

OUTLINE FOR TEACHERS

The crimes committed by Soviet Russia against Poles on the 80th anniversary of the Katyn massacre

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Why this lesson is necessary:

For a number of reasons, the history of Poland, especially the period of World War II, is often incomplete and distorted in US media, entertainment, politics and even schools. Our duty is to learn the truth about these horrific events.

Objective (what the students are to learn and remember):

- I. The genocidal nature of the „Polish Operation”, which the Soviets carried out in 1937-1938
- II. The anti-Polish Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact between the Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia, and its secret addendum
- III. Poland, the only country in the 2nd World War invaded from all directions in September, 1939
- IV. Extermination of the Polish people by Germany and Russia
- V. The Katyń Massacre, a specific case of the continuing Soviet genocide of Poles
- VI. Soviet ethnic cleansing: deportation of about 1-2 millions of Poles to Siberia
- VII. Hiding and falsifying the truth about the Soviet crimes against the Polish people

It may be necessary to explain in detail such terms as: Polish Operation, secret addendum, deportations to Siberia, genocide, ethnic cleansing, concentration camps, prisoners of war, Katyn, concealing and falsifying history.

I. The „Polish Operation”

The „Polish Operation” was carried out by the NKVD (Soviet communist political police, infamous for terror and cruelty) two years before the Second World War. It consisted of severe persecution of persons of Polish origin who lived within the Soviet Union, as a part of an ethnic cleansing plan. According to Soviet documents, almost 240,000 people were imprisoned in 1937 alone, of which almost half were murdered, the rest were sent to labor camps or deported to Kazakhstan and Siberia. In the following year, the numbers of victims were similar. The action covered all persons suspected of Polish ethnicity. Poles were killed or deported for only one reason: because they were Poles. More than other nationalities, Poles were considered potential enemies of the Soviet system.

This began a pattern of persecution (mass arrests, resettlements and murders such as in Katyn) that continued in occupied Poland after the Soviet invasion of September 17, 1939.

The Poles were the first group that the Soviets wanted to eliminate. Why? Poles were known to be religious, hardworking and usually more affluent than others. The goal of the communists was to build an atheistic and „equal" society without „capitalists." Therefore, the Politburo of the Communist Party decided to remove from the Soviet state, above all, the Polish ethnic group. The NKVD was ordered to arrest all those who had Polish names or could speak Polish; Soviet propaganda called them „Polish spies" with an intent to arouse hatred and inspire informers. Most of the Polish fathers of families were shot, others were imprisoned in labor camps. Polish mothers were deported to Kazakhstan, and Polish children were sent to orphanages to deprive them of their Polishness.

([https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operacja_polska_NKWD_\(1937%E2%80%931938\)](https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operacja_polska_NKWD_(1937%E2%80%931938))).



II. Anti-Polish German-Soviet Pact



Signing of the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact

In order to facilitate their planned aggression of Poland, the Germans formalized friendly relations with Russia and signed an agreement on mutual non-aggression, known as **Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact**. It included a secret protocol (addendum) which outlined an **invasion and subsequent partition of Poland**, a mere 20 years after regaining freedom.

III. Poland, the only country in World War II, invaded from all directions by the two most powerful armies in Europe and by the „fifth column"



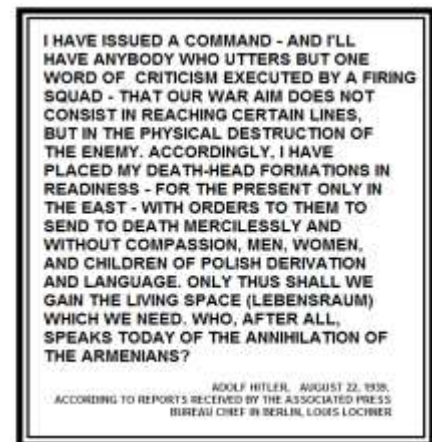
Partitioning of Poland between Germany and Soviet Union

On September 1, 1939, the German armies entered Poland from the west, south and north. On September 17, Russia invaded Poland from the east. In addition, there were German saboteurs in Poland, the so-called „fifth column" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fifth_column — many Germans living in Poland decided to aid Hitler), whose job was to cause chaos and obstruct defense. Over 800,000 Germans lived in Poland at the time.

