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The Katyn lie. Its rise and duration

We would like to present a text authored by Dr Witold Wasilewski, a historian of the Institute of National Remembrance, in which he discusses the Soviet falsification and concealment of the truth about the Katyń Massacre for almost half a century.



In the spring of 1940, about 22,000 Polish officers, soldiers and

policemen interned in Soviet prisons and camps were murdered upon the orders of the highest authorities of communist Russia (including Joseph Stalin).

Having divided Poland into separate spheres of influence under the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union both invaded Poland in September 1939. While the Germans began the mass killing of Polish citizens in western occupied Poland, the Red Army arrested and imprisoned thousands of Polish military officers, policemen, and intelligentsia during their occupation of eastern Poland. Germany began World War II with an attack on Poland. It was then that Polish officers were interned in Soviet camps and prisons. According to the recommendations, Poles were to be killed without trial by officers of the Soviet political police - NKVD. This mass killing is referred to as the Katyń Massacre, the name deriving from the town of Katyń - one of several places where Polish officers were murdered.

Witold Wasilewski

The Katyn Lie - Rise and Duration

In the spring of 1940, pursuant to the decision of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine (b) of 5 March, the NKVD murdered about 22,000 Polish prisoners of war and inmates from prisons in Western Belarus and Western Ukraine. Katyn was one of the sites of their execution.

The truth about the Katyn massacre came from an unexpected side. In the early spring of 1943, having received signals from the local population and following their own informal investigation, the Germans decided to search the Katyn Forest. The result was the discovery of the bodies of murdered Polish officers, which constituted the missing link to the murder of Polish officers committed by the NKVD in 1940. In view of undermining the USSR's credibility after the defeat of the Third Reich near Stalingrad, Minister Joseph Goebbels launched a propaganda campaign. On 13 April 1943, Radio Berlin informed about the discovery of the bodies of Polish officers in the Katyn Forest, which resounded widely throughout the world⁽ⁱ⁾. Delegations from both occupied and neutral countries were brought in, including journalists, as well as Allied officers from Oflags and forensic doctors, who confirmed the cruel truth about the Bolshevik crime⁽ⁱⁱ⁾.

In response to the German scoop, on 15 April 1943, in full indignation at Goebbels' slander, the Moscow radio released a statement by the Sovinformburo news agency, placing the blame on the Nazis and declaring punishment for the crime committed by "German fascist killers". The first key paragraph alone contained the main theses on the German responsibility, and, in consequence, on the German provocation aimed at the USSR:

"Goebbels' slanderers have been disseminating the inventions of mass execution of Polish officers by the Soviet authorities in the Smolensk region for the last two or three days, as if they had taken place in the spring of 1940. German fascist thugs are not retreating in this new

monstrous malarkey of their most villainous and vile lie, with the help of which they are trying to hide the incredible crimes committed, as it is clear now, by themselves"^[iii].

Particular attention should be paid to the second paragraph of the document, also appearing in the press. Future deceptive version of events, which was later developed in detail by the Soviet state organs and their communist allies, could be discerned already at that stage. The Soviet Union officially stated:

"Fascist German statements in this matter leave no doubt as to the tragic fate of the former Polish prisoners of war who, in 1941, were in the areas west of Smolensk on construction works and together with many Soviet people, residents of the Smolensk region, fell into the hands of German fascist executioners in the summer of 1941, after the retreat of the Soviet army from the Smolensk region."^[iv].

A falsified, Soviet version of the murder of Polish prisoners of war, i.e. the Katyn lie^[v], was created.

The announcement in April 1943 by the Germans of the information about the discovery of the graves of Polish prisoners murdered by the Bolsheviks in Katyn finally led the Polish government, already in possession of the evidence allowing such a conclusion to be drawn, to recognize the version of the murder of Poles in 1940 as the most probable and to attempt to explain the fate of the officers, also through international institutions. On 17 April 1943, the government of the Republic of Poland issued a statement regarding the murder, not

decisively defining guilt, and requested the International Red Cross (IRC) in Bern to investigate the matter further. Even at this point, the German propaganda was more heavily attacked than the Soviet criminals^[vi].

On 19 April 1943, the Soviet 'Pravda' newspaper attacked Poland for turning to the Red Cross and cooperating with German Goebbels' provocateurs. In fact, the Polish attitude was more than restrained. The Polish government even withdrew its application from the IRC, doing so under pressure from Winston Churchill, followed by Franklin D. Roosevelt^[vii]. This would become a pattern for the Anglo-Saxon policy towards Katyn in the subsequent years of the war and immediately after it ended, consisting in pushing the problem away and concealing the truth. Unlike the Polish government, the Soviets acted decisively and ruthlessly. On 25 April 1943, on the grounds of Polish participation in the German provocation which was supposed to place the blame for the fascist crime on the USSR, the Soviet government broke off the relations with the Polish government^[viii].

In the following months the Soviets began open preparations to install the communist regime in Poland, and also developed a very complex structure of forgery, which in the eyes of the world legitimized the Katyn lie, or the "legend" about the crimes on Poles by the Germans after they entered the Smolensk region in the summer of 1941.

Today we know fairly well the mechanism of constructing the initial and at the same time fundamental testimonies to the Katyn lie thanks to the documents collected in Russian archives (mainly the State

Archive of the Russian Federation - GARF, and to a lesser extent the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History - RGASPI), and reached by Russian researchers. They were discussed by Natalia Lebedeva and Wojciech Materski most frequently^[ix]. We owe the access to the documents on the part of Polish readers to their team^[x]. The original documents have been made readily available to researchers in Moscow^[xi].

In order to construct detailed false counter-evidence confirming the German responsibility, the Soviets used the moment of their recovering the Katyn Forest from the German hands at the end of September 1943. This was easy to predict, being part of the internal Soviet logic of lies.

The question of the authorship of the initiative to conduct the Soviet investigation in Katyn is complex. At the time when the Red Army was "30-35 km from Katyn", on 22 September, the head of the Central Committee of Propaganda and Agitation of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine (b) Georgy Aleksandrov wrote a letter to the secretary of the Central Committee Andrei Szczerbakov, signaling the need for "preparatory steps to unmask the German provocation" and proposing the establishment of a special commission, consisting of the representatives of the Extraordinary State Commission for Determining and Investigating German-Fascist Crimes and their Associates and Losses to Citizens, Kolkhozes, Social Organizations, Enterprise State and

Institutions of the USSR, which had been operating since 2 November

1942, as well as investigative bodies, which in fact was understood as the NKVD and the NKGB separated from the NKVD structures^[xii]. The general scheme of action proposed in Aleksandrov's letter was then implemented by decision of the USSR's highest political authorities in the All Union Communist Party Politburo (b). Certain modification was applied, namely the first phase of the work was limited to the activity of the secret services, which were later joined by other institutions. This clearly indicates the key participation of the leadership of the state security apparatus in shaping the Soviet tactics in the Katyn case. The delay in the operation of the "civil" commission in relation to the activity of the Soviet security service should certainly be explained by the pragmatics of the operation, according to which the special services were better suited for operational work in the front-line area. This was perhaps also due to the authorities' limited confidence in civilians, who when confronted with stark reality, could behave in an unpredictable manner. In view of the above, although on 27 September, i.e. two days after the Red Army's entry into Smolensk, a member of the Extraordinary State Commission Nikolai Burdenko (citing earlier preliminary arrangements) asked Vyacheslav Molotov for permission to start specific field work with the participation of the Soviet troops before the end of the month^[xiii], eventually, he and his then-famous commission arrived weeks later. Without a greater risk of error, it can be said that the control over, relatively poor for the Soviet conditions, coordinated preparations to take up the Katyn case in the new circumstances should be attributed to the NKVD-NKGB. Hesitations as to the tactics of the accepted strategy, could be due to the exceptional, even for the Soviets, nature of the crime committed

on the officers of another state, which was decided directly and in writing in 1940 by decision makers from the AUCP Politburo (b), among them V. Molotov, now wanting quickly, maybe even too quickly and nervously from the point of view of methodically operating services, to close down the dirty case made public in April 1943. The officers of the security apparatus, who in 1940 carried out the criminal decision of the Politburo, formally requested by the head of the NKVD Lavrentiy Beria, were obviously obliged to perform a secondary camouflage of the crime in 1943. Realizing the importance and difficulty of the task, to which even trusted members of the scientific and Party establishment, including for example academic Burdenko, cannot be allowed without prior preparation of the area (both metaphorically and very literally in the Katyn Forest). The view of the need for a safe preparation of the mystification was ultimately shared by the main crime decision-maker Joseph Stalin and the rest of the political leadership.

Therefore, conducting the initial investigation and preparing the ground for further actions was the task of the NKVD executioners. At the turn of September and October 1943, the NKVD and NKGB officers from the headquarters in Moscow and the NKVD Board of the Smolensk District, i.e. people who knew the most about the murder, arrived at the site. Ongoing operations in the Katyn area were commanded by the head of the NKGB counterintelligence department Leonid Raikhman - the same who was unsuccessfully questioned in the case of missing Polish officers in 1942 by Captain Józef Czapki. All the work, which included supervising from Moscow, and also inspecting on the spot, was managed by the Deputy People's Commissar for Internal

Affairs (from 26 April 1943) Sergei Kruglov and People's Commissar for State Security (from 14 April 1943) Vsevolod Merkulov – member of the NKVD “trio” designated in the "Katyn decision" of the AUCP Politburo (b) of 5 March 1940 to execute it^[xiv].

