

MURDER IN THE KATYN FOREST

An eyewitness to the massacre of Polish officers

Swianiewicz's report

Prof. Stanisław Swianiewicz, a prisoner of the Kozielsk camp, was withdrawn from the transport just before his execution. He was taken to the NKVD prison in Lubianka. The Russians decided that it could be of use to them, as he was an outstanding economist, an expert in the economies of the USSR and Germany. The Soviets sentenced him to 8 years in a labor camp for espionage. After his release in April 1942, he joined General Anders' army.

There he submitted a report on his stay in Kozielsk. He saw prisoners transferred from Kozielsk to cars and taken to the Katyn forest. In 1944, he presented his testimony to the British ambassador to the Polish government. This testimony became part of the book „The Katyn Massacre in the Light of Documents”, published in 1948, accusing the Soviet Union of murdering Polish prisoners of war.

Moscow's lie about the genocide in Katyn

The first information about the Katyn massacre was reported by the German press in 1943. A special commission of the International Red Cross was established to prepare a report. It showed that the murder had taken place before the Germans attacked the USSR.

The Russians insisted that it was the work of the Nazis. The Katyn case was even supposed to be brought before the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg. The prosecutor from the USSR, Roman Rudenko, brought an indictment of genocide of about 11,000 Polish officers

in Katyn by the Third Reich. In its judgment issued in 1946, the Tribunal ignored the case of the murder of Polish officers due to lack of evidence. The USSR authorities admitted responsibility of Soviet Russia for the Katyn massacre only after 50 years, calling it one of the most serious crimes of Stalinism. The NKVD commissioner Lavrenty Beria and his deputy Vsevolod Merkulov were indicated as guilty. In 1990, Mikhail Gorbachev, the then First Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, handed over to Poland some of the Soviet documents relating to this matter.

It is forbidden to talk about the Soviet crime

Hidden truth

Until the end of the 1980s, the authorities made sure that the Soviet crime did not come to light, and the Germans end up being blamed. In the People's Republic of Poland, Katyn could not be spoken or written in public.

The families of the murdered were harassed, widows were fired from work. Children were not admitted to universities. Until 1990, it was forbidden to mention the Katyn massacre as a Soviet crime. For the

first time, the murders committed in Katyn were mentioned during rallies in October 1956, as opposition activists mention. The fight against the Katyn lie was started by the second-circulation press in the mid-1980s. From the 1980s, Fr. Stefan Niedzielak celebrated holy masses for the victims of the Katyn massacre in the Warsaw church of st. Charles Borromeo. An epitaph appeared on the church: „To the Fallen in the East”.



Photos of the murdered from all camps and prisons

among others executed, there were officers, doctors, lawyers, officials, and clergy

Among the victims of the Katyn Massacre were 12 generals, one admiral, 82 colonels, 205 lieutenant colonels, 563 majors, 1,521 captains, 18 naval captains, 1,830 lieutenants, 4,149 „other officers”, and 21 clergymen of various denominations. Reserve officers, called to the army at the outbreak of the war, were also a large group. They represented

the Polish intelligentsia: doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers, writers, political activists, and officials.

The only woman murdered in Katyn was 32-year-old Second Lieutenant Janina Lewandowska, daughter of the famous General Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki, commander in the Greater Poland Uprising. She finished music

school, trained as a pilot and paratrooper. At the age of 22, she was the first woman in Europe to jump with a parachute from a height of over 5 km. She met her husband, Lt. Mieczysław Lewandowski, during a glider show. They got married in June 1939. During the September campaign, she served in the 3rd aviation regiment.



He fought for the memory of murdered Poles

Chaplain Peszkowski

Zdzisław Peszkowski, a participant in the September campaign in 1939, was one of the few survivors of the POW camp in Kozielsk.

He left for the Middle East together with the army of General Władysław Anders. He walked the entire combat trail, settled in Great Britain after the war and was ordained a priest. He returned to Poland in 1989.

He devoted his life to the Katyn cause. In the mid-90s, he beca-

me the chaplain of, inter alia, Katyn Families. He was the founder and president of the „Golgotha of the East” Foundation. Thanks to him, military cemeteries in Katyn, Kharkiv and Miednoje were created, as well as numerous monuments and memorials in honor of Polish officers. He emphasized that the flower of the Polish intelligentsia was buried in the Katyn forests. In January 2000, the Sejm supported his candidacy for the Nobel Peace Prize.

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