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**Summary:**

This intelligence report is a summary and timeline of the events concerning the Katyn Forest Massacre from 1939-1946.

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# Intelligence Report

No. 5678

THE KATYN MASS GRAVES

DEPARTMENT OF STATE



Office of Intelligence Research

Date: October 30, 1951

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ABSTRACT

Discovery of the Katyn mass graves was announced by the German Government in April 1943. The graves contained the corpses of Polish army officers who had been taken prisoner by the Soviet Army in 1939 and subsequently disappeared. This much was admitted by the Soviet Government, which, however, repudiated the German charge that they had been executed by the NKVD. In January 1944 a Soviet investigating commission produced a lengthy report containing a detailed explanation of the mass graves, which cast the blame for the executions on the Germans.

The Polish political emigration accepted neither the German nor the Soviet account at face value, but pointed out discrepancies in both. Most of the fundamental objections raised by the Poles have been directed at the Soviet story, however. The majority of Poles appear to be convinced of Soviet responsibility for the Katyn crime. With this conviction, the Polish exile government since the end of the war has continued its investigation of the data concerning the graves and has emphasized the Katyn episode in its anti-Soviet propaganda.

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THE KATYN MASS GRAVES

## I. POLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE KATYN GRAVES EPISODE

In April 1943 the German Government with much fanfare announced to the world the discovery of mass graves in the forest of Katyn, near Smolensk in German-occupied Russia, containing the remains of several thousand human corpses dressed in uniforms of the Polish Army and bearing the marks of brutal execution. Nazi propaganda at once launched a campaign to exploit the grisly find as an example of Soviet barbarism by alleging that the corpses were those of Polish officers captured by the Red Army in September 1939 and subsequently murdered en masse by the NKVD. For more than two months the German press and radio published almost daily communiques lengthily describing the progress in exhuming and identifying the bodies. The German allegations were widely reprinted and commented upon abroad.

The time of this episode was shortly after the battle of Stalingrad, when the tide of the war was slowly beginning to turn against Germany, though the German armies still occupied nearly a maximum extent of Soviet territory. It was a time when a number of political differences were beginning to come to the fore in the Allied camp, particularly regarding the Polish question. In this setting, the Nazi propaganda campaign regarding Katyn plainly had as one of its aims an exacerbation of latent distrust and antipathy between the Western Allies, including Poland, on one hand and the USSR on the other. To this purpose it was well suited, as one of the outstanding difficulties in the wartime relations of the Polish Government in exile and the Soviet Government had been the failure of the latter to satisfy Polish inquiries regarding the disappearance of several thousand Polish army officers in the USSR, where they had been taken as prisoners of war after the Soviet invasion of Poland in September 1939.

Largely because of the already existing Polish-Soviet difficulties, the Katyn revelations of Goebbels' propaganda precipitated a political crisis in the Allied camp. The Polish Government asked the International Red Cross to investigate the German charges. The Soviet Government thereupon severed diplomatic relations with the Polish Government, accusing the latter of having maliciously given credence to the German propaganda for the purpose of discrediting the USSR. Strenuous efforts of the British and US Governments to avert this break, and to mend it after it had occurred, were of no avail.

Though the Katyn question was probably only a convenient and accidental pretext seized upon by the Soviet Government for a long-

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planned step (since growing Soviet-Polish friction over future frontiers and related questions had for some time made such a break appear possible), the episode marked a turning point in the development of the Polish problem in World War II. From this time forward the Soviet Government openly began to groom a pro-Communist Polish group in the USSR to take over the rule of Poland after the war. This Soviet policy in turn transformed the problem of Poland's future into a much more complex and pressing issue between the USSR and the Western Allies, with which the latter eventually were forced to deal at Yalta and Potsdam.

Because of these larger issues that became prominent at the time of the original sensation over Katyn, the question of the true explanation of the Katyn graves became for the Poles a burning political question. If, as many or most of them thought, the Nazi charges were true and were the explanation of the previous inability of the Soviet Government to produce the missing Polish officers from their prisoner-of-war camps, then they felt that so grisly a crime should help justify them to the Western Allies for their deep-seated misgivings concerning the long-range intentions of the USSR toward Poland, and should justify the Polish exile government, furthermore, in resisting Allied pressure for concessions to the USSR on territorial issues and related matters of prime importance. For these reasons the Katyn episode remained a spectre in the background of British and of US relations with the Polish Government in exile during the remainder of the war, when the British and US Governments were searching for means of reconciling the Polish exile political leaders with the Kremlin.

After the war the installation of a Soviet-controlled Communist regime in Poland and the relegation of the Polish Government in exile to non-recognized status by the major Powers intensified the anti-Soviet feelings of the Polish political emigration and, among other things, reinforced the inclination of the latter to keep alive the memory of Katyn, which most Poles by then had come to regard as a symbol of a Russian aim to destroy Poland. With the postwar breakdown of the wartime alliance of the US, UK and USSR and the growth of tension between the Soviet and non-Soviet worlds, the Katyn story in its German-originated version was re-publicized by the remnants of the former Polish Government in exile, partly for the purpose of drawing attention to itself and partly to reinforce the whole schedule of Polish grievances against the USSR.

## II. PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATIONS OF THE EVIDENCE REGARDING KATYN

Because the Katyn mass graves and the human effects exhumed from them were located in an area occupied by Hitler's armies and

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subsequently reoccupied by the Soviet armies, there was never an opportunity for an independent on-the-spot investigation of them by an authority not involved in the charges and counter-charges concerning guilt.

Of the two on-the-spot investigations, the first, carried out by the Germans in the spring of 1943, was in part witnessed by non-German delegations selected and brought to Katyn by the German authorities, including several groups of Poles from occupied Poland and a panel of medico-legal experts from European countries under German domination as well as from Switzerland and Finland. The panel of experts signed a protocol purporting to give their opinions regarding the evidence, which the German Government later published. Subsequently the Germans also published a lengthy report entitled, "Official Material on the Mass Murder of Katyn."

The second on-the-spot investigation of the graves was carried out by the Soviet Government, following the recapture by the Soviet armies in September 1943 of the region in which Katyn was situated. No non-Soviet authorities were asked to participate in this investigation, although a number of foreign observers, including newspaper correspondents, were taken to Katyn under Soviet auspices to witness a part of the proceedings. In January 1944 the Soviet Government published a report of its investigation, entitled, "The Truth about Katyn," which denied the anti-Soviet accusations of the prior German report and cast the blame for the mass execution back upon the Nazis.

After the war a re-hearing of some of the testimony relating to Katyn, at which German and Soviet witnesses confronted one another, occurred during the trial of major German war criminals before the International Military Tribunal at Nürnberg in July 1946. On that occasion the Soviet Government attempted to have the responsibility for the Katyn executions formally fastened upon Germany. However, although the hearing produced a small amount of new testimony, the evidence remained inconclusive and the Soviet case was not pressed.

