

KATYŃ

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE CRIME



THE CENTRE
FOR POLISH-RUSSIAN
DIALOGUE AND UNDERSTANDING





K A T Y N

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE CRIME

Kozelsk — Smolensk — Gnezdovo — Katyn Forest

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INTRODUCTION

*Only buttons, unyielding
survived death, witnesses of the crime
surfacing from the depths
the single monument on their grave (...)*

*a bird has flown, a cloud has passed
a leaf has fallen, the mallow germinates
and there is silence up high above
and the mist rises above the Smolensk forest*

Zbigniew Herbert, Guziki [Buttons], 1992

The Katyn Forest has a special place in Polish history. The Soviet crime against Polish officers and members of the elite can also be viewed as a symbol of the fate of post-war Poland as a whole: enslaved, annihilated, covered with lies. The post-war period was a time of lies and silence, when the truth about Katyn lived in family stories, in Poles' private conversations, in publications published by the emigre community or in illegally erected memorials. Changes started to emerge with the birth of the "Solidarity" movement, when the truth, which had previously been hidden and suppressed, began to painstakingly emerge, like the voice of the underground bell ringing today at the Polish War Cemetery in Katyn. The

year 1989, which brought about the end of communism in Poland, marked the beginning of the official investigation to find out the truth about the Katyn Massacre. The crash of the airplane with the Polish delegation, headed by President Lech Kaczynski on its way to the commemoration ceremony in April 2010 added a new dimension to the tragic history of Katyn and focused the world's attention on this place, which was a witness to the Polish tragedy.

Today, the history of this crime is also presented at the Katyn Museum, which opened at its new site in the Warsaw Citadel in September 2015. It documents the circumstances of

The Katyn Museum in Warsaw



Photo: From the collection of the Katyn Museum in Warsaw

the Massacre and the history of the investigation, but has much more to offer. Visitors can descend to the underground part, which is reminiscent of an open grave and presents the collection of personal belongings of the victims discovered during the exhumations in Katyn, Mednoe (Mednoye), Kharkiv and Bykovnia (Bykivnia). The collection serves as evidence of the Massacre, and also includes memorabilia donated by the families of the victims. This gives visitors the chance to identify with real people, still living in these small objects, to better understand their values, experiences and personal stories. Quoting the eminent Polish photographer, Jan Bulhak, this place represents “a cross-section of

human souls, which are embodied in its walls and speak from them with everlasting words”.

The human and personal dimension of these historical events also serves as the leitmotif of this publication. While knowledge of the Katyn Massacre seems to be widespread in Poland, few people have actually managed to travel to Katyn, Mednoe, Kharkiv or Bykovnia, all of which are perceived to be located somewhere far away in Russia or Ukraine. Each year, these places are visited by the families and relatives of the murdered victims, by government officials and delegations of the uniformed services, by participants of the Katyn Rally or the Polish-Russian



Photo: From the collection of the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (MCNH)

Altar ensemble. Polish War Cemetery in Katyn

Youth Memorial Marches. During the 2018 FIFA World Cup hosted by Russia, many Polish football fans travelled to Katyn in order to lay their white-and-red scarves (Polish national colours) at the Polish War Cemetery. However, the insurmountable barrier for most foreign visitors lies not only in the distance of thousands of kilometres, border crossings and visa requirements, but also in the uncertainty as to what will be found at the site. Meanwhile, Katyn, one of the great Polish symbols, is at the same time, a concrete place on earth. When walking along its paths, visitors are moved in a way they have not experienced before. The mission of this Guide is therefore to encourage readers to travel to the

site, to gain a personal experience of the events and places known from the tragic pages of history, to look beyond the “bronze myth” of Katyn and come to know of the thousands—or maybe just a few—of those Poles, heroes, real people. As reading will never exhaust or satisfy these experiences, we want to give readers some space to experience the history of Katyn personally—for example, by wandering around the Katyn Cemetery from one bronze nameplate to another, from one human history disrupted in the spring of 1940, to another.

This Guide describes the history and geography of the murder of Polish officers imprisoned in Kozelsk,

transported to Gnezdovo and shot dead and buried in the Katyn Forest, where the Polish War Cemetery is located today. Our goal is to provide the readers with a study that combines essential historical information, discussed more broadly in numerous scientific publications, with practical advice on travelling and moving around the territory, as well as the local realities. We encourage interested readers to refer to the literature on the subject, i.e. the key scholarly studies on the Katyn Massacre and its victims, and the history of efforts to discover and publicise the truth.

The Guide opens with a chapter on the history of the Katyn Massacre, describing the origins and circumstances of the murder of the Polish officers and elites in the spring of 1940, the discovery of their graves by the Germans in 1943, up to the exhumations conducted by the Polish side and the establishment of the Polish War Cemetery. This chapter also recalls some—but certainly not all—of the people who have greatly contributed to the discovery of the truth about Katyn in post-war communist Poland as well as in free Poland after 1989. In Chapter 2, readers follow in the footsteps of the Polish officers in 1939–1940, from the Optina Hermitage monastery (Optina Pustyn) in Kozelsk, the Polish POW camp, via the railway station of Gnezdovo, Smolensk, to the Katyn Forest—the site of their execution and eternal resting place, today being the site of the Polish War Cemetery in Katyn. This part guides the reader

step by step through subsequent places, describes their present condition and outlines their history, discovering their sometimes quite surprising Polish links. Chapter 3 presents the Russian part of the cemetery adjacent to the Polish one. It tells the reader about the inhabitants of the Smolensk region who fell victim to the Soviet system of repression and were buried there; it also tells the story of the reconstruction of the cemetery, including the controversial yet expressive exhibition in the new museum, presenting the Russian imperial historical perspective, which often contradicts Polish and Western views on the same events. This chapter reminds us that a Polish or foreign visitor who visits Katyn will not only see the Polish graves and Poland's memory policy, but can also learn about the specifics of Russian historical memory. Chapter 4 encourages readers to visit nearby Smolensk, a city which was part of the history of Poland before the partitions in the 18th century. Chapter 5 directs the reader to Smolensk Severny airport, located on the outskirts of the city—the place where the Polish aircraft crashed in 2010, taking the lives of President Kaczynski and members of the Polish delegation, who were on their way to attend the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Katyn Massacre.

Finally, Chapter 6 is meant to familiarise foreign readers with the significance of the Katyn Massacre in Russia. While Katyn is a solid and unchangeable symbol in Poland, the memory

of this event in Russia as well as the cemetery and museum complex have become the subject of political and ideological games in recent years. "The Katyn we know" has again become a live issue and a determinant of Polish-Russian relations, as well as a symbol of the tensions within Russia—between the state apparatus and numerous researchers or ordinary citizens seeking to discover the truth about their families and local histories, and about the history of crimes against both their own people and other nations. The part of the Guide devoted to Russia also attempts to familiarise readers with the symbolic significance of Katyn for the Russians, in the past and perhaps also in the future. Many Russians see the Polish determination in the quest for truth, and the efforts to identify and commemorate every single victim, as opposed to their own countless, but often merely symbolic burial places scattered all over the country with a myriad of anonymous murdered victims. Poland's steadfastness in demanding the truth about the tens of thousands of victims, and about each of them individually, often surprises Russians, but also offers them an invaluable lesson on historical memory, even if it does not bring about obvious results straight away.

The final part of the Guide contains practical information with a handful of contact details and access tips that may prove useful for travellers. The Guide ends with a list of

recommended further reading and useful websites devoted to the Katyn Massacre.

The publication invites readers to follow the final journey of the Polish officers in 1939–1940, as well as the members of the contemporary Polish elite, who died in the plane crash on their way to the site of this Polish tragedy 70 years later. Following the tradition of pre-war guidebooks, we intended to create "a guide to human souls", which will help many readers to understand the well-known story "with their hearts".

The book that we present here is the Polish translation of the guide "Katyn. In the footsteps of the crime". We assume that the book will reach readers who are well familiarised with the history of Soviet political repressions. Nevertheless, the authors of this work hope that it will still be of interest to our readers, as it shows not only the history of the crime, but also the importance of Katyn for the Poles and the Polish memory policy, which closely linked to the moral obligation to identify and honour the memory of each and every human being who fell victim to this oppressive system. The authors are therefore convinced that Katyn carries a universal message, related to both the monstrosity of the crimes of totalitarianism and the need to fight for the memory and historical truth, which is one of the foundations of mankind.

THE KATYN MASSACRE: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the 1930s, Poland's foreign policy was based on the idea of maintaining a balance in relations with its two large neighbours. Peace with the Soviet Union was to be guaranteed by the Soviet-Polish Non-Aggression Pact signed on 25 July 1932, which was supposed to remain in force until the end of 1945. In turn, a declaration of non-violence was signed with the German Reich on 26 January 1934. However, these international agreements did not protect Poland against the attacks by its two neighbours with imperial ambitions.

The Treaty of Non-Aggression, signed on 23 August 1939 in Moscow by the German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop and his Soviet counterpart Vyacheslav Molotov, together with its secret protocol, divided Europe into spheres of influence and decided on the independence of sovereign states. For Poland, it was in fact the beginning of its fourth partition. On 31 August 1939, a general mobilisation was announced in Poland in the event of war with Germany.

And then came the war...

On 1 September 1939, German troops attacked Poland. When Britain and France declared war on the Third Reich, the Polish-German conflict turned into the Second World War. During the first two weeks of fighting, the Soviet Union maintained the appearance of neutrality. However, on the morning of 17 September 1939, the Red Army invaded the territory of Poland along its entire eastern border, thus fulfilling the aforementioned Treaty concluded between Hitler and Stalin.



Photo: From the collection of the Katyn Museum in Warsaw

The signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Moscow, 23 August 1939

The Polish concept of defence against the Germans collapsed, and waging war on two fronts turned out to be impossible. The surprise of the attack and the order from the commander-in-chief, Marshal Edward Smigly-Rydz to avoid fighting with the



Bolsheviks and to evacuate to Hungary and Romania, were among the reasons why large numbers of Polish soldiers and officers were taken prisoner by the Soviets. At the same time, the Polish authorities recognised that Poland was at war with the USSR.

Photo: From the collection of the Katyn Museum in Warsaw



Joint military parade of the Wehrmacht and Red Army. Brest, 22 September 1939

Poland under occupation 1939–1941

-  Polish territory occupied by the Third Reich
-  Polish territory occupied by the USSR



Polish Prisoners of War in Soviet Captivity

By the end of September 1939, a total of 240,000–250,000 Polish soldiers (including 8,600 officers) and members of other uniformed services (border guards, policemen, prison guards etc.) were taken prisoner by the Soviets.

Since it was impossible to detain such a large number of POWs, privates and non-commissioned officers of Belarussian and Ukrainian origin were released after being disarmed. Those remaining were transferred to ten POW camps, which had been especially established for this purpose, and were supervised by the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD).

Since the camps were still hugely overcrowded, in October and November

1939 the Soviet authorities decided to release most of the privates and non-commissioned officers of Polish origin who came from the areas occupied by the USSR. Then, under an agreement on the exchange of POWs, people originating from the territories occupied by the Germans were handed over to the Third Reich. In return, Germany handed over those Polish soldiers from the territories annexed by the USSR, mainly of Ukrainian and Belarussian nationality, who were in their captivity. In the autumn of 1939, about 26,000 privates and non-commissioned officers remained in camps. They were sent to the Rovensky, Krivorozhsky, Yeleno-Karakubsky and Zaporozhsky detention camps.

Other POWs, mainly officers, who numbered approximately 8,600 in total, were concentrated in two camps: Kozelsk in the Smolensk

Polish POWs being escorted by the Red Army. After the Soviet invasion 1939



Photo: Wikipedia, public domain

region (currently in the Kaluga region in Russia) and Starobelsk in the Voroshilovgrad region (currently in the Luhansk region in Ukraine). About 6,500 policemen, gendarmes, prison guards, soldiers of the Border Guard Corps and Border Guard, government officials, military settlers, identified intelligence agents and counterintelligence officers were grouped in the camp located in Ostashkov in the Kalinin region (currently in the Tver region in Russia).

In parallel, extensive repressions began in the seized territories of the Republic of Poland. Political arrests mainly affected Polish public officials (including army officers and police officers who were not taken prisoner), the intelligentsia, members of political parties and social organisations, industrialists, landowners, traders, cultural activists and artists, foresters, people arrested while crossing the border and other “enemies of the Soviet authorities”. The number of those arrested is estimated to be 108,000–112,000, while the number of those who died or were murdered is thought to have reached around 25,600 (including victims of the Katyn Massacre detained in the prisons of Western Ukraine and Western Belarus). Additionally, four deportation campaigns were carried out in the occupied areas, with approx. 320,000 Poles being exiled deep into the heart of the USSR.

The Crime

On 5 March 1940, the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) decided that the cases of 14,700 people held in the POW camps in Kozelsk, Starobelsk and Ostashkov, as well as those of the 11,000 detainees held in the prisons in the “western regions of Ukraine and Belarus” should be processed under a special procedure, “without summoning those arrested and without pressing charges, or presenting the decision to close the investigation and the indictment”, and with the highest penalty being applied against all of them: execution by firing squad.

The decision of the Political Bureau was based on a note from the People’s Commissioner for Internal Affairs of the USSR, Lavrentyi Beria, to the General Secretary of the Communist Party, Joseph Stalin, in which he proposed executing the Polish POWs and prisoners because “all of them are declared enemies of the Soviet authorities, not showing any prospects for improvement”. The note bears four handwritten signatures of the members of the Politburo voting “for”: Joseph Stalin, Kliment Voroshilov, Vyacheslav Molotov and Anastas Mikoyan, and annotations about the votes cast “for” by Mikhail Kalinin and Lazar Kaganovich.

The NKVD USSR “troika” was commissioned to examine the cases and adopt a resolution. It was composed of

Подлежит возврату в течение 24 часов
во 2-ю часть Особого Сектора ЦК

(Пост. ПБ ЦК от 5.V.27 г., пр. № 100, п. 5)

СТРОГО СЕКРЕТНО

(на о. п.)

Всесоюзная Коммунистическая Партия (большевиков). ЦЕНТРАЛЬНЫЙ КОМИТЕТ

№ 112/144.

Тов. Берия.

5 марта 1940 г.

Выписка из протокола № 13 заседания Политбюро ЦК от _____ 193 г.

Решение от 5.И.40г.

144.- вопрос НКВД СССР.

1. Продолжить НКВД СССР:

1) дела о находящихся в лагерях для военнопленных 14.700 человек бывших польских офицеров, чиновников, помещиков, полицейских, разведчиков, каваларов, осадников и тиремчиков,

2) а также дела об арестованных и находящихся в тюрьмах западных областей Украины и Белоруссии в количестве 11.000 человек членов различных к-р шимонских и диверсионных организаций, бывших командиров, сабриантов, бывших польских офицеров, чиновников и шарбачиков - рассмотреть в особом порядке, с применением к ним высокой меры наказания - расстрела.

II. Рассмотрение дел провести без вызова арестованных и без представления обвинений, постановления об окончании следствия и обвинительного заключения - в следующем порядке:

а) на лиц, находящихся в лагерях военнопленных - по справкам, представляемым Управлением по делам военнопленных НКВД СССР.

б) на лиц, арестованных - по справкам из дел, представляемым НКВД УССР и НКВД ЛССР.

III. Рассмотрение дел и вынесение решений возложить на тройку, в составе т.т. Меркулова, Лавулова и Баштакова (начальник 1-го Спецотдела НКВД СССР).