From the beginning of October 1943 to January 1944, NKVD-NKGB officers carried out a series of works aimed at concealing the truth about the crime and creating a false image of the fate of the Polish prisoners of war. Operational activities of officers subordinate to Merkulov and Kruglov, partly described the latter as a "preliminary investigation in the so-called Katyn case", including: 1) securing the crime scene and hiding the bodies against external penetration; 2) preparing death pits opened between October and December 1943, so that subsequent "exhumations" would serve to draw conclusions about the Soviet innocence and the German guilt. The second task was related to the fabrication of documents dating from the second half of 1940 and the first half of 1941, testifying to the Poles remaining alive at that time. They were placed next to the corpses, and when "discovered" would become the proof of the German guilt^[xv]. Activities belonging to the most secret of the services were very enigmatically reflected in reports (*Information*) on the results of the investigative work of the Merkulov and Kruglov Committee, which were to serve further activities carried out by persons with a degree of initiation impossible to determine in advance, but their conduct is not the least doubt, which results from the analysis of documents and which was confirmed by the work of the General Military Prosecutor's Office of Russia^[xvi]. However, the main plot of the Merkulov and Kruglov team was

the processing of living human material, which was used to gather false testimonies in writing and to prepare witnesses to later confirm the false version of the events, and to eliminate witnesses who could preach the truth. The object of the treatment was both the people who knew about the circumstances of the case and who did not know about it^[xvii]. Intimidation and blackmail, often regarding the responsibility for cooperation with Germany during the occupation, was a frequently used method. The NKGB organs, cooperating in the Katyn action in 1943-1944 with the NKVD, used the results of military counterintelligence "Smersh" investigations started before their arrival in the Katyn region regarding allegations of collaboration^[xviii]. It should be remembered that Soviet citizens threatened with accusations of collaboration were usually inclined to meet the expectations of the officers of the triumphant Soviet state interrogating them. At the same time, investigators collected the testimonies of people whose authentic but partial knowledge of the period of occupation was, after placing it in the right context, to serve to build a forged picture of the whole. Typical force solutions dominated, which can be indirectly due to the concentration on people who had been testifying in front of German and international tribunals, and now were to be forced to change their testimonies. The NKVD-NKGB achieved this goal with all the people found in the area of the crime after the Germans withdrew. In the arsenal of terrorist means used, isolation was given to them; as a result, they succumbed quickly. Those who did not were further isolated from the world with an aim to either breaking them or physical elimination^[xix]. Prior to convincing numerous potential witnesses with such brutal methods, the commission questioned nearly 100 people

and additionally verified 17 statements for the Extraordinary State Commission^[xx]. The activity of the Soviet security apparatus consisting in interrogations and completion of material evidence, e.g. German leaflets of 1943, i.e. imitating investigative activities, was widely reflected in the commission's documentation^[xxi]. Fortunately, reporting all of the investigative work, thanks to prior efforts by well-aware researchers, is not necessary here^[xxii]. It should be emphasized, however, that in parallel with writing down testimonies, officers prepared selected people for "live" appearances in the future.

A spectacular example of the success of the NKVD-NKGB operation was forcing the complete testimony change of an important witness to the truth Parfion Kiselov, who on 22 January 1944, in the presence of foreign journalists, canceled his testimony from spring 1943, becoming the flagship "convinced" witness of the Soviet side. An example of a witness carefully prepared by the Merkulov team - along with a complex "legend" about his relationship with the Katyn case - was astronomer Boris Bazylevsky, vice-Mayor of Smolensk during German occupation, who then joined a narrow group of Soviet witnesses during the trial in Nuremberg.

The results of the work of the Merkulov and Kruglov team, referred to as the "special commission, composed of representatives of relevant bodies", in the key period from 5 October 1943 to 10 January 1944, were summarized in the *Information on the results of the preliminary investigation in the so-called Katyn case* signed by both of them^[xxiii]. In final conclusions, the Merkulov and Kruglov commission stated:

- "Prisoners of war, Poles" stayed west of Smolensk "for road works" from spring 1940 to June 1941, i.e. until the beginning of the Soviet-German war.
- The prisoners got into German captivity and were shot by the Germans at the end of August and in September 1941.
- The shooting of Polish prisoners of war in the autumn of 1941 in the Katyn Forest was carried out by an "unknown German military institution" occupying a dacha in Kosogory and staying there until the end of September 1943 "Colonel Arnes was responsible for this institution [Ahrens - note W.W.], his closest associates and assistants in this bloody crime were: lieutenant Rechst and lieutenant Hott".
- After the shooting of prisoners of war from Berlin in the autumn of 1941, as part of the provocation, the Germans "took many actions to attribute their vile crimes to Soviet authorities," which the commission recited.

Then, the NKVD-NKGB Committee also emphasized the fact of the simultaneous murder of 500 Russian prisoners, who were digging the Katyn graves, to cover up all the traces, so as to summarize at the last point with hypocritical emphasis that the case of the shooting of Polish prisoners of war is one of the elements of the German "policy of exterminating the 'defective' Slavic nations"^[xxiv]__.

The directions of Soviet mystification in the Katyn case, signaled in earlier enunciations, became specific in the shape of the NKVD-NKGB's work, and the document resulting from it performed the role of a state interpretation of the lie.

It should be noted that the *Information* did not terminate the activity of the Merkulov and Kruglov team in the Katyn case, as evidenced best adding subsequent achievements of the officers. The supplement to the *Information* by S. Kruglov on the results of the preparatory

investigation in the Katyn case of 18 January 1944, in which Merkulov and Kruglov stated, citing data obtained from the Intelligence Staff of the Red Army General Staff, that "this unknown German military institution" [under the command of "Arnes", i.e. Friedrich Ahrens, mentioned in the *Information*] was called the staff of the 537th construction battalion in the German army "^[xxv]__". The Soviets used this finding to falsify the Katyn case in Nuremberg, with disastrous consequences for themselves.

In the future, adjustments to the "reconstruction of events" created at the turn of 1943 and 1944 by a team subordinate to Merkulov and Kruglov took place in the cosmetic scope and absolutely exceptional situations, forced by external circumstances, when maintaining a particular detail too clearly harmed the coherence of all forgery. In the area of established facts, e.g. "the end of August and September 1941" was abandoned as a possible time of committing the crime, remaining in the term "the autumn of 1941". This clearly demonstrates the decisive role of the Kruglov and Merkulov "commission" in the construction of the Katyn lie.

The completion of the first phase of operational activities of Merkulov and Kruglov by 10 January 1944 and the preparation of the report no later than 12 January was hardly coincidental, being logically placed within the chronology of constructing the Katyn lie. From that moment on, information and materials collected by the Security Apparatus were to be used by the official State Commission for Katyn. On the other hand, the fact that the commission of the ministries of security

formulated requests in the matter ready by 12 January 1944, before the end of the procedural actions, clearly indicates that from the beginning they had been treated as a guideline for the State Commission. The time had come to move from behind-the-scenes machinations to actions in the spotlight, solely for propaganda purposes.

Over three months after Burdenko's initiative, at a meeting in Moscow on the Extraordinary State Commission on 12 January 1944 a "Special Commission was appointed to determine and investigate the circumstances of the shooting prisoners of war - Polish officers by German fascist invaders in the Katyn Forest (near Smolensk) (hereinafter: Special Commission or Burdenko Commission) and its composition was determined^[xxvi]. The resolution was signed by the chairman of the Extraordinary State Commission, Nikolai Shvernik, who was also a deputy member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Polish Communist Party.

The Politburo approved the resolution without any amendments, which was recorded in the relevant protocol of 13 January 1944.^[xxvii] In the reality of the USSR, this meant giving it the weight of an indisputable decision.

It should be noted that the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine (b) only formally approved the act adopted earlier, in fact representatives of the highest Soviet authorities worked together on both resolutions, drawing amendments on the decision of the Special Commission, which then became an

annex to the more important decision of the Politburo. Probably, the draft decision was fully circulated (circulaire) without a plenary meeting of the Political Office, gaining the rank of a formal decision after signing by Stalin, the head of the Politburo, and its entry into the Protocol of decisions issued by this highest Party and, in fact, state authority. The main decision chain was as follows: Andrey Vyshinsky (responsible for the draft of the project), Vyacheslav Molotov and Lavrentiy Beria (responsible for giving it the shape of a politically mature project), and Joseph Stalin (finally approves it). It is worth noting that Molotov, after consulting Beria, made some amendments to the proposed composition of the commission, finally approved by Stalin.

The adopted composition of the Special Commission was as follows: 1) member of the Academy of Sciences Nikolay Burdenko - chairman of the commission; commission members: 2) Aleksey Tolstoy 3) Kiev Metropolitan Nikolay; 4) chairman of the All-Slavic Committee, Maj. Gen. Alexander Gundorov; 5) chairman of the Executive Committee of the Council of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Sergei Kolesnikov; 6) People's Commissar of Education RFSRS, academic Vladimir Potemkin; 7) head of the Main Military and Sanitary Board of the Red Army weapons general Jefim Smirnov; 8) chairman of the Smolensk Regional Executive Committee of the AUCP (b) Riodon Melinkov. The first three were members of the Extraordinary State Commission, which was indicated in the documents. Among the three, but not introduced additionally by other official titles, Aleksey Tolstoy was a well-known writer of prose, his epic novels belonging to the

broad canon of Russian literature.

