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The Katyn Museum – Martyrology Branch of the Polish Army Museum, Warsaw, Poland

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THE KATYN MUSEUM: THE MARTYROLOGY BRANCH OF THE POLISH ARMY MUSEUM IN WARSAW

Abstract

This article presents an outline of the history of the Katyn massacre perpetrated by the Soviet Union on almost 22,000 Polish citizens in 1940, the attempts to search for the truth about the crime, and the process of the deconstruction of the Katyn lie from 1943; it will then move to a description of the history of its commemoration (including by independent organisations such as the Independent Historical Committee for the Investigation of the Katyn Crime [*Niezależny Komitet Historyczny Badania Zbrodni Katyńskiej*] and the Polish Katyn Foundation), and the documentation of the massacre at the Katyn Museum, the Martyrology Branch of the Polish Army Museum in Warsaw. Due to the complexity of this issue, the article has been divided chronologically into several chapters, starting with the signing of the German-Soviet Pact (the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact) in 1939; the circumstances of World War II leading to the Katyn massacre; how Katyn qualifies as a war crime; and the progression of the story up until modern times. Apart from the history of the crime itself, the authors also describe the discovery of the evidence and the process of creating the Katyn Museum in Warsaw, as well as its permanent

exhibition and the most important collections. The article discusses the issues of historic military architecture which was incorporated into the Katyn Museum, creating a unique exhibition containing thousands of artefacts (Katyn relics) recovered from the death pits in Katyn (Russia), Kharkiv-Pyatikhatky (Ukraine), Kyiv-Bykivnya (Ukraine) and Tver-Mednoye (Russia).

Keywords: the Katyn Museum in Warsaw, Katyn massacre, museums, Soviet Union, Germany, World War II, war crimes, Katyn, Kharkiv, Pyatikhatky, Kalinin (Tver), Mednoye, Kyiv, Bykivnya, Katyn relics, the Independent Historical Committee for the Investigation of the Katyn Crime (NKHBZK), the Polish Katyn Foundation (PFK), the Museum of the Polish Army (MWP) in Warsaw



THE CASE OF KATYN: POLISH PRISONERS OF WAR IN SOVIET CAPTIVITY AND THE HISTORY OF DISCOVERING THEIR FATE

The Road to Destruction

Before World War II broke out on September 1, 1939, the foreign ministers of the Soviet Union and the Third Reich signed a non-aggression treaty on August 23 in Moscow. A secret protocol attached to the so-called Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact determined the future new order in Central and Eastern Europe and the *de facto* division of the spheres of influence between the two countries. According to the declarations, the northern border of Lithuania was to serve as the border between the two zones. Poland was to be divided between the Third Reich and the Soviet Union:

In the event of a territorial and political transformation of the territories belonging to the Polish state, the spheres of interests of Germany and the Soviet Union will be roughly demarcated by the Narew-Wisła-San line. The question of whether, in the interests of both, it will be considered desirable to maintain an independent Polish state will definitely only be decided

in the course of further political developments. In any case, both governments will resolve this issue through a friendly agreement (*Zestawienie* 2009, p. 14).

The Invaders

On September 1, 1939, German and Slovak troops attacked Poland. Despite their heroic defence, the Polish forces melted away, and the area of unoccupied territory gradually shrank. Even though Great Britain and France joined the war on September 3, in fulfilment of their mutual international agreements, Poland fought alone. The Soviet Army, which was concentrated on the eastern borders of Poland, was only waiting for the development of the military situation and the right moment to attack (*Moczulski* 2009).

On September 16, Count Friedrich von der Schulenburg, the German ambassador to Moscow, began to demand offensive actions by the Red Army, as recommended by headquarters in Berlin. During a meeting, Stalin informed the ambassador that

the Red Army will cross the Soviet border along the entire length from Polotsk to Kamenets Podolski this morning at 6.00 am. To avoid any misunderstandings, he urged that the German air force should not cross the Białystok-Brest-Lvov line to the East from today. Soviet planes will start bombing the areas east of Lvov (*Łojek* 1990 p. 71).

On September 17, 1939, the Soviet Union attacked Poland without formally declaring war. The Soviets, as allies of Germany, thus fulfilled the implementation of the secret protocol. In the diplomatic note (not the declaration of war by the Soviet Union!) that the Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Vladimir Potemkin, tried to hand over personally (and then handed over successfully to the Embassy with a confirmation of receipt) to the Ambassador of the Republic of Poland in Moscow, Waław Grzybowski, we read that

The Polish-German war revealed the internal bankruptcy of the Polish state. During ten days of military operations, Poland lost all its industrial regions and cultural centres. Warsaw ceased

to exist as the capital of Poland. The Polish government has collapsed and shows no signs of life. This means that the Polish state and its government have actually ceased to exist. As a result, the treaties concluded between the Soviet Union and Poland have lost their validity. Left to itself and without leadership, Poland has become a convenient field of action for all attempts to surprise the Soviet Union. Therefore the Soviet government, which has hitherto been neutral, can no longer remain so in the face of these facts. The Soviet government cannot remain indifferent to the moment when its brothers of the same blood, Ukrainians and Belarusians, residing on the territory of Poland and left to their fate, now find themselves without any defence. Given this situation, the Soviet government has issued orders to the High Command of the Red Army for its troops to cross the border and defend the lives and property of the people of Western Ukraine and Western Belarus. At the same time, the Soviet government intends to make every effort to free the Polish people from the unfortunate war into which they were driven by unreasonable leaders, and to give them the possibility of a peaceful existence [...]. (*Wiek XX w źródłach*, p. 248).

By emphasising the statements of “internal bankruptcy”, “the collapse of the government” and “the end of the existence of the state”, the Soviets tried to justify the false thesis that the Polish state had ceased to exist. The term “internal bankruptcy” was used to describe Poland’s military defeat against Germany; Warsaw did not cease to be the capital; and the supreme authorities of the Republic of Poland did in fact remain on the territory of the Polish state, near the border with Romania. Even more so, this undermining of the legality of the government’s right to represent the nation and state could not in any way be questioned under the international law. The protection of the Belarusians and Ukrainians living on the territory of the Republic of Poland and “freeing the Polish people from the unfortunate war” were just empty words aimed at “civilising” this ruthless aggression. In this way, the Soviets did not allude to the state of war in any way: later this had consequences regarding the status of the POWs in Soviet captivity.

On September 18, 1939, a joint German-Soviet communiqué on cooperation in the occupied territories of the Republic of Poland was published. It was evident that the two

invaders had deepened their cooperation and were continuing the assumptions of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact:

Wishing to avoid all kinds of unfounded rumours about the mutual goals of the German and Soviet forces operating in Poland, the government of the German Reich and the government of the Soviet Union declare that the operations of these forces are not associated with goals contrary to the interests of Germany or the Soviet Union, or to the spirit or letter of the pact on non-aggression concluded between Germany and the Soviet Union. On the contrary, the purpose of these forces is to restore peace and order in Poland, which has been disturbed by the disintegration of the Polish state, and to help the Polish population to re-regulate the conditions of their existence as a state [...] (Kastory p. 34).

Already two days after the Soviet attack on Poland, by Order No. 0308 of September 19, 1939 of the people's commissar of the internal affairs Lavrenti Beria, a Board for the Affairs of Prisoners of War and Internees of the NKVD was appointed (Kozłowski 1994, pp. 176–81). Thus, contrary to international conventions and customary laws of war, the supervision over prisoners was delegated to the security police, the internal security bodies of the Soviet Union, that is the NKVD (Kuźniar-Plota 2010, pp. 42–59). Disregarding the elementary customary rules, even of the laws of war, the prisoners became internees. Nobody realised then how important this would be for the soldiers and officers imprisoned in the camps. From the first days of the aggression, both Soviet military units and security forces had murdered prisoners of war and civilians on the occupied territories of the Republic of Poland. The commencement of actual military operations against Poland coincided with the violation of the laws of war and the norms of the civilised world. The most infamous acts of Soviet bestiality include the massacre of the defenders of Grodno and the murder of the sailors of the Pinsk Flotilla in Mokran (*Boje Polskie*, pp. 117, 236) or the murder of General Józef Olszyna-Wilczyński (Jędrzejewska 2018). In a short time, Polish cities capitulated one after another—the Red Army entered Vilnius (September 19), Grodno and Lviv (September 22), Suwałki (September 24) and

Lublin (September 28). Before the hostilities ended, brigade commander [комбриг] Semion Krivoshein and General Heinz Guderian received a joint parade of Soviet and German armoured units on September 22 in Brest-Litovsk (which had been captured by the Germans after a fierce defence).

On September 28, 1939, while the fighting was still going on in Poland, the two aggressor governments signed the “Treaty on Borders and Friendship”, which, together with the secret protocols attached to it, put the Ribbentrop-Molotov Agreement into practice. Thus, not only was the new German-Russian border established on the annexed territories of the liquidated Polish state, but at the same time wider cooperation was initiated with the aim of combating any activity for Polish independence:

Neither side will tolerate any Polish propaganda on their territories which concerns the territories of the other side. They will suppress any beginnings of such propaganda on their territories, and inform each other regarding appropriate measures for this purpose (*Zestawienie* 2009, p. 16).

In the NKVD’s Captivity

After the end of hostilities, many prisoners found themselves in the hands of the Soviets. According to P. Stawecki:

According to Russian data, on September 17–30, 1939, the 5th Army of the Ukrainian Front took prisoner: 10 generals, 52 colonels, 72 lieutenant colonels, 5131 lower rank officers, 4096 non-commissioned officers and 181,233 privates—a total of 190,584 Polish prisoners of war. On September 17–28, the Belarussian Front took 57,892 Polish prisoners of war, including 2193 officers [...] (Stawecki, 2014).

In 1939, there were approximately 250,000 prisoners of war in Soviet hands, including about 10–15,000 officers who found themselves both in special camps and in distribution, transit, collective and forced labour camps, subordinated to the NKVD and scattered throughout the territory of the then Soviet Union (*Zeszyty Katyńskie* 1992, No. 2, p. 53). According to data from December 1939 compiled by the KARTA Centre

in Warsaw (a Polish social organisation dealing with the documentation of recent history), around 14,852 people in total were detained in three special camps: in Starobielsk and Kozielsk (army officers) and in Ostaszków (officers of the State Police, the Silesian Voivodship Police, the Border Protection Corps, the Border Guard and the Prison Guard). Among the officers imprisoned in the camps, including reserve officers (before the outbreak of the war, about 17,000 professional officers served in the Polish Army) there were scientists, political activists, government officials, artists, engineers, writers, journalists, doctors, lawyers, teachers, landowners and local government officials, as well as military chaplains of all faiths. Simultaneously with the organisation and expansion of camps for prisoners of war, the mass arrests of civilians and the preparation of censuses on the territories occupied by the Soviet Union, in preparation for their mass deportations (Hryciuk 1997, pp. 11–43), began.

Soon decisions were made to prepare lists and information about the families of prisoners held in the camps. This was followed by mass deportations of civilians, from the territories of the Republic of Poland occupied by the USSR into the depths of Soviet territory—mainly to Central Asia, Siberia and north-eastern Russia. At the same time, the compilation of lists of POWs to be liquidated began: it was significant that many of them had participated in the battles against the Bolsheviks for the independence of Poland in 1918–21. Apart from a few exceptions, regardless of their religion, origin, property or political views, under a special procedure, by the decision of the highest authorities of the Soviet Union, most of the inmates were collectively sentenced to death. On March 3, 1940, Beria asked Stalin to execute Polish prisoners, and on the 5th the Politburo of the Soviet Communist Party took the decision which determined their fate:

- 1) Cases concerning the 14,700 POWs, former Polish officers, officials, landowners, policemen, intelligence agents, gendarmes, settlers and prison service staff, in camps,
- 2) as well as cases of 11,000 people arrested and imprisoned in the western districts of Ukraine and Belarus, members of various organisations, former landowners, factory owners, former Polish officers, officials and refugees—to be considered

in special procedures, and the highest penalty to be imposed on them—shooting.

