



Cross found in a grave of Polish officers in Katyń. Photography from the collection of the Institute of National Remembrance acquired from the Polish Army Veterans' Association in America

## ARTYKUŁ

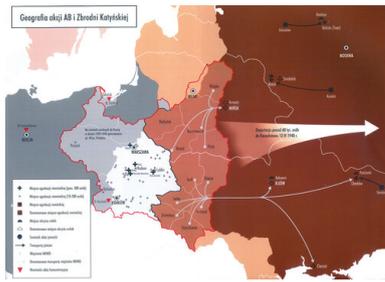
# To return to the Motherland's womb. A few words on the deported families of the victims of Katyń.

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The decisions made by the Soviet authorities in March 1940 regarded the criminal actions towards the Polish citizens. And they were not limited only to the murder decided on by the Politburo of the United Workers' Party on March 5th 1940, but had much larger repercussions.

The NKVD - based on, among other things, the surveys filled by those imprisoned in special NKVD camps and prisons at the so-called Western Ukraine and Western Belarus as well as on the correspondence between the

prisoners and their close ones and on interrogations – had the up to date addresses of their families. Thus, the proscription lists were created: the lists of people who were to be sent deep into Soviet Russia.



**Geography of the Katyn Crime  
(and the simultaneous German-  
Aktion AB). From the website  
“katyn.ipn.gov.pl”**

## **Deportations of families, depolonisation of the Borderlands**

According to the directive 892/B of the people’s commissar for internal affairs, Lavrentiy Beria from March 7<sup>th</sup> 1940, addressed to the people’s commissars of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic, the operation of deporting families of the people kept in special NKVD camps and in prisons in western Ukraine and Belarus was initiated.

The biggest deportation of families of those condemned to death due to the so-called Katyn decision has to be the deportation conducted in April 1940. The short time between the decisions made on March 5<sup>th</sup> and March 7<sup>th</sup> is worth reflecting on. According to the directive 892/B of the people’s commissar for internal affairs,

Lavrentiy Beria from March 7<sup>th</sup> 1940, addressed to the people's commissars of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic, the operation of deporting families of the people kept in special NKVD camps and in prisons in western Ukraine and Belarus was initiated. However, it should be emphasized that the relatives of the victims were deported earlier and later too: the families of the imprisoned settlers and foresters in February 1940; refugees from central Poland in June and July 1940; relatives of the formerly arrested members of "anti-revolution organisation" - in May and June 1941.

The deportations of families were aimed at sending away the unsure elements from the Eastern Borderlands of the Second Polish Republic for slave labour. It was a planned economical strategy, bringing certain advantages to the authorities, to Communism. Through deportations, those who remembered the Victims were also spread out from a small concentrated area to the large territory of Soviet Russia. The deported had to work in special reservoirs for ten or twenty years. The time of their sentence was proportional to their physical capabilities of survival of the working and living conditions in places to which they had been sent. They were never to return to their homes: immediately after they were sent away, new population, supportive of the Communist system, was re-settled in their place.

ŌHARY - KALININ



42-43. Grupa więźniarzy Stanisława Jaroszewskiego. Zbiory Stowarzyszenia Katyń w Szczecinie.

44. Podjęcie Stanisława Jaroszewskiego. Zbiory Stowarzyszenia Katyń w Szczecinie.



44. Szwarcuka kartka pocztowa adres odwołany w trybie wymagalnym: obywatel polski (Jaroszewski), Stanisław Stanisław, pozostaje w trybie wymagalnym adres nadawcy: 23282, obywatel katolicki, imię Stanisław, skrytka pocztowa nr 37, Stanisław Jaroszewski, Zbiory Stowarzyszenia Katyń w Szczecinie.

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50. Telegram Bohdana Skrzydziejewskiego do żony z wyrażeniem miłości i życzliwości. Zbiory Stowarzyszenia Katyń w Szczecinie.

44. Bohdan Bohdan Skrzydziejewski. Zbiory Stowarzyszenia Katyń w Szczecinie.



44. List Bohdana Skrzydziejewskiego do żony i siostry w Ostaszowie z 17 stycznia 1940 r. Zbiory Stowarzyszenia Katyń w Szczecinie.