An investigation of Katyn of a different type was carried out by the Polish political authorities in exile. Their collection and analysis of evidence relating to the missing Polish army officers commenced even prior to the Katyn revelations and have proceeded continuously ever since. During 1941-42 General Anders, the commander of the Polish army then being formed on Soviet soil under the Soviet-Polish agreement of July 30, 1941, directed an examination of all available evidence of the whereabouts of nearly 15,000 Polish prisoners of war, mainly officers, last heard of in the spring of 1940 at three Soviet prison camps. After the Katyn revelations the Polish efforts to piece together the story of these prisoners were redoubled, though under a handicap of distance, since by that time

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Anders and his army as well as the Polish diplomatic mission had been forced to leave the USSR. A major source of data was Anders' army itself, some individuals of which had lived for a short time in the same prison camps with the missing officers.

In 1946 the bulk of the evidence assembled in this fashion was published in highly analytical form by the Polish exile authorities in London for private circulation under the title, "Facts and Documents Concerning Polish Prisoners of War Captured by the U.S.S.R. during the 1939 Campaign." Various other books and articles incorporating some of the same material were published at that time and subsequently by members of the Polish emigration. 1/ While the "Facts and Documents" and many of the other Polish publications on the subject were presented with considerable regard for various alternative explanations of the Katyn crime, most of them leave little doubt that their compilers are convinced of Soviet guilt in the matter.

### III. RECONSTRUCTED CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS RELATING TO KATYN

From the data given in the German, Soviet and Polish reports and in the records of the International Military Tribunal, a sequence of the known or alleged occurrences relating to the missing Polish officers some of whose bodies were found at Katyn can be pieced together as follows:

#### A. Soviet Arrest Of Polish Military Personnel, 1939-40

Nearly all of the Poles whose bodies were subsequently identified in the Katyn graves were officers who had been among those captured by the Red Army during its invasion of Poland in September 1939, or who were later arrested by the Soviet authorities in Soviet-occupied Poland, or in the Baltic states, whither some had fled after the September campaign.

The Katyn victims were only a small part of Polish prisoners of war in the USSR, but they included nearly half the officers. There is no precise information on the total number of Polish military personnel interned by the USSR during and after the September campaign, but Polish exile investigators have accepted a figure of approximately 250,000, of whom somewhat more than 10,000 were officers.

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1. The principal example is a volume entitled Katyn, by General Wladyslaw Anders, published in 1949.

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B. Segregation Of Polish Officers In Special Camps, 1939

In October and November 1939 the Soviet authorities separated most of the commissioned and cadet officers from other Polish prisoners of war and placed the majority of them in two large camps for officers only, at Kozielsk, in the Province of Smolensk, and at Starobielsk, in the Province of Voroshilovgrad. Another group, consisting of Polish military and civil police, frontier guards and members of the intelligence services, both officers and ranks, were simultaneously separated from other prisoners and concentrated in a camp at Ostashkov, in the Province of Kalinin. Of the remaining thousands of non-commissioned officers and ranks, a large number were ultimately released by the Soviet authorities and made their way home to Poland.

Of the inmates of the three special camps at Kozielsk, Starobielsk and Ostashkov during the winter of 1939-40, nearly all subsequently vanished. Those in the two last-named camps have never been found. On the other hand, the corpses subsequently revealed at Katyn are believed by Polish exile investigators to have been those of all but a few of the officers who had been interned at Kozielsk.

The number of officers at the Kozielsk camp was at first around 5,000 but was gradually reduced to about 4,500 during the winter of 1939-40 through transfers of some inmates elsewhere. At Starobielsk the number was about 4,000, and at Ostashkov about 6,500, including about 400 officers and 6,100 ranks. The total for the three camps was thus about 8,820 officers and 6,100 ranks. Of these 14,920 or more men, 448 are said by Polish investigators to have survived owing to their transfer to other camps in the USSR. <sup>1/</sup> Between 350 and 400 of these survivors eventually found their way, after July 30, 1941, into Anders' army in the USSR and became the primary source of the information subsequently assembled by Anders regarding the personnel and conditions in the three camps prior to their liquidation.

C. Liquidation Of The Special Camps, April-May 1940

All accounts agree that the Kozielsk, Starobielsk and Ostashkov camps were suddenly emptied by the Soviet authorities in the spring of 1940. Such details as are known concerning this liquidation derive (1) from a few individuals whom the Soviet authorities separated from the majority en route from the camps, who later made their way to the Polish armed forces in the West, and (2) from diaries purporting to have been found on the bodies at Katyn.

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1. Facts and Documents, pages 50, 56, 59, 67, 72-73, 95-27 and 108-109.

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From these sources the following account can be pieced together:

The liquidation of the three camps by the Soviet authorities commenced early in April 1940 and was completed before the middle of May. The prisoners were taken away in batches varying from 50 to 420 every two or three days, without being told of their destination. The Kozielsk camp was emptied in this way in 21 convoys between April 3 and May 12; the Starobielsk camp between April 5 and May 12; and the Ostashkov camp between April 3 and the middle of May.

The liquidation was conducted in much the same manner in each of the three camps: (1) the prisoners were told only that they were to be moved "westward." (2) Every few days the Soviet camp authorities read out a list of prisoners, selected according to no pattern discernible to the latter, in groups varying from about 50 to as many as 420 in number, who were directed to assemble for a departing convoy the same day. (3) Those so assembled were segregated from the remaining camp inmates, were searched and deprived of all Soviet-issued equipment and sharp objects, had their personal belongings examined, and were given food for a journey. (4) They were then marched out of camp under heavy Soviet guard and taken in trucks or afoot to the nearest railway, where they were put aboard prison cars which departed immediately. In this way each of the three camps was completely emptied within a period of six weeks. 1/

From that time the whereabouts of nearly all of the 15,000 prisoners were unknown outside of the USSR. After April 1940 letters addressed to the prisoners at the three former camps were generally returned to the writers marked "Retour — Parti" (Return to Sender

1. Facts and Documents, pages 54-74, 93-97, 106-109. Some weeks later, in the summer of 1940, the Kozielsk camp was again filled with other Polish prisoners, previously interned in Lithuania and Latvia. The Starobielsk camp likewise was used again, first as a transit camp for civilian prisoners (including many from Poland) and later for Polish prisoners of war. Many inmates from both of these later groups eventually found their way into the Polish army formed by General Anders on Soviet soil in 1941-42. The fact that the camps had been successively used by different groups of Polish prisoners led at first to some confusion in the tracing of evidence concerning the missing Polish officers. (Facts and Documents, pages. 50-54, 97-101.)