II. Examine the cases without summoning the detained and without presenting charges, a decision to terminate the investigation and indictments—in the following manner:

- a) persons in POW camps—on the basis of information submitted by the Directorate for Prisoners of War Affairs of the NKVD of the Soviet Union,
- b) arrested persons—according to the information from cases reported by the NKVD of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and the NKVD of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic (Katyn 1995, p. 476).

On March 7, 1940, Beria sent a directive to his subordinate People's Commissars of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic concerning the mass deportations of members of the families of POWs and prisoners in the hands of the NKVD:

[...] recommends, by April 15 this year, the deportation of all family members of former Polish army officers, policemen, prison guards, gendarmes, intelligence agents, former landowners, factory owners and high-ranking officials of the former Polish state apparatus, held in prisoner-of-war camps and prisons western oblasts of Ukraine and Belarus, to regions of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic for a period of 10 years (Katyn 1998, p. 43).

The Victims

At the same time, the actions carried out against the Polish citizens (the soldiers and officers and their defenceless civilian families) indicated a well-organised and -prepared action of genocide. It was sure that those deported deep into the Soviet Union, mostly to Siberia and Central Asia, would have minimal chances of survival. Even at their destinations, if they had survived the deportation, they would also be subject to supervision and repression.

Despite these preparations for mass murder, the Soviet authorities tried to maintain the appearance of normalcy and

maintain day-to-day order in the camps. Each day was similar to the previous days. First of all, the prisoners waited for food, correspondence from home and messages from the fronts.

The POWs received indoctrination by means of radio broadcasting and Soviet newspapers, as well as interrogations conducted with different frequency at different times of the day and night; this kept the prisoners uncertain, but also introduced curiosity as to their further fate. The constantly emerging rumours about their transfer to other camps or their release (often skilfully planted by the NKVD) caused quite a stir. In many cases, the prisoners were convinced that they would go to distribution camps. As 2nd Lt. Włodzimierz Wajda in his diary (later found on his body at a death pit in Katyn):

[...] [gossip] about the journey—all sorts of things. One, that there will be distribution camps, and from them, wherever you want: neutral [countries], Russia, Germany, Latvia. The second, that there is no neutral. The third, only Russia; we'll see (*Pamiętniki* 1989, p. 169).

Before April 3, 1940, the first letters for transportation were signed. The transports of POWs were directed, systematically and with extraordinary precautions, to the places where the extermination was to take place. This event was referred to in many of the POWs' records, including in the pocket calendar found on the body of certified major [*maj. dipl.*] Kazimierz Szczekowski in Katyn:

[...] 188. (03.04) The bomb has finally gone off. Today, the first transport of about 100 people left—of various origins, ages and origins, where to, it is not known (*Pamiętniki* 1989, p. 125).

The first to set off was a transport of 78 prisoners from Kozielsk to the train station in Gnezdovo (two stations past Smolensk), from where they were transported by prison cars to the wilderness in the Kozie Góry forest near the village of Katyn (where the NKVD summer resort, also used to conceal the bodies of the murdered, was sited). There, just above the previously prepared death pits, the NKVD officers killed prisoners with shots to the back of the head. On April 4, the

first transport of prisoners from Ostashkov left. The POWs were transported to Kalinin (now renamed—again—Tver), where they were murdered in the basement of the NKVD Regional Directorate with shots to the back of the head, and then taken to the burial site in Mednoye. A day later, the first transport of prisoners from Starobielsk left for the headquarters of the NKVD District Board in Kharkiv, where the prisoners were murdered in the same way as in Katyn and Kalinin. Their bodies were taken to Pyatikhatky near Kharkiv, where they were hidden in mass graves prepared at the NKVD summer resort (as was done at Katyn). At the same time, the NKVD carried out an identical liquidation of the people held in prisons in Western Ukraine and Belarus. After the murders, their bodies were hidden in mass graves in Bykivnya near Kyiv, and probably in Kurapaty (now part of Minsk in Belarus). In total, no fewer than 21,768 Polish citizens were murdered during the liquidation of POWs and political prisoners (Kuźniar-Plota, p. 42).

Some time after the end of the mass murders, the families of the victims (mostly living on the territory of Poland occupied by the Third Reich, because camp correspondence was able to reach there) began to become suspicious. They asked themselves questions to which they could not find a clear answer. Why did the correspondence from the camps stop coming? why were letters sent to their relatives returned? Many of them were returned by Soviet post and stamped “addressee unknown” or “return: addressee not found”. These were the last testimonies of their fate. The Polish POWs had “disappeared”.

“The Missing”

On June 22, 1941, the German Reich attacked its former ally. This forced the Soviet authorities, among other things, to normalise their relations with the legal government in exile of the Republic of Poland. On July 30, 1941, the “Agreement between the Republic of Poland and the Soviet Union” (the so-called Sikorski-Maysky Agreement) was signed in London. This agreement represented an amnesty for Poles in the Soviet Union; from many camps run by the Main

Board of Correctional Labour Camps, GULAG [Главное управление исправительно-трудовых лагерей и колоний], they were transported to places in the Soviet Union where the Polish Armed Forces were formed: Buzuluk, Tatishchevo and Totskoye. Unfortunately, among them there were few of the officers who had been captured by the Soviets in 1939 and then detained in Starobielsk, Kozielsk or Ostashkov. Several hundred of the surviving POWs from these camps were in a camp at Pavlishchev Bor, and then in Griazovets, where they were released in 1941 (Jaczyński 2012). The supreme Soviet authorities—despite many diplomatic notes, interventions and inquiries issued by the Government of the Republic of Poland—did not deign to say what had happened to the thousands of people who were so necessary during the formation of the Polish Army troops. On December 3, 1941, during a meeting in the Kremlin with Generals Sikorski and Anders, Stalin stated in the presence of Molotov that the amnesty covered all Poles and they had been released from the camps, and that 4000 of the missing officers had just “fled to Manchuria” (*Zbrodnia Katyńska w świetle dokumentów*, p. 73).

The search for the “missing” was conducted, among others, by cavalry captain [rotmistrz] Józef Czapski, who had been in Soviet POW camps in Starobielsk, Pavlishchev Bor and Griazovets (he had personally met many of the detainees). On the basis of the Sikorski-Maysky Agreement, Czapski was released from the camp and joined the Polish Army being formed in the Soviet Union. In November 1941 he was appointed head of the office searching for soldiers and officers missing in the Soviet Union. He personally travelled around part of the Soviet Union in search of the missing soldiers (Czapski 2018, *passim*).

The Shocking Discovery

The tragic truth about the crime was revealed only by the exhumations carried out in the Katyn forest from March 29, 1943 by the German military authorities, led by Prof. Gerhard Buhtz (a forensic specialist and medical advisor to the German 6th Army, who had been investigating Soviet crime scenes in the Baltic states shortly beforehand). On April 11, the



One of the mass graves discovered during the German exhumations in 1943 in Katyn. Source: Katyn Museum

German Transocean Agency, followed by Radio Berlin on April 13, announced the discovery of around 10,000 bodies of Polish officers murdered in the spring of 1940 by the Soviets at the NKVD summer resort in Katyn near Smolensk (this number turned out to be exaggerated, but it corresponded to the German estimates of the number of Polish officers held as POWs in Soviet captivity, at between 10,000 to 14,000).

Before the Germans officially informed global public opinion about the discovery of the mass graves, they allowed representatives of the only two Polish organisations operating under German occupation to come to Smolensk: the Polish Red Cross and the Central Welfare Council [*Rada Główna Opiekuńcza*, RGO], as well as “representatives of Polish society” chosen by them. On April 10, 1943, a delegation led by the director of the RGO’s Main Board, Dr. Edmund Seyfried and Dr. Konrad Orzechowski, Dr. Edward Grodzki, and two journalists, Jan Emil Skiwski and Ferdynand Goetel, came to Katyn. On April 16, the Technical Commission of the Polish Red Cross, headed by the Secretary General of the Main Board of the Polish Red Cross, Kazimierz Skarżyński, also arrived there. This commission consisted of two groups: the so-called Warsaw group, which included its director Capt. Ludwik Rojkiewicz (later publicly executed by the Germans in Warsaw on December 23, 1943), the deputy sanitary chief for the Warsaw District of the Polish Red Cross, Dr. Hieronim Bartoszewski, Jerzy Wodzinowski and Stefan Kołodziejski, and the chauffeur-worker [*szofer-pracownik fizyczny*] Adam Godzik. The so-called Cracow group was made up of Stanisław Plappert, the representative of the Polish Red Cross for the Krakow District, his deputy Dr. Adam Schebesta, Dr. Tadeusz Susz-Pragłowski, a criminologist and senior assistant at the National Institute of Forensic Medicine and Forensics in Cracow, and Fr. Stanisław Jasiński, a representative of the Metropolitan of Cracow, Prince-Archbishop Adam Cardinal Sapieha (*Las Katyński* 2019). In Katyn, Rojkiewicz, Wodzinowski and Kołodziejski remained from the Polish group, whereas on April 17 Kazimierz Skarżyński presented the Red Cross’s directorate with a report, on which basis consent to an exhumation was given.

At the same time, Germany (April 16) and independently the Polish government-in-exile (April 17) asked the

International Committee of the Red Cross to send a special commission to investigate the crime scene. The ICRC stated that the consent of the Soviets was also necessary for this. As might be expected, Stalin and the top Soviet authorities blocked any international action in this matter.

Despite the Germans' pressure, the Polish Red Cross, professionally and with full dedication, undertook the research in Katyn. On April 19, other employees of the Polish Red Cross from Warsaw arrived at the scene of the crime: Hugon Kassur (a Home Army soldier, later killed in the Warsaw Rising), Gracjan Jaworowski and Adam Godzik. On April 20, the Polish Red Cross sent Kazimierz Skarżyński's report on the crime to the ICRC, but the matter seemed to have been sealed. The last group of Red Cross employees arrived in Katyn on April 28: this included Dr. Marian Wodziński, senior assistant at the National Institute of Forensic Medicine and Forensics in Cracow, and his assistants Władysław Buczak, Franciszek Król and Ferdynand Płonka, as well as employees of the Polish Red Cross's main board Stefan Cupryjak and Jan Mikołajczyk (Katyn 2012, pp. 22–24). The entirety of the work of the Polish Red Cross's Technical Commission was only prepared and published in the 1990s as "Confidential report. On the overall participation of the Polish Red Cross in the exhumation works in Katyn near Smolensk" (Skarżyński 1995). The work of the Polish Red Cross's Technical Commission was interrupted by the Germans in June 1943, despite the fact that not all the mass graves they had discovered were examined (Katyn 2012, pp. 22, 29–30).

Due to the ICRC's refusal to act in Katyn, and the already known findings of Prof. Buhtz's group and the Polish Red Cross, Germany established its own International Medical Commission, consisting of 11 experts from countries allied with or occupied by the Third Reich, and one expert from Switzerland. The International Medical Commission appointed by the Germans was composed of Dr. Ferenc Orsós from Hungary, Dr. Reimond Speleers from Belgium, Dr. Marko Markov from Bulgaria, Dr. Helge Tramsen from Denmark, Dr. Arno Saxén from Finland, Dr. Vincenzo Mario Palmieri from Italy, Dr. Herman Maximilien de Burlet from the Netherlands, Dr. François Naville from Switzerland, Dr. František Hájek from the Protectorate of Bohemia &

Moravia, Dr. Alexandru Birkle from Romania, Dr. František Šubik from Slovakia and Dr. Eduard Miloslavić from the Independent State of Croatia (*Amtliches Material* 1943).