The so-called actions of the Burdenko Commission, not only in terms of results, but at least part of their backstage, can be reproduced thanks to documents from a folder stored in the GARF, brought to light by Russian researchers, and also made available to Polish historians who have the opportunity to visit Moscow.

The Commission - until the publication of the *Communication* with results of works on 24 January 1944 - held six meetings, including two on 18 January 18 - at 11:00 am and 11:50 pm.

The inaugural meeting in Moscow left no doubt as to the direction in which the actions of the Burdenko Commission would follow. The Deputy Interior Commissioner Sergei Kruglov attended the meeting on 13 January 1944. The co-creator of the hoax of the Soviet security services presented the findings of his team in the Katyn case, which, without the slightest attempt to dispute, as indicated by the transcript of the meeting, was accepted by members of the Special Committee. Kruglov, in presenting the information well-known *in fact*, placed an emphasis on testimonies collected from witnesses. In addition, the following spoke: N. Burdenko, A. Tolstoy, Metropolitan Nikolai, W. Potiomkin, A. Gundorov and Secretary of the Commission Vladimir Makarov. The discussion was limited to uncritical commentary on Kruglov's information, and the most characteristic exchange was as follows:

"A. Tolstoy: The most basic testimony relates to the fact that Poles still lived after our withdrawal from Smolensk.

Kruglov: Numerous witnesses testify that in the autumn of 1943 the Germans convoyed small groups of Poles of 30-40 people towards the Katyn Forest. They were transported in cars that turned to the Katyn Forest.

Tolstoy: I think that during the opening of the grave there should definitely be some documents, cards, notes, letters dated later than 1940.

Kruglov: Later than from the spring of 1940, this will definitely be material evidence. [...]

Burdenko: As we heard from Comrade Kruglov's speech, the matter is serious and I propose to discuss our work plan." ^[xxviii] ___.

There was no room for discussion of the main questions bothering the world opinion in the Katyn case, neither on the agenda of this committee meeting nor on any other. Further deliberations on 13 January 1944 already concerned the technical issue of organizing the work of the commissions in Smolensk and Katyn.

Further work by the Burdenko Commission consisted in gathering "evidence" to support and develop the lying version of the German responsibility for the crime against Poles in detail. The commission did not investigate who committed the crimes against the Polish officers, the commission - as its name implied - determined "the circumstances

of the shooting prisoners of war - Polish officers by **German fascist invaders** [emphasis added by W.W.]". The gathering of evidence and the explanation of circumstances in practice was limited to the processing of evidence collected by the Kruglov commission. Thanks to work on material extracted from the pits earlier than on 14 January 1944, and the interrogation of witnesses selected from among persons previously interrogated by the NKVD-NKGB, the Burdenko Commission issued its judgment after ten days of work.

The short period of work and being bound to the "security" version did not mean, however, that the commission's activity was completely fictitious, limited, for example, to signing protocols in Moscow that were prepared by someone else. Members of the Commission - with the help and supervision of the NKVD-NKGB - conducted field work involving the penetration of death pits, examination of corpses and the interrogation of witnesses. At the meeting held in Smolensk on 18 January 1944 at 11:00 am, it was decided that the entire commission would visit the site of excavations carried out in the Katyn Forest under the direction of S. Kruglov from 14 January in the presence of a member of the Special Commission Rodion Melinkov, formally as part of its work - to view the graves and determine how to prepare for the exhumation and examination of the corpses^[xxix]. At the second meeting on the same day, started ten minutes before midnight - in the presence of Viktor Prozorovsky and Viktor Siemionowsky - a further division of tasks was agreed between the members of the commission, dividing it into two teams: 1) to work at the site and with the participation of forensic doctors; 2) to question and systematize

witnesses' statements^[xxx]__.

Having two meetings on one day indicated that great importance was attached to the pace of the implementation of the task entrusted to the Special Commission, as well as the distribution of its working day: from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm and from 4:00 pm to 11:00 pm. Rush was not only a declaration there, although the involvement of individual people was different - serious: N. Burdenko, V. Potiomkin and A. Tolstoy, not serious: A. Gundorov and J. Smirnov. Over the next few days, commission members oversaw exhumations with the participation of forensic experts and interrogated witnesses. Hearings regarding Katyn were conducted by the Extraordinary State Commission or the Special Commission. On 19 January 1944, in Smolensk, the Burdenko Commission held its 4th meeting, interrogating and summarizing the results of exhumation work, including the reports on forensic examinations of corpses^[xxx]__. On 20 January, the fifth meeting of the commission took place in Smolensk^[xxxii]__. The fact that - in accordance with the minutes - the meeting of the Special Commission in Smolensk at 9:50 pm was attended by Potemkin, who on that day in Moscow (probably earlier) conducted hearings before the Extraordinary State Commission^[xxxiii]__, should be explained by the pace of the work, and not by "tuning" the protocol^[xxxiv]__. On that day, Burdenko said: "We have finished hearing witnesses, but we have another job to do. [...] Our planned work is coming to an end. We should hurry up with the sound recording. You have to choose the material and prepare it"^[xxxv]__. This meant the completion of the main phase of the "investigative" activities and the transition to the stage of arriving at the conclusions,

which were also to constitute propaganda material.

Within a few days - between 13 and 20 January 1944 - the commission carried out a number of labour intensive activities. Regardless of the effort put into work, independent conduct by the so-called Burdenko Commission in such a short time of complicated investigation and reconstruction of events related to the murder of Polish officers was impossible. The investigation was not conducted independently, however, the commission uncritically used only the material collected earlier. The exhumation works carried out from 14 January 1944 in the Katyn Forest, formally by the Burdenko Commission, were in fact only a continuation of the work of the Merkulov and Kruglov team, taking place at the site and on the material prepared by NKVD-NKGB, including tossing fabricated "evidence" into the pits of death. The Burdenko Commission selected witnesses from among those interrogated previously by the NKVD-NKGB, and limited itself to "summoning" jointly selected "most useful" witnesses, resigning from interrogating the rest of the previously heard and from appointing - in their own discretion - new witnesses, which in practice meant conscious consent to contact only with people already shaped by the Soviet coercion apparatus. It should be emphasized that in the relation: the officers of Merkulov and Kruglov - the Burdenko commission, we did not have to do with the use of paraprocessor and paracourt bodies, as we can consider the Burdenko Commission, materials secured at the crime scene by the investigating authorities, i.e. NKVD-NKGB, but with a complete reversal of order. It was those conducting the "preliminary investigation" who imposed the current version of the events on the

Commission, which only helped to develop it. In the preparatory proceedings, the judgement was established and the Commission drafted its justification. In fact, it helped to draft the justification, because officers of the Ministry of Security, headed by Kruglov, constantly participated in the work of the Commission, which continued to act independently, "continually" supplementing their earlier *Information*.

In the light of the statements about the dependent and secondary role of the so-called Burdenko Commission to the Kruglov's team, one can ask the question about the purpose of its members to interrogate the same witnesses and search the same pits of death as in the "preliminary investigation". As part of the ghostly logic of building the Katyn lie, these actions did make sense. The work of the commission did not serve to find out the truth about Katyn, or even to invent a false version of the events, because this was ready, it aimed at preparing propaganda materials on Katyn for the needs of the Soviets. Documentation that can be presented as prepared by members of the Commission, i.e. persons with authority higher than the inquisitors, and to which professional terminology will be brought, including by forensic experts. Shortly speaking, a more reliable propaganda message than possible enunciations of security services. At least some members of the commission had to be well versed in the message, which precluded the signing of final documents without carrying out work at the crime scene and with witnesses.

The culmination of the commission's work was the preparation of: a

statement, expert's opinion and presentation for a press conference. The necessity of quick preparation of the message for the use of the world opinion was evidenced by the fact that the conference was organized mainly for foreign journalists, even before the publication of the Commission's work results.

On 22 January 1944, in Smolensk, the Burdenko Commission presented the results of its investigation into the murder in Katyn at a press conference. The conference was led by: Potemkin and Tolstoy with the participation of Metropolitan Nikolai and Chairman Burdenko. In the first part, representatives of the Commission made long statements, the most important conclusion of which was: it can be considered proven that in the autumn - in August-September 1941 - the Germans shot Polish prisoners of war in Koziogory^[xxxvi]__. In the second part - intended only for foreign correspondents, which in practice meant Anglo-Saxons - journalists had the opportunity to ask questions^[xxxvii]__. During the conference, the testimonies of witnesses (and some of them personally) were presented, and next to the presentation, basic for the NKVD-NKGB activities from the beginning, false testimonies of Bazylevsky, women employed in the "dacha" in the Katyn Forest or Parfion Kiselov, exposing the witness being "father Alexander Oglobin, the priest of the church in the village of Kurpino, located in the Katyn Forest", presented by the first hierarch of the Orthodox Church Metropolitan Nikolai, were noteworthy, which can be considered a creative contribution of the Commission to the propaganda of lies. In part with the questions, journalists were shown an "exhibition" of objects extracted from death pits, which was undoubtedly intended to

affect their emotions and probably to evoke a connection: if they show it, they did not do it. The scenario of the entire performance can be considered a joint work of both "Commissions": Merkulov's and Kruglov's and Burdenko's. Thanks to the conference, the Soviet version reached the world's public opinion not only through Soviet publishers, but also through foreign correspondents in the USSR.