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— Addressee Departed). 1/

D. Railway Journey And Last Evidence Of The Officers Alive

Though all trace of most of the 15,000 prisoners is lost from the time they marched out of the camps, there exists some evidence purporting to carry their story part way through the subsequent railway journey and, in a few cases, a short distance beyond the end of that journey. This evidence is supplied in very fragmentary form by (1) some of the diaries allegedly found by the Germans on the corpses in the graves at Katyn and (2) eyewitness accounts by a very small number of survivors of the camps, whom the Soviet authorities separated from the outbound convoys during the course of the railway trip. The points on which this evidence agrees are as follows:

In the case of most of the prisoners from the Kozielsk camp, they were loaded into railway prison cars at Kozielsk. The train carried them first to Smolensk. From there it continued a short distance westward to the rural station of Gnyezdovo. Here they were taken from the train, loaded into autobuses and driven away into the neighboring woods in batches of about 30 every half hour. The same buses returned to the train after these trips to pick up further groups. In the woods the prisoners were unloaded from the buses and were searched again. Watches and other small effects were taken from them. Here the account breaks off in the few diaries on the Katyn corpses that carry it this far. 2/

1. Evidence of the cessation of mail from the three special camps is contained in a communication from the Polish Red Cross at Warsaw, dated March 18, 1941, to the International Red Cross at Geneva, in reply to an inquiry of the latter of January 29, 1941. In this communication the Polish Red Cross stated that it had received letters from the Polish officers' prisoner of war camps in the USSR until the spring of 1940, after which this mail had suddenly ceased until November 1940, when a small number of letters had again come through. (Apparently those that came during and after November 1940 were from the small number of officers who had been transferred to the Gryazovyets camp.)
2. Facts and Documents, pages 64-74. In addition to the evidence of the diaries, at least one eye-witness survived who accompanied the convoys as far as Gnyezdovo and succeeded in getting a glimpse of his fellow-prisoners being unloaded from the train there, before he was separated from them and transferred to another Soviet prison camp. More than a year later he was released to join the Anders army.

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Gnyezdovo is the first railway station before Katyn, and the woods referred to were the Katyn woods.

In the case of the prisoners from the Starobielsk camp the testimony is more fragmentary still. All that is known is that they apparently were taken by rail to Kharkov and thence by automobile to a further, unknown destination. 1/

E. Survivors Of The Special Camps, 1940-41 2/

A Soviet hope of converting some of the prisoners into officers of a Communist-led Polish army to be formed on Soviet soil apparently accounts for the survival of a handful of the original inmates of the three camps. Those selected for such a role numbered at least 448 and were transferred to other special camps either before or during the liquidation of the three camps. For example, 150 who were conveyed out of Kozielsk in the sixteenth batch to leave that camp, on April 26, 1940, were sent to a special camp at Pavlishtchev Bor and subsequently to another one at Gryazovyets, where they were subjected to Soviet political propaganda and later to pressure to join the Red Army. The remainder of the 448 likewise arrived at Gryazovyets, in June 1940. Few gave in to the Soviet pressure. The Gryazovyets camp was turned over to General Anders after the Soviet-Polish pact of July 30, 1941, and the majority of its inmates in this way were rejoined to the mainstream of Polish life. As seen above, it was these survivors at Gryazovyets who were able to supply the Polish exile authorities with some of the primary testimony regarding the three camps at which most of the missing 15,000 officers and men had last been seen.

F. Polish Search For The Missing Officers, 1941-43 3/

The Polish exile government during 1939-41 was aware of the presence of large numbers of Polish prisoners of war in the USSR and even possessed some specific information regarding the location of the special camps for officers, thanks to underground reports from Poland based on letters received by relatives of the officers.

After the German military attack on the USSR in June 1941 and resultant reestablishment of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Government and the Polish Government in exile, the latter proceeded under a Polish-Soviet agreement of July 30, 1941, to try to locate Polish prisoners of war and interned civilians in the USSR and to

1. Facts and Documents, pages 95-96.
2. Facts and Documents, pages 111-132.
3. Facts and Documents, pages 138-223.

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form them into a Polish army to fight Hitler. A Soviet-Polish military agreement signed August 14, 1941, provided for the release by the Soviet authorities of all such prisoners of war to General Anders, commander of the Polish units that were to be formed. In the search for former prisoners of war on Soviet soil Anders soon found that thousands of the officers known to have been held there in 1939 and 1940 could not now be located. The Soviet Government professed ignorance of their whereabouts and denied that they were still being held. The problem of the missing officers became one of the thorniest questions in the dealings between the Polish and Soviet governments between July 1941 and the end of 1942.

The official exchange Polish inquiries and Soviet denials concerning these missing officers extended over a period of a year. On July 5, 1941, Polish Premier Sikorski told Soviet Ambassador Maisky in London that the Polish Government estimated there were at least 191,000 ranks and 9,000 Polish officers held prisoner in the USSR (an estimate apparently based on published Soviet statements referring to the number of Polish prisoners taken in the September 1939 campaign). In contrast, at the first meeting of the joint Polish-Soviet commission for organization of a Polish army in the USSR on August 16, 1941, the Soviet representative, General Panfilov, declared to General Anders that there were only somewhat more than 21,000 Polish war prisoners in the USSR. Anders reported to Sikorski on September 7 that he had so far located about 27,000 ranks and 1,800 officers. On September 9 the Soviet representative gave Anders a revised estimate to the effect that there were some 42,000 Polish prisoners of war on Soviet territory, of whom he said 35,891 had already been released and were en route to join Anders. On September 17 Anders was told by the Soviets that 46,195 prisoners of war had been released. From about the middle of October 1941 the Soviet Government uniformly insisted, in all its replies to Polish inquiries, that all Polish prisoners of war in the USSR had by now been set free to join Anders.

Anders had discovered by that time, however, that the former prisoners joining his army included relatively few officers — fewer by several thousands than he had expected. During November and December 1941 the Poles repeatedly took up this question at the highest level with the Soviet Government. On November 14 Kot, the Polish Ambassador, obtained an interview with Premier Stalin at which he informed Stalin that the thousands of Polish officers removed from the Kozielsk, Starobielsk and Ostashkov camps in the spring of 1940 were still missing and asked for their release. Stalin expressed the conviction that all had been released, and that many had perhaps failed to appear owing to their subsequent escape abroad. However Stalin relayed Kot's question to the NKVD during the interview, but dropped the subject after receiving a reply from the NKVD by telephone. Premier Sikorski, during his official visit to Moscow of December 1941, likewise broached to Stalin the question of the missing officers. Stalin

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reiterated the Soviet claim that all had been released, and told Sikorski that if any had failed to turn up it was probably because of the time required for them to make their way from distant parts of the USSR. From this and other high-level statements of Soviet leaders, some hope sprung up among the Polish leaders that the missing officers had been interned in camps of the far north and would indeed eventually appear.

