegiance to their Fatherland;

in the very special time of
the National Celebration of the Hundredth Anniversary of
Regaining Independence by the Republic of Poland
and the centenary of the victory over the Bolsheviks in the 1920 war.

In the highest recognition and profound gratitude
to all those who in time of the communist regime
guarded the truth and cherished the memory of the ones killed
in Katyn, Kharkov, Tver, Kiev, Minsk and other places of murder;

in appreciation to all who revere our national heroes
and pass on to the next generations their heritage, ethos and patriotism;

respectfully remembering those who 10 years ago
died tragically in an air crash in Smolensk
while on their way to celebrate the Katyn crime anniversary;

deeply convinced that memory and historical truth
are the foundation of our national identity and contribute to
building the spirit and power of Poland that is free, independent and sovereign.

Honor and Glory to the Heroes!
Eternal Memory to Those Who Died for Independent Poland!



Andrzej Duda

President of the Republic of Poland

KATYN AND SMOLENSK ARE STILL OPEN WOUNDS

Dear Readers,

Our national memory is focused around important Polish anniversaries.

The anniversary of the massacre committed on Polish officers in Katyn is, however, a particularly significant date. It reminds us not only of that inhuman crime, but also of the subsequent hard and lonesome struggle for the truth about who was responsible for it. In the post-war communist reality, people paid the highest price for speaking that truth. The truth about Katyn was nevertheless saved from falling into oblivion by steadfast witnesses. For that, we owe them gratitude, memory and respect. The foundations of a lie always crumble over time. Therefore, we should base and build our identity and relations with other nations on truth. It always wins and always liberates.

Today, it is us who are the guardians of the truth, since the officers killed in Katyn belong to our community. The tragic flight that took place ten years ago was organized out of respect to their sacrifice.

On the 70th anniversary of the massacre, our delegates wished to pay tribute to the murdered, and, as representatives of a free nation, express their objection to totalitarianism. The Commander-in-Chief and the Commanders of the Polish Armed Forces were going there to bow over the officers’ graves. The memory of their tragic flight is still painful. This heavy loss is an obligation for us. It is an obligation to act and continue their work for Poland and for Polish security and defense.

Let us pay tribute to the Polish officers murdered in Katyn.

Let the memory of the victims who died in the air crash and their devotion to the Fatherland stay with us forever. ■



**Mariusz
Błaszczak**
Polish Minister of
National Defense



Soldiers of the 1st Machine Gun Company of the 28th Riflemen Regiment of Kaniów. Sitting in the center is Lt Edmund Nusbek, 1920.

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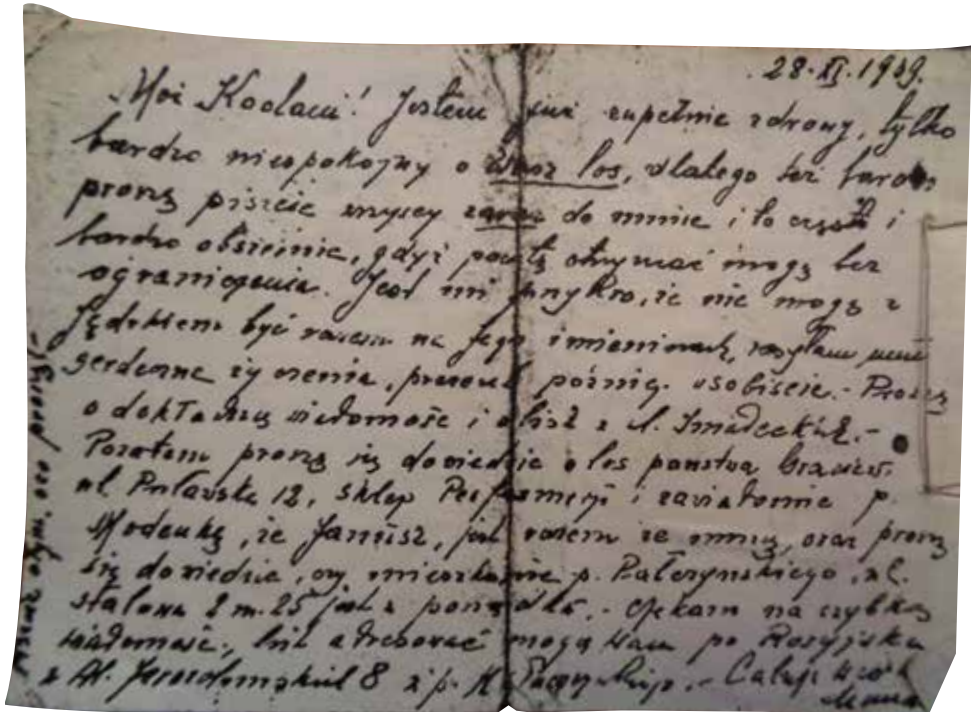
some supply trains, but he himself was taken captive by the Russians. Before that happened, he had set an appointment with the two men telling us this story at a certain place within the next 24 hours. He arrived at the spot lightly wounded, let off for 24 hours by the Russians to whom he had given an officer's word of honor. My father handed them the money, the file and our address, asked them to give these things to us, and tell us that he was alive and had to return to Russian captivity."

Andrzej Nusbek learned the truth about his father's fate much later, in the 1970s, when a friend returning from France smuggled a book for him. The book included a list of Polish officers murdered on the strength of the Katyn order, and his father's name, Edmund Nusbek, was on it. At that moment everything fell into place, and Andrzej finally

understood why he could not get a name day gift from his father. Fragmented memories, hopes, feelings started surfacing from the depths of his mind, forming the shape of his father's shadow. Years later, he also learned that Edmund Nusbek had been murdered by the NKVD in Khar'kov on the night of May 2/3, 1940.

It is an extraordinary story. The fate of Lt Edmund Nusbek could have gone in an entirely different direction. As many other Polish officers, he could have survived, if not for the officer's word of honor which did not allow him to even consider escape. The knightly ethos stood no chance against the totalitarian machine, whose triumph – we know this today – was in fact superficial and short-lived.

Piotr Korczyński, historian,
journalist at the Military Publishing
Institute (WITP) in Warsaw



The last letter written by Lt Edmund Nusbek to have reached his wife and son, dated November 28, 1939

"November 28, 1939. Dearly beloved! I am now in perfect health, just terribly worried about your lot, that's why I'm asking all of you to write to me as often as possible, and in a very detailed manner, as I can receive mail without any limitations. I am very sorry I can't be with Jędrzek on his name day, I am sending him the best of wishes, and I shall bring the present later, in person... "

Metal Plane

She liked to walk her own paths, often against the will of her father, who was one of the most respected people in pre-war Poland. She dreamed of becoming a singer, and later of flying aircraft with the white and red checkerboard on the wings. It was this dream that led her into one of the mass graves in Katyn. 2ndLt Janina Lewandowska was murdered 78 years ago.