September 1, 1939, the day of Germany's invasion of Poland, is considered the beginning of the World War II. United States entered World War II two years later, after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

IV. Extermination of the Polish nation by the Germans and the Russians

After the occupation of Poland, Russia and Germany signed the „Friendship Treaty” in which they undertook to cooperate closely in the liquidation of the Polish nation. The Germans began the extermination with teachers, professors, clergy, doctors, officials – the most educated part of society, the patriotic elite, in order to prevent the rebirth of the Polish state and the organization of a resistance movement. They arrested selected people whom they often tortured during interrogations or immediately transported to concentration camps, where most of them died of starvation and excessive workload after a few months. They also organized round-ups (manhunts) in the streets and public executions to intimidate and terrorize the society. Thousands of people, whole families, including children, were transported to Germany for slave labor. Hitler's orders for special SS military formations (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schutzstaffel>) was shocking: „... **send men, women and children of Polish origin and language to death without mercy.**”



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hitler%27s_Obersalzberg_Speech

The Soviets had their own methods of destroying the Polish nation in the territories they occupied: they secretly carried out mass executions and exiled Poles to Siberia.

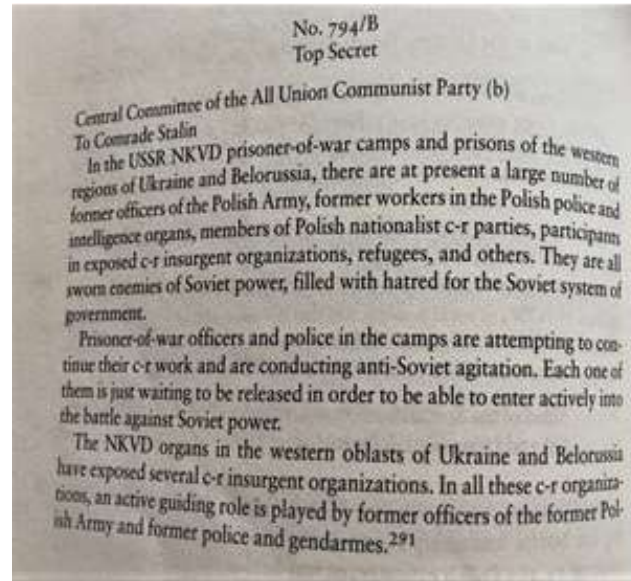
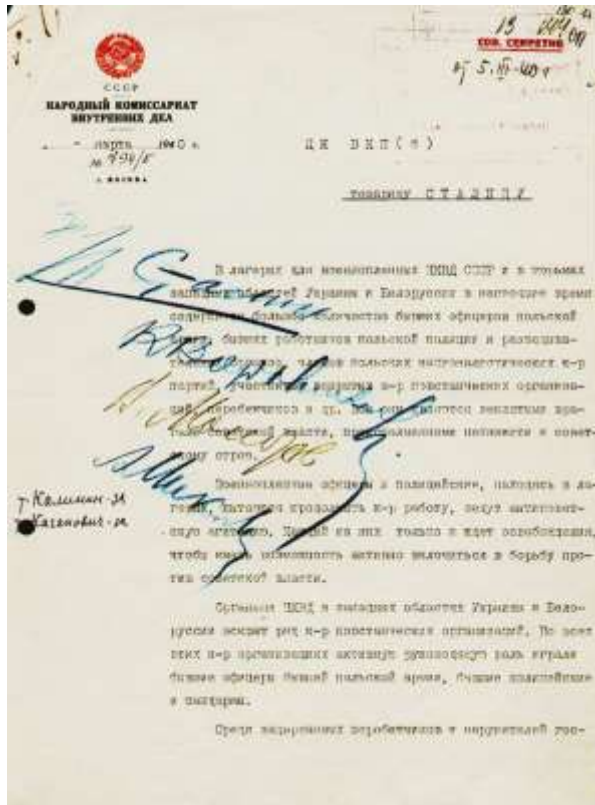
V. The Katyń Massacre, a specific case of the continuing Soviet genocide of Poles

One of important Soviet goals was the extermination of Polish army officers. In April and May 1940, the Russians murdered 22,000 people in various places in western Russia with a shot to the back of the head. Only one such place was discovered 3 years after the crime. It was reported by the local population near the village of Katyń, near Smolensk, when the area was occupied by the Germans. It has become known to the world as the place where the Katyn Massacre was committed (https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zbrodnia_katy%C5%84ska). Other locations were identified only after the collapse of the Soviet Union (early 1990s), and some have not been identified to this



A scene from the movie „Katyn” by Andrzej Wajda

day. Most of the victims of the crime were officers and soldiers of the Polish Army (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dnxxp5aCqTY>).



