

# KATYN

## Unravelling One of the Many Secrets of the Second World War

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One of the most extraordinary mysteries, conspiracies and disinformation campaigns has finally been exposed, implicating numerous prominent heads of state in the atrocities and subsequent cover up scandals. A complex edifice of deception has been thoroughly dismantled by patient and persistent perseverance and pressure.

### **Mission to Poland**

On a Mission to Poland in 1990, I saw a monument for the victims of the Katyn Forest Massacre in 1940, I questioned whether they did not mean 1941? *"Surely you don't believe the Russian propaganda?"* they challenged me. I did not know what they were talking about. The Polish Christians were most agitated over my ignorance on this matter.

### **A Lesson in History**

They explained that although Great Britain and France had declared war on Germany, 3 September 1939, ostensibly because Germany had invaded Poland, so Russia also invaded Poland in 1939. *"Of course most history books omit that fact."* The Katyn Forest is deep in Soviet territory, closer to Moscow than Warsaw, they pointed out. Over 22,000 Polish prisoners, including over 8,000 officers, were murdered in cold blood by the Soviet NKVD in the spring of 1940. When this crime was discovered, Stalin's Soviet Russia was an ally of Great Britain and the United States of America. Therefore they found it more convenient to attribute this Russian atrocity to their German enemies.

### **Judicial Fraud**

The Polish Christians informed me that the British, Americans, and French chose to participate in judicial fraud at the Nuremberg Trials by indicting the German Army with what were plainly Communist atrocities committed by Soviet Russia.

### **Missing Polish Prisoners of War**

In December 1941, the head of the London based Polish government-in-exile, General Wladyslaw Sikorski enquired of Soviet dictator, Joseph Stalin, what had become of Polish prisoners of war captured by the Soviets during their invasion of Poland in September 1939. Stalin assured Sikorski that all Polish POWs had been released. He opined that some might have moved to Manchuria.

### **Mass Graves Exhumed**

In 1943, a German intelligence officer, Rudolph von Gersdorff, serving with the Abwehr, received reports about mass graves of Polish military officers near Katyn. A ditch 28 m long and 16 m wide was found which contained the bodies of 3,000 Polish officers piled up in 12 layers. This was only the first of many such graves to be unearthed. German soldiers unearthed numerous mass graves of many thousands of Polish officers who had been massacred in the Katyn Forest near Smolensk. German news reports claimed that this was yet another evidence of the war crimes and atrocities committed by the Communist commissars of the Soviet Union. When the German government announced the discovery of the mass graves in the Katyn Forest, the London based Polish government-in-exile requested an investigation by the International Committee of the Red Cross. Stalin immediately severed diplomatic relations with it and claimed that the victims had been murdered by the Nazis.

## **Investigation**

The German government brought in a European Commission of 12 forensic experts and their staff from Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, Croatia, the Netherlands, Romania, Sweden, Slovakia and Hungary. Even Polish, American and British Prisoners of War were included in the investigation. The reports of these neutral investigators confirmed that the victims were indeed Polish officers, NCOs and intellectuals who were victims of Russian forces in the summer of 1940. When the Polish government-in-exile insisted on bringing the matter before the International Red Cross, General Sikorski died in an aircraft crash in July 1943, an event that was described as "*convenient to the allied leaders.*" Numerous books and documentary films have been made of "*The Assassination of General Sikorski.*"

## **The Burdenko Commission**

The Soviets hastened to orchestrate an alternative Soviet version of the now disclosed massacre, to claim that the Polish POWs had been massacred, not by the Soviets, but by the Nazis. Nikolai Burdenko, the President of the Soviet Academy of Medicine, presided over a commission appointed by Stalin to investigate the incident. Burdenko claimed to have interviewed more than a hundred eyewitnesses who swore that the Nazis had massacred the Polish POWs in autumn, 1941.