There is a woman aviator here in the camp – a brave girl, for four months now she's been enduring all hardships and discomforts of captivity, and she's been nothing but strong" – recalled in his diary Maj Kazimierz Szczekowski, a prisoner of the Soviet camp in Kozielsk. Another imprisoned officer, Capt Waław Mucho, added: "There have been rumors that she is a cousin or a daughter of general N.N., and that she comes from Poznań." 2ndLt (Pilot) Janina Lewandowska certainly drew attention. She was the only woman among thousands of prisoners imprisoned by the Soviets in September 1939. Nevertheless, she ended up like most of them – an executioner shot her in the back of the head with a Walther P38 gun.

It is also possible that the NKVD soldier pierced her body with a bayonet.

Sky-High Dream

Yes, she was a general's daughter. She was born in 1908 as one of the four children of Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki, later the commander of the Greater Poland Uprising, and his wife Agnieszka. She spent her childhood and younger years in Lusowo near Poznań, where her family owned a small property. She graduated from high school in Poznań and began studies at the Poznań Music Conservatory. She wanted to become an opera singer. When it turned out her voice was not good enough, she decided to try performing in comedy shows. This decision led to a big family argument, and cooled Janina's re-



Janina Lewandowska (née Dowbor-Muśnicka)

lationship with her father. At that time, however, Janina's heart was already set on a new passion – she got interested in gliding and parachuting, and at the age of 22 she became the first woman in Europe to parachute-jump from 5,000 meters. In 1936, Janina finished Higher School of Pilots in Poznań-Ławica and became a member of the local aeroclub. She also got married to Mieczysław Lewandowski, a gliding instructor.

"At that time, Janina's ties with the military were limited to a radiotelegraphy course she had completed" says Michał Krzyżaniak, PhD, the director of the Museum of Greater Poland Insurgents in Lusowo. "Before the war, women had not been allowed to serve in the Polish army. The law provided only for the possibility to conscript women to the auxiliary corps," he adds. However, when the war broke out, Lewandowska, following a patriotic impulse, volunteered for the 3rd Aviation Regiment, stationed in Poznań-Ławica.

"Ultimately, there were no fights in Greater Poland, and the Poznań Army had already been withdrawing towards Warsaw. Janina joined the so-called ground echelon of Air Force Base No. 3," explains Krzyżaniak. It is still not clear what happened to her in the next few weeks. We know that Lewandowska and her unit reached the territories seized by the Red Army in the second half of September. She was definitely taken captive, most probably near Husiatyn in today's Ukraine. "Henryka Wolna-Van Das, the author of a fictionalized biography of Lewandowska, refers to the memories of Stanisław Krzyżaniak, then officer cadet, who was held at one of the local schools with Lewandowska," says a historian from the museum in Lusowo. "Krzyżaniak was my grandfather's uncle. He was among the few people who survived the camp. He only died a couple of years ago. However, he never mentioned Lewandowska," he adds. Janina was ultimately imprisoned at

the POW camp in Ostaszków, from where she was transported to Starobielsk. "We know she was there from the accounts of other inmates. There are mentions of that fact in the work entitled *Zbrodnia katyńska w świetle dokumentów* [The Crime of Katyn: Facts and Documents], which was published in London and has been reprinted several times," informs Krzyżaniak.

Lewandowska gave the Soviet administration a fake date of her birth and father's name. While in the camp, she wore a man's flight uniform. She was most probably accommodated in a separate room. "We don't know how she was treated by the guards. We can only learn from preserved memoirs that she was searched several times, most likely because her task in captivity was to bake communion bread," explains the historian. Lewandowska's name can be found on the lists of people transported out of the camp. According to them, the transport of prisoners set off on April 20, 1940. Lewandowska was probably killed two days later. Exactly on her 32nd birthday.

The Mystery of a Certain Skull

The body of General Dowbor-Muśnicki's daughter was exhumed by the Germans in April 1943. It caused some confusion among them, as the presence of a woman in such a place did not fit the general picture of the crime. That is why they decided not to spread this information. "Lewandowska's skull was nevertheless sent to Wrocław, where it underwent detailed examination," says Krzyżaniak. After the war, it somehow found its way to Bolesław Popielski, a Polish forensic medicine specialist and a professor at the University of Wrocław. Since any mention of the Katyn crime was severely punished, the doctor kept the skull a secret, sharing it only on his dying bed. His friends managed to confirm that the skull belonged to Janina Lewandowska. In 2005, it was buried at the cemetery in



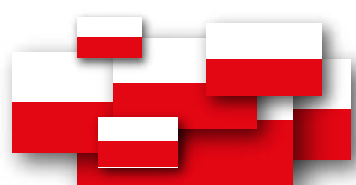
Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki with children. From the left: Olgiard, Agnieszka, Janina, Giedymin

Lusowo in the General's family vault.

There are only few memorabilia left after Lewandowska and her family. "Throughout the occupation period, their family property was left unattended. The General and his wife were already dead, one of their sons committed suicide, the other one left for France and was never heard of again. Janina's sister enga-

ged in underground activity and was shot to death by the Germans in Palmiry," reports the historian. "Today, we only have a few photos of Janina, a diary with an entry written by her, and a small metal plane – a toy that used to stand on her shelf." ■

*Łukasz Zalesiński,
journalist at the Military Publishing
Institute (WIT) in Warsaw*



**POLISH
NATIONAL
FOUNDATION**

The Polish National Foundation (PFN), as an entity of the non-profit sector, realizes its social mission through a wide portfolio of activities whose main purpose is referred to in present-day social analyses as politics of memory and heritage or contemporary historical culture. Collective memory of the national community, and preserving from generation to generation both the nation's martyrdom and its triumph of independence, ensure necessary continuity and consistency of community-forming values. Without sensible politics of memory no nation can endure extreme situations or globalization processes.

The Polish National Foundation has been established to promote Polish culture and national heritage abroad and to support Polish economy sectors in external markets,

We Will Not Last Without Politics of Memory

but above all to undertake activities aiming at popularizing Polishness as a value, as well as strengthening national identity through education and motivating people to participate in the cultural and social phenomenon which is the community of memory.

The history of Poland is a part of world history. One of the gravest mistakes made by the elites of the Third Polish Republic was to have neglected the politics of memory in public policy, both in internal and international strategies. There is a lot to make up for in this area, and this is the priority objective for the Polish National Foundation.

Poland played an exceptional role in the history of the 20th century, having been a victim of rivalry between two criminal totalitarian systems. Recently, there have been more and more attempts to impute that Poles are co-responsible for the crimes committed during WWII. This fact implies that contemporary historical culture is being intentionally distorted to suit immediate political goals. Therefore, historical politics requires international solidarity, perseverance and systematic work.

The Polish state should engage in offensive and active politics of memory. We must persist in the conviction that every institution and each of us personally is obliged to cultivate memory and base it on historical truth. Polish independence and Polish national community are the obvious victims of WWII. Poland lost up to six million citizens, including up to three million citizens of Jewish descent. Demographically, culturally and economically, the country was entirely devastated, with all its consequences for the present-day level of Poland's development and demographic processes.