СЕКРЕТАРЬ ЦК

4лк

Decision of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) on the execution of Polish POWs and prisoners. Moscow, 5 March 1940

the first deputy of the People's Commissioner for Internal Affairs of the NKVD USSR, Vsevolod Merkulov, the deputy of the People's Commissioner for Internal Affairs of the NKVD USSR, Bakhcho (Bogdan) Kobulov and the head of the 1st Special Department of the NKVD USSR, Leonid Bashtakov. The prisoners were dispatched on the basis of transport lists sent by Moscow, which, in fact, were death lists. The first three documents with the

names of 343 people reached the Ostashkov camp on 1 April 1940.

A total of 125 NKVD officers were appointed to prepare and carry out the Massacre. On 26 October 1940, by secret order No. 001365, the officers were rewarded by Lavrentyi Beria "for successful execution of special tasks" and received an equivalent of a monthly salary or 800 roubles.

Photo: Wikipedia, public domain

Katyn Massacre



The lack of full access to the documents on the Massacre, which are still stored in Russia, means that the ultimate number and names of all the victims are still not known today. Researchers have established that the genocidal decision led to the murder of 4,415 POWs held in Kozelsk (buried in the Katyn Forest near Smolensk, about 2 km from Gnezdovo station), 6,295 POWs kept in Ostashkov (shot in Kalinin in the basement of the NKVD headquarters and buried in the forest in Mednoe) and 3,820 POWs from the camp in Starobelsk (executed in the basement of the NKVD headquarters in Kharkiv and buried on the outskirts of the town, 1.5 km from the village of Pyatikhatki).

Not all the details of the crime against the Polish prisoners of war from Kozelsk are known today. It has been established that some of them were murdered in the Katyn Forest, as evidenced by the diaries found in the death pits, including Adam Sol-ski's journal quoted here or Stanislaw Swianiewicz's account. It remains an open question as to how many of them were murdered by the pits in the forest and how many in the NKVD villa located on the site. Some of the POWs were probably shot in the internal NKVD prison in Smolensk. The full picture of the Massacre is still hidden in the inaccessible documents stored in Russia's archives.



Photo: Wikipedia, public domain

Military exercises at the Polish camp in Totskoye. Russia, 1941/1942

A total of 394 people survived the liquidation of the three camps. Many of them were among those whose return was requested by the German embassy and the Lithuanian mission in Moscow as a result of the efforts of their families in occupied Poland. Some of the survivors had been recruited as secret agents, had expressed a readiness to fight alongside the USSR, or whose knowledge was considered to be useful. Apart from the aforementioned 394 survivors, some of the officers arrested during their stay in the camps and transported to the NKVD prison in Moscow's Lubyanka also managed to survive.

As part of the Katyn Massacre, at least 7,305 people were also murdered in prisons in the eastern territories of the Second Republic of Poland annexed by the USSR. The so-called "Ukrainian list", handed over in 1994 by the Ukrainian Security Service, includes

the names of 3,435 prisoners transported from Lviv, Rivne, Lutsk, Ternopil, Stanislavov and Drohobych to Kyiv, Kharkiv and Kherson, and murdered there. Despite the efforts made by the Polish authorities, we still do not know the names of 3,870 prisoners from the so-called "Belarusian list" who were murdered in Minsk, having been transferred there from Brest, Pinsk, Baranavichy and Vileyka.

The execution of Polish POWs and prisoners in 1940 was carried out alongside a decision to deport their families from the eastern territories occupied by the USSR to Kazakhstan for a period of 10 years.

Gone Missing

From the end of March 1940, the relatives and loved ones of the Polish prisoners of war detained in Kozelsk, Starobelsk and Ostashkov stopped

receiving correspondence from them. For many years, the families of the POWs eagerly awaited their return, and thought they had gone missing somewhere in the East.

After the German attack on the Soviet Union, the Polish government in exile resumed diplomatic relations with the USSR, and effectively withdrew from the position that both countries were at war. The agreement, signed on 30 July 1941 by both governments to normalise relations (known as the Sikorski-Mayski Agreement), provided for, among other things, the release of those Polish citizens who had been imprisoned and deported, and announced the formation of a Polish army in the USSR.

People eager to join the Polish Armed Forces in the USSR began to arrive in Tatishchevo, Buzuluk and Totskoye from remote prisons, Gulag camps and places of exile. General Wladyslaw Anders, released from Moscow's Lubyanka prison, assumed the role of commander. The absence of officers among the incoming Polish volunteers raised concerns. The plenipotentiary for missing persons was the writer and painter Jozef Czapski, who was a survivor from the Starobelsk POW camp and a cavalry captain. He collected information about Poles staying in the USSR and intervened in their cases with the Soviets. When Prime Minister Sikorski and General Anders raised this issue in a face-to-face conversation with Stalin on 3 December 1941,

they heard that the officers "had fled to Manchuria".

Discovery of the Graves

On 13 April 1943, Radio Berlin aired an announcement regarding the discovery of mass graves of Polish officers in the Katyn Forest. Faced with defeat on the eastern front, Germany decided to use this crime for propaganda purposes to try and break up the anti-German coalition and win over the international community to fight against the Soviet Union. The exhumation of the graves of Polish POWs was conducted under the direction of Prof. Gerhard Buhtz, the Director of the Institute of Forensic Medicine

Katyn—a German propaganda poster



and Forensic Science at the University of Breslau (now Wrocław). Soon, Polish-language newspapers published by the Germans in the occupied territories began to print lists with the names of identified victims, and propaganda posters soon appeared in the streets of cities occupied by the Third Reich.

Much like the Polish communists who were subordinated to him, Stalin immediately announced that the communiqué was a provocation. On 28 April 1943, in the "Izvestia" newspaper, Wanda Wasilewska accused the Third Reich of perpetrating the crime and a few days later the leaders of the Polish Workers' Party followed suit.

In order to internationalise the murder of the Polish prisoners of war, the Germans invited the International Red Cross (IRC) to carry out the exhumations and investigate the circumstances of the killings. An independent request to the IRC was also sent by the Polish government in exile, which was used by Stalin as an excuse to accuse the Polish authorities of cooperation with the Third Reich and to decide to "terminate relations with the Polish government". Furthermore, Moscow refused to participate in the activities undertaken by the IRC.

The Germans invited eminent forensic experts from all over Europe to investigate the circumstances of the crime in the Katyn Forest. The experts confirmed beyond doubt that the killings had been carried out by the Soviets. At the same time, with the



Exhumation of bodies of Polish POWs by the Germans. Katyn, 1943

knowledge and consent of the Polish government, the Technical Committee of the Polish Red Cross (PRC) operated in Katyn under the direction of Kazimierz Skarzynski. The Commission was able to identify 2,733 out of more than 4,243 exhumed bodies. The first makeshift cemetery consisting of six collective graves was established. Generals Bronislaw Bohaterewicz (Bohatyrewicz) and Mieczyslaw Smorawinski were buried in individual graves.

Lies and the Fight for the Truth

Despite having knowledge about the Soviet murders of the Polish officers in Katyn, the governments of the United States and the United Kingdom were not interested in giving the matter

**Holy Mass with soldiers from the 1st
Polish Corps in the USSR
Katyn, 30 January 1944**



widespread publicity. The permanence of the military and political alliance with Stalin in the war with Hitler turned out to be more important than the fates of some prisoners-of-war from an allied army.

After the Soviet annexation of the Smolensk region, an NKGB-NKVD team operated in the Katyn Forest, fabricating material evidence and “preparing” witnesses in accordance with the false Soviet version of the alleged German crime. In January 1944, the witnesses were brought before an ad hoc Soviet committee headed by Nikolai Burdenko, and foreign journalists.

Two symbolic graves were erected in place of the previous commemorative site. On 30 January 1944, with

the participation of soldiers from the 1st Corps of the Polish Armed Forces in the USSR under the command of General Zygmunt Berling (previously a POW at the Starobelsk camp, who agreed to cooperate with the Soviets), ceremonies were held at the graves to commemorate the Polish officers allegedly murdered by the Germans. The military chaplain, Father Wilhelm Kubsz celebrated a holy mass for the souls of the deceased.

This section of the Katyn Forest was separated with a tall wooden fence. A small obelisk with inscriptions in Russian and Polish was erected at the site of the Massacre, bearing a text: “Blessed memory. Here lie the enslaved officers of the Polish Army, who were horrifically murdered by the German-Nazi



The unveiling of the Katyn Monument in London.
18 September 1976

occupying forces in the autumn of 1941" (the Polish inscription contained some errors). In the 1970s, the obelisk was replaced by a plaque reading: "To the victims of fascism—the Polish officers, executed by the Nazis in 1941".

In 1946, the Soviet Union tried to include the charge of the murder of the Polish officers in Katyn in September 1941 in the indictment against the main German war criminals in Nuremberg. Given the unconvincing witness testimonies, numerous errors and inaccuracies in the Soviet prosecution, the final ruling of the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg omitted the charge against the Germans for the execution of the Polish officers.

The topic of the Katyn Massacre returned during the Cold War. In 1951,

the United States House of Representatives established a select committee to investigate and study the facts, evidence, and circumstances of the Katyn Forest Massacre, chaired by Ray John Madden (known as the Madden Committee). The final report, drawn up in 1952, held that the Soviets were responsible.

In the 1970s, the Soviet Union began to publicise the crime committed against civilians in the Belarusian village of Khatyn, which was burnt down by the Germans in 1943. The choice of Khatyn from among many similar locations affected by tragic events throughout history was made based on its sound-alike name to Katyn. A complex of massive monuments commemorating the crime in Khatyn was built where the village once stood, and foreign delegations and heads of state coming to the USSR were invited to lay flowers there, including the U.S. President, Richard Nixon. This manipulation was supposed to erase the memory of Katyn and link the Massacre to the Germans.

The memory of the victims of the Katyn Massacre was preserved by Polish political émigrés and the Polish government in exile. In the early 1950s, the first ever Katyn monument in the world was erected at St. Adalbert's Church in Detroit, Michigan thanks to the efforts of the Polish community in the United States. Monuments and plaques were also erected in London, Paris, Toronto, Rome, Melbourne and Johannesburg.

Photo: From the collection of the Katyn Museum in Warsaw

In the West, publications by authors such as Janusz K. Zawodny, Jozef Mackiewicz, Zdzislaw Stahl and Jozef Czapski were released to remind the world of the fate of the murdered POWs and demand the truth. In particular, diaries and memoirs found during the German exhumations in the Katyn Forest are invaluable sources on the life of Polish prisoners of war in Kozelsk. All the entries end abruptly in late April and early May 1940, which is one piece of evidence that confirms the killings were carried out by the Soviets. Equally valuable are the memories of the prisoners of war who survived Kozelsk, including those of Prof. Stanislaw Swianiewicz and Prof. Zdzislaw Peszkowski, both of whom were highly instrumental in revealing the truth about the Katyn Massacre.

Photo: From the collection of the Katyn Museum in Warsaw



Katyn. Solidarity 'RSS POST'

Censorship Instructions

Of the General Office of Press, Publication and Performance Control, 1975:

When assessing materials on the death of the Polish officers in Katyn, the following criteria should be applied:

1. No attempts may be allowed to hold the Soviet Union responsible for the death of Polish officers in the Katyn Forest.

2. In scientific publications, phrases such as these may be allowed: "shot by the Nazis in Katyn", "died in Katyn", "killed in Katyn". When phrases such as "died in Katyn" are used and the date of death is given, only dates after July 1941 are permitted.

3. The term "prisoners of war" should be eliminated in relation to Polish soldiers and officers interned by the Red Army in September 1939. The proper term is "the interned". The names of the camps may be allowed: Kozelsk, Starobelsk, Ostashkov, where Polish officers were interned and later shot by the Nazis in the Katyn forests.

4. Obituaries, announcements of religious services for Katyn victims and information about other forms of commemoration may only be released with the consent of the management of the General Office.

A. Przewoźnik, J. Adamska, *Katyń. Zbrodnia. Prawda. Pamięć*, Warsaw 2010, p. 417

For many years, the lie about the alleged German perpetration was used as the official interpretation by the USSR and the subordinate authorities of the Polish People's Republic. The death certificates passed onto the families had false dates, e.g. the date of end of the Second World War. The families of the victims were subjected to harassment, widows were made redundant from work, and children faced difficulties when enrolling at university. The communist authorities also resorted to criminal repressions against those who fought for the truth. Among others, Father Tadeusz Rusek and Father Leon Musielak (a Kozelsk prisoner) were sentenced to imprisonment, with terms ranging from three to five years.

Besides the "official" memory, over the years the "unofficial" version also existed. Plaques dedicated to the victims of the Katyn Massacre were placed in churches, and the names of those murdered were engraved on family tombs.

The memory of Katyn was an important element of the activities undertaken by the democratic opposition in communist Poland. Despite harassment and repressions by the Security Service (SB), opposition members printed and distributed unofficial books, calendars, leaflets, brochures, posters, stamps and postcards commemorating the tragic event.



The Katyn Cross. Powązki Military Cemetery in Warsaw

In the East, the Katyn tragedy remains, and to this day it has been a special testimony to the struggle that was undertaken at that time. (...) It is a tragedy of innocent deaths—deaths that should not be forgotten. The tragic events that took place in Katyn, Kharkiv and Mednoe is a chapter in Polish martyrdom that must not be forgotten. This living memory should be preserved as a warning to future generations.

John Paul II's address to pilgrims from the Katyn Families, Vatican 1996



Handover of the Katyn documents. Moscow, 13 April 1990

In 1978, a group of independent researchers, including Adam Macedonski, Andrzej Kostrzewski and Stanislaw Tor, established an underground Katyn Institute in Krakow, which unofficially published the "Katyn Bulletin" and literature on the Katyn Massacre.

A tragic event took place on the Krakow market square on 21 March 1980, when former Home Army soldier and retired baker, Walenty Badylak committed an act of self-immolation to protest against the silencing by the communist authorities of the facts about the Katyn Massacre.

On the initiative of Father Stefan Niedzielak, Stefan Melak, Andrzej Szomanski and Marian Jeznach, as well as the outstanding historian specialising in the Katyn affair, Professor Jerzy Lojek, a monument—the Katyn Cross—was erected on 31 July 1981 at the Powazki Military Cemetery in Warsaw, bearing the date of the Massacre: 1940. Repeatedly destroyed

by the Security Service and erected again, the monument became a symbol of the fight for the truth. Father Niedzielak, the chaplain of the Katyn Families, was murdered on the night of 19–20 January 1989. To this day his killers have still not been identified.

In October 1989, a group of eminent researchers on the Katyn Massacre—Andrzej Chmielarz, Jerzy Jackl, Stanislaw Maria Jankowski, Andrzej Kunert, Bozena Lojek, Adam Macedonski, Marek Tarczynski, Jacek Trznadel, Jędrzej Tucholski and Wojciech Ziembinski established the Historical Committee for the Investigation of Katyn Massacre in Poland, which was later renamed as the Independent Historical Committee for the Investigation into the Katyn Massacre. The Committee, together with the Polish Katyn Foundation, has published the "Zeszyty Katynskie" (Katyn Notebooks) containing scholarly articles and source material on the Katyn Massacre.

The Truth is Revealed

Political transformations and the collapse of the Soviet Union opened up an opportunity to reveal the truth about the Katyn Massacre. During a meeting in Moscow on 13 April 1990, the USSR President, Mikhail Gorbachev handed over selected documents concerning the Katyn Massacre to the Polish President, Wojciech Jaruzelski.

On the same day, the TASS press agency issued a statement that the responsibility for the Katyn Massacre lied directly with "Beria, Merkulov and their helpers" and that "the Soviet side, expressing its regret over the Katyn tragedy, declares it to be one of the grave crimes of Stalinism." The Supreme Military Prosecutor's Office of the USSR initiated an investigation, revealing the burial ground of the Starobelsk POWs in Kharkiv (Pyatikhatki) and the Ostashkov POWs in Mednoe. In 1991, preliminary Polish-Soviet exhumation works were carried out at those sites, uncovering the remains of the Polish officers and policemen murdered by the NKVD in 1940.