The assumptions as to the victims' origin were confirmed: they were Polish officers, and the material evidence found with their bodies and the surroundings of mass graves (including the age of the trees planted to mask the death pits) indicated that they were murdered before June 1941, and therefore by the Soviets. On May 4, 1943, the report of the International Medical Commission was officially published in the *Völkischer Beobachter*. In September of the same year, the Germans issued a comprehensive publication entitled *Amtliches Material zum Massenmord von Katyn* containing the current state of research on the Katyn massacre, as well as documents, reports of interrogations of the witnesses, and a list of the identified victims (*Amtliches Material* 1943).

The mass graves in Katyn were the only known execution site of the Polish prisoners taken prisoner by the Soviets in 1939 until the disclosure of Soviet documents in the early 1990s. This is why the expression “the Katyn crime” is also used to refer to all of the crimes committed against the Polish POWs, as well as the others covered by the Politburo decision of March 5, 1940, 11,000 of whom were arrested and imprisoned in Ukraine and Belarus.

At this point, it should be emphasised that Katyn was not only a site of the mass death pits but also a place of struggle between propagandas. Despite their own crimes against the Poles, the Germans tried at all costs to show the world that in this case the Soviets were the real criminals. Not only scientists, but also representatives of the press, Polish and Allied POWs from camps in the Third Reich, French volunteers fighting on the German side, and representatives of workplaces from many Polish cities under German occupation were brought to the Katyn forest where the exhumation works were being carried out (Wolsza 2019).

The crime itself was of secondary importance to the Germans, because, according to their own policy, the cynical use of the mass graves was merely an instrument of propaganda for them. The German authorities were willing to use the case of the Katyn massacre to bring about a split between the Allies, and so they also conducted extensive

activities publicising the crime among Allied prisoners, who were brought to the Katyn forest to show them the cruelty of the Russians. Of course, it was the Germans who decided who could visit the exhumation site (Morawski, pp. 10–13).

The Katyn Lie

As a result of the exhumations carried out by the Polish Red Cross (the Polish organisation operated on German-occupied territory even though the Germans guaranteed the independence of their research) and the commissions headed by the Germans, it was obvious that the Soviet Union would not recognise their results; they were also difficult for the Allies to accept unreservedly. The Soviet government immediately launched a propaganda offensive and, regardless of the significance of the published results, accused the Germans of murder. An article entitled “Hitler’s Polish collaborators” appeared in *Pravda*, and on the night of April 25/26, 1943, under the pretext of alleged German and Polish cooperation within the framework of the requests submitted to the ICRC, the Soviet Union severed diplomatic relations with the Polish government-in-exile.

Despite many signals from the Polish government—as well as the confidential report by the British ambassador to the government of the Republic of Poland, Owen St. Clair O’Malley, stating that, according to the analysis of available information, the Soviet Union had perpetrated the Katyn massacre—the Allies did not take any open action during the war to clarify the circumstances of the event. The red ally on the eastern front, with its multi-million-strong army locked in battle against the German forces in Europe, was more important than the truth about the life and death of the Polish officers. After the Soviets re-occupied Smolensk and its vicinity in September–October 1943, the crime scene was sealed off. Representatives of the NKVD appeared in the designated area; their task was to “correctly” prepare the witnesses they found, and to cover up traces and destroy evidence. A “special committee to establish and investigate the circumstances of the execution of Polish prisoners of war in the Katyn forest by the German-fascist invaders”

The front page of the *Pravda* issue of April 19, 1943 (no. 102/9238), with the op-ed entitled *Польские сотрудники Гитлера* (“Hitler’s Polish collaborators”). Source: N.A. Nekrasov library website

was established on January 13, 1944 and officially operated between the January 16 and 23, 1944 at the burial site of the Polish officers murdered in Katyn.

Apart from the head of the commission, Nikolai Burdenko, a neurosurgeon and a member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, the commission included Aleksei Tolstoy, the writer; Orthodox metropolitan Nikolai of Kyiv and Galicia; Maj. Gen. Aleksandr Gundorov, head of the Military Engineering Academy and chairman of the Pan-Slavic Committee of the Soviet Union; Sergei Kolesnikov, chairman of the Executive Committee of the Council of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies; Vladimir Potemkin, People's Commissar for Education of the RSFSR; Gen. Yefim Smirnov, Head of the Red Army's Sanitary-Military Main Directorate; and Roman Melnikov, chairman of the Smolensk Regional Executive Committee of the Soviet Communist Party. All the participants in the commission's work stated that Germany had been responsible for the crime. Interestingly, according to V.I. Prozorovsky, director of the State Scientific and Research Institute and the Soviet Union's chief forensic expert since 1940, the commission examined 925 bodies within a few days, with nine documents found, three confirmations of the sale of watches to Yuvolitorg (a Soviet state-owned company trading in valuables) in April and May of the same year, and one postcard dated June 20, 1940, belonging to a person who had never been to Kozelsk (Abarinov 2007, pp. 178–9). The last of these items is extremely important, as it indicates the falsification of factual evidence “discovered” at the crime scene by the Burdenko Commission. The date of the postcard suggests that the POWs of Kozielsk were still alive in the second half of June 1940, whereas the findings of the International Medical Commission operating under German supervision were false.

The Polish Communists, faithful to their ideals and their alliance with the Soviet Union, willingly joined in with the official Soviet version about the “truth about the Katyn crime”, claiming to all and sundry that the Germans had been responsible for the Polish officers' murders. Although no representatives of the Polish Communists in the pro-Soviet Union of Polish Patriots were even admitted to the work of the Burdenko commission, they unequivocally supported the thesis that the Germans had murdered the prisoners.

Both Wanda Wasilewska and Jerzy Borejsza, in line with the Communist narrative about Katyn, published articles in Polish-language magazines presenting only the Soviet point of view (Wasilewski 2010, pp. 82–3).

When, right after the end of the war, a government favourable to the Soviet Union was installed in Poland, and the new state system was introduced by force by the Russians and native Communists, another act of the Katyn lie took place in Western Europe. The inclusion of the Katyn massacre in the work of the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg was a falsehood on an international scale. At the request of the Soviet side, the murder of the Polish officers was included in the indictment. The Russian prosecutors tried at all costs to prove the Germans' guilt. After hearing many witnesses, however, the Katyn case was ultimately not included in the judgment of the Tribunal.

In Search of the Truth after the War

Successive Communist governments in Poland, dependent on the will of the Soviets, not only did not rush to explain the Katyn massacre, but even forbade any discussion of it, or simply concealed the truth following the Soviet propaganda. According to the interpretation of Communist law, stating the truth about the crime or questioning the official propaganda version was prosecuted: with some modifications, this state of affairs continued until the 1980s (Gasztold-Señ 2010, p. 132). No-one was allowed to speak about the Katyn affair in a manner inconsistent with Communist propaganda. All attempts to describe and publicise the truth, for example by Polish émigrés to Western Europe on the airwaves of Radio Free Europe, BBC, the Voice of America or publications, were rejected and accused, among others, of harming the interests of Communist Poland, disseminating American propaganda, or conducting sabotage.

One of the most outstanding and steadfast researchers of the Katyn massacre was the Polish writer Józef Mackiewicz, an eyewitness to the exhumation in 1943; in London in 1948, in cooperation with Zdzisław Stahl, he edited and published a book (preceded by a preface by General Władysław Anders)

entitled *The Katyn massacre in the light of the documents [Zbrodnia Katyńska w świetle dokumentów]* (Mackiewicz 1948). This first, incomplete list of the victims of the Soviet crimes appeared as the implementation of the demands made by many communities, mainly immigrants, for the names of specific victims to be published (in view of the fact that previously only the Germans had published any lists of the victims). *The Katyn List. Prisoners of the Kozielsk, Starobielsk and Ostashkov camps missing in Soviet Russia [Lista Katyńska. Jeńcy obozów Kozielsk, Starobielsk, Ostaszków zaginieni w Rosji Sowieckiej]* by Maj. Adam Moszyński, a prisoner of the Starobielsk camp, proved to be an extremely valuable document. Published a year after Mackiewicz's book, it represented another step taken towards finding out what had happened to the "disappeared" officers.

The first serious step in the West towards publicly explaining the Katyn case was taken by the former US ambassador to Poland, Arthur Bliss Lane, who in 1949 established the American Committee for the Investigation of the Katyn Crime, whose work was highly appreciated by both Polish emigrants and Americans. By 1951, articles by Ferdynand Goetl, Józef Mackiewicz and Julius Epstein had been published in the United States and Western Europe, which clearly spoke not only about the crime committed against the defenceless victims, but also about those people who worked to conceal the truth (Wolsza 2010). One consequence of these activities was the establishment of a special commission in the United States House of Representatives—the Select Committee to Investigate and Study the Facts, Evidence, and Circumstances of the Katyn Forest Massacre, commonly known as the Madden Commission. This body, which in line with American practice had powers of prosecution, included both Democrats and Republicans: Chairman R. John Madden from Indiana, Daniel L. Flood from Pennsylvania, Thaddeus M. Machrowicz from Michigan, George A. Dondero from Michigan, J. Foster Furcolo of Massachusetts, Alvin K. O'Konski of Wisconsin, and Timothy P. Sheehan of Illinois. After hearing witnesses, including cavalry captain Józef Czapski, Col. John Van Vliet, Kazimierz Skarżyński, Cpt. Donald Stewart, General Clayton Bissell, General Władysław Anders and others (Wasilewski 2010), the Madden Commission clearly identified the Soviet

Union as the perpetrators. In Communist Poland, this led to an increase in repressive actions against those people who spoke the truth about Katyn. The victims of repression from the 1950s and later who fought for the “Katyn truth” have been listed in the Electronic Archive Inventory of Files on Repression for Spreading the Truth About the Katyn Crime [*Elektroniczny inwentarz archiwalny akt dotyczących represji za głoszenie prawdy o zbrodni w Katyniu*] which has been created by the Institute of National Remembrance (*Elektroniczny Inwentarz*).

In enslaved Poland, the families of the Katyn massacre’s victims underwent arrests and repressions, which consisted in problems with finding employment, education in schools, or the possibility of getting a flat (Żelazko 2020).

Soviet government officials realised from the outset that reproducing and propagating the Katyn lie would require worldwide efforts. One way of deliberately misleading global opinion was to publicise the tragedy of the village of Khatyn’ in Belarus, where the Germans murdered 150 residents. The similarity of this village’s name to Katyn, together with the creation of a complex of monuments dedicated to those murdered there (unveiled on July 5, 1969), could only have served to pin the specific crime on Germany (Lebedeva 2008). The Polish researcher Witold Wasilewski was of a similar opinion:

It was deliberately done to confuse visitors to the Soviet Union about Katyn. In a simple transcription, in English, the name Хатынь is “Khatyn”, and therefore confusingly similar to Katyn [...] When asked about what had happened in Katyn, the Russians simply replied that the Germans had murdered Belarusians there. This was the point of the propaganda, this was how the truth was pushed aside (*Sowieckie sztuczki* 2015).

However, such actions could not in any way hinder the continued search for the truth about the Katyn massacre and to show it to the whole world. An important role here was played by the development of the independent publishing movement in Poland, for whom the Katyn massacre was a significant point of interest. One of the pioneers of reliable research in Poland was Prof. Jerzy Łojek, whose book *Dzieje*

sprawy Katynia [The history of the Katyn case], published beyond the censors' reach under the pseudonym of Leopold Jerzewski, was for years one of the most important historical books on the subject of Katyn (Łojek 1980).