Let us not forget that between 1939–1941, the Soviet Union collaborated with Nazi Germany. On the day of the 80th anniversary of the Katyn massacre, let us remember all the Polish people murdered by the Soviets in the death pits of Katyn, Mednoye, Kharkiv and Bykivnia. The Soviets murdered Polish elites to destroy our national identity, deported Poles to the territories of European Russia, Siberia and Kazakhstan.

We must not forget that the USSR did not liberate Warsaw in 1945. The Red Army

idly observed the slow agony of the Polish capital. Referring to the message arising from the article written by Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki for *Polityka* magazine, we need to remember that "the two uprisings in the city – the first one in the Jewish Ghetto in 1943, and the other one in the entire city in 1944 – were proof of cruel German crimes. While the citizens of Warsaw were waiting and hoping for help, Josef Stalin never gave an order for the Red Army to intervene."

The Polish National Foundation wants to preserve the memory of past generations and actively participates in educational projects and national historical movie productions that aim at showing the historical truth and strengthening the Polish *raison d'état*. The PFN intensively executes a wide spectrum of activities according to its statutory objectives and its overarching mission to cultivate and foster Polish collective memory and historical culture. ■

*Marcin Zarzecki, PhD; Michał Góras;
Cezary Andrzej Jurkiewicz*

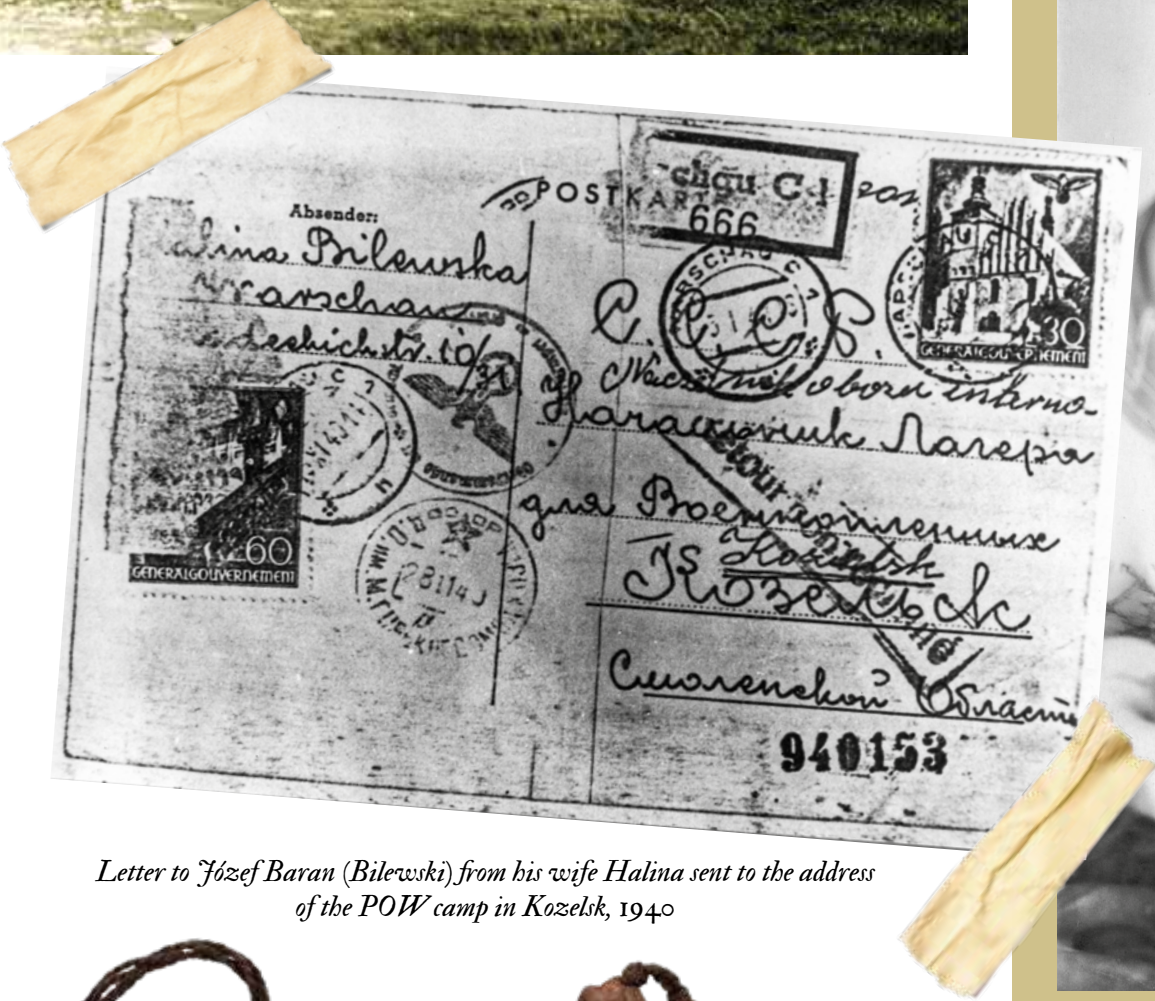
I HAVE FOUGHT THE



Wedding photograph of Mr. and Mrs. Bilewski



Józef Baran (Bilewski) during track and field competitions



Letter to Józef Baran (Bilewski) from his wife Halina sent to the address of the POW camp in Kozelsk, 1940