The Polish side continued its endeavours to have all documents concerning Katyn declassified and disclosed. On 14 October 1992, the special envoy of President Boris Yeltsin and head of the Russian Archives, Prof. Rudolf Pikhoya handed photocopied documents from the so-called "closed package no. 1" to President Lech Walesa in Warsaw. The package contained the decision of the Political Bureau of the Central

Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) dated 5 March 1940 to execute the Polish POWs and prisoners from Western Ukraine and Western Belarus, together with the request formally initiating its implementation issued by the head of the NKVD, L. Beria, as well as selected subsequent documentation relating to the enactment of the decision relating to the deliberate mass murder of Polish POWs. The following year, during his visit to Poland, Boris Yeltsin laid flowers at the Katyn Cross at the Powazki Cemetery in Warsaw.

On 5 May 1994, the Deputy Head of the Security Service of Ukraine, General Andriy Khomich, handed over to the Polish authorities the list of prisoners murdered on the territory of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) as part of the Katyn Massacre—the so-called "Ukrainian list". The names of the prisoners murdered in the Belarusian SSR remain unknown to this day.

Agreements signed with the authorities of Russia and Ukraine enabled further exhumations in Katyn and Mednoe (1994–1995), and Kharkiv (1994–1996). The teams were led by Prof. Marian Glosek, an archaeologist (in Katyn); Prof. Bronislaw Młodziejowski, an anthropologist (in Mednoe); and Prof. Andrzej Kola, an archaeologist (in Kharkiv).

As a result of drilling and excavation in the Katyn Forest, it was possible to locate all the graves constructed in

1943 by the Technical Committee of the Polish Red Cross. In addition, all the death pits were found and uncovered. The works proved beyond doubt that the bodies buried in the area of the Katyn Memorial were the remains of those Polish officers of the Polish Army murdered by the NKVD in the spring of 1940. After being examined, the remains taken from the graves were reburied, while the bony remains from the death pits were buried in the Polish Red Cross cemetery on 31 August 1995. The ceremony was attended by Father Ptolemy (Jacek Kuczmik), a Franciscan friar serving in Smolensk. In the presence of the family members of General Smorawinski, Father Zdzislaw Peszkowski, a delegation from the Katyn Families and the Council for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites (ROPWiM), a second funeral of the generals took place on 7 September.

Some of the excavated items belonging to Polish prisoners of war can be seen in the Katyn Museum in Warsaw.

Almost immediately after the truth about the Katyn Massacre was revealed, the concept of a dignified memorial to the victims was initiated. It was the will of the Katyn families that determined Poland's efforts to build the Polish war cemeteries at the sites of the massacre and organise proper burials of the victims' bodies.

Since the arrangement of individual graves in Katyn, Mednoe and Kharkiv was impossible, a decision was made to build military necropolises with



Archaeological works in the Katyn Forest, Russia, 10/11 September 1994

collective graves. The only exceptions are the two graves of the generals from Katyn: Mieczyslaw Smorawinski and Bronislaw Bohaterewicz (Bohatyrewicz).

ROPWiM and its Secretary General, Andrzej Przewoznik played an invaluable role in establishing the Katyn cemeteries and preserving the memory of the Katyn Massacre. Following a competition for the spatial design of the cemeteries announced by ROPWiM, a proposal submitted by a team led by sculptors Zdzislaw Pidek and Andrzej Solyga was selected to be constructed.



Kuropaty Forest. 2019

In 2000, sixty years after the Massacre, three Katyn cemeteries were opened and consecrated at the burial sites in Kharkiv, Katyn and Mednoe.

The Fourth Polish War Cemetery was opened in Kyiv-Bykovnia on 21 September 2012, when archaeological works and exhumations proved that this was the burial place for the bodies of some Katyn Massacre victims from the so-called "Ukrainian list", who had been murdered in prisons.

Despite numerous endeavours undertaken by the Polish authorities, it has not been possible to commemorate the victims from the so-called "Belarusian list", i.e. the citizens of the

Second Republic of Poland who were most probably murdered on the basis of the "Katyn decision" in Minsk, and then buried in the Kuropaty nature reserve.

Since 30 November 2004, the investigation into the Katyn Massacre has been conducted by the Institute of National Remembrance, which treats it as a war crime and a crime against humanity, not subject to statutory limitations. Lastly on 14 November 2007, the Polish Parliament passed a resolution, establishing 13 April as the Day of Remembrance for the Victims of the Katyn Massacre, with the aim to pay tribute and to commemorate all the victims of the Massacre.

Photo: From the collection of the Centre for Polish-Russian Dialogue and Understanding (CPRDU)

FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE CRIME



KOZELSK

It is worth starting one's journey, at least symbolically, from the prisoner-of-war camp in Kozelsk, located 400 km southeast of Katyn, in the area of the Kaluga region, adjacent to the Smolensk region. The POW camp was located in the famous Optina Hermitage monastery (Optina Pustyn), founded in the 14th century. For centuries, the monastery was known as the seat of hermits, attracting pilgrims from the surrounding villages and more remote areas, and was also famous for its excellent library comprising of 60,000 volumes and manuscripts. Since the mid-19th century,

the monastery exerted considerable influence on spiritual and cultural life in Russia, which is reflected in the literature of the period and in the correspondence and memoirs of eminent writers, thinkers and officials. Towards the end of the 19th century, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, in anguish after the death of his son, secluded himself in one of the monastery's hermitages. His stay at the Optina Hermitage monastery inspired the writer to include the figure of father Zosima the Elder in his novel "The Brothers Karamazov". The character was based on the author's encounters with the real-life



**Orthodox church on the territory
of the POW camp in Kozelsk**

monk Amvrosy (Ambrose of Optina), who was canonised in 1988. Writers Nikolai Gogol and Lev Tolstoy also lived in the monastery for some time (Tolstoy's stay resulted in the short story entitled "Father Sergei"), while Tolstoy's sister, Maria spent many years there and took religious vows as a nun just before her death.

Kozelsk is also known as the cradle of the noble families of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: the Puzyna and Oginski, with the Oginięc coats of arms, with composer Michal Kleofas Oginski being a member of the latter family. His famous polonaise entitled "Farewell to the Homeland" (Pożegnanie Ojczyzny) could serve as a tragic memento to the fate of Polish officers who set off from there on their last journey 150 years later.

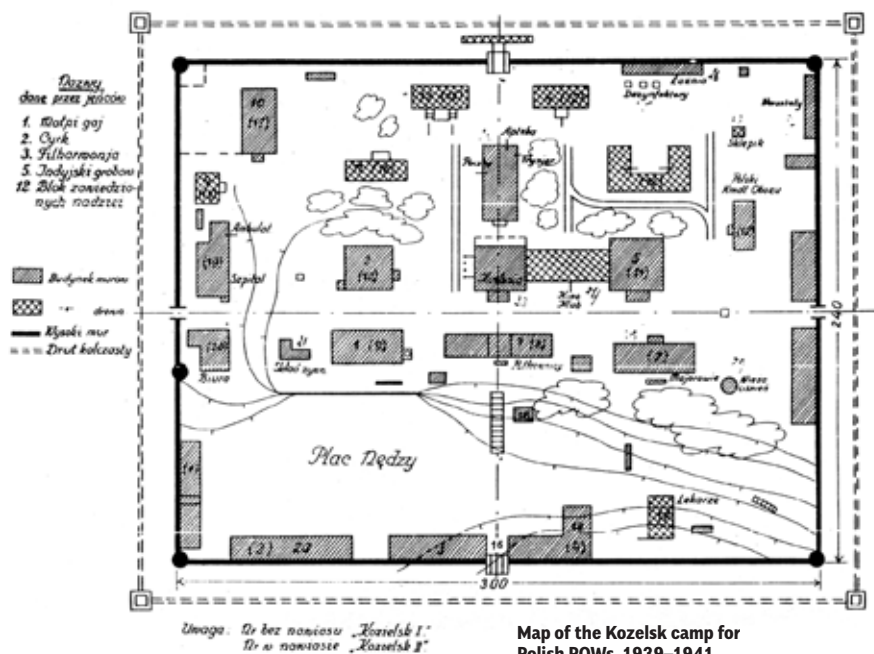
Poles as POWs in Kozelsk

In 1923, the Soviet authorities closed the monastery down. They arranged a sawmill in the main church (one of six) and converted the hermitage into an NKVD holiday home. Polish prisoners of war arrived there after the USSR captured the eastern territories of Poland. The first prisoner transports were sent to Kozelsk on 20 September 1939. The camp governor was Soviet army captain Vasily Korolov.

As of 1 December 1939, a total of 4,594 people were detained in the half-ruined monastery buildings in Kozelsk, including Rear Admiral Ksawery Czernicki, four generals: Bronislaw Bohaterewicz (Bohatyrewicz), Henryk Minkiewicz, Mieczyslaw Smorawinski and survivor Jerzy Wolkowicki, 24 colonels, 79 lieutenant-colonels, 258 majors, 654 captains, 3,420 other officers and 7 army chaplains. Seventy percent of the POWs were reserve officers from the Polish intelligentsia: professors, physicians, lawyers, engineers, teachers, journalists and many others. The only woman murdered in the Katyn Forest was also held in Kozelsk: the pilot and second lieutenant in the reserve forces, Janina Lewandowska, the daughter of General Jozef Dowbor-Musnicki.

Like the other camps for Polish prisoners of war, the Kozelsk camp was not prepared to accommodate such a large number of people. The poorly heated rooms were overcrowded. Due to an insufficient supply of water and hygiene

Photo: From the collection of the MCNH



Drawing by Z. Peszkowski, *Wspomnienia Jerica z Kozelska*, Warsaw 1989

products, bedbugs and lice were common. The number of sanitary facilities was insufficient and, worse still, they were not cleaned or disinfected. The prisoners slept in crowded units, on bunk beds, often without mattresses or pillows. Over time, they started to give humorous names to each unit. The generals lived in "Bristol", the majors in "Old Folks' Home". The former Orthodox church became "Indian Tomb", there was also "Lice Hotel" on "Misery Square", "Circus", "Philharmonic Hall", "Shanghai", and "Monkey Grove".

The daily food ration per prisoner-of-war included 800g of bread, 30g of sugar, a portion of groats for breakfast and soup for dinner. Meat, fish and vegetables were distributed irregularly. Once a week, officers received a ration

of tea, cheap tobacco, matches and soap. Due to poor living conditions in the camp, prisoners developed diseases of the lungs and digestive tract, rheumatism, and vitamin deficiencies. The health care in the camp was provided by educated physicians from amongst the POWs themselves.

Polish officers detained in the camp had to obey rules that prohibited them, for instance, from leaving the camp without permission or staying in a unit other than their own. It was prohibited to leave the barracks after dark, and lamps had to be lit throughout the night. It was also strictly forbidden to express any religious or patriotic feelings, organise meetings, or play cards. Persons on duty were selected from among the prisoners to be

responsible for cleanliness and order. A senior camp officer was also appointed; this function was performed by Colonel Ryszard Malinowski. Starting from November 1939, the POWs were allowed to send and receive letters, but they were, however, subject to censorship.

The special NKVD unit operating in the camp was tasked with keeping operational records and a network of agents and informers among the POWs. The Major of State Security, Vasily Zarubin was sent to the camp. Cultured, well-read and fluent in various languages with many years' experience of working abroad, he defied the image of the uneducated and primitive NKVD officers working in the camp. Zarubin was the only member of the camp staff saluted by the POWs. Despite his efforts, e.g. offering access to books from his small library, he managed to recruit only several dozen prisoners from among the several thousand held in Kozelsk. It was probably his report that helped Beria make the decision to execute the Poles held in camps in Kozelsk, Ostashkov and Starobelsk.

Political and educational work in the spirit of communist propaganda, glorifying the achievements of the Soviet Union, was also carried out in the camps. Radio programmes from Moscow were broadcast through loudspeakers and talks and lectures were organised. The POWs had access to the Soviet press and could also use the library of the former NKVD holiday home. The club screened Soviet films

2 Nov. (...) After two hours of walking, we are nearing our destination. One can see electrically illuminated buildings. It turns out that it is the town of Kozelsk. A typical Russian town. It stretches for many kilometres. We walk further along through the town, and we can already make out the outline of the monastery. This must be a camp because all camps are located in monasteries. We cross the river on a makeshift bridge, we enter a barbed-wired area, we have arrived. The monastery looks like an old defensive castle. We pass it and go through a magnificent forest; I have never seen such thick pines or other trees. We stop by a wall. Behind the walls, there are brick and wooden buildings. We stop again, they count us and let us in, in tens. It is already 6 am, we are among numerous buildings, various villas and houses. This place must have been beautiful once.

Tomasz Siwicki, (in:) Pamiętniki znalezione w Katyniu, Paris-Warsaw 1990, p. 90

Kozelsk 22.8.43

Kochani!
 Jestem cały i zdrowy. Mam co jeść, gdy
 nie i zimna wody i nie bóg. Bardzo
 mam ochotę, co sypiać i taś, jak tam
 broń, czy mieć co jeść, czy aby dać
 jedzą narzekając. Wzrosty nie zmienia się
 coś gorszego. Marzenie o nieśm
 może Mamusi i P. profi-roni pomie
 Bardzo proszę kolegów Mamusi
 o przepisanie i zachowanie jak najlepiej
 myśli. Proszę Mamusi bardzo
 dawać o siebie o moje zdrowie i wcale
 nie martwić się. Czy P. profesor proszę
 z mechanikami oświecić, mada
 może od Nas krótki
 moimnie kochanej ta
 dostarczyć. Przystąpiam
 i uczenia - aby d
 czenia na - Soriam
 my Nas

Почта

 ПОЧТОВАЯ КАРТОЧКА
 CARTE POSTALE

Polen - Deutschland
 Dublin
 aniczna Sasse № 8 m 6.
 p. Marija Toporowska

Ab

Журнал Монархологов
 25.7.40.

Kochani! Wam się ucieczyłam kartkę do
 P. wesołej i przyjemnej. Białe obcego nie było wiodłomocni
 Co za energię i ciekawe celi i żywi. Co z Ryżem, podobnie
 i ju. Ja z Kozelskiem i forteją (szkoleń) o mało nie załamał
 wałmnie do Pałacu. Od 18. IX. jestem na Węgrzech. Jest
 czam uśrednie dobre. Mamam wytarzać się rozprawy i
 iżei, obojętnej jakiej i dobieć. Kasa jest w Kozelskiem
 kilka osób jakiej, że nie pamiętam. Wdrożenie strażnicy
 tego przykolebiam w tam co ma sobie i walczenie i walczy
 wstawiam. Wskazuję się do 12 dni nie wiodłomocni
 więcej 38°. Wskazuję się do 12 dni nie wiodłomocni
 wozach. Także ciekaw i wiele wyprzedzają. Proszę być
 się, że z wieścią do: cpi, tożar uśrednie dobre. Co
 dalej, będzie nie wiodłomocni dobre i i karę uśrednie w wiel
 Kozelskiem, dobrze oddycham. W domu jestem nie tak nie
 wiele pasty, ale to uśrednie. Dla bar porady. Nie
 now bar proz, mamam. Do
 wo i żywi i uśrednie

Letters of the Kozelsk POWs to their loved ones

Tabara pentru ofiteri totomei Targu-Fiu
 Droga Janko!
 W Kurzenie promytalem Troje newsdo.
 O oficerow 5 BK dowiadysalem ty ta.
 O ile dotychczas nam, niema tu ani jeduzgo,
 nawet istniacy nie potykalem. Nie miz
 wiaz, to trzeba zobaczy napred, czy ta karte
 dojdzie. Z domu mogz wiadomoz dozi doze,
 niestety o M.C. nic. Sam jestem zdrow i cazy-
 Twoz maloz i gadam wyptkami i przykani
 Trista. Rzekli li calyz i iuz wyptkio,
 wyptkio napisano
 Nyznamt 30.XI.39

IN THE KOZELSK CAMP

In conversations, the officers of the for[mer] Polish army openly express patriotic feelings towards the for[mer] Polish state. For example: "Poland will exist again as it was". The majority of the officers are religious, and just like in the Starobelsk camp, there have been attempts to hold religious services.