Despite the passage of time, the Communists realised that the families of the murdered, the nationwide Solidarity movement and the independent social organisations established to commemorate the Katyn massacre would not cease to demand the truth. The Katyn Institute [*Instytut Katyński*] led by Andrzej Kostrzewski, Adam Macedoński and Stanisław Tor, and the Katyn Committee, also known as the Underground Katyn Committee [*Konspiracyjny Komitet Katyński*], led by Stefan Melak and Fr. Waław Karłowicz, showed that the memory of the crime was still alive in society and would be publicised, regardless of the Communist Party's official course. The search for the truth about the Katyn massacre (as well as the crimes committed by the Communist regime against Poles in general, both during and after the war) became one of the processes that dismantled the ideological monopoly of the state. Until the last moments of Communism in Poland, despite the increasing popular knowledge of the Katyn massacre, censorship was omnipresent, which blocked all attempts to publicise the Soviets' criminal deeds. In the manual of the Central Office for the Control of Press, Publications and Performances [*Główny Urząd Kontroli Prasy, Publikacji i Widowisk*] from 1975, we can read:

[...] When assessing materials concerning the death of Polish officers in Katyn, the following criteria should be used:

1. No attempt to hold the Soviet Union responsible for the deaths of Polish officers in the Katyn forests shall be permitted.
2. In academic studies, statements such as "shot by the Nazis in Katyn", "died in Katyn", "perished in Katyn" can be released. If in the case of the use of phrases such as "he died in Katyn" the date of death is given, it is permissible to specify it only after July 1941.
3. The term "POWs" should be eliminated in reference to Polish soldiers and officers interned by the Red Army in September 1939. The proper term is "internees". The names of the camps of Kozielsk, Starobielsk, Ostaszków, where the Polish officers later shot by the Nazis in the Katyn forests were interned may be released [for publication].

4. Obituaries, death notices, announcements about services in the memory of the victims of Katyn and informing about other forms of commemorating their memory may be released only with the consent of the management of [the Central Office] (Przewoźnik, Adamska p. 417).

Even crosses and monuments bearing witness to the truth and commemorating the thousands of innocent people murdered in the East were destroyed. The best example of this type of action by the Communist security apparatus in Poland was the destruction of all commemorations that appeared at the Warsaw Military Cemetery in Powązki, including the famous Katyn Cross erected there on July 31, 1981, on the eve of the anniversary of the Warsaw Rising. The Katyn Vale [*Dolinka Katyńska*], the place at the Powązki Military Cemetery where Poles had unofficially and illegally commemorated the victims of Katyn since the 1960s, was located among the graves of those killed in the Warsaw Rising in 1944: the construction of a monument there on the eve of the Rising's anniversary guaranteed that many people would

The Katyn Vale in the Powązki Military Cemetery, Warsaw, Poland. The Katyn Cross on the right was erected on July 31, 1981, on the eve of the anniversary of the Warsaw Rising. It was removed shortly after presumably by the Communist security authorities (restored in 1989). The cross on the left was erected by the Communist authorities in 1985, with the inscription falsely assigning the responsibility for Katyn Forest Massacre to Germans, and dating it to 1941. © Franciszek Dąbrowski, 2021



learn about the events. However, “unknown perpetrators”, most likely Security Service officers, removed the monument the same night (Majchrzak 2020). The Communist authorities tried to take over the Katyn Vale, removing the crosses raised by the public and erecting a monument in the same place in 1985 bearing the false inscription “To the Polish soldiers, victims of Nazi fascism, resting in the soil of Katyn—1941” (Majchrzak 2020; *Dolinka Katyńska*).

Despite the imminent collapse of Communism in Poland, the Communist authorities tried to drown out the truth about the Katyn massacre until their final days. The last victim of the “Katyn affair” was Fr. Prelate Stefan Niedzielak, who was murdered on the night of January 20–21, 1989 in the presbytery of the church of St. Carlo Borromeo at the Powązki Cemetery in Warsaw (where, despite the Communist authorities’ efforts, efforts were still made to commemorate the victims of the Katyn Massacre and proclaim the truth about it). The identities of the murderers have never been established; according to popular belief, the priest’s patriotic activity was the motive for the crime, and the murderers were most likely officers of the Communist security apparatus (Pleskot 2019).

The Breakthrough

The changes that began to take place in Poland at the end of the Communist era also affected the discovery and commemoration of Communist crimes, including the Katyn massacre. The perception of this problem changed thanks to the abolition of ideological state supervision and censorship, as well as the general process of historical reflection shifting from independent to open circulation. Towards the end of the 1980s, when political changes in Poland were being talked about more and more loudly, two separate trends in the investigation of the Katyn massacre were activated. On the one hand, there were circles independent of the Communist authorities, including the emerging unregistered associations of the Katyn Families (associating the families of the victims). On the other hand, the Polish Communists saw the activities related to the Katyn massacre as an opportunity to mitigate

the effects of the impending change of power. The latter, acting in agreement with Russia, created the “Joint Commission of Soviet and Polish Party Scholars for the History of Relations between the Two Countries” [*Wspólna Komisja Uczonych Partyjnych ZSRR i Polski do spraw Historii Stosunków między Obu Krajami*], named in accordance with Communist “newspeak”; this body intended to deal with explaining the common so-called Polish-Soviet “blank spots” (this commission did not formulate any conclusions that differed from the previous official versions, until the Soviet side finally admitted that the Katyn massacre had been committed by the NKVD). In 1988, the Soviets slightly softened their approach to the issue of commemorating the crimes: they allowed the victims’ families to visit the Katyn Forest and agreed to set up the so-called “Primate’s Cross”, which had been consecrated by Cardinal Józef Glemp, nevertheless while still maintaining that the Germans had committed the crime in 1941. This was a sign that the ruling Communists had to take account not only of the truth about Katyn, but also with that part of Polish society which were aware of the Soviet responsibility for the crime.

II. BUILDING THE KATYN MUSEUM: FROM SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, ACADEMIC RESEARCH AND INVESTIGATIONS— TO INSTITUTIONS

The Truth Shall Prevail

During the negotiations with the Communists at the “Round Table” in 1989, it was extremely important to obtain their consent to the registration of associations and trade unions. This made it possible to formalise the activities of numerous organisations dealing with the Katyn affair and ensure their unhindered social activity: they thus ceased to be illegal. The emergence of many independent circles, some of which dated from the 1980s, led to the spread of information about the

Katyn case. It should be emphasised that among the many initiatives, one of the most important was the initiation of the process of creating a consolidated movement for the families of the victims of the Katyn massacre, inspired by the Warsaw Katyn Family, which arranged a nationwide meeting of the victims' families and descendants:

As early as 1989, representatives of the newly emerging Warsaw Katyn Family sought to establish contacts with other Katyn communities in Poland who constituted the Families. The most active group of people, tried and tested from the very beginning, were the "Organising Committee", who were composed of Bożena Łojek (chairman), Jędrzej Tucholski (deputy), Jolanta Klimowicz-Osmańczykowa and Danuta Napiórkowska (secretary). This group arranged the first nationwide meeting of representatives of the Katyn Families on September 17, 1989 in Warsaw; this resulted in the establishment of the Federation, which from then on could uniformly represent the interests of the Katyn Families externally, *inter alia* by establishing contacts at the central level (*Federacja*).

This naturally led to the establishment and formalisation of the activities of the Independent Historical Committee for the Investigation of the Katyn Crime (*Niezależny Komitet Historyczny Badania Zbrodni Katyńskiej*, NKHBZK), which was announced in the first edition of the new journal *Zeszyty Katyńskie* [The Katyn Papers]:

The Committee was composed of Andrzej Chmielarz, Jerzy Jackl, Stanisław M. Jankowski, Andrzej K. Kunert, Bożena Łojek [the widow of Jerzy Łojek], Adam Macedoński, Marek Tarczyński, Jacek Trznadel, Jędrzej Tucholski, Wojciech Ziemiński. [...] In January 1990, Cezary Chlebowski joined [...] The Honorary Council consisted of Józef Czapski, Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, Fr. Prof. Leon Musielak, Fr. Zdzisław J. Peszkowski, Prof. Stanisław Swianiewicz, and Prof. Janusz K. Zawodny (*Zeszyty Katyńskie* 1990, No. 1, p. 4).

The next step was the establishment of the Polish Katyn Foundation, the founding members and founders of which

were mostly people associated with the Katyn Families and NKHBZK:

Dr. Bożena Łojek, historian of the theatre; Prof. Mieczysław Nieduszyński; the attorney Jan Olszewski; Fr. Zdzisław Peszkowski, a survivor of the Kozielsk camp; Dr. Marek Tarczyński, a military historian; Prof. Jacek Trznadel, a literary historian; Jędrzej Tucholski, a son of a Katyn victim, and editor Wojciech Ziemiński, an independence activist. The charter of the Polish Katyn Foundation was prepared by Jan Olszewski. [...] In 1991 and 1992, Dr. Jerzy Jackl, the prosecutor Stefan Śnieżko and Adam Macedoński were admitted to the Foundation. They were all active at different times in both the PFK and NKHBZK. In addition to those mentioned in the NKHBZK, the historian and journalist Stanisław M. Jankowski has also been active from the very beginning. Certain eminent personalities related to the Katyn massacre have accepted honorary membership of the committee: Józef Czapski, a prisoner at the camp in Starobielsk, and author of the first list of victims of the Katyn massacre and the book *Na nieludzkiej ziemi* [Inhuman land]; Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, a prisoner in the Soviet camps; Fr. Prof. Leon Musielak, a survivor of the Kozielsk camp; Fr. Zdzisław Peszkowski, a prisoner of the Kozielsk camp; Prof. Stanisław Swianiewicz, a prisoner of the Kozielsk camp, and one of the first to testify to the crime; and Prof. Janusz K. Zawodny, the author of the first book about Katyn in English, *Death in the Forest* (Łojek B.).

It should be emphasised that the activities of the Katyn Families, NKHBZK and PFK, were extremely effective in 1989, so that the general public, including the Communists who still jointly ruled Poland after the Round Table talks, could see that the truth would prevail.

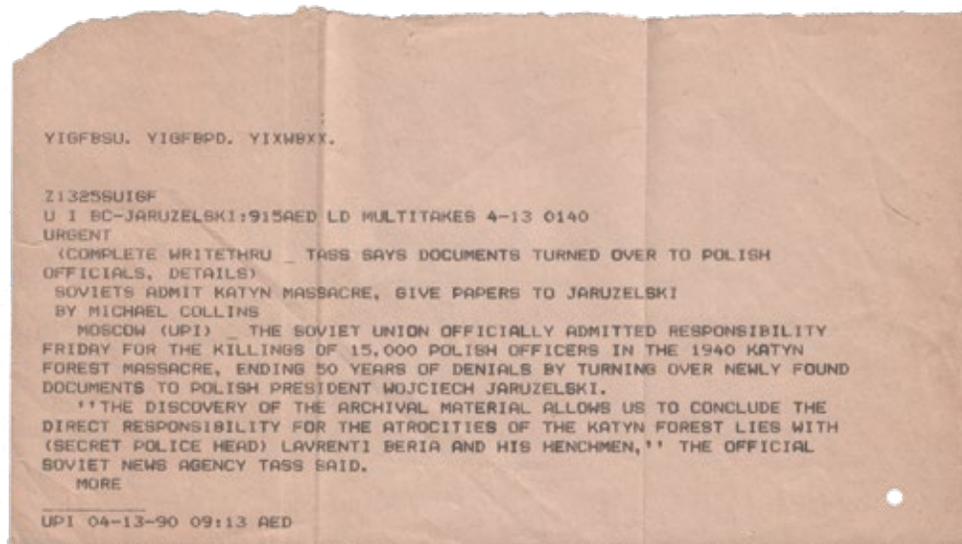
On April 18, 1989, urns with soil from the Katyn Forest were ceremonially buried in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and in the Katyn Vale at the Powązki Military Cemetery. On the night of July 5–6, 1989, unidentified persons replanted the Katyn monument, which had been dismantled and stolen in 1981 (most probably by the Communist Security Service), in front of the same cemetery.

In March 1990, the Soviet prosecutor's office in Kharkiv took steps to investigate the mass burials in the forest park, which came within the city limits:

(...) in a criminal case brought on March 6, 1990 regarding the facts of mass burials in the 6th quarter of the forest park of the city of Kharkiv by the Prosecutor's Office of the Kharkiv oblast (Katyn 1998, p. 473).