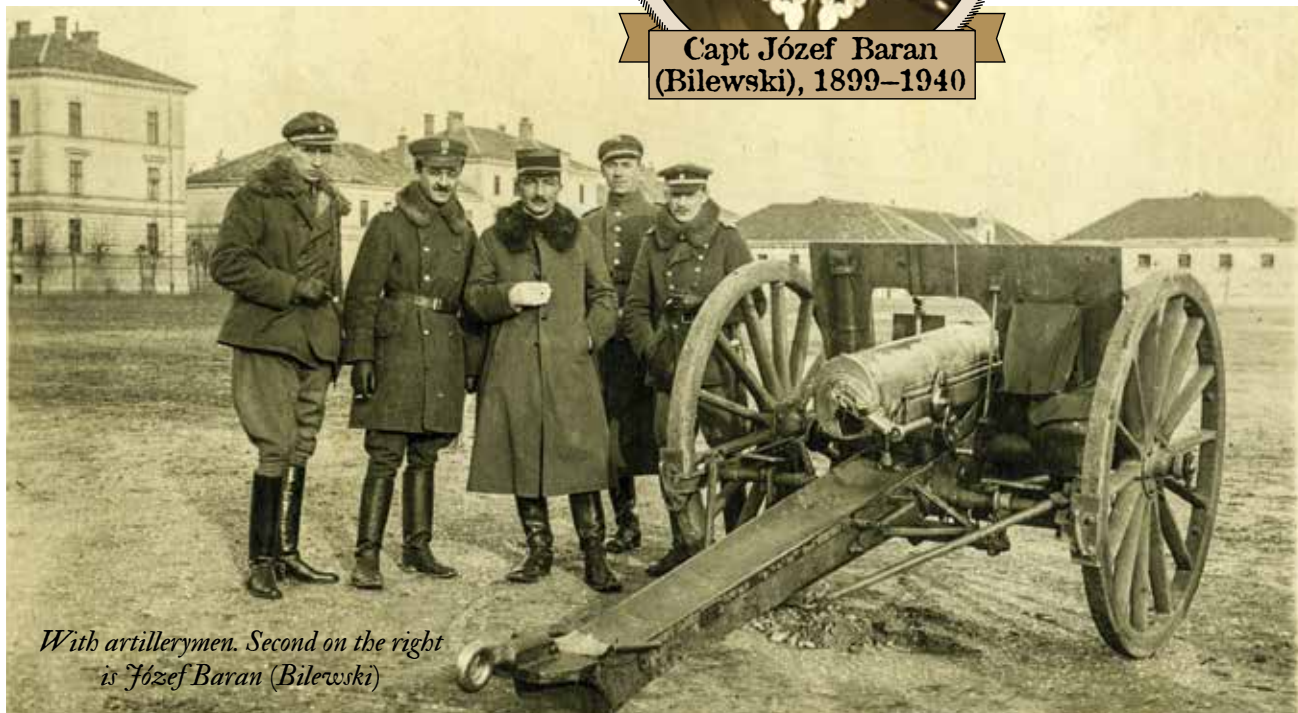


Rosary, field altar and host box dug out during exhumation

GOOD FIGHT



Capt Józef Baran
(Bilewski), 1899–1940



*With artillerymen. Second on the right
is Józef Baran (Bilewski)*



*With friends. Sitting second
on the right is Józef Baran (Bilewski)*



*Certificate of appreciation from the Polish Athletic Association
"for defending Polish colors in national representations
and for victorious 11 out of 27 meetings"*



*1st Group of the Artillery Officer
Cadet School in Toruń. Fourth
on the left is Józef Baran (Bilewski)*

Cold War Over Katyn

On December 22, 1952, a committee of inquiry established by the US Congress, with Ray John Madden as chairman, published a report on the Katyn massacre. The authors did not have any doubt – the NKVD was guilty of the crime. The report was the first official Western document that confirmed Soviet responsibility for killing Polish officers.



Congressman Ray Madden



Polish witnesses before the US Congress Committee – Officer Cadet Marian Garwiałk and Polish Ambassador in the USSR (1942–1943) Tadeusz Romer, as well as Ray J. Madden, 1952

This committee unanimously finds, beyond any question of reasonable doubt, that the Soviet NKVD [...] committed the mass murders of the Polish officers and intellectual leaders in the Katyn Forest near Smolensk, Russia. The evidence, testimony, records, and exhibits recorded by this committee through its investigations and hearings during the last 9 months, overwhelmingly will show the people of the world that Russia is directly responsible for the Katyn massacre.” – this is the conclusion of the report, published for the first time at the end of 1952. The document was prepared by members of

a select committee of inquiry established by the US Congress [full name: The Select Committee to Conduct an Investigation and Study of the Facts, Evidence, and Circumstances of the Katyn Forest Massacre]. It was made up of Congressmen, and its chairman was Ray John Madden. “The Committee’s work did not lead to sentencing the guilty. It was, however, clearly unfeasible from the very beginning,” admits Witold Wasilewski, PhD, a historian of the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN). “The report itself, though, was of great significance. It was the first time that representatives of a Western power officially stated who was

behind the Katyn massacre,” he adds. For eight years, there had been a conspiracy of silence on that subject among the allies.

Executioners Cover Up Tracks

The mass graves in Katyn were discovered during the German occupation of the USSR. They were actually found by Poles – forced laborers of Organization Todt (OT), a German organization which executed military engineering projects. The news quickly reached the Germans, who decided to use it for propaganda purposes, and so they started exhuming the graves in April 1943. They would bring international observers to the site, organize press conferences for foreign journalists. All evidence suggested that several thousand Polish officers were killed in the spring of 1940. That in turn meant the crime must have been committed by the Soviets.

Meanwhile, the truth was very inconvenient for the allies, as in June 1941, the USSR had become one of the pillars of the anti-Hitler coalition. The issue of Soviet responsibility for the massacre was therefore successfully swept under the rug in the West. Also, Moscow very quickly started their propaganda counter-offensive. After the Katyn region had been liberated from the German occupation, the Soviets conducted their own investigation. In January 1944, a group of specialists from NKVD and SMERSH (an umbrella organization for military counter-intelligence agencies), came to the site to “collect evidence.” The agents dug up the graves in order to plant falsified evidence, they prepared false witnesses and removed the inconvenient ones. Soon after that operation, the site of the massacre was made accessible to a national commission led by a Russian doctor, Nikolay Burdenko. The result of the “investigation” could not be any different – “Germans are the ones responsible for the murder,” concluded Burdenko.

The Russians tried to seal their version of events during the Nuremberg Trial. Ultimately, though, they did not succeed in sentencing the indicated Nazis. The Soviet version was full of inaccuracies that were easy to disprove. However, the Western governments still refused to openly accuse the USSR. “The situation changed only at the beginning of the 1950s. Most likely, the reason for that was the growing tensions caused by the Cold War,” explains Wasilewski.

Travelling Investigators

The first cracks on the anti-Hitler alliance appeared as early as almost a year after the collapse of the Third Reich. In March 1946, the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill uttered his famous words

about the iron curtain that had split Europe apart. Three years later, the West was disturbed to observe that China had joined the Communist side. However, the paths of the former allies ultimately went separate ways with the outbreak of the Korean War (1950–1953). At the same time, also the Katyn issue resurfaced. “The US authorities wanted to publicize the crime, and reveal the true face of the Soviet system. Particularly that the American soldiers fighting in Korea were afraid they would share the fate of the Polish soldiers if they were caught by the Communists,” emphasizes Wasilewski. The so-called Madden’s Committee was made up of seven Congressmen from the House of Representatives, both Republican and Democrat. Some of them had Polish roots. The Committee began work on October 11, 1951, by hearing a testimony of Donald B. Stewart. During WWII, he was taken captive by the Germans, and after the discovery of mass graves he was sent to Katyn as a member of the allied POWs delegation to witness the exhumation. In the next nine months, Madden’s Committee heard 81 witnesses, whose testimonies were considered by the Congressmen as crucial to determine the final verdict. Another 300 people provided clarifications and written testimonies. Witnesses heard by the Committee also included Poles, such as Stanisław Mikołajczyk, the former Prime Minister of the Polish Government-in-Exile, or Ferdynand Goetel, a writer and a member of an international commission appointed by the Germans to examine graves in Katyn. There were also anonymous witnesses. The most famous one, called Joe Doe by the press, stood before the Committee in a hood. He introduced himself as a Polish soldier and a former Soviet prisoner. He explained that he had escaped from the Pavlishchev Bor camp with two other prisoners, and later observed the execution of the captives from a hiding place in a tree. His testimony, however, raised a lot of doubt.

