

# Institute of National Remembrance

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## Katyn 1940. The Soviet crime and half a century of lies



### WERSJA POLSKA

**Katyn massacre was a series of mass executions of Polish nationals carried out by the NKVD ('People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs', the Soviet Secret Police) in the spring of 1940. Of the total of about twenty two thousand citizens of the Polish state, close to 14.5 thousand killed were the prisoners of war (POWS) and 7.3 thousand were civilians.**

The name of the massacre comes from the locality Katyn near

Smolensk where a large part of victims, 4.4 thousand of POWS held in Kozielsk prison camps, were killed and buried. It is named after Katyn also because it was the first place where, still during World War II, the mass graves were discovered. Places of execution and the graves of the remaining POWS, the prisoners of Starobielsk and Ostaszkow, were not even known until the nineties of the twentieth century.

Katyn massacre has no precedent in history. First, because of thousands of victims who were POWS, mostly military officers. Those individuals' lives are supposed to be protected under the international law. The purpose of the crime and the result of it, tremendous losses to the Polish nation and the Polish state, were absolutely extraordinary as well. Soviets had one goal only, to physically exterminate Polish patriots and as a result to prevent the rebirth of the Polish state in the future. Soviet government knew that the members of the Polish educated class, the military and technical elite, would always be 'avowed enemies of Soviet authority'. The victims represented Polish patriotism of the highest degree and many were members of the country's intellectual elite. They were scientists, engineers, doctors, and artists. They would never give up the fight for free Poland.

The Katyn killings were directed not only against the people, but also against the truth. Until 1990, Soviet authorities kept denying the responsibility for executions on the Polish citizens and falsely put the blame on Germany. In this context, we need to remember all those who tried to disclose Soviet deception and find the truth. For instance, in 1951 - 1952, the United States Congress Madden Committee shed

the light on the Soviet responsibility for executions on the Polish citizens in 1940. The United States taking interest in the Katyn massacre proves that it is important not only for Poland and the Polish people. It is a part of the world's history and the warning for all humanity.

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