## **The Nuremberg Trials**

At the Nuremberg Tribunal of 1945-1946, the German military were proclaimed guilty of shooting Polish Prisoners of War in the Katyn Forest. So the Soviet version of the Katyn Massacre moved from war-time propaganda into school history books: *The Germans shot Polish Prisoners of War in Katyn Forest in 1941.*

## **Duplicity**

The Polish-Soviet crisis threatened Western-Soviet relations and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and US President Franklin Roosevelt were torn between their commitment to their Polish ally and the demands of Stalin. In private, Churchill agreed that the atrocity was most likely carried out by the Soviets. According to Edward Raczynski, Churchill admitted on 15 April 1943, during a conversation with General Sikorski: "*Alas, the German revelations are probably true. The Bolsheviks can be very cruel.*" However, on 24 April 1943, Churchill assured the Soviets: "*We shall certainly oppose vigorously any investigation by the International Red Cross or any other body...*" Classified UK documents concluded that Soviet guilt was "*a near certainty*", but the alliance with the Soviets was deemed to be more important than the moral issue. The official version parroted the Soviet propaganda and the censors suppressed all contradictory accounts.

## **Cover-up**

The British Foreign Secretary pointed out several inconsistencies, and near impossibilities, in the Soviet version. Churchill's post-war account of Katyn skirts over the Katyn Massacre by referring to *the 1944 Soviet Enquiry which attributed guilt to the Germans* adding cryptically: "*belief seems an act of faith.*"

## **Suppressed**

When US Navy Lieutenant Commander George Earle produced a report concluding that the massacres were committed by the Soviet Union, President Roosevelt ordered Earle's report to be suppressed. When Earle formally requested permission to publish his findings, the President issued a written order forbidding it. Earle was reassigned and spent the rest of the War in the remote island of American Samoa.

## **Reports Destroyed**

Two senior American Prisoners of War, Lieutenant Colonel Donald Stewart and Colonel John van Vliet, taken by the Germans to Katyn for investigation, submitted a report, after their release in 1945,

that the Soviets were definitely responsible for the Massacre. George Marshall's Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Major General Clayton Bissell, destroyed the report. During the 1951-1952 Congressional Investigations, General Bissell defended his action before Congress arguing that it was not in the US interest to antagonise the Soviet Union which was *America's ally*.

### **Embarrassed**

The Americans and British were embarrassed by the Soviet inclusion of the Katyn Forest Massacre in the indictments against the German military at Nuremberg. Soviet General Roman Redenko, at the Nuremberg Tribunal stated that *"One of the most important criminal acts for which the major war criminals are responsible was the mass execution of Polish Prisoners of War shot in the Katyn Forest near Smolensk by the German Fascist invaders."* Katyn was: *"The worst massacre of Prisoners of War in history."*

### **Hypocrisy**

For sheer bare-faced hypocrisy this accusation was classic. All present at the trial, including the one making the accusation, knew that this was judicial fraud and farce.

### **Censorship**

The Black Book of Censorship in the People's Republic of Poland expressly stated: *"Any attempt to burden the Soviet Union with the responsibility for the deaths of Polish officers in Katyn Forest is forbidden."* Further evidence that everyone knew who was really responsible, was that even the most simple memorial erected in Poland such as *Katyn 1940*, was confiscated by police and destroyed. The Polish practice was to erect memorial crosses on All Saints' Day. These were always dismantled by the police. If Katyn had really been a Nazi atrocity, it would not have been a taboo subject in Communist controlled countries. Not only did the Soviet Union forbid any monuments to be erected to victims of the Katyn Massacre, but the British government also objected to plans to build a Katyn monument in the UK.