On April 13, 1990, Mikhail Gorbachev handed over to Wojciech Jaruzelski a small part of the documents from the Soviet archives confirming the Soviets' responsibility, including part of the transportation lists of Polish POWs from the NKVD camps to the execution sites. On the same day, the TASS agency announced in an official statement that "Beria, Merkulov and their helpers" had been responsible for the crime, and that the Katyn tragedy was one of the gravest crimes of Stalinism. This was evidently part of a propaganda campaign in the spirit of *glasnost* that Gorbachev was carrying out at the time to give credibility to Jaruzelski, the Polish Communists and their "Soviet friends". At the same time, when the handing over of the Katyn documents was publicised, a large-scale action known as "Anti-Katyn" was launched, whose task—in accordance with the secret ordinance No. RP-979 (PII-979) of November 3, 1990—was

UPI dispatch about the TASS communiqué admitting the Soviet responsibility for Katyn Forest massacre. Source: Katyn Museum collection



to relativise the Katyn massacre and compare its victims to the death rate of Soviet POWs in Polish POW camps during the Polish-Bolshevik war in 1919–20 (Komorowski, Rawski 2006).

Key Decisions

At the end of 1990, representatives of the Katyn Families, as well as other organisations and institutions, decided to undertake activities aimed at creating both a permanent exhibition displaying documents obtained from the Russians, as well as family heirlooms which had been carefully kept during the years of humiliation. In order to collect as much of the memorabilia of the murdered that had been kept in private resources as possible, on January 9, 1991 the Board of the Federation of Katyn Families asked the associations included in the federation for help, in the form of a letter-appeal signed by the Federation's President Dr. Bożena Łojek, in which she wrote:

The Polish Army Museum plans to hold the Katyn Exhibition on the 51st anniversary of the crime. I would like to encourage and mobilise you to help the organisers, so that the exhibition becomes the broadest [source of] information and the most representative and at the same time the strongest in this matter [...] If we all take part actively in organising the exhibition, this could be our enormous protest and shout in this painful matter (and it is the duty of the Katyn Families to shout loudly). The help of the Katyn Families should be based on organising the collection of documents, photographs and souvenirs. The director of the Polish Army Museum has promised to delegate a curator who—after making the appointment by phone—will come to the individual seats of the Katyn Families [branches] and collect memorabilia of the victims of the crime from you. [...] Originals of cards, letters, photographs are desirable, diplomas and trinkets related to the victims, their personal and professional life. Each item should be accompanied by a biographical note about the victim and the contact details of the lender (name, address, telephone number). [...] The management of the Museum has promised to restore damaged documents at their own expense (Łojek, Mikke, Sawicki, Trznadel 2000, p. 66).

The institution that dealt with the new exhibition was supported by the will of many of the Katyn groups. The natural place for the previously unknown collections to be displayed was the Museum of the Polish Army in Warsaw, where, after obtaining the consent of the Ministry of National Defence and with the approval of its then director, Col. Andrzej Szerauc, the first exhibition devoted to the Katyn massacre and its victims was created. The director earmarked about 100 million zlotys for the purpose of the exhibition at that time (which was the equivalent of about US\$10,500; to indicate the proportion of the costs, it should be noted that according to data from the *Zakład Ubezpieczeń Społecznych* [the main national insurer in Poland] from that period, the average monthly salary in Poland was 1,029,637 zloty, which then amounted to around US\$108; *Przeciętne wynagrodzenie 2020*). Thanks to the involvement of the Federation of Katyn Families and the great generosity of the victims' descendants, about 1500 items which formed the nucleus of the exhibition were collected. The public perception of the new exhibition, entitled "Nie tylko Katyń" [Not only Katyn], which has been on display since April 1991, has exceeded the creators' wildest expectations. A society hungry for truth has shown that a temporary exhibition is not enough; the number of visitors and the amount of media interest, like the national discussion on where a worthy site for a memorial to the victims of the Katyn massacre, has motivated the creation of a specific museum in which pride of place would be given to the mementoes of the victims.

At the same time as the first Katyn exhibition was organised and presented at the Defence Ministry, the first exhumation works were beginning in the park which had been the NKVD's sanatorium in Pyatikhatky near Kharkiv. From July 25 to August 7, 1991, a Polish research team led by the Deputy Prosecutor General of the Republic of Poland, Stefan Śniezko, conducted survey work and carried out research on around 1.3 ha of the area where the remains of 167 Polish officers, as well as two other graves where the remains of Soviet citizens had been buried:

The limited research time allowed for the full exhumation of only two graves of Poles. The skeletons of 87 people were excavated from one (excavation 5/91), and 74 from

the other (excavation 22/91). The remains of 4 people were lifted from the third grave (excavation 39/91), after which the exploration was stopped, while the fourth grave was not examined (excavation 34/91). In addition, a hole was found and examined (excavation 30/91), in which items probably taken from the victims before the execution—military equipment, personal items—had been buried. The scorch marks on them indicate that the NKVD officers had tried to burn them before hiding them. At the bottom of this dump there were the bones of two people. In total, the remains of 167 people were exhumed from the graves identified in 1991 as “Polish” (they were then buried in grave no. 5). The state of the remains did not permit individual identification of the dead (Persak 2010, p. 35).

After the exhumation work in Pyatikhatky was completed, the same group of Polish prosecutors, scientists and documentary filmmakers went to Mednoye:

As suggested by the hosts, the first 10×10 m test trench was dug in the central part of the designated area where traces of the demolished building remained. Soon the excavator’s bucket pulled a fragment of a navy blue [Polish] police coat with metal buttons bearing an eagle from the ground, and after some time it uncovered the first human remains. In the course of further exploration, as many as three mass graves were uncovered in this excavation, and a fourth was discovered a few metres further away. [...] In 1991, the limited exhumation time imposed by the Russians allowed only one grave to be fully explored, from which the remains of 243 people were excavated. A hole was also discovered, as at Pyatikhatky, containing things taken from POWs before their execution, including their belts, which had been missing in mass graves, as well as coats, caps and service bags. The course and atmosphere of the fieldwork in Mednoye was influenced to some extent by external circumstances. Four days after their start, there was the so-called Yanayev coup. Despite the uncertain and nervous situation, the Polish team did not stop working. It is worth emphasising the attitude of Russian military prosecutors, especially the one who supervised the investigation, General Frolov, who protected the Poles against

pressure from the local party committee and the KGB, who sought to stop the exhumation (Persak 2010, p. 47).

In the following years, both in Kharkiv-Pyatikhatky, Mednoye and Katyn itself, and then at Kyiv-Bykivnya, further archaeological research was carried out, which revealed new sites where Polish soldiers, public officials and political prisoners had been buried.

After the research team returned to Poland from Kharkiv-Pyatikhatky and Mednoye, some of the excavated artifacts were transferred to the Museum of the Polish Army and the Central Forensic Laboratory of the Police Headquarters in Warsaw and the Institute of Police Sciences in Legionowo, where they were subjected to identification, conservation and inspection works as evidence of crime.

After comprehensive conservation, they were presented at an exhibition entitled “Dowody zbrodni – Ostaszków – Miednoje, Starobielsk – Charków” [Evidence of crimes: Ostashkov—Mednoye, Starobelsk—Kharkiv] that ran from November 1991 to June 1992. At the same time, along with the preparation of the exhibition, the original idea to create a permanent exhibition was carried out.

The opening event of the exhibition “Dowody zbrodni – Ostaszków – Miednoje, Starobielsk – Charków” – “Evidence of crimes: Ostashkov—Mednoye, Starobielsk—Kharkiv”. Col. Zdzisław Sawicki (R, in the uniform). November 1991, Polish Army Museum, Warsaw, Poland. Source: Sławomir Frątczak collection



In December 1991, the president of the Federation of Katyn Families sent a letter to the then President of the Republic of Poland, Lech Wałęsa, requesting the establishment of the Katyn State Museum. In the letter Dr. Bożena Łojek emphasised that

the Federation of Katyn Families, which includes the thousands of families of the murdered prisoners of Kozielsk, Ostaszków and Starobielsk, hereby approaches the Supreme Authorities of the Republic of Poland with the initiative of establishing the Katyn State Museum, and warmly requests the President for his personal protectorate of this undertaking. This museum will permanently serve to commemorate the martyrdom of the victims and document the crimes committed. [...] We emphasise the urgency of the relevant decisions, because it is highly likely that the collection of relics from this year's exhumations in Kharkiv, Mednoye and Katyn may be dispersed relatively soon (Frątczak 2007, pp. 109–31).

Requests similar in content and form were also received by the Marshals of the Parliament and Senate (*Sejm* and *Senat*) of the Republic of Poland, the ministers of foreign affairs, justice, culture and art, the Primate of Poland, the Chairman of the Council for the Protection of Memory of Struggle and Martyrdom (*Rada Ochrony Pamięci Walk i Męczeństwa*, ROPWiM) and the President of the Main Board of the Polish Red Cross. Of particular note is the letter addressed at the beginning of February 1992 to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland, Jan Olszewski, which indicated not only the need to establish a new museum, but also was concerned with more down-to-earth matters—the financing and conservation of the artefacts and collections. Dr. Łojek wrote:

The second issue [...] is that of the Katyn Museum, which would contain numerous museum items that were excavated during last year's survey exhumations ordered by the prosecutor's office. These items are not only mementoes for the Katyn Families, but are also *de facto* national relics. We have requested that the Katyn Museum should also include

an archive, library, research laboratories, and that it should be a broader scientific and research facility devoted to the subject of Katyn. Knowing the disastrous condition of the budget, at this moment the beginning of this institution could be established, with its development to be designed in the following years, but currently, funds for the conservation of the exhibits should urgently be allocated. The current situation is alarming. Due to lack of space, the items excavated last year during the investigators' exhumation are being kept by the General Prosecutor's Office at the Central Forensic Laboratory of the Police Headquarters in Warsaw, at the Institute of Police Sciences in Legionowo, and at the Polish Army Museum. Due to the lack of resources, if left untreated they will quickly crumble into dust (paper, cloth, leather, wood), and the metal is also being consumed by corrosion. The matter is therefore serious, and appropriate steps must be taken immediately to avoid the devastation of these priceless national monuments. If the financial situation of the state is so critical that funds for maintenance would turn out to be insufficient, it will be necessary to resort to the public's generosity, in which we can help. However, we would like to ask for a working meeting so that this pressing issue could be discussed and definitive arrangements made (Łojek, Mikke, Sawicki, Trznadel, pp. 84–85).

The opportunity to present the truth about the Katyn massacre could not be lost: as a result of the involvement of the Federation of Katyn Families, NKHBZK, the Council of the Polish Katyn Foundation, the Social Board of the Military Fund for the Remembrance of the Murdered Soldiers of the Polish Army [*Zarząd Wojskowego Funduszu na Rzecz Pamięci Pomordowanych Żołnierzy WP*] in cooperation with the Ministry of National Defence, the Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland and the General Prosecutor's Office, a special fund for the organisation of a new museum facility was finally set up.

On March 17, 1992, at a joint meeting of the Federation of Katyn Families, NKHBZK, the Council of the Polish Katyn Foundation and the Social Board of the Military Fund for the Remembrance of the Murdered Soldiers of the Polish Army, a number of important decisions were

made that influenced the further commemoration of the victims of the Katyn Massacre. Col. Marek Tarczyński—president of the Fund, editor of *Zeszyty Katyńskie* and a member of the Council for the Protection of Memory of Struggle and Martyrdom, as well as the co-founder of the PFK and NKHBZK—decided to donate 180 million zloty (around US\$12,500) to the Polish Katyn Foundation, with the funds to be allocated to the creation of the Katyn Museum. A commission was also established to carry out an on-site inspection chaired by Col. Tarczyński, with the participation of Bożena Łojek and the then director of the MWP, Col. Zbigniew Świącicki as the owner of the land, and Jędrzej Tucholski as the author of the concept of the Katyn Museum. On March 25, 1992, Dr. Łojek asked the President of the Republic of Poland, Lech Wałęsa:

[to] assume patronage of the future Katyn Museum, in which [petition] we read, among other things, the following: the Federation of Katyn Families, encompassing 30 provincial groups called the Katyn Family, and therein many thousands of families of murdered soldiers, addresses the President [as] supreme head of the Polish Armed Forces, with a fervent request for consent to assume the honorary patronage of this work of great social importance which we have undertaken, whose purpose is to preserve the memory for future generations of the Poles who defended the Homeland in 1939, the 15,000 Polish POWs victims of the NKVD.