The decision to shoot prisoners of war, signed by Stalin and his associates Voroshilov, Molotov and Mikoyan. Annotations on the margin testify that Kalinin and Kaganovich also supported this decision.

According to the definition adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 1948, genocide is the mass killing of people because of their belonging to a specific group, e.g. ethnic, racial, religious, etc.



The map and diagram of the Katyn Crime

Katyn is, therefore, not only a breach of the international Hague and Geneva Conventions about the treatment of prisoners-of-war ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geneva_Convention_\(1929\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geneva_Convention_(1929))), but also a case of **genocide** (<https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide.shtml> – mass killing of people) against Poles. The murder of thousands of soldiers captured by the Soviets as prisoners-of-war, at the time when there were no hostilities between Poland and Soviet Russia, is a unique crime of its kind in the 20th century.

Why did Stalin decide to issue such an order?

- Communist (extreme left) governments base their power on terror, lies, murder, and betrayal;

- Both Stalin and Hitler felt unpunished, believed that their crimes could be concealed, minimized, engineered for public opinion – they were certain of never having to face the consequences or responsibility for their actions (this worked out for Stalin);
- Probably, the desire to take revenge for the successful repulsion of the Soviet aggression of Poland in 1920 also played an important role. Polish soldiers prevented the Soviets from marching to the West and thwarted their goal to impose communism on the entire Europe.

It should be added that the Germans also treated the civilian population with great cruelty. Prisoners of war were also often shot during the war in 1939, but not on the scale that the Russians did (the Germans tried to comply with the Geneva Convention of 1929). After the war, most of the Polish soldiers returned from German POW camps to their families.

The discovery of the Katyn graves

The graves in Katyn were reported to the Germans by the local population at the beginning of 1943. On April 13 that year, the German radio broadcast a message about the discovery of mass graves with the bodies of missing Polish officers.

In order to prove that it was the Russian crime of murdering Polish soldiers, and not theirs, the Germans invited representatives of the Allies and many other countries to inspect the crime scene.

The ten-person delegation of the Polish Red Cross agreed to cooperate in the exhumation.



One of the eight discovered death pits in Katyn, where the bodies of the murdered Polish officers were pushed

Under the supervision of the Germans, the recovered bodies were placed on stretchers and searched meticulously to recover any documents, such as notes, diaries, photos, wallets, and also parts of uniforms, and then the bodies were buried in new common graves. All important materials were put in envelopes and secured in 14 boxes. They constituted a valuable evidence. The extraordinary fate of these items is described by Allen Paul in his book „Katyn“.

It is known from these notes and diaries how the Poles were deceived: they were told that there would be an exchange of prisoners. The soldiers were glad that they would soon be free. Before they were transported from the camp to the Katyn forest, they were given extra food portions and they were allowed to keep their personal belongings.

The history of Poland is marked by the graves ... There has never been such a grave yet.

(words uttered on May 14, 1943 by Waclaw Lachert, president of the Board of the Polish Red Cross during the exhumation, to which the Germans invited representatives of that organization)

[The Ballad of Katyn – Jacek Kaczmarski](#). Two renditions of the song by the author



[This rendition is illustrated by the archival footage from the Katyn exhumations \(contains drastic imagery\).](#)

VI. Ethnic cleansing: deportations

From the Polish eastern territories occupied by the USSR, the **Russians deported 1.1 million Poles** deep into the Soviet Union. From February 1940 to June 1941 (until the invasion of Russia by Germany), four such deportations of Poles were carried out. Entire families with children were deported to Siberia and Kazakhstan, to the „inhuman land". **One of the first victims of the deportation were the families of prisoners murdered in Katyn.** That was a cruel journey, which lasted several days (sometimes several weeks) in freight rail cars, not adapted to transport of people, unheated, without sanitary facilities, locked to prevent escape. On starvation meals, without medical care, exhausted and frozen, **many did not survive** the trip.

Poles were deported with the intent that they never return from Siberia... that they would die of hunger and unforgiving weather there.