It can be hypothesized that the additional purpose of the conference was to expose the details of the Katyn Lie construction that were kept behind closed cabinets in an attempt to collide with external reviewers - foreign journalists. The overthrow of the lying legend prepared with considerable effort was certainly not taken into account and could not be taken into account, but it was possible to check the carrying capacity of the details and detect any possible weaknesses of forgery. It was the last moment when, at relatively low costs, it was still possible to make additions and even make some adjustments in the constructed story. An exchange of opinions between 'Time's correspondent Richard Lauterbach and the members of the commission can indicate such a test function of the conference. The American journalist asked if the commission did not seem to have the victims dressed too warmly (sweaters, thermal undergarments) for August-September 1941. Potemkin replied that cold nights began in September (moving to the agenda over the aforementioned August), and Tolstoy deviously explained that the prisoners had not had other clothing^[xxxviii]. Perhaps the presented exchange of views contributed to the withdrawal in subsequent Soviet documents of the dating of the murder of "August-September" 1941 (alternatively "end of August-

September") in favor of "autumn", which cut off August and placed the murder in September or even later.

On the next day after the press conference, 23 January 1944, the Commission held its sixth meeting in Smolensk. Chairman Burdenko stated that "the documents found are fully convincing and allow for the statement that the time of the execution was **the autumn of 1941** [underlined by W.W.] "that all witnesses of interest from the point of view of the commission were heard, their testimonies were summarized, and the material of the forensic and medical expertise is developed and only requires editing^[xxxix]__. Therefore, when N. Burdenko assured the audience that the draft final statement of the commission was almost ready, it was considered possible to finish the work in Smolensk. It was only decided to question one witness, which was carried out in Smolensk on the same day. Although the Commission, whose members in a short discussion proposed that as long as it was possible, that is, until the statement was signed, to continue work, formally decided to prolong the work of forensic medical experts until 27 January, in fact a day later the work of the Commission was completed with the issuing of the final statement.

The completion of the Commission's work before the deadline indicated the pressure exerted on it by the Party and state authorities not to delay the work any longer. However, the course of the last meeting before the announcement of the meeting testified to the participation in the preparation of the key text of the document only some members of the Commission (including Burdenko) and it is

possible that only to a limited extent. Undoubtedly, the Commission did not discuss the full composition of the statement summarizing its work (!). The Burdenko Commission undoubtedly received substantial and technical assistance in its preparation from officers of the NKVD-NKGB security departments.

Time pressure was closely related to the Germans distributing, at the turn of 1943 and 1944, real information about the Soviet crimes in the Katyn Forest, including a particularly compact study documenting the crime in Katyn carried out in 1943^[xi].

Perhaps in Moscow on 23 January 1944, i.e. on the day of the meeting of the Burdenko Commission in Smolensk, a short "document" was formulated. Forensic examination of the Katyn mass graves^[xii].

Theoretically, it was to serve the Commission as evidence allowing, alongside with other pieces of evidence, to reconstruct the events studied. Practically, the expert's opinion could no longer be analyzed by the Commission a day later, and it itself contained ready conclusions on the overall case. These conclusions were hardly connected with activities in the field of forensic medicine and in no way could they result from them, including the statement that "the liquidation of Polish prisoners of war in the Katyn Forest was carried out by the abovementioned persons [Ahrens, Rechst and Hott - ed. W.W.] in accordance with the Berlin directive". The expertise also contained elements of forensic medical examinations typical of a document of this nature. However, the conclusions formulated in the experts' report were - in light of the then knowledge - unauthorized, as

the scope was too far-reaching, and most importantly, from the point of view of the history of the Katyn case, they were simply wrong^[xii]. All of them aimed at the proving the thesis on the German responsibility for the crime against the Polish prisoners of war. An example of such forgery was the statement: "However, it can be concluded from a macroscopic examination that the changes in the cover tissues, soft tissue and internal organs, skeletal and tubular bones correspond to a period of two years"^[xiii]. Meaning the turn of 1941 and 1942, when Katyn was in German not Russian hands.

So the turn of 1941 and 1942, when Katyn was in the hands of the Germans, not the Russians. In general, it can be said that the experts carried out real tests in the field between 16 and 26 January 1944 and on exhumed corpses^[xiv], but the conclusions drawn from them and presented, among others in the experts' report, were unreliable. Conclusions of forensic and medical experts, whose work was the responsibility of the Chief Forensic Expert of the People's Commissariat of Health of the USSR, Viktor Prozorovsky, falsified reality, and the experts were liars who prepared the test results, even if it was mainly at the level of drawing conclusions from visual inspection, not at the visual inspection stage alone^[xv].

The fabricated results of forensic medical examinations became part of the construction of the Katyn lie, being included in the main document of the Burdenko Commission.

The statement of the Special Commission on the establishment and investigation of the circumstances of the German-fascist invaders

shooting prisoners of war - Polish officers in the Katyn Forest (near Smolensk) was issued in Moscow on 24 January 1944 (on that day it was officially signed by all commission members) and published on 26 January in 'Pravda', followed by the appointment of TASS in other newspapers^[xlv].

The publication of the statement on 24 January 1944 ended the principal activities of the Special Commission, although Chairman Burdenko, who was very involved in promoting the results of his work, continued his correspondence, and the commission met many times, at least on paper^[xlvii].

The document of 24 January 1944 became the most important official text of the Katyn lie, presenting the full Soviet version of the events related to the murder of Polish prisoners of war in Katyn. It was used to present the deceitful version of the crime while taking up the Katyn case from the 1940s to the 1980s - in the USSR and all Eastern Bloc countries, especially in Polish People's Republic. *The Communication* - repeatedly subsequently published in full or in part by high-volume publishers and as material for the use of selected categories of people - became the best-known text of the Katyn lie. Due to its propaganda career over the course of several decades and assimilation in historiography, thanks to annotated editions after 1990, there is no point in discussing this extensive, sinister elaborate, occupying several columns of newspapers, in detail.

Presenting the overall content of *the Communication*, it can be stated that its authors in several chapters presented the reconstructed history

of the murder of Polish prisoners of war, citing witnesses and documents. One of the chapters of the *Communication* is a forensic and medical expertise dated here on 24 January 1944 in Smolensk and signed by five experts, headed by V. Prozorovsky.

The Special Committee recapitulated the entire argumentation in the "General conclusions", which the *Communication* presented in 11 points:

"From all materials in the possession of the Special Committee, namely - from the testimonies of more than 100 witnesses heard by the Commission, from the data of forensic-medical expertise, from documents and material evidence extracted from the graves in the Katyn Forest, the following conclusions can be drawn:

[...]

- From the data of the forensic medical examination it follows in a manner that does not raise any doubt:
- the executions took place in the autumn of 1941.
- German torturers shooting Polish prisoners of war used the same shot from the pistol in the back of the skull, which they used in other cities, such as in Orle, Voronezh, Krasnodar and in Smolensk.
- The conclusions drawn from the testimonies of witnesses and the forensic examination that prisoners of war - Poles were shot by the Germans in the autumn of 1941- are completely confirmed in material evidence and documents extracted from the Katyn graves.
- By shooting prisoners of war - Poles in the Katyn Forest, German fascist invaders were consistently implementing their policy of exterminating the Slavic peoples."

Even a cursory reading of the above document reveals similarity of the "findings" of the Burdenko Commission to the findings of the of the Merkulov and Kruglov team, which is confirmed by a deeper analysis of the final conclusions of the Special Committee and the entire text of its *Communication*. In all important elements, the results of the Burdenko Commission's work reproduced the results of the NKVD-NKGB initial investigation, which in the light of the facts presented above - depending on the following materials: documents, witnesses, etc. secured by the NKVD-NKGB and constant supervision of these bodies over the work of the Special Committee - it is not surprising. What's more, the Commission's communiqué can be considered a variant of the Merkulov and Kruglov *Information*, though slightly expanded and enriched by elements related to forensic medical examinations, and rearranged, but strictly dependent on the former. In fact, the Special Committee did not set any circumstances, but narrated the previously established circumstances - according to the fundamental course of the plot outlined by the NKVD-NKGB. While telling the story, Burdenko and others used not only Kruglov's script, but also his actors: witnesses - prepared and intimidated - and props - objects found and planted by the NKVD.

To sum up, the Burdenko Commission could not and did not want to move away from the binding false version of the events passed to it by Kruglov. The correction of the NKVD legend could be made only when it served its probability, as in the case of postponing the estimated time of the crime to the autumn of 1941, and it could only be done under the supervision and with the participation of the NKVD-NKGB

apparatus still working on the case.