### **Disinformation Campaign**

In the 1960s, the Soviets launched a Disinformation Offensive to side-track the persistent accusations of Soviet atrocities and massacres throughout Eastern Europe. A village in Belarus, Khatyn, whose name is very similar to Katyn, was chosen as a site for a memorial to commemorate *the victims of Nazi atrocities*. Apparently 149 Khatyn villagers had been massacred by Ukrainian and Belarus soldiers fighting for the Nazis in March 1943. This Khatyn Memorial became an obligatory stop for all foreign visitors. This Disinformation Campaign scored its major success in 1974 when US President Richard Nixon was brought to Khatyn to remember the Polish victims of the Nazis! From this time all Soviet publications displaced Katyn with Khatyn, including in Polish encyclopaedias and historical dictionaries.

### **Facts are Stubborn Things**

Every Soviet leader had to deal with the persistent Polish charges of the Katyn Forest Massacre. The Polish Solidarity movement in the 1980s used underground printing presses to expose the Soviet duplicity and print the facts about the Katyn Forest Massacre.

### **Gorbachev's Glasnost**

Mikhail Gorbachev launched an historical commission in 1987 to create a new Soviet version of what had *actually* happened at Katyn. Gorbachev's Politburo proposed in 1988 to build a memorial to the victims of the massacre *"executed by Hitlerites in Katyn"* alongside a memorial to 500 Soviet POWs supposedly also killed at Katyn by the Germans - a myth created by the Burdenko Commission with absolutely no evidence that it ever happened at all. Gorbachev also offered the Poles *"a simplified procedure"* for relatives wishing to visit the sites where their loved ones lay buried.

### **One of the Worst Crimes Ever**

However the Polish historians tenaciously exposed the Russian responsibility, and the Catholic church in Poland labelled the Katyn Massacre *"one of the worst crimes in the history of mankind."*

### **Exposure**

Gorbachev's trusted advisor, Valentin Falin, reported that Polish historians subverted the Soviet Commission by producing their own evidence exposing the 1944 Burdenko Report as spurious. Without waiting for the Soviet Commission's response, the Poles began publishing the facts. The problem stubbornly refused to go away. Even the communist puppet government of Jaruzelski was forced to admit that *"the liquidation of the Polish officers was the responsibility, of the USSR."*

### **Admission**

On the symbolic date of 13 April 1990, 47 years after Berlin radio had announced the discovery of the massacre site, Gorbachev handed over two boxes of evidence to the Poles. The documents made clear that the Katyn Massacre was the work of the head of the NKVD, Lavrenty Beria. Gorbachev attempted to convince the Poles that more than 20,000 Polish nationals had been executed by the secret police chief *without any authority from the Soviet Politburo!*

### **Deception Rejected**

This limited confession and further attempts at deception only enraged the Polish people further. An investigation conducted by the Prosecutor General's Office of the Soviet Union in 1991, and later by the Russian Federation, confirmed Soviet responsibility for the massacres. However the Russian Federation later tried to diminish the number of the deaths to 1,803 Polish citizens. They also refused to classify the action as a war crime, or as an act of genocide. They declared the investigation closed on the grounds that the perpetrators of the massacre were already dead.

### **Finally the Truth Comes Out**

In October 1992, Boris Yeltsin, who had replaced Gorbachev, lowered the Soviet flag, abolished the Soviet Union and handed over *"newly found"* secret documents from the Soviet Politburo to Polish president Lech Walensa. The Politburo order dated 5 March 1940, was entitled, *Question of the NKVD*. In it Beria informed Stalin that 14,736 Polish officers, officials, police officials, gendarmes and other intellectuals were being held in prison camps in occupied Polish territory and that 18,632 similar people were being held in camps in the Western Provinces of Ukraine and Belarus. Beria requested permission to shoot them all.

### **Stalin's Order**

Stalin's *"in favour"* and bold signature are scrawled at the top of Beria's question. Five other Politburo members also signed and approved the execution order. The document was labelled **Top Secret**. Of the total killed, about 8,000 were Polish military officers taken prisoner during the September 1939 Soviet invasion of Poland. Another 6,000 were police officers, with the rest being Polish Intelligentsia arrested for being *"bourgeois"*. The Katyn Forest Massacre was justified by Stalin's Politburo as necessary to deprive a potential future Polish military of its leadership. Since Russia intended to keep the Eastern portion of Poland, he was determined to deprive it of a large proportion of its military and intellectual elite.