During the first weeks of 1942 Joseph Czapski, an officer of Anders' army, traveled to NKVD headquarters in several parts of the USSR on an official assignment from Anders to try to obtain from NKVD sources some indication of the possible fate of the missing officers. Czapski met with no success.

The Polish exile authorities continued to press the Soviet Government during the first half of 1942, without result. On March 18, 1942, General Anders handed Stalin a list of 4,518 names of missing Polish officers, representing 30 percent of the prisoners deported from the Kozielsk, Starobielsk and Ostashkov camps in the spring of 1940, compiled with great difficulty at Anders' headquarters. He told Stalin that so far not a single officer deported from those camps had reappeared, and he asked where they could be. Stalin replied that he did not know, and added that it might be they had been in camps in territory taken by the Germans and were later dispersed. This was the first Soviet suggestion that the missing officers might have been captured by the Germans in 1941.

Anders and his army were transferred from the USSR to the Middle East in the summer of 1942 without ever having found more than a handful of the officers who had been in the three camps during 1939-1940. On July 8, 1942, the matter was brought up for the last time at an interview in Kuibyshev between the Polish Ambassador, Kot, and Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Vishinsky. On this occasion Vishinsky declared that there were no Poles whom the Soviet Government was still detaining in prisons or camps and that no Polish officers remained in the Soviet Union outside of Anders' forces. He suggested that some of the missing officers might have previously escaped abroad, and that others might have died. 1/

1. The principal Soviet-Polish diplomatic interviews at which the subject of the missing officers was discussed were as follows: October 6, 1941, Ambassador Kot and Deputy Foreign Commissar Vishinsky; October 14, 1941, Kot - Vishinsky; October 22, 1941, Kot and Foreign Commissar Molotov; November 2, 1941, Kot - Vishinsky; November 3, 1941, Ambassador Cripps and Vishinsky; November 12, 1941, Kot - Vishinsky; November 14, 1941, Kot and Stalin; March 18, 1942, General Anders and Stalin; July 8, 1942, Kot - Vishinsky; November 15, 1941, Kot-Molotov; December 3, 1941, Premier Sikorski and Stalin.

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The Polish Embassy at Kuibyshev also received an aide-memoire from the NKVD on July 10, 1942, which repeated the assertions already made by other Soviet authorities. It declared that the Polish claims regarding the missing officers were erroneous and were based on the untrustworthy recollections of a small number of former prisoners of war. It added that if some former prisoners had not yet been traced by the Polish Government, the explanation might be (1) their release and return to Poland prior to 1941, or (2) their escape abroad after their release in 1941, or (3) their accidental death while making their way from camps in the far Soviet north after being released in 1941.

Simultaneously with its search for the missing officers in the USSR, the Polish Government conducted, through its highly-organized underground movement in German-occupied Poland, a search in the homeland for the missing men, on the hypothesis that some of them might have escaped from the USSR and arrived there. None were found. Likewise, prisoner-of-war camps in Germany were canvassed by the same Polish underground agencies, without result.

Owing to the fruitlessness of the exhaustive search that had thus been conducted not only in the USSR but in Poland and Germany as well, hope of finding the missing officers declined among the Poles. Early in 1943 articles in the Polish exile press expressed the conviction that they had met a tragic fate. It was at this juncture that the Germans disclosed to the world the Katyn mass graves, which appeared conclusively to prove what had happened to at least a part of the missing Poles.

#### G. Revelation Of The Katyn Graves By The Germans, April 1943

The disclosure of the mass graves at Katyn was first made by the Germans at the beginning of April 1943 to groups of representative Poles in German-occupied Poland, a few days before the existence of the graves was announced to the world. These Polish representatives were told by an official of the German Ministry of Propaganda that mass graves of Polish prisoners executed by the Soviet authorities had been discovered near Smolensk by the German military authorities.

On April 10 the first Polish delegation to inspect the graves was taken to Katyn by the Germans. It was composed of welfare officials, writers, a worker and several newspaper men. They were shown two mass graves and some 250 exhumed bodies, and were told that an estimated total of 12,000 bodies lay buried in the immediate vicinity. The Germans informed this group of Poles that Polish laborers working near Katyn had learned of the graves as early as October 1942, but that the German authorities had been told of them only in February 1943.

A second delegation from occupied Poland, consisting mainly of

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representatives of the Polish Red Cross, was taken to Katyn a few days after the first, and after its return the Secretary General of the Polish Red Cross gave the Executive Council of that organization on April 16 his eye-witness report, confirming that the corpses of executed Polish officers lay at Katyn. Some members of this delegation remained at Katyn to participate in the further exhumation and identification of bodies. The Germans also brought delegations of Polish officers from German prisoner-of-war camps to view the graves.

The German authorities tried unsuccessfully to elicit statements from the Polish delegations that could be exploited in German propaganda. The Polish Red Cross, in particular, refused to do more than cooperate in investigating the Katyn graves. While all of the Poles taken to see the graves were convinced of their authenticity, most of them remained suspicious of the motives and explanations of the Germans. 1/

First-hand testimony regarding the Katyn find reached the Polish underground "Army of the Homeland" (AK, Armja Krajowa), and thence the Polish Government in Exile in London, owing to the action of the AK commander-in-chief, General "Bor" (General Tadeusz Komorowski), who succeeded in having one of his personal aides included as an observer in the second Polish delegation taken to Katyn by the Germans. This observer brought back to "Bor" specimens of the bullets, cartridge cases and other evidence found on the bodies, as well as diaries and identity papers. He also reported that the graves probably did not contain many more than 4,000 corpses, instead of the 10 - 12,000 claimed by the Germans. 2/

Meanwhile the Germans began on April 13 to publish news of the Katyn graves to the world. The first German communique, issued that day, announced that the graves had been discovered "a few days earlier" by the German military authorities through "hints" given by the local inhabitants. It declared that the bodies in the graves were those of Polish officers who had been the victims of "Jewish-Bolshevik bestiality", and it estimated their number at more than 10,000. The communique added that their execution had apparently taken place in the spring of 1940, because the local inhabitants had testified that the officers had arrived at the nearby railway station of Gnyezdovo between March and May of that year, and because spruce trees "now three years old" were growing on the graves. It also stated that the bodies and their Polish uniforms were well preserved, and that they bore identification documents, diaries and other papers, but no jewelry or watches.

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1. Facts and Documents, pages 229-33.