In view of the above, it should be stated that the key role in the construction of the Katyn lie was not played by the Burdenko Commission, but the Merkulov and Kruglov team. The special role of the Special Commission in the history of lies is due to the propaganda role assigned to it from the onset, which was best illustrated by the difference between the NKVD-NKGB documents intended for internal use and the Communication, which was intended for external use in advance.

After the German revelation and the TASS proclamation in April 1943, the Soviets began to promote their version of events, with significant successes exemplified by press articles abroad, such as Dorothy Tomphson's in the 'New York Post'. The completion of the work of the Special Committee was a signal to start another endeavour - a great wave of propaganda, including a documentary film, efficiently presenting, among others, statements by "inverted" witnesses, e.g. Parfion Kiselov, a story made up by the NKVD-NKGB^[xlviii].

The publication in early 1944 of the Communication and the accompanying propagation of the lies contained therein completed the fundamental process of formulating the Katyn lie.

The Katyn lie, in a narrow sense - a false Soviet version of the murder of Polish prisoners of war by the Germans in Katyn after the Third Reich attack on the USSR on 22 June 1941 and the capture of Smolensk, and then the provocation by Goebbels in 1943, involving the

false accusation of the USSR with the crime.

More broadly, the Katyn lie can be defined as the content of the crafted "version" and the entire set of activities related to its formation, propagation and maintenance - carried out through diplomatic, legal and operational means, and also including repression aimed at those who proclaim the truth about Katyn or the truth cultivators. All these activities, including the disinformation and silence policy, served the communist regimes in the USSR, Polish People's Republic and other countries to defend the version created in 1943-1944 about the German responsibility for Katyn.

Broadly speaking, the concept of the Katyn lie can be extended to:

- providing any false information about the Katyn Massacre, seeking to erase it from social memory or relativizing it;
- an attempt to hide (from the spring of 1940 to the spring of 1943) the fact of the murder of Polish prisoners of war, which from the summer of 1941 was accompanied by the Soviet authorities providing further vague and contradictory explanations regarding the fate of missing Poles^[xix].

After proclaiming the Katyn lie and procrastinating its detailed legend, with which no citizen of the state ruled by Stalin undertook a polemic, Moscow's main goal was to spread the lie outside the Soviet Union, in particular to the communized nations and countries.

Poles were the key and natural goal of implementing the Katyn lie.

Polish communists unconditionally accepted the Soviet version of the fate of Polish prisoners of war. Activists residing in the USSR, although excluded by Stalin from the Burdenko Commission, remained loyal to the Soviet leadership in concealing the truth about the crime against their compatriots. The Union of Polish Patriots and the command of the First Corps of the Polish Army undertook a wide campaign promoting the findings of the Soviet Commission. In January 1944, the head of the ZPP, Wanda Wasilewska - through Gen. Georgy Zhukov, who had been misinformed about the Katyn case since the conclusion of the Soviet-Polish military agreement in August 1941 - took care including Jerzy Borejsza to the group of journalists invited to Smolensk in connection with the conference of the special Commission⁽ⁱ⁾. On 1 February 1944, his report entitled "Free Poland" appeared in the ZPP magazine. In the footsteps of crime, presenting a new Soviet version of events, and a similar text by W. Wasilewska *Mord in Katyn*⁽ⁱⁱ⁾. As early as in 1944, they were followed by further publications promoting the lie in the Polish-language communist press published in the USSR: 'Free Poland', 'New Horizons', and 'Rzeczpospolita'. Some of these texts were then submitted, together with appropriately selected foreign publications, to the first Polish compact print published in Moscow under the title *The Truth about Katyn*, and in fact propagating the Katyn lie⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾.

At the same time, under the inspiration and under Soviet supervision (among others, General G. Zhukov) and with the active participation of the Polish commanding staff, disinformation activities were carried out among soldiers of the so-called Berling's army. In the newspaper of the first corps 'We Will Win' of 28 January, the episodes issued a Special

Communications Committee and other official and journalistic texts falsifying the truth about the Katyn case^[iii]. On 29 January 1944, the commander of the 1st artillery brigade, Colonel Leon Bukojemski, issued an ordinance ordering the organization of collections of troops to commemorate the murdered and to provide information about Katyn, i.e. the s of findings of the Burdenko Commission. On that day a group of "pre-war" Polish Army officers with the participation of Bukojemski and Berling signed a proclamation accusing the Germans of the crime in Katyn, which was poignant evidence of the ruthlessness of the communist lie machine^[iv]. On 30 January 1944, selected units of the First Corps of the Polish Army honoured the memory of Poles murdered by the Germans in 1941 (the memorial service was canceled and the sermon was delivered by the Corps chaplain, priest Major Wilhelm Kubsz)^[iv]. These celebrations are probably the best-known episode in the long history of falsifying knowledge about the crime among Polish Army officers in the modernized Polish army. The Katyn lie was introduced into the ranks of the emerging Polish People's Army and officially ruled there until the end of the Polish People's Republic.

After the Red Army entered Poland and the communist government of Polish communists was installed there, the Katyn lie became a valid version of events for the next few decades. Communists in the country still under German occupation surreptitiously surrendered to Soviet counterfeiting, as evidenced by the documents and publications of the Polish Workers' Party. From the turn of 1944 and 1945, the narrative of the Burdenko Commission was to become the only interpretation of the fate of Polish prisoners of war murdered in the spring of 1940 in the

USSR. The propaganda of counterfeiting in the Polish People's Republic has already been outlined in the literature^[vi]. In addition to propaganda activities, i.e. publications and talks, which were given by, among others, Władysław Gomułka, actions were taken using the apparatus of repression: local and the NKVD. The practice of getting rid of uncomfortable witnesses and fabricating desired evidence was transferred to Polish soil. In Poland, initially this was aimed at the people visiting the Katyn Forest in spring 1943 and disseminating information about the Crime during the war. Those who did not escape from the country (e.g. Józef Mackiewicz left) were persecuted, which led to their change of position (priest canon Stanisław Jasiński, former president of RGO Edmund Seyfried) or forced silence^[vii]. As a result of the direct application of repression to some and causing others to have a justified fear of deprivation of liberty and even life, the rule of falsehood in public space was ensured - fear served a lie. The fear was triggered by the investigation regarding Katyn, initiated - after consulting the USSR Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs Andrey Vyshinsky - by Minister Henryk Świątkowski, supervised by Prosecutor Jerzy Sawicki, and conducted by Prosecutor Roman Martini^[viii]. In subsequent years, witnesses to the German exhumation in 1943 were convicted in court proceedings^[ix].

Steps similar in nature, although for understandable reasons modest in terms of scale of activity, were initiated in other communist countries, including Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria. The experts of the international medical commission operating in Katyn in 1943 became the object of operational activities of the NKVD and local services, as well as the

communist apparatus of justice. Its member - a victim of the staged trial Bulgarian Dr. Marko Markow became one of the three witnesses of the Soviet side in the Katyn case during the Nuremberg Trial (1945-1946).

In Nuremberg, the Soviets decided to impose the Katyn lie on the entire world. After the communists and the conquered countries of Central Europe, the Anglo-Saxon West and behind it *de facto* the rest of the globe were to adopt the version of events formulated by NKVD-NKGB and described in the Burdenko's *Communication* as the only proper version. To this end, Soviet prosecutors - by decision of the Party and state authorities - included the Katyn crime in the prosecution of German war criminals before the Nuremberg Tribunal. A verdict issued by an international court, on behalf of all the victorious powers in World War II, would mean irrefutable (and irreversible - according to the principle that the criminal offense is attributed to the convict) confirmation of the guilt of the Germans, and the innocence of the Soviets. The consequences of conviction are hard to predict, but they would certainly be catastrophic for the further course of the Katyn case. Due to the efficiency of defense and impartiality of judges, who were sometimes wrongly attacked in connection with the Katyn case, the conviction was not passed. This meant a fiasco of the ambitious plan of the Soviet authorities, and even indirectly pointed to the guilt of the second perpetrator considered by the world opinion, i.e. the USSR. It can be said somewhat metaphorically that the Nuremberg Trial set the formal limit of lies^[ix].

The Nuremberg failure of the promoters of the claim for German responsibility for Katyn did not mean its end - to the contrary, it was only after Nuremberg that the largest propaganda campaign of lies about Katyn was carried out. However, it is impossible to resist the impression that the activities that followed over the next decades to maintain the Katyn lie were, however, mainly defensive in nature, in the sense that their greatest intensity occurred in periods in which the West or Poland undertook actions aimed at establishing the truth about the Katyn massacre.

By far, the largest propaganda campaign of the Katyn lie took place in connection with the activity of the "Katyn" Commission of the House of Representatives of the 82nd US Congress (1951-1952). In response to an effective attempt to display the true nature of the events in the Katyn Forest by the US and to indicate as the perpetrator of the murder of "Russians", in the first half of 1952 - after the Politburo of the Central Committee of the AUCP (b) decision to reject the Soviet government's proposal to cooperate with Americans, and having sent the Burdenko Commission's statement of 24 January 1944 and a similar reaction from the Polish authorities - the communist states began a campaign against the US Congress Committee and the false version about the German guilt was once again propagated. The campaign of slander and lies included dozens of press titles in which hundreds of "Katyn" texts were published, and thanks to the magazine of the Information Office of the Communist and Workers' Parties "For Lasting Peace, for People's Democracy" it was spread in several languages used by the most of the world's inhabitants. In the entire

Eastern Bloc, the main text of propaganda in 1952, the print of which took up the entire columns of the March issue of newspapers, was again the Special Commission's *Communication*^[ixi].