### **Cold Blooded Mass Murder**

Those who were murdered, in the first batch alone, included: an Admiral, 2 Generals, 24 Colonels, 79 Lieutenant Colonels, 258 Majors, 654 Captains, 17 Naval Captains, 3,420 NCOs, 7 Chaplains, 20 University Professors, 300 Physicians, hundreds of lawyers, engineers and teachers, more than one hundred writers and journalists and over 200 pilots. Altogether during the massacres, the NKVD murdered 14 Polish Generals. Vasili Mikhailovich Blokhin, the Chief Executioner for the NKVD, is reported to have personally shot and killed 7,000 of the condemned, from the Ostashkov Camp, over a period of 28 days in April 1940.

## **A Legacy of Deception**

Further documents revealed that every Soviet chairman since Joseph Stalin had signed out the Politburo's Katyn file and were well aware of the Russian complicity in this crime. In a Memo dated 20 March 1959, to Chairman Khrushchev, Interior Minister Alexander Shelepin reported: *"The Committee of State Security... has held, since 1940, case files and other materials regarding prisoners and interned officers, policemen, gendarmes, military settlers, landowners, etc., persons from former bourgeois Poland who were shot in the same year. In all, on the basis of the decision of a special Troika of the NKVD, USSR, 21,857 people were shot... the entire operation was carried out on the basis of the decision of the Central Committee of 5 March 1940. Since 1940, no information from these files was released to anyone. All of the files, numbering 21,857, have been stored in a sealed location. To Soviet organs, all of these files represent neither operational interest, nor historical value. It is also doubtful that they could be of any real value to our Polish friends. Quite the contrary, any unforeseen incident may lead to revealing the operation with all the undesirable consequences for our state. This is especially so because regarding those shot in the Katyn Forest, there is an official version supported by an Investigation carried out on the initiative of the Soviet state in 1944, by the Burdenko Commission... which concluded that all of the Poles liquidated there are considered to have been killed by the German invaders. The conclusions of the commission became firmly established in international public opinion. It seems appropriate to destroy all of the records regarding the persons shot in 1940, in the above mentioned operation."*

## **Evidence Destroyed**

Shelepin's recommendation to purge the records was carried out with these over 21,000 case files destroyed. However, the Politburo Execution Order and Memo from Beria remained in the official record. Files later released from Gorbachev's time included advice from advisors, that should the truth of the Katyn Forest Massacre come out, *people could be convinced that the Soviet Union was no better than, and may have been worse than, Nazi Germany during the war, and that the Soviet Union bears no less responsibility for the war.*

## **Polish Deportations**

Polish historians point out that during the 1930s, hundreds-of-thousands of Poles living in the Western areas of the Soviet Union were marked out for persecution by Stalin - either execution, or deportation to Central Asia. The Soviet invasion of Poland in September 1939, was followed by more waves of arrests and mass deportations to the East. When the Katyn Forest Massacre took place, hundreds-of-thousands of Poles, mostly the better-educated and economically active citizens, were already in exile in Siberia, or in labour camps in Central Asia. They were herded there in horribly overcrowded freight trains and at least one out of every five of them died during transportation to the Soviet concentration camps.

## **Oppression**

Between 320,000, to possibly up to 1 million, Polish citizens were deported to the Soviet Union. Of one group of 12,000 Poles incarcerated in Delstroy, near Kolyma, in 1940, only 583 survived by 1942. Over 570,000 Polish citizens were arrested and incarcerated in concentration camps by the Soviets during the war. Polish prisoners were subjected to lengthy interrogations between October 1939 and February 1940. These interviews were a selection process to determine who would live and who would die. According to NKVD reports, if the prisoners could not be persuaded to adopt a pro-communist attitude, they were declared *"hardened and uncompromising enemies of Soviet authority"* and condemned to death.