Apart from hearing witnesses, Madden’s Committee also studied all available documents, analyzed and investigated the infamous Burdenko Report, and... travelled a lot. The Congressmen collected materials not only in the USA, but also in London, Naples, Frankfurt and Berlin. They invited Polish governments – the one in Warsaw and the one in exile – as well as the authorities of the Federal Republic of Germany and the USSR to cooperate. Only the representatives of the Polish government-in-exile and the Germans agreed. “The Communists refused. Next, they launched a propaganda attack on a scale never seen before. At least as far as the Katyn issue is concerned,” emphasizes Wasilewski.



Witness testifying before the Madden Committee. To hide his identity, the witness testified with a covered head, 1952

Racism, Plague, Wehrmacht

"Clouds of smoke from cities, settlements, villages burnt by American bombs, hang over the tormented Korean land – along with swarms of insects infected with bacteria of plague and cholera disseminated by American aircraft. In West Germany, American politicians and American generals, preparing a new world inferno, assemble together with Nazi criminals, Nazi gun and Zyklon producers, a neo-Nazi Wehrmacht: against the USSR, against Poland. And in the same February of the same year 1952, the US Congress revives an old Nazi provocation: Katyn. Nothing ever happens by accident." This is a fragment of Bolesław Wójcicki's book entitled *Prawda o Katyniu* (The Truth About Katyn), which fully reflects the mood of publications of that time.

"The propaganda offensive against Madden's Committee started in March 1952, and spread virtually across the entire Eastern bloc. There were hundreds of press articles attacking Americans and reminding people of the Soviet version of the Katyn truth. There were many references to the Burdenko Report," explains the historian. The Communists also used other tools, such as the cover of the satirical *Szpilki* [Pins] magazine with a drawing by Szymon Kobylński. The author's objective was for the drawing to expose the incognito witness standing before Madden's Committee. It shows a man in a white Ku Klux Klan robe, under which we can see the cross worn by the Nazis on their uniforms. The inscription under the picture says: "I am an eyewitness of Katyn!"

Meanwhile, the Committee completed their work in the late fall of 1952. On December 22, they published a report in which they found the Soviets responsible for the Katyn massacre. They also advised the Congress to turn to the UN for appointing an international commission, as a step towards sentencing the perpetrators. Unfortunately, the project fell through. It was blocked by the Communists and countries that did not want to escalate the conflict between the two superpowers.

In time, the talk on the Katyn crime grew quiet also in the USA. There was a change of power in the White House. Dwight Eisenhower took office from Harry Truman. The new president – as Wasilewski explains – on the one hand wanted to fight communism, but on the other hand, above all wanted to end the Korean War. In order to do that, he had to ease the tension in American-Soviet relations. "However, from the point of view of the Poles who had been fighting for the truth about Katyn, the very fact that the Madden's report emerged was enormously significant," emphasizes Wasilewski.

On April 4, 2003, Americans handed over to Poland copies of documents (7,000 pages in total) from the Committee's work. The ceremony took place in the Capitol.

Lukasz Zalesiński

In this article, I cited excerpts of: the book entitled *Mord w lesie katyńskim. Przesłuchania przed amerykańską komisją Maddena w latach 1951-1952* [Murder in the Katyn Forest. Hearings before the American Madden's Committee during 1951-1952], published by IPN; Witold Wasilewski's text entitled "Komisja katyńska Kongresu USA (1951-1952)" [The US Congress' Katyn Committee (1951-1952)], published in the IPN bulletin; Bolesław Wójcicki's book entitled *Prawda o Katyniu* [The Truth About Katyn], Warsaw, 1952



Group of allied prisoners of war examining items taken out of the mass graves in the Katyn Forest. Third on the right (profile) is Capt Donald B. Stewart

MY FATHER SAW EXECUTION PITS IN KATYN

"In Katyn, my father and other allied POWs saw the execution pits filled with the bodies of murdered Polish officers. The Germans wanted them to witness the exhumation and confirm that the Poles had been killed by the Soviets. My father would later send from the POW camp coded messages to the USA which confirmed the Soviet guilt for this massacre," tells us Dave Stewart, son of Capt Donald B. Stewart.

How come that Capt Donald B. Stewart was in the Katyn Forest in May 1943?

Dave Stewart: He was a West Point graduate deployed to the 17th Artillery Regiment of the US Army. In 1942, he was sent as a battery commander to North Africa, where the Allies opened the front against the Germans. He was taken captive in February 1943 during the Battle of Kasserine Pass in Tunisia, which was one of the first encounters of the US forces with Wehrmacht. At that time, about 90% of his unit was taken captive. My father was in Oflag IX A/Z in Rotenberg in Germany. In May 1943, the Germans demanded that a group of English-speaking prisoners go to Smolensk to witness the exhumation of the mass graves of Polish officers discovered by the Germans. The Nazis wanted to take advantage of this discovery, and use it to divide the Allies and the Soviets. My father and one other American soldier, Lt-Col John H. Van Vliet Jr., were to be some of those prisoners.

What was your father's reaction to this order?

He refused, as he didn't want to participate in Nazi propaganda. My father and Lt-Col Van Vliet were convinced that it was the Germans who were guilty of this massacre, and this entire action was just a manipulation to take the Katyn crime off Nazi hands. A group of eight POWs from the USA, Great Britain and its dominions was however taken to Katyn, despite their protest and refusal to sign a paper which obliged them not to make any attempts of escape on their way to and from Katyn. The prisoners, on their way to the crime site, decided they would not cooperate with the Germans, and while there, they would not say much, show no emotions or in no way express their opinions, so the Germans could not anything for their own purposes.

What did your father remember from Katyn?

The odor of decomposing bodies. The prisoners arrived at the Katyn Forest on May 13. My father said they could smell the fetor at the distance of three kilometers away from the forest. While on site,

they would almost continuously smoke cigarettes to cover this terrible smell. However, it was in their clothes and they could smell it long after they left the site of the massacre. In Katyn, they saw execution pits full of dead bodies. They had to point to one body, which was then taken out and examined. Personal belongings of the victims were also excavated. After all this, my father and Lt-Col Van Vliet realized that the Germans were telling the truth, and it was the Soviets who had murdered the Polish officers.

How did they know that? From the documents found in the pits?

Partially so, yes. None of the letters, notes, newspaper clippings found with the bodies were dated later than the spring of 1940. The Soviets claimed that the massacre was conducted by the Germans in late summer and fall of 1941, and not the spring of 1940. However, these documents could have been fairly easily falsified. What convinced my father was the shoes. Their own jackboots – his and his fellow officers' who had been in captivity for almost two years then – were seriously worn out, while the jackboots of the murdered Polish POWs as well as their uniforms were in a very good state. That meant they couldn't have been using them for two and a half years. Also, the corpses were in a state of advanced decay, which meant that Polish officers couldn't have been shot in 1941, but much earlier. At the end of the prisoners' stay, the Germans gave them packages with copies of documents on exhumation as well as photographs taken during their visit.

Did the soldiers talk to each other about their conclusions from this visit?