The largest anti-American campaign in reference to Katyn was launched in the Polish People's Republic, where in support of Burdenko's theses old "evidence" and current "testimonies" were used (Metropolitan Nikolai, a Czech from the international medical commission Dr. Frantisk Hajk, Pole Adam Szebesta). The quintessence of propaganda in communist Poland was the extensive

book by Bolesław Wójcicki *The Truth About Katyn*^[ixii], repeating the title of the war brochure by Polish communists.

In 1953, in the Great Soviet Encyclopedia, the Katyn Massacre entry presented the version of the events fully in line with the theses of the NKVD-NKGB and Burdenko, while attacking American efforts to clarify the matter^[ixiii]. In the following decades: from the 1960s to the 1980s, in encyclopedic publications, published both in the USSR and the communist Poland, Katyn was, in general, ignored.

Contrary to popular belief, 1956 did not constitute a sharp turning point in the history of the Katyn lie. The claim about the proposition of telling the truth about the Katyn massacre submitted to Władysław Gomułka by Nikita Khrushchev is not confirmed by sources^[ixiv]. This seems unlikely.

It should be noted that in communist Poland, the majority of repressions directed against people actively defending the truth about

Katyn or only preserving its memory took place after 1956 (of course, it should be remembered that it was also the majority of its history). Based on materials of the Ministry of the Interior and the judiciary, stored in the Archives of the Polish Institute of National Remembrance, about a hundred cases of involvement in repressions related to the Katyn case of law enforcement and "justice" can be identified^[lxv]. In the Stalinist period, there were more cases which ended with court verdicts, while as far as Citizens' Militia or Security Services repressions were concerned, as well as cases in which the Prosecutor's Office got involved, but ultimately they did not find their way to court, they were distributed fairly proportionately before 1956 and after. Within the individual decades of the Polish People's Republic, one can notice differences in the quantitative intensity of repression, but the line of changes does not run in one direction, but is rather of a pale nature^[lxvi]. The probability of receiving severe punishment after the trial in the Stalinist period was more likely, it could also be hypothesized that the actions of "unknown perpetrators" from the Security Service - Ministry of Public Security (UB-SB) (which could even end in the deaths of victims) took place primarily during the "acquisition and consolidation" of power and its crisis at the end of the Polish People's Republic.

Without a doubt, however, since the late 1950s, the USSR authorities pursued a policy aimed at completely covering up the Katyn case, which was manifested in the initiative to destroy part of the documentation related to the Katyn case in 1959, and in subsequent decades also to destroy traces in the places where the victims' bodies were hidden^[lxvii].

After 1956, we can also see an evolution in the approach of the Polish People's Republic authorities and the authors who followed the guidelines referring to the topic of Katyn in publications devoted to the latest history, including textbooks. While in the 1940s and 1950s the authors of Polish works on Katyn reproduced the version about the German responsibility for the murder of Polish prisoners of war, in later years they sometimes bypassed the issue of perpetration, however, condemning the Polish government in London for anti-Sovietism and alleged submission to Goebbels in 1943.^[lxviii]___

The 1960s and 1970s transition in high-volume publications from the policy of promoting a directly counterfeit Burdenko's version to the tactics of silence was associated with the development of complicated censorship orders, excluding the slightest mention of the fate of the Polish officers, police officers and police murdered by the NKVD, even by authors who once wrote about it^[lxix]__.

The policy of displacing the topic of Katyn from the sphere of social consciousness in no way meant, however, withdrawing from the proclamation of the Katyn lie, the canonical version of the events developed in 1943-1944 - both towards the West and the communist countries.

The undertaking of the Katyn case in Great Britain in the 1970s resulted in the widespread Soviet and Polish action in defense of the Katyn lie since the times of the Madden Commission. On 15 April 1971, the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, after the approval or consultation of Leonid

Brezhnev, Alexei Kosygin, Mikhail Suslov, Yuri Andropov, Andrei Gromyko, Boris Ponomarev, decided to take action to block publicizing the truth about Katyn in Great Britain. A "démarche to the Ministry of England" was sent to the British government, defending the version about Polish officers formulated in 1943-1944^[lxx]. In the following years, the initiative of erecting a monument to the victims of Katyn in London caused a strong contraction on the part of Moscow and Warsaw, aimed at defending the lie about the alleged German responsibility for Katyn^[lxxi].

From the mid-1970s, opposition development and the samizdat circulation in Poland threatened the domination of the Katyn lie in the country of crime victims' fellow countrymen, which was crucial for its existence. The authorities of the Polish People's Republic reacted not only with retaliation towards individual people fighting for Katyn's memory, but also with preventive actions counteracting the breaking of its information monopoly, which was manifested by the Security Service conducting special object-related matters dedicated to the Katyn problem. The communist regime prepared to defend the false version on the 40th anniversary of the actual crime with particular care, when in the spring of 1980 the opposition - for the first time on such a scale in the Eastern Bloc - attempted to recall the Soviet crime^[lxxii]. The fight against the restoration of social memory about the tragedy four decades ago was conducted with the unequivocal goal of upholding the deceitful legend of committing crimes against Polish prisoners of war by the Germans in 1941. An example of continuing the defense of the Katyn lie in its canonical variant was the publication of

an information brochure in February 1980, a sensational repetition of the conclusions of the Special Commission *Communication* of 1944.^[bxxiii] Even during the so-called Solidarity revolution, the communist authorities invariably opposed the introduction of real information about the Katyn Massacre in the public sphere through repression and censorship. They also consistently clung to counterfeits, propagating them forcefully in the army - crucial for maintaining the strongly disturbed power of the Polish United Workers' Party, which was manifested in the publication in March 1981 of the Information No. 33/81 entitled *The Katyn Massacre in Light of Facts and Documents*^[bxxiv], again unconditionally supporting the version drafted by the NKVD-NKGB and announced by the Burdenko Commission. After the imposition of martial law, there could be no discussion about abandoning the claim of the German liability for Katyn.

The Katyn lie lasted practically until the end of the Polish People's Republic. Only after 1987 in connection with the political changes in the USSR (glasnost', perestroika), which resulted in, among others, the establishment of the Russian-Polish Commission of Historians, the version of NKVD and Burdenko was questioned in the circles of power. In the forum of the Commission, its Polish members questioned the accuracy of the report by the Burdenko Commission, and Czesław Madajczyk gave a critical lecture at the Office of the Council of Ministers on 28 April 1988, although it was addressed to the ruling elite, and not to the public opinion, which was still supposed to believe in the German responsibility for Katyn.^[bxxv]

The breakdown of the communist system in Poland in 1989 - for which the Katyn lie was a founding lie more directly than Katyn itself was the founding murder - inevitably, as a result of the breakdown of the political monopoly of the current rulers of the Polish People's Republic led to the fall of the lie. Trying to control the transformation and respond to social expectations, in the spring of 1989 the authorities of the Polish People's Republic officially allowed the possibility of the crimes having been committed by the Stalinist NKVD, although censorship continued to interfere in publications regarding the Katyn case. In the second half of 1989, however, the truth about Katyn could already be proclaimed and published without any restrictions. In Poland, the Katyn lie had fallen.

In the USSR, the Katyn lie was upheld until the end of the state's existence, and it was not withdrawn until 13 April 1990, when the TASS described the NKVD as the perpetrator of the crime on Polish prisoners of war. Documents indicating the responsibility of the AUCP Politburo (b) for the Katyn massacre were handed over to Poland by the President of Russia in 1992. To this day, however, individual epigones of the Katyn lie, such as Yuri Muchin, maintain the false version of the alleged German murder in Katyn.

^[1] *Katyń. Dokumenty zbrodni [Katyn. Crime Documents]*, vol. 4: *Echa Katynia: kwiecień 1943 - marzec 2005 [Echoes of Katyn: April 1943 - March 2005]*, Warsaw 2006, doc. 1, p. 43.

^[ii] – *The Katyn Forest Massacre. Final Report of the Select Committee to Conduct an Investigation and Study of the Facts, Evidence, and Circumstances of the Katyn Massacre. Appendix. Excerpts from interim report, July 2 1952, Washington 1952.*

^[iii] – *Katyń. Dokumenty zbrodni [Katyn. Crime Documents], vol. 4, doc. 3, pp. 44-45.*

^[iv] – It should be noted, however, that a detailed reconstruction of the fate of Poles was missing, and on careful examination of the text, it is clear that it refers that to the crimes of the Nazis in general and about their capturing prisoners in the summer of 1941, and not about a specific murder on Polish prisoners of war. Apparently, the authors (who at that moment did not know all the advantages of the opponent) were afraid of halving the details, although the conclusion about the murder committed on officers after 22 June 1941 came to the readers in a compelling manner. The lack of preparation on the part of the Soviets could have made them emphasize the topic of the German provocation, not the murder itself, and to use very aggressive rhetoric. Admittedly in propaganda standards, this could have also hidden the unusual uncertainty of the surprised leaders of the USSR.