## **Further Massacres**

When Germany launched Operation Barbarossa in the summer of 1941, the NKVD concentration camp guards massacred thousands of Polish prisoners before fleeing eastwards to avoid the German advance.

## **The Betrayal of Warsaw**

When the war was reaching its end and the Red Army was at the very gates of Warsaw, radio broadcasts from Russia urged the Polish citizens to *rise up in revolt!* The Soviet Army was then ordered to stand by and *render no assistance* as the Germans crushed the Warsaw Uprising. Stalin said that it was better that all resistance in Poland be crushed before a Soviet occupation.

## **South Africa's Support Remembered**

The Polish Christians in 1990 reminded me that only the South African Air Force had flown in weapons and aid to the Polish underground during the Warsaw Uprising. I was surprised. I had read that the RAF had done so - but that was another lie. It was actually the SAAF, but because of apartheid, historians had expunged South Africa's role and replaced it with the RAF. The fact that history books could be re-written to conform to politically correct dictates is disturbing.

## **Never Liberated**

Polish citizens strenuously objected to any suggestion that they had been "*liberated*" by the Soviets. "*The Soviets never liberated anyone!*" they insisted. The first act of the Soviets on occupying Poland was arresting all leaders of the underground army and government. Polish Christians pointed out that most of the atrocities attributed to the Germans were actually communist atrocities committed by the Soviets and conveniently blamed on their enemies. Polish relatives of the victims continued to urge the European Court of Human Rights to rule on the crimes of the Stalin regime.

## **Putin's Perspective**

To Vladimir Putin's Russia, the Katyn Forest Massacre is an inconvenient truth which taints Russian *war-time heroism*. Putin's chief military prosecutor, Alexander Savenkov, issued a ruling on Katyn on 11 March 2005, in which they acknowledged that the NKVD Troika found 14,542 Polish citizens, held in NKVD camps, *guilty of committing state crimes* and made a decision to shoot them in the spring of 1940. Putin's representative claims that these Soviet officials "*abused their authority,*" but that no criminal cases could be opened against them because the guilty parties had since died. The Polish claim of genocide was rejected and although they agreed to hand over 67 of the 183 volumes of evidence, two thirds of the remaining evidence was to remain classified.

## **Outrage**

The Polish parliament was outraged and demanded that Russia's Katyn archives all be declassified and that Russian courts rule that the Katyn Forest Massacre was an act of genocide. Communists throughout the world would prefer the truth about Katyn to be buried, but Christians in Poland, and throughout Eastern Europe, determined to exhume the secrets and expose the true nature of Soviet Communism.

## **Pressure**

Human Rights societies continued to pressure the Russian government, until in November 2010, the Russian Duma approved the declaration blaming Stalin and other Soviet officials for having personally ordered the Massacre of Polish Prisoners of War. This was only after the disastrous plane crash of Polish leaders, enroute to Katyn for the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration.

## **Death Flight**

On 10 April 2010, an aircraft carrying Polish President Lech Kaczynski, his wife and 87 other politicians and high-ranking army officers, crashed near Smolensk, killing all 96 on board the aircraft. The passengers were to attend a ceremony marking the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Katyn Massacre. The Polish people were convinced that they were the victims of a communist terror campaign which assassinated their president and senior leaders on the eve of the most important and solemn anniversary of this massacre. Many observed that it was like the assassination of General Sikorski in 1943. In the furore following the death flight of the Polish government, the Russian Duma finally acknowledged Russia's guilt for the Katyn Forest Massacre.

## War Crime

In 2011, the European Court of Human Rights declared admissible two complaints of relatives of the massacre victims against Russia concerning the inadequacy of their investigations. In a ruling on 16 April 2012, the court found that Russia had violated the rights of victims' relatives and described the Massacre as a war-crime. It has taken 77 years, but facts are stubborn things.

***"They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity..."*** 2 Peter 2:19

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