While being in the camp, they try to maintain their insignia, orders and salutes.

The polit[ical] apparatus carries out awareness-raising work as well as anti-religious propaganda. The s[pecial] d[epartment] has detected the organisers.

From reports on the situation in camps dated [not earlier than 31] Dec. 1939 (Dokumenty zbrodni, vol. 1, doc. 155, pp. 352–353)

From 21 Jan. to 19 Feb. Nothing important has happened during this time. Every day is like any other. The yearning grows each day, one would like to fly like a bird to see Poland, family, friends. There are rumours in the camp about going to the Urals, Germany, the Caucasus.

Maksymilian Trzepałka, (in:) Pamiętniki znalezione w Katyniu, Paris–Warsaw 1990, p. 31



Stanisław Westwalewicz, queuing for water, a sketch with added paint. Kozelsk 1940

such as "Alexander Nevsky", "Volga, Volga", "Mother" and "Chapaev".

As noted by Lieutenant Stanisław Swianiewicz, a Kozelsk survivor, prominent Sovietologist and a professor of economics and law in his civilian life: "Kozelsk can therefore be described as a kind of institution for studying the mentality and characteristics of different types of people, whom the Soviet Union managed to capture in 1939 thanks to its alliance with Hitler."

The operational and political work undertaken by the NKVD in the camp failed to bring about the expected results. According to NKVD reports, the Polish POWs harboured hostile feelings towards the Soviet Union and declared their willingness to fight and liberate their homeland from the hands of both aggressors. They flooded the camp headquarters with applications and petitions, demanding to

be sent back to Poland or to a neutral state. Few declared their readiness to cooperate with the Soviet authorities.

The prisoners boycotted the camp rules, treating them as an element of Soviet indoctrination. Official Polish holidays and religious feasts were celebrated contrary to the ban. Clergymen held secret religious services. There were also Orthodox Christians, Jews and Protestants in the camp, and participation in ceremonies held by other faiths was practiced. When Christmas celebrations were banned and Catholic priests and other clergymen were deported from the camp on 23 December 1939, this caused widespread indignation. Only one priest remained in Kozelsk, namely Major Jan Ziolkowski, who was kept in solitary confinement at the time.

The POWs engaged in self-education. They organised illegal lectures and

talks, given by eminent specialists being held in the camp. They covered a wide spectrum of topics, from Greek theogony to Stefan Zeromski's literary works to the embalming of corpses. Foreign language courses were taught. Kozelsk also had a library, which the soldiers created with the books they had taken with them to

war. The "Monitor" and "Merkuriusz" newspapers were illegally published. The daily "spoken news reports", prepared based on news and articles, became a specific social phenomenon in the camp.

The POWs set up choirs, musical ensembles and theatrical groups, with the performances of the famous Poznan satirist, second lieutenant Tadeusz Hernes enjoying great popularity. In their free time, POWs played chess and cards or even organised spiritual séances.

The liquidation of the Kozelsk POW camp began on 3 April 1940. On that day, the first transport of 74 Polish officers set off for Gnezdovo, and from there to the Katyn Forest. Throughout April, transports departed almost every day. The last POW was sent from the camp on 20 May. POWs were escorted to Smolensk and Gnezdovo by the 136th Independent Battalion of the NKVD Transport Troops stationed in Smolensk.

Kozelsk Today

Nowadays, the Kozelsk monastery has regained its status as a shrine and an important centre of religious worship. It was returned to the Orthodox Church in 1987, just before the 1000th anniversary of the Christianisation of the Rus'. The building has been renovated and attracts crowds of believers and pilgrims, as well as the highest officials—in 2010, it was visited by the then president, Dmitry Medvedev.

9 April. Tuesday. (...) It is 2:30 p.m. We arrive in Smolensk. For the time being, we are standing at the freight railway station. Like in most young Russian towns, this is a giant station, the track of the freight station stretches over several kilometres. However, we are in Smolensk. It is evening, we have passed Smolensk, we have reached Gnezdovo station. It looks as though we have to get out here because there are many military men around. Anyway, so far, they have not given us anything to eat at all. Since yesterday's breakfast we have been living on a portion of bread and a modest dose of water.

Wacław Kruk, (in:) Pamiętniki znalezione w Katyniu, Paris-Warsaw 1990, p. 61

[According to researchers' findings, W. Kruk is not the author of these notes found in the death pit. The real author has not yet been identified.]

Photo: Michał Stemiński



The Kozelsk monastery



Cemetery in Kozelsk



Photo: Michał Siemirski

During the Easter of 1993, a tragic incident took place in the monastery, shocking the faithful all over Russia. A mentally ill reoffender killed three monks of the Optina Hermitage monastery, and the event became known as “Red Easter”.

Unfortunately, despite the efforts undertaken by the Polish side, Kozelsk is the only former camp where it has not been possible to commemorate the officers of the Polish Army, which were imprisoned there during the war. Although in 1992 the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus’ at the time, Alexey II agreed in writing for a commemorative plaque to be placed in the Optina Hermitage monastery, his decision was opposed by the Kozelsk monks. Moreover, the monastery does not have a museum dedicated to the Soviet victims of the Stalinist repressions, or to the repressions against the monks themselves. The only trace of remembrance of the Terror can be found in the topic of one of the tours offered to visitors—“New martyrs and the history of persecution of the Orthodox Church”.

There are no memorials either in the cemetery located in Kozelsk, where the Polish officers who died during their detention in the monastery were buried. The old municipal cemetery located in the centre of Kozelsk, at 22 Chkalova St., is overcrowded and new burials take place in areas occupied by old unattended graves (this also applies to Russian graves). No trace is left of the Polish graves, so it is only possible to commemorate them symbolically by lighting a candle somewhere within the necropolis.

Kozelsk can be reached from Moscow by long-distance coaches, which depart from Tyoply Stan metro station approximately once every hour (the journey takes about 5 hours) or by train to Kaluga (3.5 hours), and from there by bus to Kozelsk. The monastery can be reached from the town by minibuses (marshrutki) that run every hour. Other local means of transport are also available, and inquiries can be made in the town.

GNEZDOVO

The next stop on this tragic map is Gnezdovo. In April and May 1940, Polish officers imprisoned in Kozelsk were transported to this railway station by rail cars. They did not know their destination and could only speculate as to whether they were going to one of the neutral countries, France or maybe Poland. In the worst-case scenario, the possibility of being taken deeper into the USSR was also considered.

In Gnezdovo, the Poles, surrounded by a dense cordon of NKVD officers, were transferred to buses or to prison vehicles heading to the execution site. The vehicles, known as “black ravens”

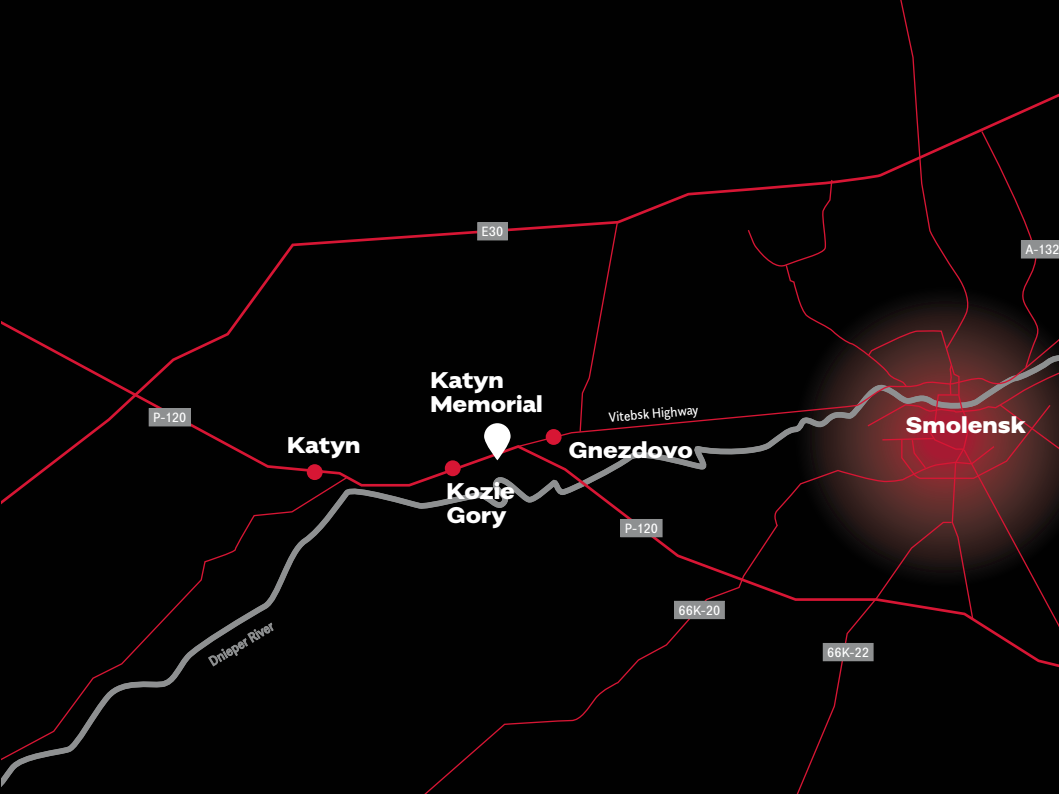
(chernyi voron), evoked ghastly images throughout the Soviet Union, and were associated with night-time deportations. This was the officers’ last journey to their place of execution.



Gnezdovo Station. 1943

9 April. Five a.m. The day began in a peculiar way. Departure by a prison truck in compartments (terrible!). They brought us to some forest; something like a summer retreat. We were carefully searched here. They took away my wedding ring which (...). They took away my roubles, main belt, pen knife (sic!).

*Adam Solski, (in:) Pamiętniki znalezione w Katyniu, Paris-Warsaw 1990, p. 105
[chronologically, this is the last record made before the massacre]*



I heard a motorcycle whirring and some commotion behind the wall. (...) Under the roof, I noticed a hole through which I could see what was happening outside. So, I tried to climb onto the top shelf designated for items (...). In front of us, there was a square (...) densely surrounded by a cordon of NKVD troops with their bayonets upright. (...) An ordinary passenger bus entered the square from the road (...), the windows were covered with lime. The bus could accommodate about thirty people. (...) The bus drove backwards towards the neighbouring rail car so that the prisoners could enter it directly from the steps of the rail car without stepping on the ground. (...) After half an hour the bus would come back to take the next batch. This meant that the place where the prisoners were being taken was not far away.

*Stanisław Swianiewicz, W cieniu Katynia,
Warsaw 1990, pp. 112–113*



Gnezdovo and its links with Poland

Gnezdovo became part of the region's history in the Middle Ages. This settlement is older than Smolensk, serving as an important defence and trade centre of the Varangians in the 9th and 10th centuries. Before the First World War, it was part of the Ivshche estate, which was owned by the Pole, Edward Kozlinski. The nearby areas, which were part of the Katyn-Borek estate (located 3 km away from the current Polish War Cemetery) were owned by another Pole, Aleksander Lednicki.

Lednicki was a lawyer living in Moscow. He was head of the Moscow Polish Club and other Polish organisations, a member of the Russian Duma representing the Minsk region, a philanthropist and a freemason. He used to spend the summer months with his family in his manor house on the Dnieper River. The Katyn Forest, including the Kozie Gory nature reserve (where the Polish officers were subsequently murdered), served as a place for leisurely walks, horse riding and hunting.

Another dramatic reference to Katyn is the fact that in 1899 Lednicki hid a Polish man in his home. The Pole, who had escaped from exile, was most likely to be Felix Dzerzhinsky, later the founder of Cheka (Soviet secret police). Wacław, the son of Aleksander Lednicki, claims that his father did not know the identity of the fugitive, who was just one of the many compatriots helped by Aleksander Lednicki.

After the revolution of 1917, the Kozlinski and Lednicki families fled Russia to escape the Bolsheviks and settled in Poland. Although Lednicki's activity in Poland was highly appreciated by Marshal Jozef Pilsudski, he did not manage to get involved in politics since he was labelled "pro-Russian". His son, Wacław, also maintained connections with Russian culture until the end of his life. He ran the Department of Russian Studies at the Jagiellonian University, was a professor of Slavic Studies in Brussels and then at the universities of Harvard and Berkeley. Towards the end of his life, he published his memoirs in London, describing the history of the Lednicki family, including the Katyn-Borek estate.

Gnezdovo is taken over by the Cheka

Following the Bolshevik Revolution and the escape of the Polish owners, the land and buildings belonging to them were seized by the Cheka (the security services). The Lednicki manor house was surrounded by additional dwellings and was later converted into

Gnezdovo Station. 2019



a holiday resort for the NKVD, with a sanatorium built in the immediate vicinity. The area was surrounded with barbed wire, preventing local residents from accessing the forest. Starting from 1918, when the “Red Terror” began, Cheka officers executed and buried inhabitants of Smolensk region in the Katyn Forest. The Stalinist purges peaked in 1937–1938. In 1937 alone, over 7,000 people were executed by firing squad in the Smolensk region, and the number of executed victims reached 180 per day in the following year. The committee of the Polish Red Cross stayed in the former Lednicki manor house during their stay in Katyn after the Germans had discovered the mass graves of the Poles in 1943. The manor house was demolished before the year 2000. Today, the area houses a sanatorium for the Russian Ministry of the Interior, built after the war (in 1946), as well as several small post-war buildings, and contemporary dachas (cottages) erected in recent years

and presumably owned by officers of the contemporary security agencies.

Gnezdovo Today

Today, Gnezdovo is a small village with 350 inhabitants and has a railway station with a renovated station building. The only element that has survived in an almost unchanged condition from the period when Poles were transported to Katyn are the industrial buildings located across the tracks. For unknown reasons, even the name of the village on the façade of the station building was removed during its most recent renovation.

Getting from the Gnezdovo station to the Katyn War Cemetery (located about 5 km away) takes a few minutes by car or bus along the Vitebsk Highway. Every year, this route is covered on foot by Polish and Russian youth who participate in the Youth Memorial Marches.

KATYN FOREST AND POLISH WAR CEMETERY

Location and History

The place in the Katyn Forest, where, according to the latest findings, 4,415 murdered Polish officers were buried, lies between Gnezdovo railway station and the village of Katyn, 16 km west of Smolensk, and 411 km from Moscow. The Polish War Cemetery is adjacent to the P-120 trunk road connecting the cities of Orel, Bryansk and Smolensk with Belarus. Visitors should rely mostly on maps and navigation devices as there are no signposts in Smolensk indicating how to get to Katyn, and the plaque in Russian reading “Katyn Memorial Complex” (Мемориальный комплекс “Катынь”) can only be seen when approaching the Katyn Forest.