^[v] – In terms of language, the Katyn lie is a construction analogous to the Auschwitz lie, but each term refers to a specific historical phenomenon.

^[vi] – *Zbrodnia katyńska w świetle dokumentów [The Katyn Massacre in*

Light of the Documents], London 1982, pp. 88-89.

^[vii] _ *Sprawa polska w czasie drugiej wojny światowej na arenie międzynarodowej* [*The Polish Cause during the World War II in the International Arena*], Warsaw 1965, doc. No. 74, 75, 76, pp. 347-348.

^[viii] _ *Wnieszniaja politika Sowietskogo Sojuza w pieriod Oteczestwiennoj Wojny* [*Vishniya Politik of the Soviet Soyuz at the piety of the Open War*], Vol. I, Moscow 1946, pp. 346-347. English translation: E. Rożek, *Allied Wartime Diplomacy. A Pattern in Poland*, New York 1958, p. 127-128.

^[ix] _ N. Lebedieva, *Komisja Specjalna i jej przewodniczący Burdenko* [*Special Commission and Its Chairman Burdenko*], [in:] *Zbrodnia Katyńska między prawdą a kłamstwem* [*The Katyn Massacre between Truth and Lie*], Warsaw 2008 ("Zeszyty Katyńskie", No. 23), pp. 56-101; W. Materski, *Z początków wojny propagandowej wokół zbrodni katyńskiej. Sowiecka Komisja Specjalna (tzw. Komisja Burdenki)* [*From the Beginnings of the Propaganda War Around the Katyn Massacre. Soviet Special Commission (the so-called Burdenko Commission)*], [in:] *Represje sowieckie wobec narodów Europy 1944-1956* [*Soviet Repression against the Peoples of Europe 1944-1956*], ed. by D. Rogut, A. Adamczyk, Żelów 2005, pp. 20-28.

^[x] _ Editing documents of the "preliminary investigation" of Merkulov-Kruglov and the so-called Burdenko Commission in translation into Polish in: *Katyn. Crime Documents*, vol. 4. Some of the documents

edited there are quoted directly from the originals, but the priority of their assimilation to historiography should be indisputably attributed to the editors of the collection, in particular to N. Lebedeva and W. Materski.

^[xi] _ The key feature was the access the 7021 team documents in the GARF, inv. 114, vol. 6 (Merkulov-Kruglov commission) and inv. 114, vol. 8 (Burdenko Commission). I thank Hieronim Grala and Magdalena Gumkowska and friendly Russians for help during the query in Moscow.

^[xii] _ *Katyń. Dokumenty zbrodni [Katyn. Crime Documents]*, vol. 4, doc. 37, p. 121.

^[xiii] _ *Ibidem*, doc. 38, p. 122.

^[xiv] _ Cf. I. Jazborovskaya, A. Jabłokov, J. Zoria, *Katyń. Zbrodnia chroniona tajemnicą państwową [Katyn. A Crime protected by state secrets]*, Warsaw 1998, pp. 285-286. Specific contributions of individual officers can be seen in the documents in the file of the "investigation" of Merkulov-Kruglov from the GARF collection. In fact, we dealt with the work of two ministries, coordinated by the semi-formal inter-ministerial "commission" of Merkulov and Kruglov.

^[xv] _ Documents point, for example, to secret providing a card written by Stanisław Kuczyński on 20 June 1941, who, however, did not die in Katyn, and others "discovered" during exhumation (the aforementioned card by body No. 53) by the "expert" of Burdenko

Konstantin Zubkow's commission . See N. Lebedev, *Special Committee ...*, pp. 65-67; GARF, team 7021, inv. 114, vol. 9, pp. 6-8.

^[xvi] — Cf. N. Lebedeva, *Komisja Specjalna... [Special Committee ...]*, p. 65. The General Military Prosecutor's Office of the Russian Federation obtained testimony in this case from persons directly involved in counterfeiting.

^[xvii] — I. Jazborovskaya, A. Jablokov, *Katynskoje priestuplenije. Barometr sostojanija prava w czetowieczeskom izmierenii*, [w:] *Mieźdu proszłym i buduszczim*, Moscow 1999, p. 264. The scope of authentic knowledge about the crime on the part of "local" witnesses should not be overestimated.

^[xviii] — GARF, team 7021, inv. 114, vol. 8, pp. 262-263 and 255-260. The original intentional connection with this issue of the "Smersh" activities subsequently used in the Katyn case is not, in my opinion, obvious.

^[xix] — N. Lebedeva, *Komisja Specjalna... [Special Committee ...]*, p. 62. The author wrote about detention in a "single cell" and "liquidation".

^[xx] — In the commission report on work up to 10 January (GARF, team 7021, inv. 114, vol. 6, p. 1) there were 95 summoned witnesses. A few days later at a meeting of the State Commission Kruglov spoke of 93 interrogated people. In addition, the commission was to collect 17 statements from "people who came forward", meaning, if I understand

correctly, they had submitted written explanations on their own initiative.

^[xxi] — I mean documents cited here from several files of the 7021 team, inv. 114, in the GARF collection.

^[xxii] — The most complete description of the work of both committees (departmental and state) was undoubtedly brought by the sketch of N. Lebedeva that I cited, also many works by W. Materski, and Inessa Jazborovskaya.

^[xxiii] GARF, zesp. 7021, inw. 114, vol. 6, k. 1-53.

^[xxiv] — *Ibidem*, pp. 52-53. Quating: *Katyń. Dokumenty zbrodni...* [*Katyn. Crime Documents ...*], vol. 4. doc. 42, p. 162

^[xxv] — *Ibidem*, team 7021, inv. 114, vol. 7, pp. 1-9.

^[xxvi] — *Ibidem*, team 7021, inv. 114, vol. 8, p. 39.

^[xxvii] — *Katyń. Dokumenty zbrodni...* [*Katyn. Crime Documents ...*], vol. 4; *ibidem*, doc. 45, p. 171. Protocol No. 42 with the decisions in point 271.

^[xxviii] — GARF, team 7021, inv. 114, vol. 8, pp. 37-58. Quote after: *Katyn. Documents of Crime ...*, vol. 4, doc. 46, p. 181.

[xxix]
— GARF, *ibidem*, pp. 63-64.

[xxx]
— *Ibidem*, pp. 96-97.

[xxxi]
— *Ibidem*, pp. 146-148.

[xxxii]
— *Ibidem*, pp. 179-180.

[xxxiii]
— *Ibidem*, p. 146 and next.

[xxxiv]
— Of course, the coloring of the protocols (generally not transcripts) could have taken place to some extent. It can be said with a high degree of probability that the hearings of witnesses and the examination at the scene of the crime took place and followed the protocols known to us.

[xxxv]
— GARF, team 7021, inv. 114, vol. 8, p. 178.

[xxxvi]
— *Ibidem*, pp. 207-226.

[xxxvii]
— *Ibidem*, pp. 227-235.

[xxxviii]
— *Ibidem*, k. 228-229.

[xxxix]
— *Ibidem*, k. 267-268.

^[xi]
_ *Amtliches Material zum Massenmord von Katyn*, Berlin 1943.

^[xii]
_ GARF, team 7021, inv. 114, vol. 8, pp. 193-201. Cf. *Katyn. Crime Documents...*, vol. 4. doc. 65, p. 280. At the beginning of the expert opinion (kept in the Burdenko Commission file), which was actually a loose typescript, not a document, without embarrassment, the conclusions of the entire Commission were mentioned, which theoretically did not yet exist. Individual documents could be backdated by one day.

^[xiii]
_ The unethically of the procedure was often double: categorical conclusions that were drawn could not be drawn with the methods at the time, and those that were drawn were purposefully subordinated to a false thesis. It should be noted that, contrary to popular courts, activities related to the examination of death pits and the examination of exhumed corpses could not - given the state of knowledge at the time - provide unambiguous and indisputable answers to questions about the time of murder of prisoners of war, and thus undoubtedly indicate the perpetrators, and useful be combined with data collected in other ways. The earlier correct conclusions of the commissions operating under the German aegis in 1943 resulted more from the examination of documents, hearings of witnesses and their analysis than from medical and forensic examinations.

^[xiv]
_ GARF, team 7021, inv. 114, vol. 8, f. 198, quoted after: *Katyn. Crime Documents*, vol. 4, doc. 65, p. 280.

^[xliii] — *Sprawozdanie z pracy sądowo-medycznej komisji biegłych do spraw ekshumacji i badania zwłok polskich jeńców wojennych w Lesie Katyńskim wraz z dziennikiem pracy, 1 lutego 1944 [Report on the Forensic and Medical Work of the Expert Commission for the Exhumation and Examination of the Corpses of Polish Prisoners of War in the Katyn Forest Together with the Work Diary, February 1, 1944], [in:] *Katyń. Dokumenty zbrodni [Katyn. Crime Documents]*, vol. 4, doc. 70, pp. 321-323 (on p. 322 facsimile). The number of 1380 exhumed or autopsied bodies presented in the report (journal entries can be interpreted in two ways) were overstated (especially assuming the implementation of the autopsies) or the activities were carried out very briefly.*

^[xliv] — The Commission did not create a forensic-medical expertise at the table; it is also impossible to disqualify the expertise of experts working under V. Prozorovsky, but undoubtedly their knowledge was used for the wrong purpose.