2. T. Bor-Komorowski, The Secret Army (London, Gollancz, 1951) page 130.

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The German announcement aroused considerable interest abroad, where few had been aware of the disappearance of the Polish army officers and of the attempt of the Polish Government since 1941 to discover their whereabouts. There was some tendency at first, especially in the Allied countries, to discount the entire Katyn story as a fabrication of Goebbels' propaganda apparatus. During April and May 1943 the German radio issued almost daily communiques concerning the progress made in investigating the graves, as part of an elaborate propaganda obviously aimed at discrediting the Soviet Government in the view of the Western Allies. The names and descriptions of those corpses that were identified were read over the German radio, sometimes with excerpts from diaries found on the bodies, in order to reinforce the impression of authenticity and to inflame still further the feelings of the Poles in the Western camp against the USSR.

The climax of the German propaganda campaign was reached on April 28 - 30, 1943, when the German Government brought to Katyn what purported to be an expert commission of twelve physicians — mainly professors of forensic medicine and criminology — from four German-occupied countries (Belgium, Denmark, Holland and Czechoslovakia), six countries allied with Germany, Bulgaria, Finland, Croatia, Rumania, Slovakia, Hungary), and Switzerland. This commission interviewed several witnesses from among the local Russian population, investigated the work of exhumation already carried out, and performed post mortem examinations on several corpses. At the request of the Germans it issued a protocol describing what it had found. Inter alia the protocol stated the following:

(1) Seven mass graves had been found and opened, of which the largest was estimated to contain 2,500 bodies. (2) 982 bodies had been exhumed to date, of which 70 percent had been identified. (3) All the victims so far examined had apparently been killed by a pistol shot at close range in the back of the head; all wounds were identical and indicated experienced executioners. (4) On many bodies the arms were tied together with cord, and some bodies showed signs of having been pierced by a four-edged bayonet. 1/ (5) The young spruce trees found growing on the graves were at least five years old and had been transplanted to that place three years before, i.e., in the spring of 1940. 2/ (6) The bodies so far exhumed were dressed in authentic

1. A type of bayonet allegedly used only in the Soviet Army. (Facts and Documents, page 287.) The protocol also stated that the binding of arms and method of shooting appeared to be exactly the same as in the case of numerous Russian civilians also dug up in Katyn forest but executed and buried there before the war.
2. This differed from the statement in the first German communique, that the trees were three years old. In a newspaper interview, Prof. Edward Biloslavich, the Croatian member of the commission, stated that cross sections of these spruces showed five annual rings, with the middle one underdeveloped, indicating the year of transplanting, i.e., 1940. (Facts and Documents, page 288.)

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Polish uniforms, well-fitting and properly arranged, indicating that they were the same ones worn at the time of execution. The clothing was of winter type, including furs, jerkins, pullovers and scarves. (7) Documents found on the exhumed bodies referred to the period from the autumn of 1939 to March and April 1940, no later. (8) No insects nor traces of insects were found on the bodies, indicating that burial must have taken place in winter or spring, prior to the emergence of insects.

As the exhumation of bodies proceeded during April and May 1943, the Germans reduced their estimate of the total number of bodies buried at Katyn. On April 26 a German spokesman put the number at 8,000 to 9,000 and declared that the marshy location of part of the graves would probably make it impossible to exhume all of these. On June 1 an eighth Polish grave was discovered, but apparently it contained few more than 100 bodies. <sup>1/</sup> Two days later the Germans discontinued the exhumations. Up to that time 4,143 bodies had been recovered and examined. German propaganda explained the cessation of the work of exhuming bodies on the ground that the onset of summer heat had rendered work in the graves unhygienic and difficult. Polish exile circles, however, after careful analysis of the dimensions of the eight mass graves and other data published by the Germans, came to the conclusion that all the graves together could never have contained many more bodies than the number the Germans had already claimed to have exhumed, i.e., slightly more than 4,000 although this was less than half the number of bodies originally estimated by German propaganda as lying in the graves. They therefore concluded that the real reason for the breaking off of the investigations at Katyn by the Germans was that the latter had discovered there were no more bodies to exhume. <sup>2/</sup>

Whether or not this was the true explanation of the German action, the Germans never subsequently announced a resumption of their exhuming operations at Katyn. The 4,143 bodies they had exhumed up to June 3 remained at the Katyn woods, reinterred in new graves. At the end of September 1943 the German armies were driven out of the region of which Katyn was a part, and the graves came under Soviet control.

Meanwhile, in mid-September, the German Government published its official version of the investigation held the previous spring. The 350-page volume, entitled Antliches Material zum Massenmord von Katyn ("Official Material On The Mass Murder Of Katyn") was to remain the most comprehensive compilation of the evidence from the

1. Facts and Documents, page 331.
2. Facts and Documents, page 329.

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German side. This included, principally, the reports of the German Secret Field Police concerning the exhumations; their records of interrogations of Russian witnesses; the lengthy report of the chief police surgeon who examined the bodies, Professor Gerhard Buhtz; and a reprint of the protocol of the German-sponsored international medical commission, dated April 30, 1943.

#### H. Polish And Soviet Reactions To The German Revelations

Following the German announcement on April 13, 1943, of the discovery of the graves at Katyn, the other two principally interested parties, the Soviet Government and the Polish Government in Exile, reacted as follows:

(1) On April 15 the Soviet Government issued its first communique on the subject. It vehemently denounced as "vile fabrications" of "Goebbels' slanderers" the German assertion that the victims found near Katyn had been murdered by Soviet authorities in the spring of 1940. It agreed, however, that the "German-Fascist reports on this subject leave no doubt as to the tragic fate of the former Polish prisoners of war." These, it counter-charged, "in 1941 were engaged in construction work in areas west of the Smolensk region and fell into the hands of the German-Fascist hangmen in the summer of 1941, after the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the Smolensk area."

(2) On April 17 the Polish Government announced in London that it had approached the International Red Cross in Geneva that same day with a request that the latter send a delegation of neutral persons to Katyn to investigate the German charges.

(3) On April 17 the Soviet Government issued a second communique depreciating the evidence offered by the Germans and accusing them of having staged the Katyn discovery, with the aid of Polish personal identity documents taken from the archives of the Gestapo and planted on the bodies.

(4) On April 19 the leading Soviet daily newspaper Pravda published an editorial in which it denounced the Polish request made to the International Red Cross and accused the Polish leaders of having in an "inexcusable manner fallen prey to the wily provocations of Goebbels."

(5) On April 20 the Polish Government presented a note to the Soviet ambassador in London, pointing out that the Soviet communique of April 15 seemed to indicate that the Soviet Government possessed more ample information regarding the missing Polish officers than it had communicated to the Polish Government in reply to the queries of the latter during 1941 and 1942, and requesting that it now give the Polish Government this information. (No Soviet reply to this note

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was received by the Poles.)