The name of this enterprise: Katyn Museum.

Today the project has already taken very real shape (Łojek, Mikke, Sawicki, Trznadel 2000, p. 86).

Activities aimed at finding a place for the needs of the new memorial site were carried out simultaneously with the work of the Social Inventory Committee to collectively catalogue the items recovered after the exhumation work in Kharkiv and Mednoye. The committee was composed of Stanisław Chruściel, Sylwester Domański, Bogusław Kukła, Olga Lipińska, Janina Lubian-Udziela and Józef Sołtys. Additionally, Jędrzej Tucholski and retired colonel Zdzisław Sawicki were appointed as experts (Łojek, Mikke, Sawicki, Trznadel 2000, p. 89).

The First Location of the Katyn Museum

In order to meet the needs and requirements of this completely new museum, the 19th-century complex of the 9th “Dąbrowski” Fort in Warsaw, also known as the “Sadyba” or “Czerniaków” fort due to its location, was designated as the final location.

The remaining tsarist barracks, after a partial demolition at the beginning of the 20th century, but which were undamaged during World War II, were an attractive location. Despite the significant transformation of this part of the city and the urban changes that had taken place in Sadyba after the war (the new street dividing the fort has broken it almost in half and a park was created in its eastern part), a section of the original tsarist fortress buildings was left in the western part for use by the army. A short distance away from the busy thoroughfares, surrounded by greenery, the remains of a moat and the buildings of the former so-called Sadyba Oficerska district, the fort seemed to be an ideal place for a potential museum. The history of the fort itself also indicated that it could serve as a place which connected and commemorated several important aspects of Polish history: the heroic defence of Warsaw from the Nazi invasion of 1939, the Soviets’ crime at Katyn against defenceless detainees and political prisoners in 1940, and the Warsaw Rising of 1944.

In the second half of 1992, Colonel Zbigniew Świącicki presented the then Deputy Minister of National Defence Bronisław Komorowski with a formal request to establish the Katyn Museum in Fort Czerniakowski as a branch of the Polish Army Museum. In the letter, Minister Komorowski was presented with the organisational project of the Museum, taking into account important suggestions from the Katyn community, including that:

the Katyn Museum will be: [...] a permanent exhibition commemorating the fate of Poles in the Soviet Union after September 17, 1939 until their murder in Katyn, Kharkiv, Mednoye and other yet unknown places of execution, with an archive, library and scientific documentation centre.

Based on the decision of June 5, 1992 by the Chief of General Staff of the Polish Army No. 546, the Fort Sadyba

complex at 13 Powsińska street was entirely allocated to the organisation of the Katyn Museum. In response to the next letter from director Col. Święcicki of July 15, 1992, Deputy Minister Komorowski offered a handwritten resolution: “I accept the application”, appending his signature. This document is considered as the official decision to establish and organise the Katyn Museum as a branch of the Polish Army Museum (*Historia Muzeum Katyńskiego*).

At the same time, when the fate of the new museum was still at stake, on October 14, 1992, by the order of the President of Russia, Boris Yeltsin, the chairman of the Committee for the State Archives in Russia, Prof. Rudolf Pikhoya handed over copies of declassified and previously unknown Katyn documents to the President of the Republic of Poland, Lech Wałęsa. The dozens of documents from the so-called Special File no. 1 included copies of the decision of March 5, 1940, included in protocol number 13 as item 144, and the so-called “Shelepin notes” containing a proposal to destroy 21,857 personal files concerning the victims of the Katyn massacre (Wasilewski 2012).

On December 17, 1992, in the presence of representatives of the Katyn Families, the NKHBZK and the director of the Polish Army Museum, a large information board was installed at the entrance to the Fort in Sadyba from ul. Powsińska, reading “Under construction: The Katyn Museum. A branch of the Polish Army Museum”.

The moment of mounting a sign with the text:

“Under construction:

The Katyn Museum. A branch of the Polish Army Museum”, December 17, 1992, Fort Sadyba, Warsaw, Poland.

Source: Katyn Museum collection



At the beginning of 1993, about 5000 items excavated in August 1991 from the death pits in Kharkiv-Pyatikhvatky and Mednoye were transferred from the CLKP to the MWP. After the restoration and research work was carried out by the Microbiology Laboratory of the Military Institute of Aviation Medicine in Warsaw, CLKP, the Paper Conservation Workshop of the National Museum in Warsaw and the MWP, all the excavated artefacts were placed in the Museum and could be included in the new exhibition. The creation of a new museum was announced in an article in *Polska Zbrojna* on March 1, 1993 entitled “The Katyn Museum to be built at Fort Sadyba” [*W Forcie Sadyba powstanie Muzeum Katyńskie*], which not only described the conditions in the fort, but also the plans for the future:

Here, where not so long ago there was just a pile of rubble, some scaffolding was set up, on which there was a board with the name of the site. This area of over 3 hectares has now been cleaned up. All 19 of the casemates have been prepared for renovation and renovation. There are also plans to use a canteen that is to remain after the planned demolition of the barrack, which at present is a shelter for Warsaw’s homeless. The decision to use the former anti-aircraft barracks was handed down by a specialised commission. At first glance we can see that the host, although probably poor, has got down to work hard. We will not experience the momentum here, but we do see a lot of diligence, thrift and ordinary working-man’s thinking. A zloty is money here too. There were several reasons why the Polish Army Museum took over the area known as Fort Sadyba from the WAK [*Wojskowa Administracja Koszar*, Military Administration of Barracks] and the 10th Automobile Regiment. The main one is, of course, the huge yet cramped spaces and exhibition areas at Aleje Jerozolimskie. These are not owned by the Army, of course, because the lease of the eastern wing of the building of the National Museum actually expired in 1984. And here—slowly but surely—our army is restructuring, and the amount of equipment being withdrawn from active service is still rising. Should we give everything to [be melted down at] the steel mills? Another thing is the historical value of the fort itself, dating from the 19th century. In specially prepared casemates, the mementoes related to the military can look really good (*Polska Zbrojna* 1993, No. 41, p. 3).

Originally, at the turn of 1993, about 200 m² of the former tsarist brick barracks shelters were developed, which were to constitute exhibition space, warehouses and the public facilities of the museum. On June 29, 1993, the Katyn Museum was officially opened at 13 Powsińska street in Warsaw.



Opening ceremony of the Katyn Museum in Fort Sadyba, June 29, 1993, Warsaw, Poland. Rev. Zdzisław Peszkowski (L), Bożena Łojek (centre), Bishop Sławoj Głódź (then the Military Ordinary of Polish Armed Forces) (R), Bronisław Komorowski (then the Deputy Minister of Defense) (R). Source: Katyn Museum collection



Opening ceremony of the Katyn Museum in Fort Sadyba, June 29, 1993, Warsaw, Poland. Rev. Zdzisław Peszkowski (R), Sławomir Frątczak (Museum's curator) (centre). Source: Katyn Museum collection

The initial permanent exhibition by Maria Irzyk, entitled *Memory could not been destroyed* [*Pamięć nie dała się zgładzić*], the title of which was taken from the poem “Katyn” by Feliks Konarski (a.k.a. “Ref-Ren”), marked the beginning of a permanent monument to the victims of the Katyn massacre on a global scale. In commemorating this momentous event, *Polska Zbrojna* reported:

Upon handing over this special place of national remembrance to the public, the director of the Museum of the Polish Army, Col. Zbigniew Świącicki, drew attention to the symbolic dimension of the 110th anniversary of the construction of the fortifications in Sadyba by the Russian invaders. Today, the vaulted and barred casemates provide an eloquent setting for the revealed truth about a crime deliberately committed during another partition [of our country]. Delivering a specific sermon, Fr. Prelate Zdzisław Peszkowski—who once as a young cadet was held prisoner at Kozielsk—appealed for national remembrance for the victims of the criminal totalitarianisms. He mentioned, for example, the other nations that spare no money to erect huge mausoleums, locate the burial places of their countrymen, and meticulously determine their personal details. What can a Polish priest visiting them say about the graves of their martyrs? The father prelate expressed his hope that the museum, which is modest in scope today, would systematically grow, that this action would be a great work of the entire nation, serving future generations as a memento and a tragic warning.... In her speech, Dr. Bożena Łojek thanked the Army, the Ministry of National Defence, and the foundations and organisations involved in the creation of the Museum. Minister Komorowski considered its creation a summary of an important stage commemorating the martyrdom of Poles in the East. He also recalled the extensive participation of the Army and its specialist services in the discovery, documentation and preservation of the traces of the crime (*Polska Zbrojna* 1993, No. 127, pp. 1–2).

In the museum’s initial period of operation located in the first two rooms (the fortress casemates), the most important task was to undertake the broadly understood education of Polish society and create the “Card-index of the murdered”



Part of the permanent exhibition in the Fort Sadyba (1993–2009), Warsaw.
Source: Katyn Museum collections

[*Kartoteki osób pomordowanych*], that is, a collection of all the available archival documentation and reports, in order to create a comprehensive list of the victims of the Katyn massacre. At the same time, a drive was held to collect the family mementoes that could find a worthy place in the collection. After the completion of further exhumation work in 1994–6 in Katyn, Kharkiv-Pyatikhhatky and Mednoye, a significant number of grave artifacts arrived at the Katyn Museum, some of which, after being recovered from the death pits and restored, were displayed in the museum showcases. The exhibition area of the Katyn Museum was gradually enlarged over the years, and finally, in 1997, it came to cover about 500 m² of the fort's area. From 1993 to 2009, the collection included items excavated during the exhumation works in Katyn, Kharkiv-Pyatikhhatky and Mednoye, over 5000 photographs of the victims, as well as documents and archival material. It should be noted that concurrently to the documenting effort of Museum, the investigation led by the

Main Commission for the Prosecution of the Crimes against Polish Nation gathered substantial resources concerning the Katyn Forest massacre and its victims (*Odpowiedź* 2009).

The museum held a record of those murdered, and had an extensive, specialised book collection and a film library. Since its establishment, the Katyn Museum effectively operated on nothing more than the budget of the Polish Army Museum from the Ministry of National Defence, which offered the basic conditions at Fort Czerniakowski to store and display collections of particular importance for modern Polish history, in accordance with the requirements of the Act on Museums and the standards of contemporary museology. It should be emphasised that the Polish Army Museum, from the moment the Katyn Museum was established, provided this facility with rooms, audiovisual equipment, and covered the entire maintenance costs of the facility (including the cost of maintaining the premises), financed the equipment with air-conditioning devices, and paid the costs of telephone calls (enabling consultation, information and dissemination activities, among others for the victims' families). The museum also secured funds for the supply of consumables for the computer and printing equipment working in the department, and paid part of the maintenance costs of the exhibits, for services in the field of accepting gifts, deposits and acquisitions and their registration; it also incurred the costs of designing, implementing and promoting temporary exhibitions, travelling and educational exhibitions. It should be emphasised here that the initial staffing, consisting of both professional and service staff, as well as the technical service, was performed by only six people.

The main activity of the Katyn Museum involved, above all, the collection of memorabilia related to the Katyn massacre and the fate of Poles in the Soviet Union, as well as archival and visual materials, reports, documentaries, and publications devoted to the Katyn massacre. In addition, considerable efforts were focused on creating a computerised registry of the victims at Katyn, Kharkiv-Pyatikhatky, Tver-Mednoye (formerly Kalinin) and other places of execution, scientific studies of the collections, conservation activities, and dissemination of the Katyn case through exhibition activities, museum lessons, promotions in the mass media, etc.