^[xlv] — GARF, team 7445, inv. 114, vol. 8, pp. 317-348. Cf. *Katyn. Crime Documents...*, vol. 4. doc. 67, pp. 289-317.

^[xlvi] — *Protokół 28-go posiedzenia Komisji Specjalnej z 23 marca 1944 r. [Minutes of the 28th meeting of the Special Committee of March 23, 1944.]* (on the form of the Extraordinary State Commission), GARF, team 7021, inv. 114, vol. 19, pp. 24-25; quoted after: *Katyn: Katyń. Dokumenty zbrodni [Katyn. Crime Documents]*, vol. 4, pp. 334-335.

^[xlviii]
— The GARF contains TASS files with an overview of the world's response to statements from April 1943 and the Communication from January 1944. They contain several dozen recorded (mainly from radio listening) media noises confirming (in April and January) the divergence of world opinion: a believable version of the "German" or misleading Soviet lies.

^[xlix]
— On March 18, 1942, Józef Stalin, who asked General Władysław Anders about the Polish Army officers, replied that he had ordered them all released, he did not know where they were, there was no reason to keep them, and finally: "maybe they are in the areas occupied by the Germans, they went in many directions ... ", but countered by colonel Leopold Okulicki, accompanying W. Anders, said that "it's impossible", and did not support the earlier supposition. The "lie" uttered by Stalin can be regarded as the genesis of the Katyn lie proclaimed in 1943. See *The Katyn Massacre in the Light of Documents*, London 1982, pp. 77-78.

^[i]
— W Janowski, *Nie publikowane fragmenty wspomnień Wandy Wasilewskiej z lat 1939-1945 [Unpublished Fragments of Memories of Wanda Wasilewska from 1939-1945]*, "Teki Archiwalne" 1996, vol. 1 (23), p. 137. The intervention concerned not the lack of "Polish representatives" in the composition of the special commission, but among journalists sent to its conference.

^[ii]
— "Free Poland", February 1, 1944, No. 4 (45).

^[iii]
— *Prawda o Katyniu [The Truth about Katyn]*, ed. ZPP in the USSR, Moscow 1944 (reprinted on the Footsteps of J. Borejszy's Crimes, pp. 7-9).

^[iii]
— "We will win" 28 I-4 II 1944, no. 10-16.

^[iv]
— RGASPI, team 17, inv. 125, vol. 250, pp. 35-36. leek. *Katyń. Dokumenty zbrodni [Katyn. Crime Documents]*, vol. 4, doc. 71, pp. 324-325.

^[iv]
— S. Jaczyński, *Zygmunt Berling. Między sławą a potępieniem [Zygmunt Berling. Between Fame and Condemnation]*, Warszawa 1993, p. 217-227 Warsaw 1993, pp. 217-227.

^[vi]
— M. Golon, *Zbrodnia katyńska w propagandzie PRL (1944-1989). 45 lat fałszowania historii, [w:] Charków - Katyń - Twer. W sześćdziesiątą rocznicę zbrodni [The Katyn Massacre in the Propaganda of the Polish People's Republic (1944-1989). 45 Years of Falsifying History, [in:] Kharkiv - Katyn - Twer. On the Sixtieth Anniversary of the crime]*, red. A. Kola, J. Sziling, Toruń 2001; J. Żelazko, *Pamięć i propaganda. Sprawa Katynia po 1945 r. [Memory and propaganda. The Katyn case after 1945]*, [in:] *Represje sowieckie... [Soviet repression ...]*, p. 393-426.

^[vii]
— See S.M. Jankowski, R. Kotarba, *Literaci a sprawa katyńska [Writers and the Katyn Case]*, Krakow 2004. Some, fearing for their lives and not wanting to lie, fled to the West, e.g. Kazimierz Skarżyński and Ferdynand Goetel.

^[lviii] — *Katyń. Dokumenty zbrodni [Katyn. Crime Documents]*, vol. 4, doc. 79, pp. 343-344. The investigation was not completed.

^[lix] — S.M. Jankowski, *Pod specjalnym nadzorem, przy drzwiach zamkniętych. Wyroki sądowe w PRL za ujawnienie prawdy o Zbrodni Katyńskiej [Under Special Supervision, with the Door Closed. Court Judgments in the Polish People's Republic for Revealing the Truth about the Katyn Massacre]*, [in:] *Zbrodnia Katyńska. Polskie śledztwo [Katyn massacre. Polish investigation]*, Warsaw 2005 ("Zeszyty Katynińskie", No. 20), pp. 95-135; S.M. Jankowski, *Sprawa Hieronima Majewskiego. Wyroki sądowe w PRL za ujawnienie prawdy o zbrodni katyńskiej [The Case of Hieronim Majewski. Judgments in the Polish People's Republic for Revealing the Truth about the Katyn Massacre]*, [in:] *Zbrodnia Katyńska. Przesłanie dla przyszłości [Katyn massacre. A message for the future]*, "Zeszyty Katynińskie" 2006, No. 21, pp. 83-107.

^[lx] — A. Basak, *Historia pewnej mistyfikacji. Zbrodnia katyńska przed Trybunałem Norymberskim [A Story of a Certain Hoax. The Katyn Massacre before the Nuremberg Tribunal]*, Wrocław 1993.

^[lxi] — W. Wasilewski, *Propaganda kłamstwa kontra „Komisja Katyńska” Izby Reprezentantów USA [Propaganda of lies versus the US House of Representatives 'Katyn Commission']*, [in:] *Zbrodnia*

Katyńska między prawdą a kłamstwem [The Katyn Massacre Between Truth and Lie], "Zeszyty Katynińskie" 2008, No. 23, pp. 129-141.

^[lxii] — B. Wójcicki, *Prawda o Katyniu [The Truth about Katyn]*, Warsaw 1952.

^[lxiii] — *Katynskij rasstriet*, [in:] *Bolszaja Sowietuskaja Encykłopedija*, vol. 20, p. 389-390.

^[lxiv] — *Khrushev Remembers*, trans. by Strobe Talbot, London b.d., p. 307 and others.

^[lxv] — The most complete review can be found in this volume in the work of Przemysław Gasztold-Seń.

^[lxvi] — It should, of course, be noted that these observations are burdened with a large margin of error, and for two reasons: the incompleteness and incompleteness (for different periods) of sources and the incomparable nature - formally likely to seem similar - of cases in different periods of the communist regime, due to to change the social, political, international context etc.

^[lxvii] — *Projekt decyzji Prezydium KC KPZR, 1959 r. [Draft decision of the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee, 1959.]*, [in:] *Katyn. Dokumenty ludobójstwa. Dokumenty i materiały archiwalne przekazane Polsce 14 października 1992 r. [Katyn. Genocide Documents. Archival Documents and Materials Forwarded to Poland on October 14, 1992.]*, prepared and translated by W. Materski, Warsaw 1992, pp. 46-47.

^[lxviii] — P. Łysakowski, *Kłamstwo Katyńskie [Katyn Lie]*, „Biuletyn

Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej” 2005, no. 5-6, p. 89 i n. "Bulletin of the Institute of National Remembrance" 2005, No. 5-6, p. 89 et seq.

^[bix] — The censorship record of 1975 stated: "No attempt should be made to make the USSR liable for the death of Polish officers in the Katyn forests".

^[bix] — *Wyciąg z protokołu Politbiura KC KPZR (O démarche dla MSZ Anglii w związku z antysowiecką kampanią wokół tzw. „Sprawy Katynia”) z załącznikiem, 15IV1971 [Excerpt from the protocol of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU (About the Démarche for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of England in Connection with the Anti-Soviet Campaign around the so-called "Katyn Case") with an attachment, 15IV1971], [in:] Katyń. Dokumenty ludobójstwa... [Katyn. Genocide Documents ...], p. 52-55.*

^[bix] — W. Wasilewski, *Związek Sowiecki wobec podejmowania sprawy Katynia w Wielkiej Brytanii [The Soviet Union and the Katyn case in Great Britain], [in:] Zbrodnia Katyńska w oczach współczesnych Rosjan [The Katyn Massacre in the Eyes of Modern Russians], Warsaw 2007 ("Zeszyty Katyńskie", no. 22), pp. 79-97.*

^[bixii] — W. Wasilewski, *Pamięć Katynia. Działania opozycji [Katyn Memory. Opposition Activities], [in:] "Bulletin of the Institute of National Remembrance" 2009, No. 5-6, pp. 60-61.*

^[bixiii] — *Zbrodnia Katyńska w świetle faktów i dokumentów" [The Katyn*

Massacre in Light of Facts and Documents "] Copy No. 1264, Main Political Board of the Polish Army. Propaganda and Agitation Committee, Warsaw, February 1980 (copy in the author's collection).

^[xxiv]
— *Zbrodnia Katyńska w świetle faktów i dokumentów [The Katyn Massacre in the light of facts and documents]*, Information No. 33/81, Main Political Board of the Polish Army. Propaganda and Agitation Committee, Warsaw, March 1981 (copy in the author's collection).

^[xxv]
— C. Madajczyk, *Stosunki polsko-radzieckie w świetle najnowszych badań [Polish-Soviet relations in the light of the latest research]*, Warsaw 1988.

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