They didn't, and decided to say nothing in the presence of the Germans who were filming and taking photographs during the visit. They were aware that every gesture or word could be used by German propaganda, and this in turn could be considered by the US Army Command as collaboration with Germany. Soon after, in June 1943, my father and Lt-Col Van Vliet

were sent to Oflag 64 in Szubin near Bydgoszcz. There, they didn't tell anybody about what they had seen in Katyn either.

However, they kept sending coded messages to the USA...

That's true, they both knew military intelligence codes, which let them encode the information, e.g. about the situation in the Oflag, in their letters to families. They would also send to the USA coded messages about the Katyn Forest Massacre, confirming that the Soviets were to be blamed for it. The gist of one of my father's coded messages was: "German claims regarding Katyn are substantially correct in the opinion of Van Vliet and myself." My father also decided to save as evidence the materials and photographs he had received from the Germans. In January 1945, when the Red Army was approaching and the Germans ordered evacuation of the Szubin camp, my father hid the documents in-between the newspaper layers he used for insulating his clothes. During the march, he was however thoroughly searched, and a German soldier found and took the Katyn documents. Fortunately, he didn't find the photographs. My father was sent to the camp in Hammelburg, where he stayed until liberation.

When he came back home, did he tell your family about what he saw in Katyn?

No, he didn't, he had been obliged to keep military secret. He was only given Pentagon's consent to testify in 1951 before the US Congress Select Committee to Conduct an Investigation and Study of the Facts, Evidence and Circumstances of the Katyn Forest Massacre with Ray Madden as chairman. He was the first witness to be cross-examined. He confirmed the information he sent in coded letters about the Soviet guilt for the crime. Following the order, he never talked about Katyn afterwards, even after he retired in 1968.

How long did he have to keep it secret?

Until 1970, when one of the journalists was given a green light from Pentagon to interview him and Lt-Col Van Vliet about Katyn. From then on, my father would willingly give interviews and meet with the Polish community in Chicago. He wanted to spread information about what the Soviets had done, and how the US administration had been hiding the truth not to annoy Russia. Unfortunately, despite his great desire to visit Poland, he never went there.

Why?

He was afraid of what the Russians could do to him if they caught him. He also warned me against visiting Communist countries. Unfortunately, my father died in 1983, before Poland regained freedom. That's why me and my siblings often visit Poland now in order to remind people about the Katyn crime and about the role of our father in revealing the truth about it. I have handed over to the Katyn Museum the copies of documents on the massacre, including my father's coded message where he confirmed the Soviet guilt for Katyn. ■

Interview by Anna Dąbrowska

Dave Stewart, son of Capt Donald B. Stewart



They Bore Witness to the Soviet Crime

The participants of the delegations organized by the Germans in 1943, who were to confirm the Soviet responsibility for the murder of Polish officers in Katyn, became inconvenient witnesses for the USSR. After the war, they were accused of collaborating with Germans, wanted on arrest warrants, put in prison. Some of them even disappeared in unexplained circumstances – says Professor Tadeusz Wolsza.

After the graves of Polish officers had been discovered in Katyn in the spring of 1943, German authorities would organize delegations that visited the site. What was their purpose?

Professor Tadeusz Wolsza: The Germans wanted to take advantage of the fact that the Soviets murdered Polish officers to play the western states against their eastern ally. To that end, they had to convince the world that the Soviets were the ones to blame for the crime, even more so that the USSR authorities immediately accused the Third Reich of the massacre. The Germans needed an independent and trustworthy institution to examine the bodies, set the date of the murders and point to the perpetrators, so they turned to the International Committee of the Red Cross. It nevertheless refused to send a delegation to Katyn.

Why?

Such examination would require the consent of all parties concerned, and one of them was the Soviet Union, which, surely enough, did not want to give such consent. Therefore, the Germans formed the International Katyn Commission,

made up of over a dozen world-class pathologists and forensic scientists from countries occupied by Nazi Germany, such as Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland, the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary, Italy, and also from neutral Switzerland. Doctors from Spain, Portugal, Sweden and Turkey, who had also been invited, did not make it to Katyn. Between April 28-30, the members of the Commission worked in Katyn to determine the date of the crime on the basis of, inter alia, tests conducted on the residue found on the bodies. Other evidence proving that the executions were carried out in the spring of 1940, which in turn confirmed the Soviets' responsibility for the murders, were letters, photos, newspapers, notes and diaries found together with the bodies – their dates did not go beyond March 1940. Having finished the work, the Commission prepared a report, concluding that the Soviet Union had been responsible for the massacre. A bit earlier, Katyn had been visited by a few journalist delegations, the first of which had been sent from several neutral states, such as Spain, Switzerland



Katyn, April 11, 1943 – participants of the first Polish delegation. Third from the left is Ferdynand Goetel.

and Sweden. In total, about 31,000 people came through Katyn in the spring of 1943, including over 30,000 Wehrmacht soldiers. The sight of the bodies of Poles murdered by the NKVD was to motivate them to show more courage and dedication in fighting the Red Army.

Was the report of the International Katyn Commission signed by all the doctors?

Yes, and without any pressure from the Third Reich. The Germans generated a massive amount of publicity for this document, even making it into a book published in Germany and France. Moreover, all Commission members spread the news of the crime in their own countries by giving interviews, writing articles, or taking part in scientific conferences.

The researchers took from Katyn things like, for example, pieces of rope with which the hands of the officers had been tied, shoulder-straps, buttons, and Helge Tramsen, PhD, a Danish surgeon, even brought back the skull of one of the murdered men...

Tramsen of the Department of Forensic Medicine at the University of Copenhagen

had been given consent by the Danish resistance movement to go to Katyn, and on his return to Denmark he had smuggled the skull of one of the victims, Maj Ludwik Szymański. The skull had remained at the institute until the officer's son, Jerzy Szymański, was found in Australia 60 years later. Upon his request, the remains of his father were placed in the Katyn chapel at the Field Cathedral of the Polish Army.

Since the USSR was proven guilty of the crime by the specialists, what was the purpose of sending to Katyn in May 1943 a delegation of allied prisoners of war remaining in German captivity?

Most of the doctors and journalists came from occupied European countries, so they could have been somewhat unreliable for the USA or Great Britain. In order to confirm that the Polish officers were murdered by the Soviets, the Germans forced a group of English-speaking prisoners to witness the exhumation. The eight-person group included officers from Great Britain and the Commonwealth countries, as well as two Americans: LtCol John Van Vliet Jr. and Capt Donald B. Stewart.

NIGHT OF DEPORTATIONS

The winter of 1939/1940 proved to be exceptionally severe. Snowdrifts and freezing weather paralyzed life in almost all of Europe. That harsh winter brought a pause for the fighting armies. However, it did not give any breathing space to Poland.

Estapo and the NKVD tirelessly performed their criminal duties. The Soviets were working particularly hard to prepare for an extensive operation they were to carry out in Kresy (Eastern Borderlands of the Second Polish Republic).