**Letter from policeman Stanisław Jaroszewski to his relatives, from Ostaszów, before his execution in Kalinin... From the "Educational file of the Institute of National Remembrance" entitled "Katyń Crime"**

**Letter from Lieut. Bohdan Skrzydziejewski to his wife... From the "Educational file of the Institute of National Remembrance" entitled "Katyń Crime"**

**Bureaucracy of death, basic human instincts**

For the specialised police-administrative apparatus, the fate of the deported masses was nothing more than a means to achieve their plans. While they were conducted, the “bureaucracy of death” was taking place. Deaths, as they were seldom reported, were stripped of the human tragedy and somewhat dehumanised. The reports prepared by the Soviet officers became as morally neutral as production or trade losses. However, the bureaucratic bookkeeping of deaths does not lessen the horror of the situation through removing the suffering from its descriptions but rather strengthens it. Due to these activities, the nation structure of the Polish Eastern Borderlands was changed.

The time of their sentence was proportional to their physical capabilities of survival of the working and living conditions in places to which had been sent. They were never to return to their homes: immediately after they were sent away, new population, supportive of the Communist system, was settled in their place.

Those who experienced the deportations deep into Soviet Russia forever remembered the gruesome imagery. Without doubt, it would be easiest to portray that cruel reality in plain, black colours. Nonetheless, those who survived the forced relocations emphasize that they also had happy memories, the feeling of unity with their relatives or even being admired by the local communities for their ability to withstand difficult situations. They often recall the most basic human instincts and appeal to remember those who helped them survive; they stress that good and evil were not bound by nationality or religion.

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99. Zabiciu 132 rodzin w Miok, Komunistyczny NKWD z Branki nad Bugiem. Realizacja ekonomiczna projektu deportacji ludności polskiej, zfilmowany Jan Baranowski.



100. Julia Hryshkiewicz z celi w łazience, deportowana 13 kwietnia 1940 z gminami województwa do Komsomol-na-Olenok „Karia”.



101. Zabiciu na Uskiej fermie Mielkowskiej, Szwecja w Komsomol. Od lewej: Maria Wierzbicka, Janina, Andrzej Wierzbicki, Józefina, Maria Wierzbicka. W filmie „Karia” zrealizowanym w 1940 zrealizowanym „Karia”.

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**For the USSR, the families of the  
Katyń Victims were enemies as  
well... From the "Educational file  
of the Institute of National  
Remembrance" entitled "Katyń  
Crime"**

### ***Miraculously returned, not included in the victims' statistics***

The *miraculously returned to the Motherland's womb* from Soviet Russia were forced to be silent about what they experienced. For many of them, their traumatic imprisonment did not end the day they returned to Poland. The past cast a shadow on their present.

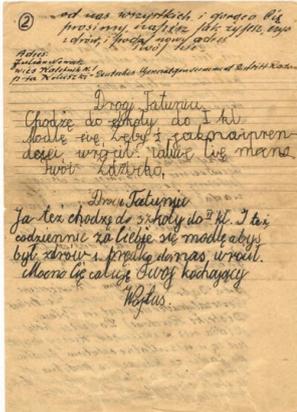
In the horrific reality of Soviet Russia, the moment of happiness remembered the most by everyone was receiving the news of the changing situation of the international scene. As a result, huge masses of repressed citizens of the Second Republic of Poland became the official allies of their former oppressors. Thanks to the Sikorski-Mayski treaty, signed on July 30<sup>th</sup> 1941, some families of the Victims of the Katyń massacre were able to leave Soviet Russia. Those, who did not manage to reach the Polish Army, led by Gen. Władysław Anders, had to wait before returning to the country with the army commanded by Zygmunt Berling.

The *miraculously returned to the Motherland's womb* from Soviet Russia were forced to be silent about what they experienced. For many of them, their traumatic imprisonment did not end the day they returned to Poland. The past cast a shadow on their present. As they could not grieve for their lost ones, say their final goodbyes to them nor tell the truth about their demise, they remained in a peculiar bubble of lies. Some of them passed away never knowing what happened to their relatives, marked by internal and physical

suffering. Their deaths were not included in the bookkeeping of the crime spread in time.

In the face of the experiences of the families of the Victims of the broadly understood Katyń crime, deported to the remote and immense regions of Kazakhstan or Siberia, it makes one reflect that there is never enough mention of these places, these events and their long-term consequences. The deportations of Polish citizens sentenced to repressions deep into Soviet Russia are still a relevant memento; the memory of these painful experiences should be preserved; it was a non-prosecuted crime on thousands of Poles, a source of truth of who we were then and who we are today.

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102. List dzieci do ojca więzionego w obozie. Zbiory Stowarzyszenia Katyń w Szczecinie.

**Letter from children to their  
Dad... From the “Educational file  
of the Institute of National  
Remembrance” entitled “Katyń  
Crime”**

BACK