(6) On April 20 the International Red Cross informed the Polish Government, in reply to the latter's request of April 17, that it could not send investigators to Katyn except with the consent of all the parties interested in the dispute. It suggested that the Polish Government approach the Soviet Government with a request that the latter agree to such an investigation. (Throughout the subsequent proceedings the Soviet Government never volunteered its consent to such an investigation.)

(7) On April 26 the Soviet Government notified the Polish Government that it had decided to sever relations with the latter, on the grounds that the Polish Government had "taken up" and "fanned" the German propaganda charges regarding Katyn in order to "exert pressure on the Soviet Government, by making use of the slanderous Hitlerite fake for the purpose of wresting territorial concessions" from the USSR. (This was a reference to Polish refusal to concede current Soviet claims to all of prewar Polish territory east of the Curzon Line.)

Following the break in relations, the Soviet Government through its propaganda media continued to direct scathing attacks at the Polish Government in London for the alleged credence given by the latter to the German account of the Katyn massacre. A leading article in Izvestia of April 27 claimed to see in this a Polish aim of discrediting the USSR in order to obstruct Soviet claims to the territory east of the Curzon Line. Subsequent Soviet propaganda against the Polish Government put increasing emphasis on this territorial issue.

#### I. The Soviet Investigation Of The Katyn Graves 1943-1944

The Red Army retook Smolensk at the end of September 1943 and drove the Germans out of the locality of Katyn early in October. The mass graves thereby came under Soviet control, where they have remained.

Following the tripartite declaration of the US, UK and USSR on November 1, 1943, regarding war crimes, the Soviet Government on November 2 decreed the establishment of an Extraordinary State Commission to investigate German war crimes. One of the earliest actions of this Commission was an investigation of Katyn. For this purpose it appointed a Special Commission, headed by the Academician M.N. Burdenko, which in turn summoned a panel of Soviet medico-legal experts to examine the bodies in the Katyn graves. On January 16, 1944, according to the report of these experts, Katyn was visited and the graves were opened. During the following week, January 16-23, 925 bodies were exhumed and subjected to examination, and testimony was taken from over 100 witnesses. On January 22 a number of foreign press corres-

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pondents and other foreigners residing in the USSR, including Miss Kathleen Harriman, daughter of the US Ambassador, visited Katyn on invitation of the Soviet authorities and witnessed some of the proceedings.

On January 24, 1944, the Special Commission signed its report, subsequently published under the title, "The Truth About Katyn." Its principal points were as follows:

(1) That there were Polish war prisoners working on roads and quartered in three special camps in the region of Katyn in the summer of 1941 when the Germans captured the region. (On this point little evidence was given beyond the bare assertion, and the identity of these prisoners with those from the earlier camps at Kozielsk, Starobielsk and Ostashkov was left to inference rather than proven. The Poles later cited cases of Polish prisoners who fell into German hands near Smolensk and later escaped, as proof that prisoners in that area had no necessary identity with the lost Polish officers. 1/)

(2) That these prisoners fell into the hands of the Germans during July 1941 because the Soviet authorities found it impossible to evacuate them in time. (The Report printed the testimony of several local Soviet officials to prove that railway cars were unavailable to transport the prisoners eastward before the Germans arrived. The Poles, however, later argued that Polish prisoner-of-war camps in other parts of the USSR were evacuated on foot ahead of the German advance, and that the alleged inability to evacuate the camps near Katyn throws further doubt on the existence of such camps. 2/)

(3) That Polish prisoners of war taken from captured Soviet camps were held by the Germans in the Katyn area in the late summer of 1941. (The Report cites testimony of local Russian witnesses on this point, and states that the Germans guarded these Polish prisoners so strictly that not one succeeded in escaping and getting back to Poland. On this point the Poles raise the question why no Polish prisoner should have been able to escape the Germans at Katyn, when elsewhere in the war zone such prisoners succeeded in escaping in considerable numbers. 3/)

(4) The captured Polish prisoners were executed by the Germans in Katyn Wood at the end of August and beginning of September 1941. (The Report, while unable to adduce eyewitness accounts of the alleged execution, cited the testimony of Russian domestics employed at the German staff headquarters in Katyn concerning suspicious movements of the German officers at that period; statements of local Russian residents that they had seen an unspecified number of Polish war prisoners brought in batches by German soldiers to the Katyn Wood at unspecified times, and had heard shots in the Wood; and statements of

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1. Facts and Documents, pages 363-365.
  2. Facts and Documents, pages 352-358..
  3. Facts and Documents, pages 361-363.

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two Smolensk officials that they had heard from German officers during the occupation in September 1941 that Polish prisoners of war in the locality were to be exterminated. 1/

(5) That the Germans "framed" their Katyn story in the spring of 1943 and forced local Russian residents to give false witness for that purpose; that they also exhumed all of the Katyn bodies in March of that year, removed all documents dated later than April 1940, and re-buried the corpses, using for this work some 500 Russian prisoners of war whom they afterward shot. (Polish commentators argue that it would have been impossible to carry out this task in the space of a month and to have left no traces of the tampering. They point out, furthermore, that the Soviet authorities, in taking testimony from Russian witnesses earlier questioned by the Germans, could force them to swear falsely as easily as the Germans allegedly had done. 2/)

(6) That despite previous German removal of documents and valuables from the corpses, papers and valuables were still found on many of the bodies, including documents dated much later than the spring of 1940 when, according to the German story, the victims had been executed by the Soviet authorities. (Polish commentaries express suspicion over the circumstance that the Soviet investigation at Katyn, hastily conducted on 925 corpses which had already been carefully searched by the Germans, should have turned up so many allegedly important documents and valuables --- all of them, according to the Soviet report, on the first hundred corpses re-exhumed. They also point out that none of the documents which the Soviet Commission claimed to have found were personal documents of the victims, and that all but one (an "icon") had either been issued by the Soviet authorities themselves or had passed through their hands. 3/)

J. The Katyn Question Before The International Military Tribunal, 1946

After the Soviet investigation in January 1944, the Katyn episode received comparatively little further publicity until the end of the war. Only the Polish leaders in exile continued to explore and agitate the question of guilt.

At the end of 1945, however, the Soviet Government indicated that it would demand inclusion of its version of the Katyn affair in the indictment of leading German war criminals. On February 14, 1946, the USSR submitted the report of the Soviet Special Commission of January 24, 1944, entitled "The Truth About Katyn," as part of its case against

1. Facts and Documents, pages 366-378, 431-432.
2. Facts and Documents, pages 380-396.
3. Facts and Documents, pages 399 and 406.