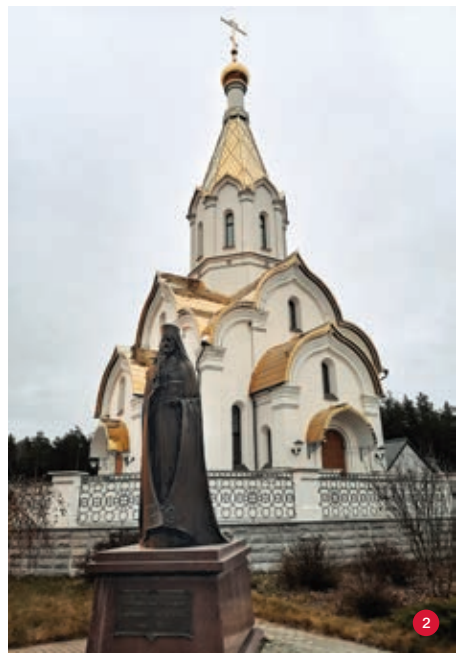
The Polish War Cemetery is one element of the museum complex, which is also comprised of Russian facilities and sites: a cemetery of Soviet victims of repressions, a museum pavilion dedicated to both Polish and Soviet victims of repressions (at the entrance to the memorial complex), a museum, opened in 2018, with an exhibition entitled “Russia and Poland. The 20th century. Pages of history”, and a monument entitled “Execution”, commemorating the murdered victims, alongside the wall of remembrance. The entire complex, including the Polish War Cemetery, is



a branch of the State Central Museum of Contemporary History of Russia in Moscow, supervised by the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation.

The construction of the museum complex was initiated following the 1996 decree issued by the Government of the Russian Federation, “On the creation of memorial sites at the burial sites of Soviet and Polish citizens who fell victim to totalitarian repressions in Katyn and Mednoe”. It was officially opened and consecrated on 28 July 2000 as part of the 60th anniversary commemorations of the Katyn Massacre. The conceptual work and construction of the Polish War Cemetery was coordinated by the Council for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites, which also took care of the remaining memorial sites of the

Photo: From the collection of the CPRDU



Katyn Massacre in Kharkiv, Mednoe and Bykovnia. The project submitted by the team led by sculptors Zdzislaw Pidek and Andrzej Solyga and architects Wieslaw and Jacek Synakiewicz was selected for implementation following the conclusion of the competition. The construction of the cemetery was financed with funds donated by the Polish government, the Katyn Families, the Polish Katyn Foundation and other donors.

For many years, until April 2018, the Polish War Cemetery remained the only fully completed memorial site in the area while the memorial in the Russian section was still unfinished (for more details see Chapter 3 on the Russian cemetery).

On their way to the Polish War Cemetery, visitors will first walk past several Russian facilities. At the entrance to the museum complex, there is a welcome board with a large Russian inscription "Katyn" (Катынь), as well as masts with the flags of Poland and Russia. ❶ On the right, visitors can see the church complex of the Resurrection of the Lord, which was consecrated in September 2012 and commemorates the victims of the Stalinist repressions. The church was founded on the initiative of Patriarch Kirill, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church and former archbishop of Smolensk and Kaliningrad regions, who personally consecrated it. ❷ The construction of the church was financed by Rosneft, an oil company connected to the Kremlin. Patriarch Kirill donated a copy of the icon of Our Lady of Czestochowa to



the church, which he himself received as a gift from Polish bishops during his visit to Poland in 2012. He expressed the hope that the icon would act as a patron for prayers for “the full reconciliation of our nations”. The icon can be seen to the right of the iconostasis. The church also houses an icon devoted to the Katyn martyrs: clergymen, monks and laypeople, among them Lieutenant-Colonel Szymon Fedoronko, an executed Polish POW who used to be the chief Orthodox chaplain of the Polish Army. The icon is painted with the area around Katyn in the background. Another icon depicts St. Serafim, the archbishop of Smolensk, executed in the Katyn Forest in 1937. A museum documenting the persecution of the Orthodox Church in the 20th century is located in the so-called lower church. There is a statue of St. Seraphim in front of the church, with accommodation for pilgrims, social buildings and a well with holy water nearby.

The Museum and Cemetery Complex in Katyn

In front of the entrance to the memorial complex, there is a board with a detailed map of the site and a legend in Russian, English and Polish. Signposts in these three languages help visitors navigate the area.

At the entrance to the memorial complex stands a pavilion, rising from the ground and cut across by a narrow corridor, thus forming a symbolic gate. ③ In 2018, plates imitating rusty metal were placed on the corridor walls with names of Polish and Soviet victims written alternately in Polish and Russian. The whole section is accompanied by the following inscription: “More than 8,000 Soviet citizens and over 4,000 Polish citizens are buried here”. Through a glass gate with an image of a cross, symbolising the passage to the other world, visitors embark on the so-called “death

Photo: From the collection of the CPRDU



road”: along this road the convicts were taken to be executed or their bodies were transported back, and buried in the pits in the Kozie Gory nature reserve.

Located in the pavilion of the main entrance on the right, the museum exhibition tells the story of the tragic fate of the victims buried in the Katyn Forest and the history of the memorial site. Multimedia technology is used to give visitors a bird’s eye view of the entire Katyn memorial complex and all the architectural objects within it.

The core part of the exhibition is devoted to the fates of people living in the Smolensk region who fell victim to the political repressions of the 1930s, and is entitled “The Totalitarian Past of the Smolensk Region”. A special place is dedicated to the personal belongings of the repressed, handed over to the museum by the victims’ relatives and loved ones.

Photo: Viktor Volkov

The exhibition also presents items which used to belong to Polish prisoners of war and were excavated from death pits during the exhumations carried out in the 1990s.

The core element of the exhibition is the Remembrance Gallery, a display of names and photographs of Soviet and Polish citizens buried in the memorial complex of Katyn. 4

After passing through the gate, on the right side of the square, visitors can see a reconstructed railway car, an example of one of those used for transporting victims of repression during the 1920s through to the 1950s. Such a rail car, heated by a stove, could accommodate 30–40 people. They slept on wooden bunks and used a bucket as a toilet, emptied only during longer stops. Likewise, the bodies of the deceased were taken out of the rail cars only during stops, so prisoners had to spend many



Photo: From the collection of the CPRDU

hours in the same rail car with the dead bodies of their companions in misery. In 1940–1941, the similar rail cars were used to deport approximately 320,000 citizens of the Second Republic of Poland from the eastern territories occupied by the Soviets. ⁵

For many years, an exhibition entitled “GULAG on wheels” was shown on boards nearby, presenting information about the fate of the victims of the repressions. According to such information, at the time of Stalin’s death in March 1953, there were at least 16,000 inhabitants of the Smolensk region among the total number of approximately 2.8 million prisoners being held in the Gulag camps. In 2017, the exhibition was replaced by plaques

dedicated to the Polish-Bolshevik War. They describe in detail the severe conditions under which Soviet prisoners of war were held, and the number of fatalities, i.e. 25,000–28,000 people, which significantly exceeds the Polish estimates (16,000–18,000) and also the previous estimates made by Russian researchers (18,000–20,000). The greatest manipulation by the Russian side is that the exhibition highlights the information regarding the tragic fate of the Red Army soldiers at the scene of many crimes committed by the Soviet repression apparatus, and thus indirectly attempts to equate the fate of Soviet POWs, who died of diseases and malnutrition, with the murder of the Polish officers directly ordered by the highest Soviet authorities.

Photo: Viktor Volkov



Nearby, on the right, there is a granite plaque commemorating 500 Soviet POWs allegedly executed by the Germans in the Katyn Forest in May 1943. The memorial is a result of the false report by the so-called Burdenko Committee, which attributed the murder of the Polish officers to the Germans and added the killing of the Soviet POWs to reinforce its propaganda effect. The execution of Soviet POWs has still not been confirmed by historical sources. 6

The death road splits in two at the square, and the red metal gates with the Polish and Russian flags guide visitors respectively to the Polish and Russian sections of the cemetery. 7
A boulder symbolising the memory of



*The trees that saw it still grow there
The earth still remembers the shape of boots, the taste of blood
Heaven knows the language in which the commands were given
Before the shots were fired, still echoing down.*

*Here is a world without death. A world of death without murder,
A world of murder without command, a command without voice.
A world of voice without flesh, and flesh without God,
The world of God without a name, a name without fate.*

*There is only one such side of the world,
Where something that doesn't exist still calls for vengeance.
Where the grave is not revered even with laughter,
The pit is not passed, for an eagle or a falcon...*

*Jacek Kaczmarski, Ballada Katyńska,
from the Litania album, 1986*

the murdered victims has been placed in front of the entrance.

Polish War Cemetery

The right-hand path leads to the Polish section of the cemetery, which covers an area of 1.4 ha and is surrounded by a 470 metre long metal fence.

The entrance to the cemetery is framed by two pylons with images of Polish military eagles and the paving stones are beset with the metal inscription "Polish War Cemetery". A cast-iron plate with text in Polish, Russian and English lies next to the inscription and contains information about the construction of the

cemetery and its official opening on 28 July 2000.

Going further we can see plates depicting the highest Polish military decoration- the Virtuti Militari Cross and the 1939 September Campaign Cross. **8**

To the left along the path, visitors walk past the wooden Primate's Cross, handed over in 1988 by the then Primate of Poland, Cardinal Jozef Glemp. It reads: "A cross commemorating the death of the Polish officers will be erected in this place". **9** Initially it was erected in this area next to a Soviet monument, which attributed the massacre to the Third Reich. Some benches are located in front of the cross.



Photo: From the collection of the CPRDU

**An officer in his hat asleep, a living
soul can't remember any more,**

**For a foreign river washes him now,
a foreign leaf in the forest hums
to him.**

**It won't be a century; it won't be
a year before boys and girls**

**Take out their notebooks to write
words that stick in our throats today.**

*Bułat Okudźawa, A road trip
around Warsaw at night, 1989*



Photo: From the collection of the CPRDU



Photo: From the collection of the CPRDU



Photo: Viktor Volkov

In a short distance from the cross, there are four vertical plates with the symbols of the faiths professed by those buried in the cemetery: Christianity (Catholic and Orthodox), Judaism and Islam. ¹⁰

The creators of the cemetery, i.e. the team of architects led by sculptors Zdzisław Pidek and Andrzej Solyga, designed the whole area to be a symbolic grave. Seen from a distance, the area seems to be flat. However, upon coming closer, visitors can see that it has the shape of a burial mound surrounded by a trench, with its sides having been turned into a wall of remembrance. Walking further along the alley, visitors descend below the ground level, thus symbolically crossing the boundary between life and death.

Those who come to the memorial complex may be surprised to see a rusty red colour on many elements in the cemetery, potentially resembling the colour of clotted blood or the rust on the buttons of the uniforms covering the exhumed bodies. The cast iron used to make several elements of the cemetery was covered with a special corrosion accelerant. It was Zdzisław Pidek's idea that the monument should age in the same way as its surroundings.

The rust colour can also be found on the cast-iron epitaphs honouring each of the murdered victims. Placed on the walls of the trench, the plaques contain the military rank, full name, date and place of birth, occupation,



service rank and date of death—year 1940 of the victims. ¹¹ The individual epitaphs are among the most important elements of the cemetery: they are arranged in six vertical rows as a reference to the bodies being placed layer upon layer in the death pits. The creators' idea was that the trench wall could form a kind of underground chapel and memorial museum, making a strong impression by combining ascetic commemoration with a powerful message. Pilgrims leave miniature Polish flags, flowers and small souvenirs by the plaques.

¹² The altar ensemble also has a rusty red colour. It consists of a cast-iron gate with 4,412 names imprinted on it in alphabetical order (this was the estimated death toll when the cemetery was opened), a cross in the clearance, a sacrificial table and a bell hanging in the trench below ground level with the inscription "Katyn" and the text of "The Mother of God" (Bogurodzica), the oldest preserved Polish religious and patriotic song (dating back to the 13th–14th centuries). ¹³

The symbolism of the altar ensemble invokes the Resurrection of Christ: the gate and the cross invoke the Holy Sepulchre and the stone removed by the Resurrected Christ, while the underground bell refers to the voice of truth, which can even be heard from below the earth. Ecumenical religious services are held at the altar table in this church without walls during commemorative events to honour the Katyn victims.

Two cast-iron commemorative plaques are placed in front of the altar. One signifies the place where, in 1995, President Lech Walesa laid the foundation stone for the cemetery, consecrated by Pope John Paul II. The plaque bears the following inscription: "Truth to the suffering, prayer to the deceased, in the face of God Almighty". The second plaque symbolises the homage paid on behalf of the Polish nation to "over 4,400 Polish Army officers from the Kozelsk camp murdered by the NKVD in the spring of 1940 and buried in the Katyn Forest".

In front of the altar, there are also six collective graves covered with cast-iron plates with crosses. ¹⁴ Only two individual tombs are located here—those of General Bronislaw Bohaterewicz (Bohatyrewicz) and General Mieczyslaw Smorawinski. ¹⁵

The irregular cast-iron slabs between the trees were arranged in the place of the seven death pits from which the remains of the victims were exhumed. The slabs are supposed to symbolise

rusty spots which, like the truth about the Katyn Massacre, come to the surface despite attempts to hide them.

¹⁶ Outside the Polish cemetery, pit no. 8 is located about 100 meters south of the other death pits, towards the Dnieper River. Discovered during the exhumation in 1943, it contained the bodies of the POWs murdered by the NKVD. When an expedition led by Professor Marian Glosek went to Katyn in 1994 in order to exhume and transfer the bodies of Poles from pit no. 8 to the military cemetery, it turned out that the bodies of Polish officers were no longer there. It is not clear what happened to the bodies. According to one hypothesis, the pit was emptied during the work of the Burdenko Committee, and the bodies were buried in nearby grave no. 6.

The site is surrounded by a forest—the silent witness to the crime committed here several decades ago.



Photo: Viktor Volkov



Photo: Viktor Volkov



14



15



Photo: From the collection of the GPRDU

16

RUSSIAN CEMETERY AND MUSEUM

The Russian cemetery is adjacent to the Polish War Cemetery, with a red gate and a Russian flag at the entrance. Foreign pilgrims are advised to visit this place as well. They may want to bow their heads at the graves of the residents of Smolensk region murdered by the Soviet repressive apparatus and find out how volatile and “arrhythmic” Russian politics of memory can be.

The Russian cemetery was officially opened in 2000, together with the Polish one. It is the burial site of at least 8,000 victims of repressions: inhabitants of the Smolensk region, including at least a few hundred of Poles, mostly the victims of the NKVD’s “Polish operation” carried out in 1937–1938. For many years, however, the Russian section of the cemetery remained underdeveloped—it was only marked with a tenmetre high Orthodox cross placed behind the red gate (where Polish delegations also lay flowers every year), as well as small wooden crosses placed by the families of the victims. For many years, the Polish War Cemetery was the only fully completed section of the memorial complex. On the Russian side, there were paths leading deep into the forest, cutting across the mass graves, which bore no markings whatsoever.

The situation changed dramatically in 2017. The Russian side began the process of thoroughly reconstructing and expanding its section of the cemetery, as well as carrying out exhumations. These measures were initiated by the proponents of the imperialist vision of Russian history strongly associated with the Kremlin. The work was coordinated by the State Central Museum of Contemporary History of Russia in Moscow and the Russian Military History Society under the supervision of the former Minister of Culture of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Medinsky. The comprehensive concept of the new memorial complex was developed by Andrei Kovalchuk, the chairman of the Union of Russian Artists, who, incidentally, was Vladimir Putin’s returning officer in the presidential elections, a signatory of the letter to support Putin’s policy towards Ukraine in 2014 and

the author of the monument to Alexander III in Livadia near Yalta in occupied Crimea, which he and the Russian president unveiled together in 2017.

On 20 April 2018, the new buildings were officially opened in the presence of high-ranking officials from Moscow and the region, notably the Chairwoman of the Federation Council (the upper chamber of the Russian parliament), Valentina Matviyenko, formally the third most important person in the country, the then Minister of Culture, Vladimir Medinsky and the Governor of the Smolensk region, Alexei Ostrovsky. The ceremony was also attended by the Polish Ambassador to Russia, Włodzimierz Marciniak.