Sybiraks – Poles exiled to Siberia

<https://naviny.belsat.eu/pl/news/10-02-1940-zsrr-zaczyna-deportowac-polakow-na-sybir/>

An account of the first deportation notes: *The deportation carried out by the NKVD on February 10, 1940 took place in terrible conditions, which for many meant a death sentence. During its implementation, the temperature was as low as -40°C (-40°F).*



Map of labor camps and deportations

The deported people were allowed less than one hour to pack up. In many instances, people were not allowed to take anything with them at all. A then-teenage boy from Dubno county in Volhynia gives this account of the invasion of their house by Soviet functionaries (from the book „In the fortieth, Mother, to Siberia they sent us”, Poland and Russia 1939-1942:

NKVD barged into our house like a pack of wolves, with nagans [revolvers] and daggers, and proceeded to destroy holy pictures, break furniture, while calling us names like „the Polish bourgeois”. They kept a watchful eye on my father, and they repeatedly asked about weapons that Daddy didn't have, so they proceeded to tear boards from the floor, throw clothes out of wardrobes, break beds. After our house had been destroyed for an hour, we were ordered to gather; we were allowed to take some clothes and only 5 kg of flour, although 5 of us were deported. Like prisoners, we were led under nagans to a sleigh and driven as a laughingstock through the town to the railroad station.

VII. Hiding and falsifying the truth about the Soviet crimes against the Polish people

The Communist government imposed on Poland by the Soviets after World War II for 45 years concealed and distorted information about the Katyn massacre and deportations to Siberia. With terror, they achieved that Poles after the war were afraid to even utter the word „Katyn” or talk about Soviet crimes.

Meanwhile, much was said (rightfully) about German crimes, especially against Jews, just as it is today.

The Katyn Massacre still remains an untried and unpunished crime. For many years the truth about it was hidden by United States and Great Britain, erstwhile allies of Stalin. The U.S. Congress recognized the truth about Katyn after 10 years, and only under pressure from the Polish American Congress (documented by the U.S. Congress Madden Committee)

<https://www.archives.gov/files/research/foreign-policy/katyn-massacre/selected-records.pdf>,

https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Specialna_Komisja_%C5%9Aledzca_Kongresu_Stan%C3%B3w_Zjednoczonych_do_Zbadania_Zbrodni_Katy%C5%84skiej).

Even today, the full truth about Katyn is not always admitted. The U.S. Congress continues to refuse to officially classify this crime as genocide, despite the fact that it meets genocide definition adopted by the United Nations in 1949. The U.S. Congress did not commemorate the

80th anniversary of Katyn with the adoption of an appropriate resolution, which was sought by American Polonia.

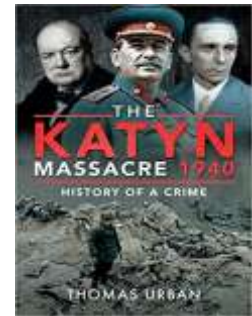
The Institute of National Remembrance in Poland initiated an investigation into the Katyn massacre on January 12, 2004:

<https://ipn.gov.pl/en/news/77,Decision-to-commence-investigation-into-Katyn-Massacre.html>.

The above document by the Institute of National Remembrance provides a large number of detailed findings of historians on this matter.

Another example of falsifying the truth about Katyn: Thomas Urban's book, published on December 28, 2020. The author promotes the view, that the Allies did not know that the Soviets were the perpetrators.

On the cover: Churchill, Stalin, and Goebbels



SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

Most important for students to understand and memorize:

Poland suffered proportionally the greatest material and human losses among all countries fighting in World War II.

Over 6 million Polish citizens perished, i.e., almost every sixth.

For various reasons, the history of Poland, especially the history of World War II, is distorted and deformed, also in the United States, therefore we must learn the truth about these events.

- 1) This material was devised for students in advanced grades of high school. Teachers are, of course, welcome to tailor it to their specific needs, bypassing the portions of the presentation as they deem appropriate for their audiences.
- 2) Questions that may be asked of the students:
 - Who has heard the name Katyn?
 - What happened in Katyn?
 - With what is the name Katyn associated for Poles?
 - Have you heard about any Katyn monuments, or seen any?
- 3) Proposed tasks for students: search for monuments, books, articles, family memories related to Katyn.
- 4) The illustrations in this outline are also included in the presentations, in full size.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND MATERIALS

Pre-war population: Poland 35 million, Germany 70 million, Soviet Russia 170 million. As a result of the war, occupation and border changes, Poland lost 11-12 million people. After the war, the population of Germany increased (people returning from other countries) and the population of Russia also increased because of territorial annexations.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographic_history_of_Poland