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Germany before the International Military Tribunal at Nürnberg. 1/

On July 1, 1946, the International Military Tribunal listened to the German defense against the charges relating to Katyn, as well as the Soviet counsel's argument on the subject. The Germans produced three witnesses, including German officers who had been attached during the latter part of 1941 and 1942 to the army headquarters stationed in Katyn Wood, then under German military occupation. These witnesses repeated the German story of the finding of the Katyn graves by Polish prisoners working in the vicinity in 1942, and of their having been subsequently reported to the German authorities.

The Soviet counsel likewise produced three witnesses. The first was Bazilevsky, a resident of Smolensk, who repeated his testimony that Menshagin, a wartime collaborator who had acted as mayor of Smolensk for the Germans, had confided in him in the autumn of 1941 that the Germans had executed all Poles in the special camps near Katyn.

The second Soviet witness was Dr. Marko Antonov Markov of Bulgaria, who had been a member of the commission of medico-legal experts taken to Katyn by the Germans on April 28, 1943. In spite of the fact that Dr. Markov had signed the protocol of that commission which declared, inter alia, that the Katyn corpses appeared to have been buried in 1940, he now testified (for the Soviet prosecutor) that he had really believed at that time that the bodies were only 1 - 1½ years dead — i.e., that they had been buried in 1941 or 1942. He implied that other members of the commission had actually been of the same opinion.

The third Soviet witness was Victor Ilich Prosorovsky, head of the panel of medico-legal experts that had re-examined the Katyn bodies for the Soviet Government in January 1944. Prosorovsky's testimony cited the documents of alleged late date found on some of the bodies. He also testified that the bodies showed evidence of having been shot in a manner employed generally by the Germans in executions carried out by them in the USSR during their wartime occupation.

The testimony regarding Katyn adduced before the International Military Tribunal added nothing essentially new to the German allegations against the Soviet Government first put forward in the spring of 1943, nor to the Soviet counter-charges as published in final form in January 1944. The defense put forward at Nürnberg from the German side attempted to prove, by means of the testimony of German army officers who had been stationed at Katyn during the period named in the Soviet

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1. References to Katyn in the records of the Nürnberg trial as follows: Trial of Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal, Vol. I, pages 48-54; VII, 426; IX, 3; XIII, 430; XV, 289, 292, 414; XVII, 274-371, and XXII, 294.

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accusations, that no executions had been carried out there at that period. In the cross examination of these German witnesses, the Soviet counsel attempted to cast doubt on their testimony. The results were wholly inconclusive, and in the absence of Soviet witnesses capable of giving conclusive substantiation to the Soviet case, the Katyn charges were allowed to drop out of the indictment under which the Nazi leaders were eventually convicted of war crimes guilt.

#### IV. THE GERMAN ACCOUNT OF THE KATYN GRAVES

The official German account of the discovery of the Katyn graves, which varied from time to time in certain minor details, can be recapitulated as follows:

The existence of the graves was first known to the local Russian population. From the latter it was learned of in the fall of 1942 by several Polish prisoners employed as laborers in the vicinity by the German occupation authorities. The Polish prisoners searched for and found the graves and erected two crosses on them. Local German military personnel heard of the graves at about the same time but at first attached no significance to them. Early in February 1943 the German Field Police excavated one of the graves and began to question the local Russian inhabitants about them. From the latter they learned that prisoners of war had been unloaded in the woods from trucks by the Soviet authorities during four or five weeks in the spring of 1940. This testimony was forwarded to the headquarters of the Central Army Group, which thereupon ordered exhumation of the bodies and sent its chief police surgeon, Buhtz, to examine the bodies. Systematic exhumations and post mortem examinations were begun under Buhtz's direction on March 29, 1943, and a more intensive questioning of the local population was carried out between April 1 and April 6.

The German account concluded that between 10,000 and 12,000 Polish prisoners of war (the estimate was reduced to 8,000 - 9,000 in a later German estimate) had been brought to Katyn woods by the Soviet authorities in March, April and May 1940, executed there en masse and buried in mass graves.

#### V. POLISH APPRAISAL OF THE GERMAN ACCOUNT

Polish political emigres were suspicious of German motives when the German Katyn story was put forward in 1943. Then and later, however, the Polish investigators and commentators who have analyzed the Katyn data most carefully have found fewer questions to raise against the German account than against the official Soviet rebuttal. In their

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opinion the German story on the whole hangs together successfully, though it contains certain discrepancies and relies on witnesses who were under German control. Polish criticism of the German account is largely confined to such points as the following:

(1) The German description of the mass graves and their contents was based on an investigation conducted almost exclusively by Germans and by a few non-Germans selected by the German Government. Hence there can be no certainty that the allegedly expert opinions issued by the investigators were freely arrived at and corresponded with scientific accuracy to the conditions found in the graves.

(2) According to the German account, the Katyn bodies had lain in the mass graves exactly three years when they were first exhumed; yet they were found well preserved. While good preservation after so long a time may not be precluded, confirmation by independent experts would have made the allegation more credible. As it was, the opinion of the German-sponsored medico-legal experts regarding the 3-year burial period was flatly contradicted by the opinion of the Soviet experts that the bodies could have been buried only a year and a half at most.

(3) The German account grossly exaggerated the number of bodies lying in the graves. The figure of 10,000 first announced by the Germans was obviously derived from published Soviet figures regarding the number of Polish officers taken prisoner by the Soviet army in 1939, indicating that the Germans were primarily bent on making a propaganda story that would account for the disappearance of all the Polish officer prisoners of war in the USSR, rather than divulging the true number of bodies in the graves.

(4) The testimony taken by the Germans from some of the Russian witnesses was improbable and suggested fabrication by the German authorities. Thus two witnesses testified that as many as three or four railway convoys daily of Polish prisoners were brought to Gnyezdovo in the spring of 1940, an implausibly high figure in the light of careful Polish calculations regarding the number of corpses actually found in the graves, and probably fabricated for the purpose of supporting the German claims concerning an enormous number of Katyn victims.

## VI. THE OFFICIAL SOVIET EXPLANATION OF KATYN

The Soviet explanation of the Katyn mass graves was put forward in April 1943, immediately after publication of the German story, for the purpose of refuting the latter. Later it was elaborated and, in some respects, altered.

In the first, unelaborated version, the Soviets claimed the

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following: The Polish officers from the Kozielsk, Starobielsk and Ostashkov camps had been moved from those camps in 1940 and in the summer of 1941 were engaged in construction work on roads west of Smolensk. There they fell into German hands, after the withdrawal of Soviet troops following the German military attack on the USSR. They were undoubtedly killed by their German captors and buried in the mass graves; or (as a second communique asserted at this time), more probably, part had been killed at once but others had been kept alive until 1942 or 1943, then killed by the Gestapo and placed with the other corpses, along with documents taken from the Gestapo archives.