The museum, which presents the imperialist vision of Polish-Russian relations, is an important new building in the reconstructed Russian cemetery. The core exhibition is entitled "Russia and Poland. The 20th century. Pages of history". ❶

By selecting a biased assortment of materials, often openly manipulated, the authors of the exhibition present the Second Republic of Poland as a country taking an aggressive stance towards its neighbours and, at the same time, glorify Moscow's policies. Among others, the museum presents the fate of Soviet POWs during the Polish-Bolshevik War (significantly overstating the number of victims and blaming Poland for carrying out a purposive extermination), the occupation of Zaolzie (the territories beyond the Olza River) by

Poland after the Munich Agreement, the liberation of Poland by the Red Army during the Second World War and post-war Polish-Soviet "cooperation". The relations between the USSR and the People's Republic of Poland are presented as idyllic, with an emphasis on brotherhood and the Soviet financial assistance given to Poland, while the repressions of the communist regime against Polish underground fighters and the democratic opposition have been omitted. The exhibition fails to mention the names of those Russians who greatly contributed to the research on the Katyn Massacre, such as General Alexandr Tretetsky, who headed a group of investigators from the Russian Military Prosecutor's Office in the early 1990s, which investigated the

Photo: From the collection of the CPRDU



Massacre and coordinated the exhumation process in Katyn and Mednoe. Nor does it mention the tragic fate of the witnesses of the Katyn Massacre such as Parfiyon Kiselov, a guard at the NKVD's dacha in Katyn or Ivan Krivoziertsev, a peasant who testified before various committees and groups of Poles and Western representatives brought in by the Germans for propaganda purposes. Finally, the museum highlights cases of "monuments of gratitude" to the Soviet Army being dismantled in Poland in recent years, but fails to provide any information about Poland's efforts to maintain and renovate the cemeteries of Red Army soldiers, at a cost to the Polish budget. The crash of the Polish presidential plane on 10 April 2010 is mentioned in a single sentence,

followed by an assurance that Russia has consistently shown good will towards the Polish side, by participating in the joint investigation into the circumstances of the crash and the co-organisation of the mourning ceremonies. The exhibition as well as the concept of the entire Russian section of the cemetery was developed by the Russian Military Historical Society under the leadership of former Minister of Culture, Vladimir Medinsky, who has been a controversial figure among the scholarly community in Russia for many years.

Walking deeper into the forest, one reaches a ten-metre tall red Orthodox cross which, until recently, was the main sign of remembrance in the Russian section of the cemetery. 2

Photo: From the collection of the CPRDU

Photo: Viktor Volkov





Photo: From the collection of the CPRDU

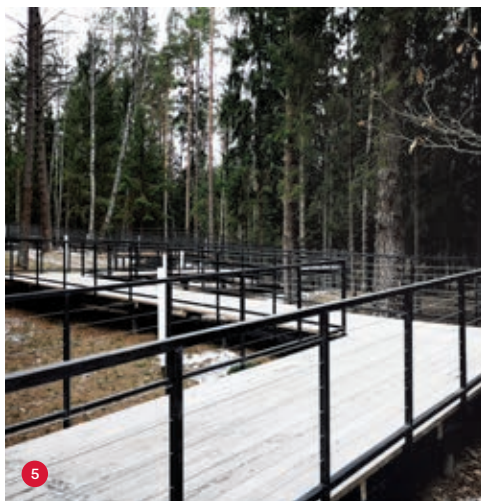
Located nearby is a small exhibition devoted to the history of Soviet political repressions, showing, among others, the most important places of mass murder discovered in Russia: Katyn, Mednoe, and the military training ground in Butovo near Moscow. The graves of the victims of Soviet political repressions discovered in 1998 are located deeper in the forest on the left. Scholars have found that this was the burial place of Soviet citizens executed there in the 1920s and 1930s. 3



Photo: From the collection of the CPRDU

One of the central elements of the Russian cemetery is the sculptural composition entitled "Execution", created by the aforementioned sculptor Andrei Kovalchuk, his father Nikolai, and young architects Vadim Frolov and Sofia Shlenkina. The monument shows the figure of an executed man just before he falls, surrounded by thick concrete pylons. 4

The monument can be reached via newly arranged wooden footbridges, following the signposts in three languages: Russian, English and Polish. 5





6

Near the monument, there is a wall of remembrance with 8,000 names of Russian victims of Soviet political repressions from the Smolensk region.

6 The names were reconstructed based on the NKVD archives. During the exhumations, only one person could be identified, based on their surname engraved on a toothbrush.

The site is surrounded by the so-called “death valley”, containing the mass graves of victims of the Soviet repressions. Visitors can move around the territory by walking on wooden footbridges. A weeping willow has been planted by one of the footbridges as a symbol of remembrance and mourning. 7

Among the victims killed by the Smolensk-based NKVD and buried in the Katyn Forest were people of many nationalities and religions. Apart from Russians, there were also Poles, Latvians, Lithuanians, Jews, Croats and even Chinese. One of the murdered victims was St. Serafin (Ostroumov), an Orthodox bishop and an ordinary of the Diocese of Smolensk and previously, a superior of the seminary in Chelm and an assistant priest in the Diocese of Chelm. Accused of leading a counter-revolutionary group, he was executed by firing squad in 1937. In 2001, he was declared as a new martyr, i.e. a person who suffered a martyr’s death at the hands of his atheist persecutors.

Photo: Viktor Volkov

We were not allowed to ask any questions. We were not allowed to say anything to anyone. This state of fear, since I was a child, through my adolescence. Totally alone. No relatives at all.

Lilia Turchenkova, President of the Smolensk Association of People with Disabilities—Victims of Political Repressions, the head of the Smolensk branch of the 'Memorial' Association. In 1938, when she was three years old, her father Alfred Kazakov as well as her uncles and cousins (seven family members in total) were killed in the Katyn Forest. The three-year-old was taken away from her mother and placed in an orphanage, and her younger sisters died of starvation.



SMOLENSK

Smolensk plays a special role in the history of Russia. For many centuries, the city on the Dnieper River, nestled among seven hills, served as a strategic defence at the borders of the Tsardom of Russia as well as the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and, later on, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The city is part of the history of Poland and Lithuania—until the early 16th century and for over 40 years in the 17th century, it was the easternmost major fortress of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, guarding its borders.

The first mention of Smolensk in historical chronicles dates back to the 9th century, presenting it as the centre of authority of the Krivich tribe. The town on the Dnieper River began to flourish in the 12th century: it was located along the transport route leading



from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea and served as an important centre of trade, crafts and defence. It was one of the most important cities in Ruthenia after Kyiv and Veliky Novgorod.

Over the following centuries, Smolensk was the subject of rivalry between the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Republic of Poland, the Grand Duchy of Moscow, and then the Tsardom of Russia. It remained under Lithuanian rule in 1404–1514, serving as the capital of the province from 1508 onwards.

Smolensk was recaptured in 1514 by the Muscovites and its painful loss was depicted in the famous painting entitled "Stancyk" where renowned



Juliusz Kossak—Smolensk Relief

Polish painter, Jan Matejko portrayed the royal jester in sorrow upon learning about the loss of the town. The Polish singer, songwriter and poet, Jacek Kaczmarski also sang about the jester being the only man aware of the importance of Smolensk for the security of the Republic of Poland more than a century later, at another moment in history. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth regained Smolensk in 1611–1654, finally losing it to the Tsardom of Russia in 1667. ❶

Situated on the border of influences between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Moscow, the town served as a strategic defence bastion for both countries. In the late 16th

century, Tsar Fyodor Romanov, who ruled Smolensk at the time, ordered the demolition of the old ramparts so a defensive fortress in stone could be erected, protected by the waters of the Dnieper River in the north. A copy of the miraculous icon of Our Lady of Smolensk, which, as the legend goes, was painted by St. Luke the Evangelist, was placed above the Dnieper Gate of the fortress to raise the morale of the army and residents.

Sigismund III Vasa regained the town for the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during the Time of Troubles (Smuta), but only managed to do so by laying siege to the town for two years. On his initiative, Smolensk

**The Muscovite saw it was hard to defend the foreign property
But thought of how to defend it.
He used all his might to build a castle.
Built in bricks.**

**A wall wider than three fathoms,
Two lances high,
Thirty-eight hefty towers around
In these quarters.**

**In each quarter, for good shooting
Tower is separated from tower,
The wall is lined with hewn stone,
And an embankment outside.**

**Water canals in pits around the walls,
This is why the castle seems so bold,
With foundations on oak stilts,
Right along the Dnieper.**

Jan Kunowski, Smoleńska zacność R[oku] P[añskiego] 1628

received Magdeburg rights in 1611. In 1623, the Palatine-Governor of Smolensk, Aleksander Korwin Gosiewski founded the Jesuit College in the town, which formally became the first university on the territory of present-day Russia. The College, which taught mathematics, philosophy, ethics and rhetoric, enjoyed great prestige in Smolensk.

Moscow did not come to terms with the loss of Smolensk. After the outbreak of the war with Poland in 1654, the town was recaptured by the army commanded by Tsar Aleksey Romanov himself, thus gaining a strategic bridgehead. A year later, the Muscovites attacked Vilnius, causing

the biggest fire in the history of the town at the time. The final loss of Smolensk by the Republic of Poland was confirmed by the Eternal Peace Treaty of 1686. In 1708, Smolensk was designated by Peter I as the capital of the province.

During Napoleon's Russian campaign in 1812, the town was occupied by French and Polish troops. The defence of Smolensk was commanded by General Mikhail Barclay de Tolly, and the street surrounding the fortress bears his name today. The town was severely damaged at the time and struggled to rise out of the ruins for centuries. After the First World War, on 1 January 1919, the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic

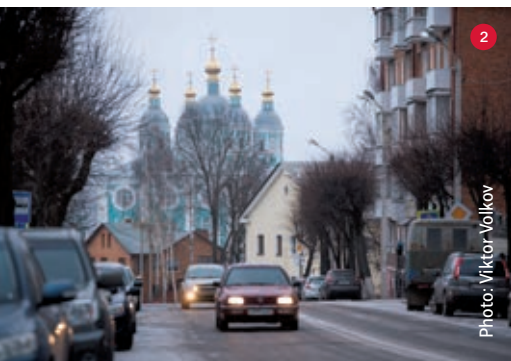


Photo: Viktor Volkov



Photo: From the collection of the CPRDU

was proclaimed in Smolensk, but two weeks later the town was declared part of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. Smolensk was almost completely destroyed once again during the Second World War.

Today's Smolensk is a peaceful, fairly picturesque city, inhabited by 330 thousand people. It is the capital of the Smolensk region, one of the less prosperous regions of the Russian Federation. ②

The Soviet period left its mark on the city landscape, which is filled with grey blocks of flats, as well as on its toponyms—the main street is named Bolshaya Sovietskaya (Great



Photo: From the collection of the CPRDU

Soviet Street), and the square in the city centre is named after Lenin, as well as having streets named after Dzerzhinsky and the October Revolution. ③

Smolensk has two thousand residents of Polish origin, but most of them no longer speak Polish. The members of the Polish community who are aware of their background meet at the so-called Polish House (Dom Polski). Since the 1990s, the local Polish community has been highly involved in taking care of the Polish War Cemetery in Katyn. Father Ptolemy (Jacek) Kuczmik, head of the Catholic parish of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is an important

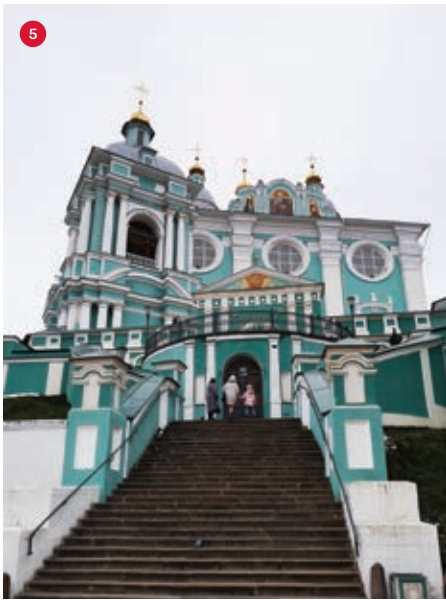


figure for the community and he takes care of pilgrims visiting the Katyn execution site.

On the left bank of the river, visitors can find multiple churches and defensive monuments, notably the defensive walls, which date back to the turn of the 17th century and sometimes are called "the kremlin". ⁴ The entire town was surrounded by stone walls to repel Polish-Lithuanian attacks at the time, but they did not strictly form a "kremlin", a term traditionally used to refer to the seat of the local ruler and its most important offices, surrounded by the wall. A few dozen towers scattered around the city centre have survived until this day, together with fragments of the defensive walls near to Barclay de Tolly, Dzerzhinsky, Isakovsky, Timiryazev and Sobolev Streets.

Smolensk is the capital of the Smolensk and Vyazma Diocese, headed until 2009 by the present Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus', Kirill. The baroque Assumption Cathedral (Ouspensky Sobor) dating back to the 17th and 18th centuries, is located at 5 Sobornaya Gora Street and serves as the cathedral of the diocese. Located on a hill, the church is perfectly visible from many locations.

The church houses a copy of the aforementioned icon, Our Lady of Smolensk, brought to Ruthenia from Byzantium in the 11th century (the original icon disappeared during the German occupation of 1941–1943). Like many other religious buildings, the church was closed down by the Soviet authorities in 1929 and returned to the faithful only following the collapse of the USSR. ⁵

One of the most important monuments on the right bank of the river is the Church of St. Peter and Paul (at 20 Kashena [Cachin] Street, near the railway station). ⁶ Built in 1146, it is one of the few examples of Old Ruthenian architecture modelled on Byzantine designs. The complex includes the Church of St. Peter and Paul (with a facade made of exposed brickwork) and the Church of St. Barbara (also referred to as the white-stone church). During the times of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1611–1654), the church was turned into a Uniate temple and decorated with Rubens and Tintoretto canvases, but regained its status



Photo: From the collection of the CPRDU

as an Orthodox church after 1654. The building was severely damaged during the Napoleonic Campaign and the Second World War. It remained closed throughout the Soviet period and was returned to the faithful after the collapse of the USSR in 1991.

Sites of importance for foreign tourists will include the aforementioned Catholic Church of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Franciscan monastery at 10 Urickogo Street. **7** The neo-Gothic building, consecrated in 1898, was funded by contributions donated by the Polish community. The church was closed down in the 1930s and its parish priest, Ignacy Soldierowicz was arrested and imprisoned in the Gulag in Kazakhstan, where he died. The Catholic congregation was then dispersed. In the tragic year of 1940, the NKVD archive was moved to the

church, which later also housed the state archives. After the collapse of the USSR, the church was supposed to be handed over to the faithful. However, although archive has been transferred to another location and the local Catholic community has made efforts to regain the building, it has remained closed, gradually falling into ruin. Religious services are currently held in a chapel, located in the former stone working workshop. At the entrance, there are plaques commemorating clergymen, nuns and church elders who perished as a result of the political repressions in the Smolensk region. They were either executed or sent to prison camps in Kazakhstan, where they died.

Next to the church is a small cemetery, where priests from the parish are buried alongside the founders of the church and eminent residents of the region, for

example, members from the Giedroyc and Komorowski families. 8

The city's multicultural history is reflected in the preserved buildings of the former Lutheran church (12 Lenina Street), currently housing the Chess



Association, and the Jewish Cultural Centre located in a former synagogue (9 Isakovskogo Street).