Start of Soviet Deportations

After the "liberation of Western Belarus and Western Ukraine," – this is what the Soviet propaganda called the Red Army's aggression in Kresy – an immediate unification of the region with the Soviet empire began. The pace was truly impressive: on October 22, 1939, they held "elections" to

the People's Assemblies of Western Belarus and Western Ukraine. "The representatives of the people" appointed as a result of this mockery of elections immediately announced their intention to incorporate "Western Belarus and Western Ukraine into the all-union family of Soviet republics." As a consequence, the Supreme Soviet (Council) of the Soviet Union, during a meeting held on November 1-2, 1939, agreed to include these territories within the borders of the USSR. It was then that Vyacheslav Molotov uttered a famous sentence about Poland, saying that "A short blow by the German army, and subsequently by the Red Army, was enough for nothing to be left of this bastard of the Treaty of Versailles."

Great Terror

Shortly after the decision to annex Kresy to the USSR, another directive was issued. It was to ultimately change the lives of the region's inhabitants into a nightmare. On November 29, the Supreme Soviet (Council) of the Soviet Union granted Soviet citizenship to all people who had been living on the annexed territories on November 1-2. On December 30, 1939, a decree was passed on issuing passports, i.e. Soviet IDs, to all those people. This compulsory "passportization" was a perfect way for the NKVD to collect or complete data about the inhabitants of Kresy, particularly Poles, who were the biggest problem for the Soviet security service at the time. The people forced into So-

viet citizenship were immediately subject to conscription to the Red Army. In this way, 150,000 Poles were conscripted at once to its labor battalions. Moreover, in December 1939, the NKVD increased the number of arrests. At that time, mainly in the cities located in Kresy, many former employees of the Polish administration, judiciary, social and economic activists, and reserve officers were arrested. They were taken to labor camps on the strength of sentences given by open or secret tribunals. As it turned out, this was only the beginning – the launch of a great machine of terror created by the NKVD to subdue Kresy.

The NKVD officers were well aware that no kind of propaganda or indoctrina-

Going to Smolensk, both of them were deeply convinced that it was the Germans who had been responsible for the massacre.

What convinced them that the Germans were telling the truth?

Documents found in the graves, as well as shoes and uniforms which were in good condition. That, and of course the findings of the doctors and talks with the delegates of the Polish Red Cross. Soon after, the American officers were put in Oflag 64 in Szubin near Bydgoszcz, from where they sent ciphered communications on the Katyn massacre, confirming the Soviet crime, to US military intelligence. After the liberation of the camp, in May 1945 LtCol Vliet submitted a report to the Pentagon, confirming again that the USSR was responsible for the massacre in Katyn. Unfortunately, the document was classified.

The Germans also organized visits to Katyn for journalists and writers from occupied Europe. They were to later spread the information on the crime in their countries. One of such people was Józef Mackiewicz, a writer and a publicist who had earlier been sentenced to death by the underground court.

He had been accused of collaboration – he had allegedly written several anti-communist articles in 1941 to a German-controlled propaganda newspaper published in Vilnius, Gonic Codzienny. However, the head of the cell executing the sentences, Sergiusz Piasecki, refused to carry out the punishment, since he doubted Mackiewicz's fault. Later, LtCol Aleksander Krzyżanowski, the commander of the Vilnius District of the Home Army, looked into the case and decided to revoke the sentence. In the spring of 1943, Mackiewicz, upon the consent of Polish underground authorities, went to Katyn. At that time, also the Technical Commission of the Polish Red Cross, led by Marian Wodziński, PhD, was working at the site of the massacre. The task of the

Commission was to exhume and identify the victims. After Mackiewicz returned, he gave an interview that was published in Gonic Codzienny, entitled "I Saw It with My Own Eyes." Ferdynand Goetel, also a well-known writer, participated in another delegation with the knowledge and consent of the Government Delegation for Poland. He too prepared a report after his return. It is worth emphasizing here that reports from the site of the Soviet crime reached the Polish Government in London quite quickly, due to the effort undertaken by the authorities of the Polish Underground State.

The graves of Polish officers were also visited by Robert Brasillach, a French poet and writer.

During the occupation, Brasillach wrote for the Parisian collaborationist weekly Je suis partout. The Germans invited him to Katyn, because they counted on him to spread the news of the Soviet responsibility for the crime. He did not fail them, publishing many articles on the subject in French papers after his return. Besides, he wasn't the only one. We might say that in 1943 Katyn was "the hit of the Parisian spring season." After the liberation of Paris, Brasillach was arrested, and in January 1945 sentenced to death by shooting for collaboration with the Third Reich. The sentence was carried out on February 6. There are opinions, not entirely accurate I assume, that his death was the Communist revenge for disseminating the truth about Katyn. I guess his entire conduct during the war may be considered blameworthy. He was a supporter of fascism, fascinated with Hitler, he believed that only Nazi Germany can save Europe from bolshevism.

After the war, the people who had visited Katyn became inconvenient witnesses for the Soviets.

Helge Tramsen was persecuted in Denmark and accused of collaborating

with the Germans. Nevertheless, he didn't revoke his statements. He wrote articles on the subject, made appearances in the Polish Section of Radio Free Europe. He also gave testimony before the US Congress Committee. However, he was constantly afraid of Soviet revenge and, truth be told, he might have been right. His daughter came to Warsaw in 1970 for the Chopin Festival and died in a car crash. Tramsen claimed she had been murdered by Soviet agents, which actually seems very probable. A similar, but much less dramatic, fate awaited Vincenzo Palmieri and François Naville, among others. Their scientific careers in Italy and Switzerland were hindered for some time due to Communist interventions.

Did other members of the Katyn Commission also suffer repressions for having participated in it?

Almost all of them to some extent. After the war, some found themselves in countries occupied by the Soviets, for example František Hájek from the Czech Republic, and Marko Markov from Bulgaria. Both were accused of collaboration and faced death penalty, so they withdrew their signatures from the report and declared that the massacre had been committed by the Germans. On the other hand, František Šubík from Slovakia, despite spending two years in prison, refused to change his statement, and after being released in 1952, he fled the country. Ferenc Orsós from Hungary also left his country, gave up his career as a doctor and became a painter, and used Katyn as a theme of some of his works.

What happened to Mackiewicz and Goetel?