A significant and extremely important role in the development of the facility was also played by the Council for the Protection of Memory of Struggle and Martyrdom [*Rada Ochrony Pamięci Walk i Męczeństwa*, ROPWiM], which donated nearly two-thirds of the artifacts recovered from the death pits during the 1991–6 exhumations at Katyn, Kharkiv-Pyatikhhatky and Mednoye. The ROPWiM (its duties are currently continued under the respective competences of the Ministry of Culture & National Heritage and the Institute of National Remembrance) organised and paid for the initial conservation (often long months of tedious and costly work) and coordinated descriptive research on these artefacts. The families of the murdered also played a great role, and they have provided (and still continue to do so) numerous family mementoes related to the victims (documents, photographs and reports on the fate of the murdered, especially from the period of their families' deportation to Kazakhstan: these were exhibited in the Memorial Hall in Sadyba until 2009), and they still contribute their information to the constant expansion of the file and computer database of the Katyn massacre's victims. Bearing in mind the need for public consultation, on September 16, 1999, the then director of the Polish Army Museum, Dr. Henryk Wielecki, established the Advisory Board of the Katyn Museum, a branch of the Polish Army Museum. This body performed auxiliary and consultative functions, and included people who had been involved in the investigation of the crimes since the 1980s. In addition to the representatives of the Polish Army Museum (Jolanta Adamska, deputy director of the MWP, who at the same time was appointed by the ROPWiM; and Zdzisław Sawicki, head of the Katyn Museum), the board members were Prof. Dr. Jacek Trznadel from the Polish Katyn Foundation; Włodzimierz Dusiewicz, President of the Board of the Katyn Families Federation; Dr. Ewa Gruner-Żarnoch, President of the Katyn Family of Szczecin; Witold Banaś, President of the *Rodzina Policyjna 1939* National Association; Iwona Dąbrowska from the Warsaw Katyn Family; Rev. Zdzisław Król; and, of course, the *spiritus movens* of many of the activities related to the commemoration of the Katyn case, Dr. Bożena Łojek.

Naturally, together with the development of the Katyn Museum, problems related to its functioning began: the institutions that had fought for its creation found themselves with nothing more than a substitute for the Museum. Despite the significant involvement of the MWP and other institutions and private persons, its own location and its extremely interesting collections, the new facility (according to its creators) did not meet all the expectations and hopes placed in it. What is more, the staff of the facility, apart from their devotion to its mission of ensuring the safety of the exhibition, was deprived of scientific and research facilities; and from 2003, the director-curator of the Museum was, in practice, the facility administrator, inventory supervisor and decision-maker in the field of conservation activities, and at the same time an educator. In 2008 alone, the Katyn Museum conducted museum lessons combined with sightseeing for about 260 organised groups—the vast majority of which, of course, were dealt with by the museum's director-curator. It also happened that, leaving aside the realities of the institution's operation, the effort to maintain and ensure the relatively efficient functioning of the institution, both in terms of museums and logistics (put mainly by the Polish Army Museum) was being undermined. In 1996, the *Polska Zbrojna* journalist Michał Kalinowski stated:

The negligible interest on the part of the authorities of Warsaw and its home district in the museum may be somewhat surprising. The mass media (with the exception of *Polska Zbrojna*) are not being overgenerous to the facility. It would be useful to support the museum's busy staff with an additional full-time staff member, bearing in mind the constantly growing number of exhibits, the increasing attendance and the ambitious plans for the future (*Polska Zbrojna* 1996, p. 9).

The original idea of the composition and exhibition was preserved until the end of the operation of the Katyn Museum in Sadyba, which, although it had grown over the years, was divided into several themes, linked to each other by the timeless history of the crime, the search and the discovery of the truth. The first room of the museum presented the genesis

of the crime and the fate of the victims on their way to their places of detention in the POW camps. There, thousands of artefacts and mementoes of the murdered were exhibited. In each of these rooms there were models of the places of burial and execution: the forests in which the death pits were discovered, as well as photographs and plans of the camps in Kozelsk, Starobelsk and Ostashkov. In addition, in the rooms about Kharkiv-Pyatikhatky and Mednoye, photographs of victims from the times preceding the outbreak of World War II were presented. Extremely important, in terms of memorandum and documentation, was the chronology of the exhumations in 1991–6. In the Hall of Memory, located at the end of the exhibition's route, the family memorabilia which came to the museum from around the world and donated as gifts or deposits, were exhibited.

New Challenges

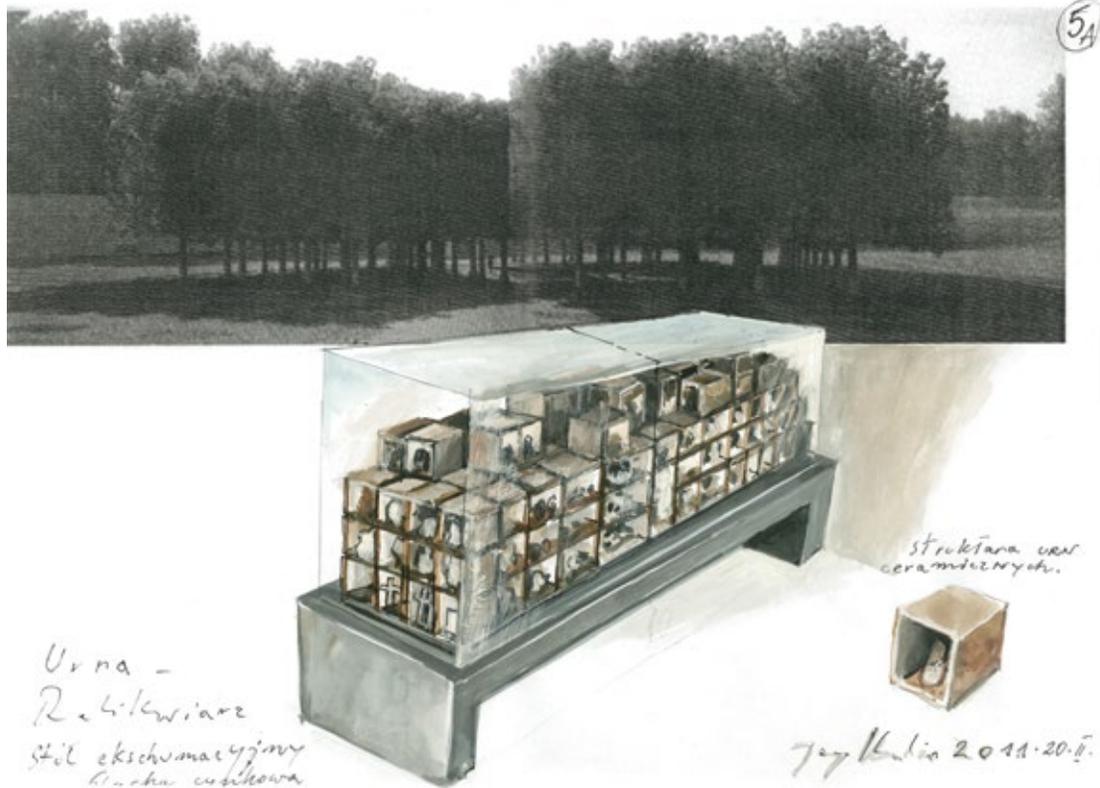
The Katyn Museum, established in 1993 in an atmosphere of enormous social pressure, was originally supposed to be a nationwide institution. However, the initial enthusiasm of many circles and institutions subsided, and the problem of the Museum's final location and mode of operation remained unresolved. Despite the numerous declarations made at the stage of its creation, the actual aid did not arrive until 2009. Meanwhile, the Polish Army Museum was not able to meet the demands and proposals from, among others, the Katyn Families: one of the most important issues, raised many times, primarily concerned the conditions in which the grave artefacts were stored. It was also necessary to arrange the largest possible exhibition space for the constantly expanding collections. After the closure of the Katyn Museum at 13 Powsińska street, its resources had been inaccessible to visitors. This was met with obvious protests and negative opinions, not only from the residents of the Sadyba district, but above all with criticism from the circles involved in commemorating the Katyn massacre. Hence, efforts were made to provide visitors with access to the history of the Katyn massacre—including, in particular, the grave artefacts—until the next site was created.

Memory Could Not Be Destroyed...

It was obvious that new exhibition would have to be prepared. In order to meet the new requirements and needs of a modern museum exhibition, while at the same time preserving the institution's founding principles, a special team was created: Sławomir Frątczak, curator of the Katyn Museum; Andrzej K. Kunert, Secretary General of the ROPWiM; Izabella Sariusz-Skańska, President of the Federation of Katyn Families; Mateusz Zemla, a delegate of the FRK; and Jerzy Kalina, a great Polish performer, author and creator of artistic installations (*Kalina*). The “scenario team”, who created the historical path of the new Katyn Museum, presented a concept for a temporary exhibition to the management of the Polish Army Museum and the Ministry of National Defence, who finally gave their approval. On September 17, 2011, in the Hetman's Hall of the Polish Army Museum at Jerozolimskie Avenue in Warsaw, the official opening of the temporary exhibition entitled *Memory could not be destroyed*, was held: the title was a direct link to the first exhibition at Sadyba.

The Hetman's Hall, which housed the temporary exhibition, was divided into several parts. They resembled the interior of a Caponier in the Warsaw Citadel (the future seat of the Katyn Museum), and also referred to the nature of the installations, which at this stage was merely suggested by means of large-format projections and photographs. The exhibition consisted of several spaces depicting the historical and artistic narrative: the first of these was the so-called “Archive”, where the cabinets—available as in an office or a library—contained a multitude of documents. In some of these cabinets profiles of the victims were presented. One element of the wall decorations was a representation of one half of a soldier's identity mark, the dog tag, fragments of which were found in the death pits.

This space also included the so-called “Silhouettes”: these were multimedia installations, where on each screen the visitor could read profiles of the Katyn victims. In addition to biographical information, one could see documents, private photos and other exhibits related to a specific person. In the second space, the main theme was the “dog



Concept drawing of the "Urna-Relikwiarz" - "Urn-Reliquary", and "Warta" - "The Watch" installations by Jerzy Kalina, prepared for "Pamięć nie dała się zgładzić..." ("Memory could not be destroyed...") exhibition, and future Katyn Museum areal, February 20, 2011. Source: Katyn Museum collection

tag", which constituted the background to the multimedia showcases. In the middle there were low display tables filled with water, in which copies of the documents and photographs were immersed. In this way, the effect of slowly revealing the truth was achieved, like an image emerging during the traditional process of developing a photograph. The "Discovery" installation was a supplement: one of the treatments deliberately employed there was a play of light, of reflections emitted from the projector, which recalled the rays of the sun passing through the branches of the trees.

Between the second and the third space, the visitors encountered the visualisation of future installations (projections, large-format photographs): the "Watch", a symbolic forest that was integrated into the square in front of the caponier in the projected museum building. The darkness there was intended to prepare the visitor to enter the exhibition and, in a way, to silence him. The "Scar" was a furrow cut in the



earth, which was to symbolise the wound left by the Soviets in the heart and memory of the nation. The “Sarcophagi” are rectangular objects, permanently welded shut, which used to represent wagons carrying the POWs from Kozielsk, Ostashkov and Starobielsk to the place of execution. In the next space there were chests in which the documents and protected items retrieved from the death pits in Kharkiv, Katyn and Mednoye were displayed. This formed the main part of the exhibition’s historical narrative. The walls were covered with glass panes, cut in the shape of the dog tag, with symbols of religions (crosses, the Star of David, and a crescent moon) repeating the motif from the Polish War Cemeteries in the East. It was assumed that the glass panes could be used as screens for temporary projections, for example during museum lessons. They could also contain individual quotations from remaining documents, such as the prisoners’ diaries found in the death pits, or the correspondence of prisoners with their families.