While walking along the streets of Smolensk, visitors may want to stop in front of the building located at 13 Dzerzhinskogo Street. 9 The building served as the seat of the security services since the October Revolution. Some of the victims of the Katyn Massacre were presumably murdered in the cellars of this building, in the so-called internal prison of the District Board of the NKVD, and their bodies were later transported and buried in the Katyn Forest.

Photo: Viktor Volkov

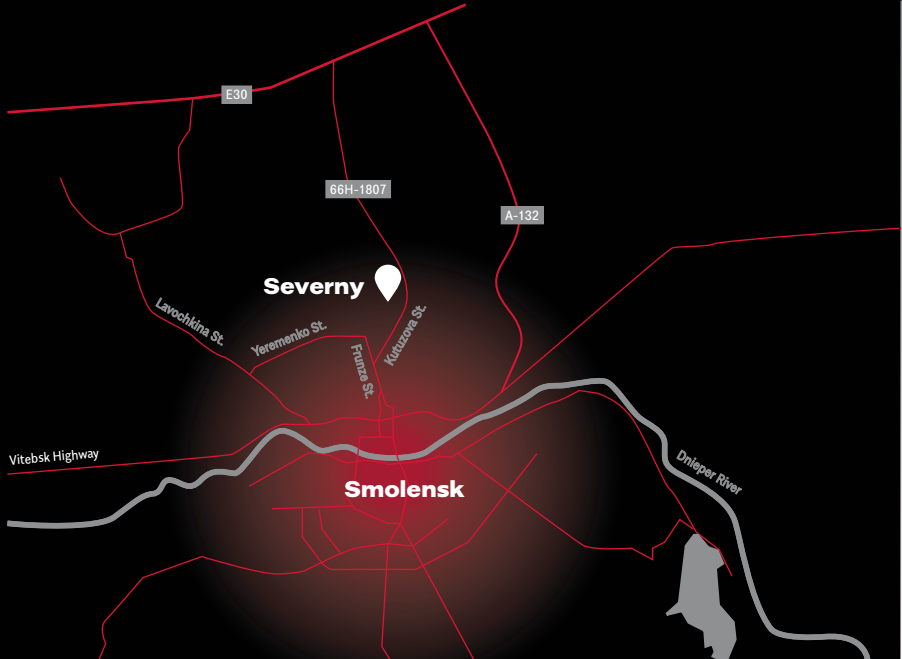
Photo: Viktor Volkov

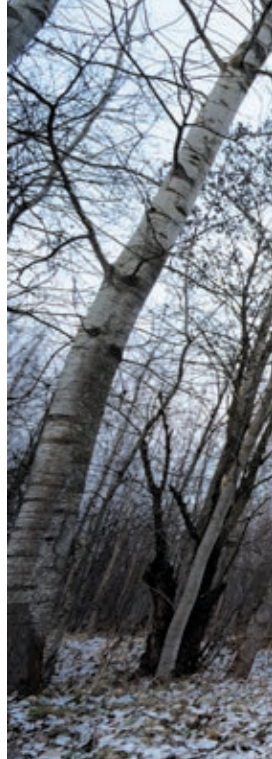


SMOLENSK SEVERNY

THE SITE OF THE POLISH AIRPLANE CRASH

For Poland, the military airport of Smolensk Severny marks another tragic site on the map of the Smolensk region. On 10 April 2010, the Polish airplane with an official delegation crashed during a landing attempt at this airport. The delegates were on their way to attend the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Katyn Massacre. The crash took the lives of the President of the Republic of Poland, Lech Kaczynski and the First Lady, as well as all the members of the Polish delegation and the flight crew—96 people in total.





The airport is located on the northern outskirts of the city at Kutuzova Street, about 20 km from the Polish War Cemetery in Katyn (accessible by the Vitebsk Highway and further through the city). The crash site can be reached by walking along a concrete road (about 5 minutes).

A commemorative stone has been placed at the site of the crash, and the inscriptions in Polish and Russian read: "In memory of the 96 Poles, headed by the President of the Republic of Poland, Lech Kaczynski, who perished in the airplane crash near Smolensk on 10 April 2010". The stone was brought to the site on the order of the then governor of the region, Sergei Antufiev in 2011. Initially, the inscription on the plaque mounted on the stone read

that the members of the Polish delegation died "on their way to the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Soviet massacre in the Katyn Forest, committed against prisoners of war and officers of the Polish Army in 1940". In 2011, the plaque was replaced by the Russian authorities, who argued that it only contained a text in Polish and was mounted without any agreement by the Russian side. ❶

Next to the boulder, there is a wooden cross erected by the Katyn 2010 Association, which was set up by the members of some of the victims' families. ❷ Visitors also light candles at the foot of the nearby birch tree, its branches arranged into the shape of a cross. ❸ For the sake of precision, the tree knocked down by the Polish

Photo: From the collection of the CPRDU



Photo: Viktor Volkov



Photo: Viktor Volkov

airplane was located about 500 meters further away. Polish delegations laid wreaths and candles at that tree until 2013, when the area was designated for the construction of an industrial facility and dug over (part of the birch tree was secured by Polish prosecutors).

The present modest commemoration was intended to be temporary, as the Polish authorities planned to erect a monument on the site. The competition for the architectural concept was adjudicated in 2012. Nevertheless, the plan was not implemented as the Russian side insisted on reducing the scale of the monument, and the talks ended in an impasse.

In 2017, the area adjacent to the plane crash site was taken over by a private entrepreneur, who announced that a gas pipeline would be built there, with a small power plant to follow later. Currently, the area is fenced off and the gate is locked. However, the owner has put his phone number on the gate and declared his readiness to enable access to the site to all visitors.

RUSSIA AND THE KATYN QUESTION

In this Guide, we have presented key information about the Katyn denial, but visitors to the Katyn Forest may be surprised today by the intensity of changes and reinterpretations of the stance adopted by the Soviet and Russian authorities towards the Katyn Massacre.

The stance changed from denial of the NKVD as the perpetrator, through to the acknowledgement of this fact, and finally attempts to relativise its responsibility and balance it out with alleged offenses committed by Poland during the interwar period. These changes tell us a great deal about Russia itself, about its struggle with the country's own history and its difficulty in shedding the burden of a totalitarian past that infects the minds of people in power as well as ordinary citizens.

The first step towards the truth, after 50 years of denying Soviet perpetration, was taken in 1990, when the government news agency, TASS published a telegram on 13 April, confirming that NKVD had executed

Polish officers in the spring of 1940. On that day in Moscow, the President of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev met with the President of the Republic of Poland, Wojciech Jaruzelski and handed over copies of selected documents concerning Katyn, including a list of the Polish officers transported from Kozelsk to Smolensk and from Ostashkov to Kalinin in the spring of 1940. Gorbachev also ordered the Chief Military Prosecutor to commence an investigation into the Katyn Massacre, which was launched in September 1990.

However, although the Katyn Massacre was declared to be an NKVD crime, the authorities of the USSR and Russia tried to control the "boundaries of repentance". Just a few months later,



The handover of copies of the Katyn documents. Warsaw, 14 October 1992

Gorbachev commissioned a search of archives to find materials illustrating the damage and loss that Poland had supposedly inflicted on the USSR, as an attempt to balance out the crime committed against the Poles. These infamous actions became known as the “anti-Katyn” campaign. One of the accusations put forward by the Russian side was that Poland had carried out the deliberate mass murder of Soviet POWs during the Polish-Bolshevik War of 1919–1921. Articles promoting this claim began to appear in the Russian press and scholarly journals in the early 1990s. Official representatives of the Russian government also became involved in these efforts. The Russian consul in Krakow infamously stated in 1994 that Pilsudski had built concentration camps for Soviet POWs, where 60,000 people were murdered without trial, which likened the Polish Marshal with Stalin. Russian

communist periodicals and online portals regularly published opinions denying Soviet responsibility for the Katyn Massacre but more significantly, the mainstream media also sometimes allowed voices accusing Poland of deliberately murdering the Soviet prisoners of war.

In October 1992, the head of the State Archive of the Russian Federation Rudolf Pikhoya came to Poland at the request of President Boris Yeltsin. He met with President Lech Walesa and handed over copies of documents from the so-called “closed package no. 1, comprising of the so-called “Katyn decision” (the resolution of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) dated 5 March 1940, ordering the execution of Polish POWs) and a note from the President of the KGB Alexander Shelepin



Photo: From the collection of the Katyn Museum in Warsaw

The complete set of declassified archival materials leads to the conclusion that the direct responsibility for the crimes in the Katyn Forest lies with Beria, Merkulov and their helpers. The Soviet side expresses its deep regret in connection with the Katyn tragedy and declares that this is one of the grave crimes of Stalinism.

TASS agency wire of 13 April 1990

President Boris Yeltsin lays flowers at the Katyn Cross in the Powązki Cemetery, Warsaw 25 August 1993

dated 1959, with his recommendation to Khrushchev that the personal files of the Katyn victims should be destroyed (20 years later, Pikhoya was awarded the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland). Yeltsin himself travelled to Poland a year later and visited the Military Cemetery in Powązki, where he laid flowers at the monument in the Katyn Valley and, according to some accounts, turned to the members of the Katyn Families present there and said: "Forgive us".

However, like other leaders, Yeltsin was also accused of sluggishness in de-classifying the Katyn materials. Gorbachev maintains that he personally handed over closed package no. 1

to Yeltsin upon the transfer of power (December 1991), drawing the new president's attention to the "devilish document" it contained. However, according to official reports, the package was not opened until 24 September 1992. During Yeltsin's term of office, the Katyn investigation effectively came to a halt as from 1994, the ongoing proceedings were rather ostensible.

The efforts to expose the crimes of the Soviet security forces were limited even further after Vladimir Putin, a former KGB officer, came to power in 2000. In the case of the Katyn Massacre, all legal steps that would enable the victims' families to apply

*Whose conscience
do these graves burden*

*Whose mouths
were gagged to be silent
Whose memory
was covered with lime*

*murderers in the sunshine
innocent*

we are left

with only an epitaph

*Jan Górec-Rosiński, Katyń
From Księga snów*

for the rehabilitation of the those killed and make claims against the Russian government were blocked. Although in 1993 experts from the Russian Supreme Military Prosecutor's Office classified the Katyn Massacre as "the gravest crime against peace and humanity", recognising that the perpetrators should be held responsible for "causing a deliberate murder on a particularly large scale, which should be treated as genocide", the investigation itself remained at an impasse for years, and no charges were ever brought against any specific people. Finally, on 21 September 2004, the Supreme Military Prosecutor's Office of Russia discontinued the investigation "due to the death

of the perpetrators". The Polish side responded on 30 November 2004 by initiating its own investigation into the Katyn Massacre at the Institute of National Remembrance. Prosecutor Malgorzata Kuzniar-Plota, who was running the investigation, wrote: "It has become the responsibility of the Polish state to establish the facts and carry out a legal and criminal assessment of the Katyn Massacre and its perpetrators".

The Supreme Military Prosecutor's Office of Russia repeatedly refused to recognise those killed in Katyn as victims of political repression, arguing that there was no evidence that the murdered Poles were

charged under the Soviet Criminal Code. Moreover, starting in 2007, the Prosecutor's Office even indicated that there was no evidence of the death of the POWs, despite the fact that they were mentioned in the NKVD documents and identified during the exhumations.

Moreover, the Katyn Massacre has never been formally judged in the international arena. It was not the subject of the final verdict at the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg, or in the proceedings before the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. The ECHR only considered individual complaints from the victims' relatives concerning the unreliability of the Russian investigation carried out in 1990–2004, but not the essence of the Katyn Massacre itself and the responsibility of its perpetrators.

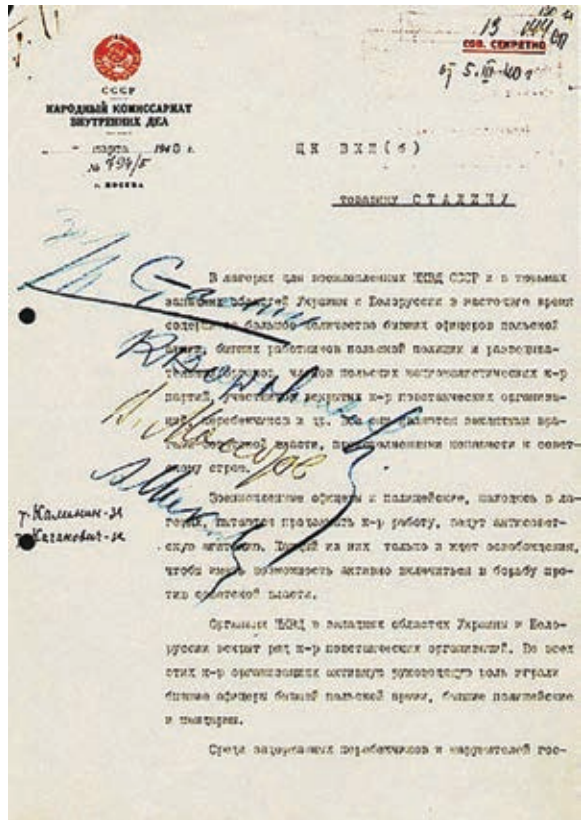
During Vladimir Putin's presidency, Russia's historical policy has also evolved, especially with regard to the official stance on the infamous pages of the country's own history. Supported by some historians, experts and officials, the Kremlin intensified its imperial and heroic historical narrative, which promoted the belief that the Soviet Union only played a glorious role in the Second World War and shaping the post-war order. Issues such as Soviet crimes, Soviet cooperation with the Third Reich before June 1941 or the post-war enslavement of some European countries remained silenced at an



official level. The Soviet Union was presented as a force that overcame the threat from the Third Reich and saved Europe, including Poland, from colonisation or even extermination and did so almost alone, at a high cost and with an enormous number of victims. These arguments were intended to support contemporary Russian aspirations to become a pillar of European and global security. This narrative even included an apology of Stalin (albeit an indirect and ambiguous one), mainly by emphasising his leadership in the victorious fight against Nazism. For internal use, this vision was intended to strengthen the Russian citizens' support for the idea of a strong authority that pursues global goals despite sacrifices or even victims on the way. Russia tried to counter divergent interpretations

Photo: From the collection of the CPRDU

Stalin's bust in the so-called Avenue of Leaders near the seat of the Russian Military History Society, Moscow 2019



A memo from the head of the NKVD, Lavrenty Beria to Joseph Stalin proposing the execution of the Polish prisoners of war, dated March 1940, with the signatures of Stalin, Voroshilov, Molotov and Mikoyan

of history, especially those that undermined the belief that the Red Army brought freedom to the countries of Central Europe, considering the criticism of the USSR by Poland, the Baltic States or Ukraine to be a sign of ingratitude, and sometimes even “the rehabilitation of Nazism”.

However, the Kremlin’s historical narrative has been subject to fluctuations and reinterpretations. Under the presidency of Dmitry Medvedev (2008–2012), the message was partially de-Stalinised. Key officials in the country condemned the dictator’s policy and the large-scale

political repressions carried out by the Soviet authorities. When visiting Katyn on 7 April 2010 together with Polish Prime Minister, Donald Tusk, the then Prime Minister Vladimir Putin condemned the Katyn Massacre as a Stalinist crime, stating that Stalin carried it out in revenge for his defeat in the Polish-Bolshevik War. Soon after the airplane crash near Smolensk, Russian public television aired “Katyn”, a movie by Polish director Andrzej Wajda, at prime time. In April of the same year, the Russian Federal Archives Agency (Rosarchiv), on the order of President Medvedev, published facsimiles of

In these memorable and painful days for Poland, we, Soviet human rights defenders, want to assure our Polish friends, and—through them—the entire Polish nation, that we have not forgotten and will never forget the responsibility that our country bears for the crime committed by its official representatives in Katyn.