The more elaborate version of the Soviet case was contained in the report of the Soviet Extraordinary Commission sent to Katyn to inspect the graves in January 1944. In this were specified three special camps in which the missing officers were alleged to have been quartered, west of Smolensk, in the summer of 1941. Reasons and testimony were adduced, purporting to prove that the Soviet local authorities had found it technically impossible to evacuate these Polish prisoners in July 1941 and that they had therefor fallen into the hands of the invading German army. Other evidence was adduced, purporting to prove that they had been seen in German custody in this area by Russian witnesses during July-September 1941. The report alleged that the mass shooting of these prisoners had been carried out by the Germans during August and September 1941, and that later the Germans had suborned witnesses, tampered with the documents on the bodies and secretly executed several hundred Soviet prisoners whom they had used as grave-diggers for the Polish officers.

Still more detail was added to the Soviet claims at the Nürnberg trials of German war criminals in the summer of 1946. Here the Soviet case alleged that the mass executions had been carried out by special SS detachments from Smolensk in September 1941 while the 537th Signal Regiment of the German Army had headquarters in the Katyn wood.

#### VII. POLISH QUESTIONS REGARDING SOVIET EXPLANATION

The official Soviet explanation of Katyn leaves a considerable number of puzzling questions unanswered. These questions have been set forth in greatest detail by the Polish political exiles, who in the half-dozen years since the end of the war have subjected the available evidence concerning Katyn to the most exhaustive scrutiny. Among the difficulties in the Soviet explanation pointed out by them, and by others, are the following:

(1) As soon as the Germans proclaimed the discovery of the Katyn graves, the Soviet Government issued an elaborate explanation, purporting to account for every movement of the Polish officers from 1940 until

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the alleged date of their capture and murder by the Germans. Yet prior to this time the Soviet Government had met Polish inquiries with professions of complete ignorance as to the fate of the officers. If the Soviet Government prior to April 1943 possessed indications, or had suspicions, of a German crime of the magnitude of Katyn, why did it conceal them, when their revelation would presumably have satisfied Polish inquiries and contributed to the Soviet propaganda against Germany?

It has been pointed out, in answer to this difficulty, that bureaucratic confusion and the pressures of wartime could have prevented the Soviet Government from tracing the lost Polish officers prior to 1943. Yet the alacrity with which the Soviet Government came forward in April 1943 with an account of their movements between 1940 and 1941 throws doubt on this excuse.

(2) The official Soviet explanation of Katyn charged that the Germans had secretly removed from the corpses all documents of a later date than April 1940 (afterward executing some 500 Soviet prisoners of war who allegedly were used to remove the documents). This charge, however, fails to account satisfactorily for the circumstance that diaries found on the bodies, seemingly intact and authentic, contain no entries later than April 1940.

The official Soviet account also states that a number of documents dated much later than April 1940, including some dated 1941, were found on the bodies by the Soviet Extraordinary Commission. According to the Commission's account, these were found on the first hundred bodies exhumed. The Commission's report fails to explain why it cited documents only from the first hundred bodies, whereas it exhumed a total of 925 bodies — a circumstance exposing the Soviet Government to the possible charge of having itself planted such documents on the topmost hundred bodies. Moreover, the Soviet Government furnished no means of corroborating the authenticity of these documents and did not submit them as evidence before the International Military Tribunal in 1946.

(3) The Soviet report claims that the Polish officers taken from Kozielsk, Starobielsk and Ostashkov in the spring of 1940 were transferred to three special camps west of Smolensk, where they worked on roads until the summer of 1941. A number of Soviet witnesses were adduced who testified to having seen Polish prisoners in that area during 1941. Yet the Soviet account fails to explain why these officers (some of them war-disabled) were put at hard labor while Polish officers at other Soviet camps were not; or why none of the Soviet witnesses specified that the Polish prisoners they had seen were officers. The Soviet report also disregards an alternative explanation of these encounters by the Soviet witnesses, namely that other Polish prisoners, unconnected with the missing officers, were located in camps west of Smolensk during 1940-41, as is indicated by independent testimony of Poles who claimed to have sojourned in such camps.

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(4) After the liquidation of the Kozielsk camp in April 1940, those of the inmates who were eventually transferred to the Gryazovets camp continued to receive mail sent to them from Poland. In the case of the remaining prisoners, who vanished from view at that time and whose bodies later were identified at Katyn — their families who sent them letters after April 1940 received such mail back again marked "Retour — Parti" ("Letter returned; addressee departed"). If these prisoners were engaged in construction work in special camps west of Smolensk between April 1940 and June 1941, as the Soviet report states, why was their mail not forwarded to them?

(5) In a number of cases, Polish officers shipped out of the Kozielsk camp in April or May 1940 in the same convoy together were found lying side by side in the same part of the mass grave when exhumed by the Germans. How could this coincidence occur if, as the Soviet report claims, they had been shifted about in the interval (April 1940 — June 1941) on various road construction jobs in the alleged camps near Smolensk?

(6) The Katyn corpses were found clothed in winter overcoats, and few if any insects, summer or otherwise, were found with the bodies. The Soviet case passes in silence over the difficulty of reconciling these circumstances with its allegation that the officers were executed by the Germans in late summer.

(7) In its report on Katyn of January 1944 and in its case presented to the International Military Tribunal in 1946, the Soviet Government used the figure 11,000 in referring to the number of Polish prisoners which it accused the Germans of having killed at Katyn, although only a few more than 4,000 bodies had been exhumed there and although the dimensions of the graves suggest that not appreciably more than this number could have been buried in them. Why did the Soviet Government accept the figure first given by the Germans for the total number of bodies at Katyn, without publishing an independent estimate of its own? By accepting the unproved and implausible German figure the Soviet Government exposed itself to the charge of wanting to account for all of the missing Polish officers by means of the Katyn graves and to avoid the question whether a part of them had perished elsewhere in the USSR.

(8) Among the Russian witnesses quoted in the Soviet report of January 1944 was one Moskovskaya, who testified that on a day in March 1943 she had encountered in the forest a runaway Russian war prisoner who told her that he had been one of several hundred brought there to dig up the bodies of Polish officers, remove documents from them, and re-bury them. Moskovskaya's deposition included the statement that this man had told her that "at the beginning of April 1943 all of the work planned by the Germans was apparently completed, as for three days not one of the war prisoners had to do any work." It is pointed out by

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Polish commentators that this statement makes Moskovskaya's testimony look like a careless fabrication of the Soviet authorities, since it refers to a date in March 1943 yet purports to describe events that occurred in April. 1/

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1. Facts and Documents, pages 387-388.

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