They both fled to Italy. The peer disciplinary court of the Polish Journalists Association cleaned Mackiewicz of the collaboration charge. In 1948, the writer took part in editing the publication entitled "The Katyn Crime in the Light of Documents

with a Foreword by Gen Władysław Anders," and a year later he published his own book, in German, on the Katyn massacre. He also tried to publish it in the USA, but without success. Both works played an important role in spreading the truth about the Soviet responsibility for the crime. Also Goetel wrote many articles on the subject and conducted a priceless interview with Ivan Krivozierce, a peasant living near Katyn, who in the spring of 1940 witnessed the NKVD bringing Polish officers in trucks. He had heard from the locals about digging holes in the woods. Both writers also testified before a specially appointed committee of inquiry, created in 1951 in the USA for the purpose of explaining the Katyn crime. In total, Ray Madden's Select Committee to Conduct an Investigation of the Facts, Evidence and Circumstances of the Katyn Forest Massacre heard several hundred witnesses, including both US officers and several doctors: Tramsen, Orsós, Naville, Palmieri. In 1952, it published a final report summarizing their work, finding the Soviet Union guilty of the Katyn massacre. ■

Interview by Anna Dąbrowska

Professor Tadeusz Wolsza is a historian and a political scientist, Deputy Chairman at the College of the Institute of National Remembrance, Chairman of the Museum Committee at the Museum of the Second World War, and a Member of the Scientific Council at the History Institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences. He deals with the problem of Stalin's crimes in post-war Poland and the history of the Katyn massacre. His book, entitled Dotyk



Katynia, awarded in a competition organized by Janusz Kurtyka Foundation, was published in the USA under the title Encounter with Katyn in 2019 (due to the effort of Carolina Academic Press).

tion can turn Poles into "Soviet people." Besides, they had clear grounds to think that – for example, on January 21, 1940, in Czortków (at the time already a part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic), a group of 120–150 Polish secondary school teenagers started an uprising. Partly armed, they seized a train station with a view to taking control of a transport route to Romania, from where it was possible to get to France, and join the Polish Army there. After the initial panic among the soldiers of the Soviet garrison, the riot was quickly suppressed. Eight mutineers were executed in Odessa, and the rest were imprisoned, but the whole situation proved that Molotov had been too rash to announce the definite end of Poland. The NKVD then reached for proven methods of repressing not only single people, but entire communities and social groups.

On the night of February 9/10, 1940, together with another wave of frost and blizzards, the NKVD began deportations.

They began to prepare a large number of railway sets and mark out deportation routes to take people away into the furthest regions of the vast Soviet empire.

Freezing Nightmare

On the night of February 9/10, 1940, together with another wave of frost and blizzards, the NKVD began their deportations. The course of that horrible night was similar in thousands of Polish towns, settlements and hamlets – it was planned by the NKVD to the smallest detail. According to the proscription lists, the houses of families selected for deportation were first surrounded. The residents, brutally woken from sleep, were then allowed to take their personal items, cookware and food reserves for several weeks. After that, they were put into sleighs or taken on foot to the nearest train station, where cattle wagons had already been waiting for them on the side track. This is how the then teenage Adela Żurawska from Lipowiec near Drohobycz remembered that moment: "Soviet soldiers who surrounded our house gave us a moment to pack the most important things, and then put everyone in a sleigh. We were taken to the train station in Zborów, where a very long train of cattle wagons was waiting for us under steam. About fifty people were

Continuation on the next page

Double Tragedy

One of the first questions they were asked on entering the camp was: "Where do you want to go when you are released?" They usually answered: "To my family," and gave the address. In this simple way, the NKVD collected addresses to later deport the prisoners' families to the east. A total of about 325,000 Polish citizens (and even close to a million according to the Polish Embassy in the USSR), were transported deep into the Soviet Union in the four waves of deportations (in February, April and June 1940, and in May and June 1941). This was a double tragedy for the imprisoned: having given the addresses of their families, they unintentionally caused their deportation. People who studied the graves in Katyn found letters and postcards that the prisoners had been planning to send to their families. These documents revealed that the captives had known about the depor-

tations. Some families had managed to send letters from Siberia. One of them was the Sowa family. Senior Constable Jan Sowa received a letter from his family saying: "We set off on a faraway journey." He figured that this meant deportation. He told his fellow prisoners to warn their families of the imminent danger. Another soldier cautioned in his letter: "Don't wait for me, leave town." On March 5, 1940, the Political Bureau of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) adopted a resolution on shooting the Polish officers imprisoned in camps on the territory of the Soviet Union, as well as other Polish prisoners held captive in the western districts of Ukraine and Belarus. On the strength of this decision, on April 3, 1940, the NKVD began the liquidation of the camp in Kozielsk, and two days later the camps in Starobielsk and Ostaszków. Within the next six weeks, 14,587 Polish prisoners were shot to death. Also, on the strength of the same decision, the NKVD murdered about 7,300 Poles held in Soviet prisons on the territory of pre-war eastern provinces of the Republic of Poland. ■

Małgorzata Schwarzgruber, journalist at the Military Publishing Institute (WIIW) in Warsaw

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squeezed into our wagon. After four or five days we headed east. [...] One big cry of despair was then heard – people started wailing and praying.” This February deportation concerned mainly military settlers, foresters and other civil servants, and railroaders. All of them with their families, of course. If heads of families had been proven to be officers, businessmen or landowners, they were directed to gulags on the strength of sentences given by emergency courts. The rest of the people deported in February 1940 – mainly women, children and old people – were taken to the Urals and Siberia, where they had to “start a new life” in extremely severe conditions. Many of them had not lived to experience that hell – they had died of cold and hunger during the transport.

The operation of February 9/10, 1940 was the first of a whole series of deportations planned by the NKVD to once and for all cleanse the annexed territories of all Poles. In April, the families of the imprisoned, sentenced and arrested became victims of mass deportations. That way, the closest families of Polish officers who were being murdered in Katyn at the same time were among people transported to Kazakhstan. In June, deportations covered fugitives from central and western Poland. Contrary to what the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, claims, among the Polish citizens deported at that time were thousands of Jewish people who had escaped from the repressions of Stalin’s ally – Hitler. Many of them did not survive the transport in cattle wagons or died later at the place of their exile – Arkhangelsk or Krasnoyarsk.

Finally, the last wave of deportations, executed soon before the outbreak of the German-Soviet War in May and June 1941, concerned fugitives from the Vilnius Region. They were being transported to Kazakhstan and Siberia practically until the very last days of peace between the Third Reich and the USSR. Many trains with deportees were in fact taken over by Wehrmacht on entering Kresy on June 22, 1941. It is very hard to estimate how many Polish citizens were deported in total during the four waves of deportations. The number mentioned most often oscillates between 400–500 thousand. One thing is certain – all of them faced hell on earth in the “Soviet paradise.” Those who were lucky enough to survive, joined General Władysław Anders’ army after the “amnesty” of July 1941 and later took part in the mass exodus to the West. Those who “did not make it to Anders” returned to Poland in the ranks of General Zygmunt Berling’s army. This was also the fate of the above-quoted Adela Żurawska. ■

Piotr Korczyński

Smolensk – We Remember

“Let us help the Katyn wound to fully heal and cicatrize at last.”

the late President Lech Kaczyński

Fragment of the speech that President Lech Kaczyński was to deliver on April 10, 2010 in the Katyn Forest



Poland in mourning, Warsaw – April 2010. After the air crash, in which a Polish delegation of 96 people died on their way to Katyn, thousands bereaved Poles lit candles in front of the empty Presidential Palace, mourning after the late Presidential Couple and all other victims of that terrible national tragedy.

POLSKA ZBROJNA HISTORIA
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Anna Putkiewicz

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