[What was the population in Germany before and after World War 2? - Answers](#)

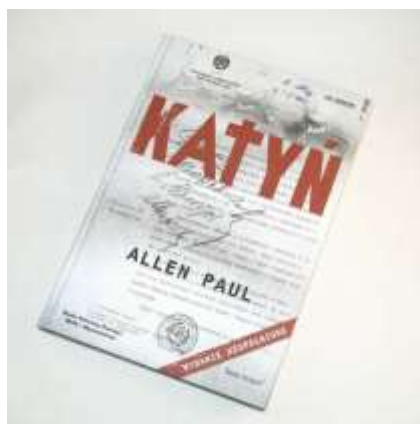
[The Russian Population Enigma | Foreign Affairs](#)

Institutions concerning themselves with the Katyn massacre:

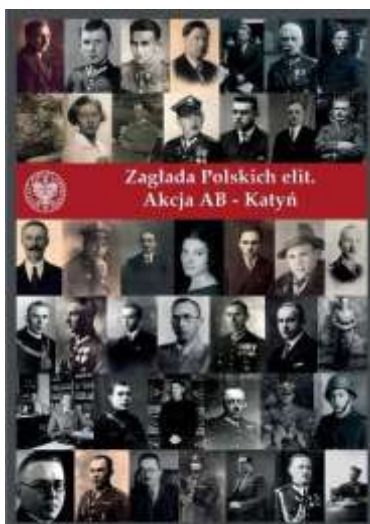
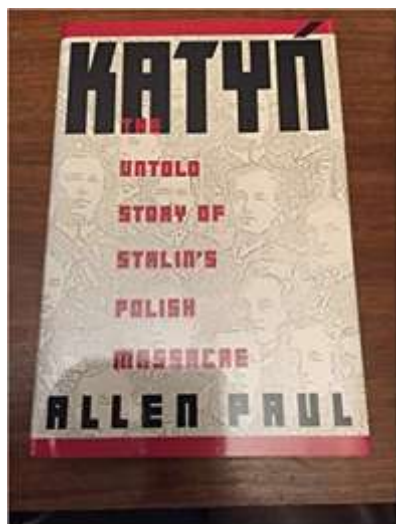
Związek Stowarzyszeń Rodzin Katyńskich w Polsce oraz Chicago • Instytut Pamięci Narodowej <https://katyn.ipn.gov.pl/> • Muzeum Katyńskie • Rada Ochrony Pamięci Walk i Męczeństwa • Narodowe Centrum Kultury • Ośrodek „Karta” • Instytut Katyński • Dom Polski w Smoleńsku • Państwowy Kompleks Memorialny w Smoleńsku • Stowarzyszenie Komitet Pamięci Katynia – Komitet Katyński • Niezależny Komitet Historyczny Badania Zbrodni Katyńskiej • Polska Fundacja Katyńska

Books

Excerpt from the introduction to the 2006 Polish edition of Allen Paul's book "Katyn":



"I am an American with no Polish roots, I do not speak Polish [...] I took up the case of Katyn, amazed that such a terrible crime is completely unknown in the West. I have found that Poles themselves often have a vague idea of events that can be easily regarded as the Stalinist version of the "final solution" of the Polish issue."



How the families of murdered Poles experienced the Katyn tragedy ...



[Witomiła Wołk-Jeziarska, poet, daughter of an officer of the Polish Army murdered in Katyn in 1940, tells about the fate of her father and her family deported deep into Soviet Russia](#)



[Janina Rychalska, daughter of a Katyn officer](#)

Katyn Memorials



Toronto, Ontario, Canada



Jersey City, New Jersey, USA



London, Great Britain



Katowice, Poland



Doylestown, Pennsylvania, USA

The monument created by Andrzej Pityński, about 30 feet high, consists of a granite pedestal and a bronze sculpture of a hussar kneeling on one knee, leaning on a sword.

There are two plaques on the pedestal, the first with the inscription KATYŃ 1940, and the other with the inscription SMOLEŃSK 2010, added in 2011.

The Katyn Memorial in Jersey City during the terrorist attack on World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001

Pictured here are the burning WTC towers on the other side of the Hudson River, in the background of the Katyn Memorial and a crowd of witnesses of this tragedy.

Polish Americans later added a plaque in the base of the Memorial to commemorate the event and its victims.



Fot.: Walter Kowalchouk