We are convinced that the day is near when our nation will do justice to all those involved and affected by this tragedy, both the executioners and the victims: the former in proportion to their crime, the latter in proportion to their martyrdom.

Statement entitled "Look back with repentance", signed by USSR human rights defenders, including Ludmila Alexeyeva, Vladimir Bukovsky, Natalia Gorbanevskaya, Pavel Litvinov, Kronid Lyubarsky. Emigration journal "Kontinent", No. 24, April 1980.

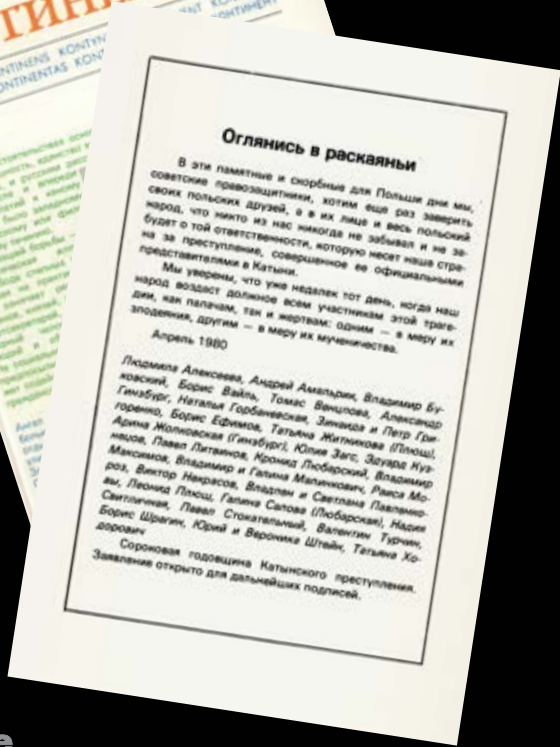


Photo: From the collection of the CPRDU

Katyn-related documents from the so-called “closed package” on its website. In subsequent months, Russia handed over a total 148 (out of 183) volumes of the criminal case concerning the murder of Polish officers, also stating—through the Chief Military Prosecutor, Sergei Fridinsky—that virtually all the materials had been handed over while the rest remained classified to protect the personal data of those officers who may have been involved in the decisions about the killings. Further, on 26 November 2010, the State Duma adopted a declaration stating that the Massacre was carried out on a direct order issued by Stalin and his subordinates, and that Soviet propaganda had attributed responsibility for this crime to the Nazis for decades (the Communist faction in the Duma voted against the declaration). Prior to his visit to Poland in December 2010, President Medvedev stated that it was unacceptable to challenge the published documents from the “closed package”, which proved that the Katyn Massacre was a Stalinist crime, and that the denial of this fact by the USSR was an attempt to falsify history. In 2012, Patriarch Kirill consecrated the Orthodox church in Katyn, donating a copy of the icon of Our Lady of Czestochowa and appealing for a reconciliation between the two nations. Notably, the rhetoric used by many politicians, mainstream columnists and Orthodox clergymen at that time was consistent, which may indicate that the message was orchestrated in a top-down manner

and had a prescriptive character. However, as already stated, the process was clearly delineated, preventing the victims from being rehabilitated posthumously and their families from making legal claims. The Supreme Court of the Russian Federation did not permit the declassification of all the files in the Katyn case. Even during the period of the “Katyn thaw”, texts directly negating Soviet responsibility for the massacre were published not only by marginal but also by highly popular press titles.

The anti-Stalinist rhetoric became clearly subdued after Vladimir Putin’s return to the Kremlin in 2012. As civil liberties became more restricted and repressive measures against the president’s opponents escalated, official criticism of the Soviet repressions was silenced and actions to commemorate their victims were blocked. Moreover, even researchers were targeted. Yury Dmitriev, one of the most distinguished activists and local historians (a laureate of the Golden Cross of Merit of the Republic of Poland), who discovered mass graves of victims of Stalinism in Karelia and the Solovetsky Islands and identified many people buried there, has been in custody since 2016, accused of serious offences against morality. The research community has unanimously claimed that the allegations were fabricated. These accusations, which shocked historians and human rights defenders in Russia and beyond, were accompanied by attempts to deny Soviet

responsibility for these crimes. For several years, progovernment scholars in Karelia have promoted the idea that the graves discovered by Dmitriev in Sandarmokh are not of the victims of Stalinism, but of Soviet POWs murdered by the Finnish army during the Winter War of 1939–1940. The “Memorial” Society, whose mission is to investigate and publicise information on Soviet repressions, and which made an invaluable contribution to the investigation of the Katyn Massacre, has also been pressurised and subjected to restrictions. In 2016, “Memorial” published the so-called “list of executioners”, with the names of nearly 40,000 NKVD officers from the 1930s. Since 2013, “Memorial” has had the status of a “foreign agent”, given by the Russian authorities to non-governmental organisations which receive foreign funding. The clampdown on those who study the shameful chapters of Soviet history goes hand in hand with the widespread ignorance regarding historical events among Russian society, indifference to massacres, or even the acceptance of such crimes as an inevitable element of governance in Russian history.

The official attitude towards Soviet crimes is also reflected in the case of Katyn. Initially, high numbers of Russian officials attended commemorative events devoted to the Katyn Massacre, but over time their presence has shrunk to almost nil. Events have been picketed by groups of Stalin apologists. Some

Russian journalists have stated that the permission to establish the Katyn cemeteries was issued during a “troubled time, when towards the end of Yeltsin’s years in power, Russia was apologising for everything to everyone”. The new museum opened in the Russian section of the Katyn cemetery in April 2018 can be also seen as an example of “anti-Katyn recidivism”: it attempts to balance out the Stalinist crimes with the alleged crimes committed by Poland during the interwar period.

It must be mentioned that alongside the imperialist, anti-Western Russia, re-living the myth of the USSR, there is also another Russia—one which calls for even the darkest pages of its own history to be uncovered, which tirelessly conducts research and supports Polish efforts to publicise the truth about Katyn, and which calls for repentance for this and other crimes committed by the USSR against Poland, other enslaved countries and its own people. The “Memorial” Society has played an invaluable role in discovering the unknown details of the Katyn Massacre, making efforts to rehabilitate the victims and fully declassify the Katyn files. In 1989, Alexey Pamyatnykh, a member of “Memorial”, published the first ever article about the Katyn Massacre in the Soviet press. “Memorial” published monumental books of remembrance “Murdered in Katyn” and “Murdered in Kalinin, buried in Mednoe” edited by Alexandr Guryanov, describing the history of



**Yury Dmitriev Sandarmokh,
5 August 2016**

the massacre, the efforts to discover the truth and a list of victims with names, photographs and biographies (notably, although Katyn research is financed by Polish and foreign foundations, the publication of the book was financed by donations collected from among the ordinary Russian citizens). In turn, Nikita Petrov from “Memorial” studied Soviet documents to compile and publish a list of names and the biographies of NKVD officers who received awards for the preparation of, and participation in, the Katyn executions.

Two eminent Russian researchers should be mentioned here, namely Prof. Inessa Jazhborovskaia and Prof. Natalia Lebedeva. Their invaluable contribution to the research and popularisation of knowledge about the Katyn Massacre cannot be overestimated: among others, Lebedeva was the author of the

Promotion of the book of memory by the “Memorial” Society, “Murdered in Katyn”. From the left: Alexandr Guryanov, Albin Głowacki, Larisa Yeremina, Arseniy Roginsky. St. Petersburg 25 November 2015



Russian chapter on the Katyn Massacre in the monumental publication “Białe plamy, czarne plamy” [White Spots, Black Spots], which was the fruit of the work undertaken by the Polish-Russian Group for Difficult Matters in 2010. The Polish chapter on Katyn was prepared by Andrzej Przewoznik, then the Secretary General of the Council for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites. Other names worth mentioning in this context include prosecutor Alexandr Tretetsky and his successor, Anatoly Yablokov, who headed the Supreme Military Prosecutor’s Office investigation into the Katyn Massacre in 1990–1994, including the exhumation process and other studies conducive to discovering the whole truth about the Massacre. In an act of fate, Tretetsky was awarded the Commander’s Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland in 2010, which was one of the last



The “Last Address” campaign in St. Petersburg

decisions made by President Lech Kaczynski on the eve of his death in the Smolensk airplane crash.

Oleg Zakirov, a major of the KGB in Smolensk, rendered considerable services to the Katyn investigation. During the perestroika period, he was involved in tracking down the executioners of the Katyn Massacre and was removed from the KGB as a result. In the face of threats, he was forced to flee to Poland.

The opposition newspaper “Novaya Gazeta” has advocated for the truth about the Katyn Massacre for many years. In 2008, its editors requested the Military Prosecutor’s Office to

reveal the full truth about Katyn and published the following address to the Poles: “Forgive us for the tragedy of Katyn, the killing of 22,000 Polish citizens. Forgive us that our ancestors were the perpetrators of this tragedy”. Finally, Ludmila Alexeyeva, the human rights defender who died in 2018, should also be mentioned here. She publicly invoked the memory of the Katyn Massacre on multiple occasions and appealed to Russians to show repentance. In 2015, at the presentation of the book of remembrance “Murdered in Katyn”, Alexeyeva said with emotion: “The aggression of 1939 and Katyn are both a terrible disgrace vis-à-vis the Poles. Please forgive us if you can”.

Photo: Nadezhda Kiseleva

Despite the various steps taken to discourage individuals and organisations from studying the infamous pages of Russian history, today's Russia has many grass-roots initiatives to commemorate the victims of Soviet repressions and expose the perpetrators. For many years, as part of the "Last Address" campaign, information plaques have been placed on various buildings in Russian cities with information about the people who were deported from these places by the security forces and subsequently murdered. In Moscow, the "Topography of Terror" walks organised by "Memorial" to places related to the repressions have gained considerable popularity (under the same project, "Memorial" has also developed a route following in the footsteps of repressed Poles living in Moscow). In 2016, the case of Denis Karagodin from the city of Tomsk received considerable publicity. After several years of searching, he collected documents enabling him to fully identify the executioners (those who made decisions and carried out the killings) of his great-grandfather, a peasant who was arrested in 1937 and shot dead as a "resident of Japanese intelligence". After his publication, Karagodin was contacted by the granddaughter of one of the executioners, who asked for forgiveness. This example encouraged many other Russians to seek information about the fates of their ancestors who fell victim to the Soviet system. The Internet was flooded with stories where victims and executioners were

often members of the same family. This process of ordinary citizens searching for the truth about the fates of their relatives was labelled by independent Russian historians as "second memory", in opposition to the heavily promoted official "first memory", which is heroic and devoid of dark chapters.

Admittedly, the Russian authorities have a great advantage in the clash of these two memories. At the level of governmental institutions, the attitude towards Soviet crimes, including the Katyn Massacre, is purely instrumental and is modified when there are changes to the Kremlin's interests. At present, we are currently dealing with the omnipotence of Russia's secret services, who are the heirs to the Soviet apparatus of repression. As a result, the memory of repressions is silenced, and their criminal character is being relativised. However, when looking at Russian history, one may recall the story from the Old Testament, where Abraham begged Jehovah to save a city for the sake of the few righteous people who lived there. While the families of the Katyn victims and many concerned Poles may only associate Russia with the responsibility carrying out the crime, it is worth remembering that there are many people in Russia who preserve the memory of the Soviet atrocities committed not only against their families and the nation, but also against other nations. These people speak out about it and are not afraid to apologise.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

(as of January 2020)

Before going to Russia, it is important to check whether you require **a visa**. All necessary information about travelling and staying in Russia can be found on the website of The Federal Agency for Tourism (Rosturizm) at www.russiatourism.ru/en. When planning a trip, it is also advisable to read the information available on the website of the consular office of the Russian Federation in your country of residence.

TRAVEL TIPS

When travelling to Katyn by car, one must take into account the fact that Russia must be entered through one of the border crossings with international status – in the case of travel from European countries, the most convenient one is the Terehova-Burachki crossing on the Latvian-Russian border. Due to current tensions between Belarus and Russia, it is no longer possible to enter Russia via the

shortest route as indicated on maps, via Belarus.

When travelling by car through Lithuania and Latvia, travelers will pass through Kaunas, Daugavpils, and Rezekne to the Terehova/Burachki crossing. The route from the border to Smolensk runs through the towns of Nevel and Velizh, which used to be within the borders of the Republic of Poland until the First Partition in 1772. When travelling from Moscow – the capital of Russia, one can reach the Polish War Cemetery in Katyn by taking the bus or train to Smolensk, which run regularly from the Belarusian Railway Station in Moscow. The journey takes 5-6 hours.

The most convenient way to get from Smolensk to the Polish War Cemetery in Katyn is by car. If you do not have your own car, you can order a taxi and make an appointment with the taxi driver for the return journey. The cost of the journey will probably be the result of some negotiation, but depending on the waiting time,

it is recommended to offer the driver a maximum of 2000 rubles (about 30 EUR). The cemetery is located about 22 km west of Smolensk, on the road to Vitebsk. It is important not to take the route to the village of Katyn (which is 7.5 km away), but to the museum marked on the maps as Мемориальный Комплекс Катынь / Memorial Complex Katyn, located on route P-120 just outside Gnezdovo. The entrance to the car park is located next to the Orthodox Church of the Resurrection complex, which is visible from a distance.

It is also possible to take a suburban bus from Smolensk (the bus station is located at 13 Kashena Street / ул. Кашена 13). Although the bus stops in the village of Katyn and only passes by the cemetery and museum complex, you can ask the driver to stop here.

Smolensk has a wide range of **accommodation options**. It is also worth checking out the offers on the website of the Tourist

Information Centre, "Smolenski Terem" (www.visitsmolensk.ru) – unfortunately, information is available only in Russian – or you can use popular online accommodation booking services. You can also stay in the pilgrim's house next to the Katyn cemetery. The lodgings belong to the Orthodox Church of the Resurrection.

The so-called bishop's courtyard (Архиерейское подворье) comprises of the pilgrim house and a canteen, serving tea and traditional Russian cakes that can be enjoyed on a cold day. Telephone number for the pilgrim house: +7 (4812) 48 89 35, +7 910 782 64 32, podvoryekatyn.ru/palomnicheskaya-gostinitsa (Russian version only).

USEFUL CONTACTS

CEMETERY-MUSEUM COMPLEX "KATYN" (KATYN CEMETERY)

POSTAL ADDRESS: Russia, 214 522,
Smolensk region, rural settlement of
Katyn, east of the village Kozie Gory.

CEMETERY OPENING HOURS:

8:00–21:00 (

8:00–18:00 (October–March). Free entry.

MUSEUM OPENING HOURS:

Tuesday–Sunday 9:00–17:00

ADMISSION: 150 roubles (museum of
Polish–Russian relations), 200 roubles
(pavilion at the entrance)

GUIDED TOURS: 1600 roubles (group up
to 15 people), 2200 roubles (group up to
25 people) – guided tours are provided in
Russian only.

FEE FOR PHOTOGRAPHY AND FILMING:
100 roubles

OPEN: Monday–Friday 9:00–17:30

MUSEUM MANAGEMENT:

+7 (4812) 30 56 41, 38 02 13

INFORMATION: +7 (4812) 48 89 67,
30 56 42

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USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

EMERGENCY TELEPHONE ALL
OVER RUSSIA: **112**, also in English.

POLICE: **102**

EMERGENCY: **103**

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The Centre for Polish-Russian Dialogue and Understanding is a state-operated institution based in Warsaw, established in 2011 and supporting dialogue between Poland and Russia. The Centre initiates projects and undertakings to support dialogue through scientific research, publications, educational initiatives, public debates, conferences and lectures on Polish-Russian relations, history and the culture of both countries etc.

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