“Urn-Reliquiary” designed by Jerzy Kalina in the Polish Army Museum interiors during the *“Pamięć nie dała się zgładzić...”* (“Memory could not be destroyed...”) exhibition, September 2011. Source: Sławomir Frątczak collection

This space was complemented by the installation entitled “The Lost”, in which displayed by projector, blurred and hazy silhouettes appeared on the bare walls around the exhibition. Slowly emerging from the shadows, they became sharper—giving the impression that they were getting closer to the visitors. One could recognise the Polish officers walking within them. One of the most symbolic and important installations in the space called “Discovery” was a fragment of the exhibited German exhumation table from 1943. The culmination of this space was the presentation of the future installation “The Avenue of the Missing”—stone pedestals with the names of the professions or functions of the murdered, showing the visitors the people whom the Republic of Poland has irretrievably lost. In turn, the road led to the so-called “Dead End”, where film and documents from the German exhumation of 1943 were presented. This part of the tour was optional; in the final stage of the exhibition as well, the visitors was warned about the nature of the materials presented, so they could avoid it if they chose.

In the fourth space, the decor of the walls changed: the shape of the dog tag was now filled with a texture similar to earth and permafrost. In this stage, the showcases displayed the remains of the uniforms recovered from the death pits. In the middle of the room there were reliquaries: tables with clay urns in which personal items from the death pits were placed. The space was closed with large-format photographs from the Polish War Cemetery in Katyn. The fifth and last space of the “Wall of Memory” was filled with “Katyn Epitaphs”—that is, the names of all the victims of the Katyn massacre, classified by their places of execution and rest (Katyn, Kharkiv, Mednoye, Bykivnya). It should be noted that the “Epitaphs” also contain blanks intentionally left for the names of victims and places that are still unknown today, but who will someday be discovered and recalled. This refers particularly to the so-called Belarusian Katyn list, which may have been preserved in the old archives of the NKVD in Russia or Belarus (Petrov 2012).

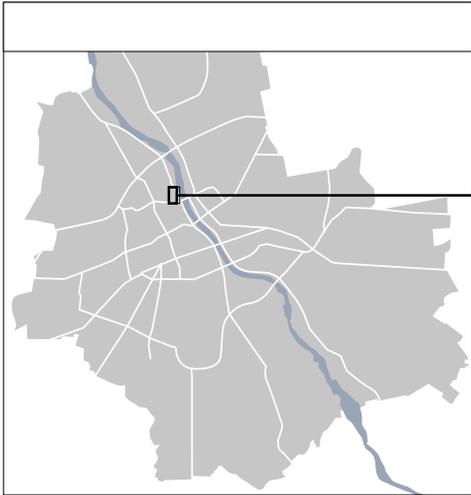
The permanent elements of the exhibition at the MWP were the “Calendar” presenting the chronology of crimes, the lies and the fight for the truth, and “Quotes”, explaining the origin of the most important terms and titles related to the

Katyn massacre and indicating their precise dates. The entire exhibition was designed and built to create three independent sightseeing paths, separately marked in the exhibition's visual identification system. Thanks to this, each visitor to the exhibition could choose the sightseeing method that best suited his preferences, mood or habits.

The Katyn Museum at the Warsaw Citadel

Simultaneously with the conceptual work on the exhibition in the Hetman's Hall of the MWP, a competition was organised to adapt a fragment of the Warsaw Citadel for the needs of a new, final resting place for the Katyn Museum. The place itself, located on the upper bank of the Vistula River, occupies a special place in the history of Poland. The citadel is one of the most important testimonies to the struggles and suffering of the Polish nation since the times of the Russian partition (Królikowski 2002). Interestingly, the 9th Fort in Sadyba, which originally housed the Katyn Museum, belonged to the outer ring of fortifications of the Warsaw Fortress, the centre of which was the Citadel (Ponikiewski 2010).

On April 8, 2010, the results of the "Competition for the programme and spatial concept of the Katyn Museum in the building and caponier surrounding of the Warsaw Citadel" were announced. 22 entries were submitted; the jury chaired by Konrad Kuczy-Kuczyński, together with a competition jury composed of representatives of the Katyn Families organisation, the MWP, the Ministry of National Defence, the Military Historical Research Bureau and the Association of Polish Architects selected the design concept proposed by the Maksa studio. Nobody expected that two days later, on April 10, 2010, many representatives of offices, institutions and the Katyn Families who were directly involved in the creation of the new Katyn Museum ("*Smoleńskie portrety*") would die in a plane crash near Smolensk in Russia. The authors of the winning design were Jan Belina Brzozowski & Konrad Grabowiecki, and Jerzy Kalina & Krzysztof Lang with their teams. The authors of the architecture and spatial solutions related to the adaptation of the caponier in the Warsaw Citadel to the new seat of the Katyn Museum were Jan Belina Brzozowski & Konrad Grabowiecki



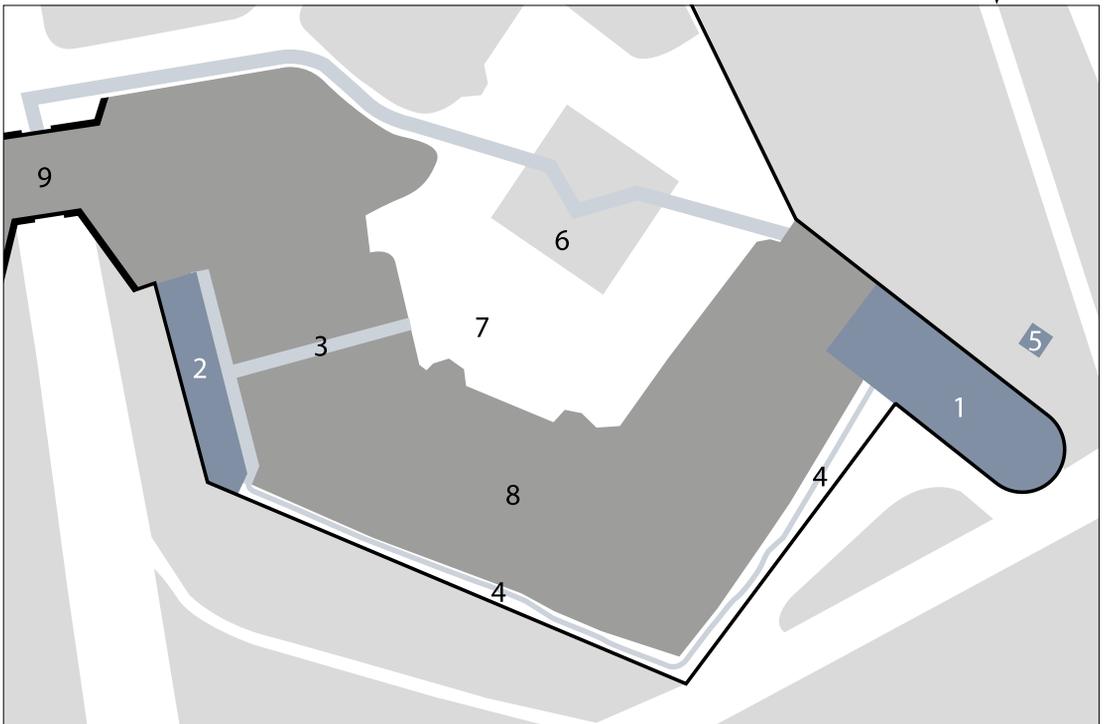
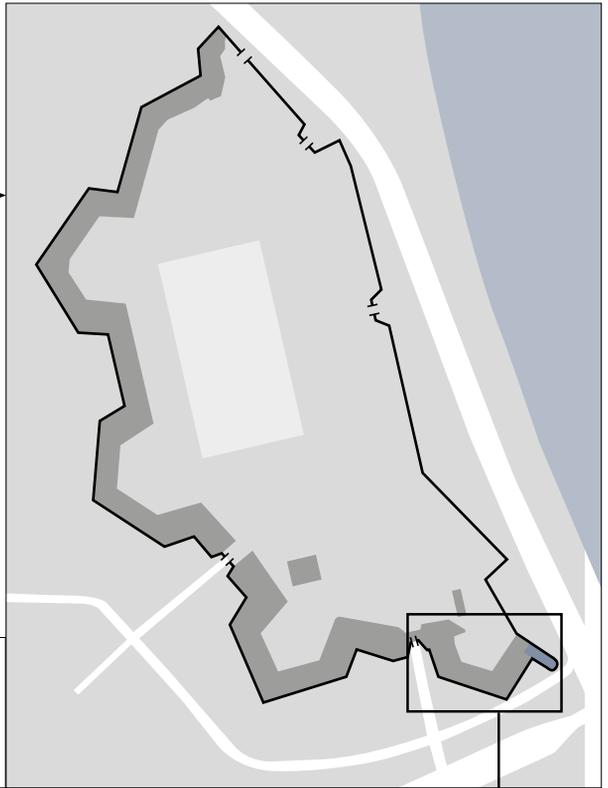
WARSAW

-  Vistula River
-  Main roads and junctions

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THE WARSAW CITADEL

-  Vistula River
-  Museum of Polish History building
-  Gates and external walls
-  Citadel earthwork



THE KATYN MUSEUM

- 1 Museum main building
- 2 The Katyn Epitaphs
- 3 "Passage"
- 4 The Avenue of the Absent
- 5 The Katyn Bell
- 6 "The Watch" and "the Scar"
- 7 "The Trooping Square"
- 8 Citadel earthwork
- 9 The Nowe Miasto Gate – Museum's main entrance

from the Brzozowski/Grabowiecki Architekci studio (*Muzeum Katyńskie [Projekty]*; see *Budowa Muzeum* 2010). The historical scenario for the future permanent exhibition was developed by a team under Prof. Andrzej K. Kunert. The final exhibition concept was implemented by the TRIAS company (*Muzeum Katyńskie – nadzory* 2020). The landscape architecture was the responsibility of the PASA Design company and Anna Kalina (Grabowiecki 2015).

After almost three years of “design struggles” to create the final artistic narrative and develop the historical scenario of the permanent exhibition, PBM Południe SA was selected as the general contractor after the tender procedure was completed (*Ogłoszenie* 2013; *Ruszyły* 2013).

On October 9, 2013, a meeting was held at the site where the construction of the Katyn Museum began, involving Tomasz Siemoniak, the head of the Ministry of National Defence; Bogdan Zdrojewski, the Minister of Culture and National Heritage; Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz, the Mayor of the Capital City of Warsaw; Andrzej Kunert, secretary of the Council for the Protection of Memory of Combat and Martyrdom; Maciej Klimczak, Undersecretary of State in the Chancellery of the

The Caponier – one of the Citadel batteries that are now exhibition rooms of the Katyn Museum.

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President of the Republic of Poland; Izabella Sariusz-Skańska, the president of the Federation of Katyn Families; and Prof. Zbigniew Wawer, the director of the Polish Army Museum. At the construction site, Sławomir Frątczak, the curator of the Katyn Museum, presented the concept of the new museum to the audience, and Zbigniew Gontarz, the President of PBM Południe SA, showed the guests around the construction site.

Almost a year later, on September 17, 2014—the anniversary of the Soviet attack on Poland—a meeting was held in the Warsaw Citadel between Bronisław Komorowski, the President of the Republic of Poland, and the Katyn Families. The President then unveiled the first plaques: the so-called “Katyn Epitaph” (listing the victims from the Katyn cemetery). During the ceremony, the scope of construction and conservation works as completed in the first stage was also presented. On December 15, 2014, in accordance with the plan to create a new seat for the Katyn Museum, branch of the Polish Army Museum in the Warsaw Citadel (both the Caponier exhibitions and the so-called “external installations” by Jerzy Kalina), the sculptor Zbigniew Mikielwicz brought another part of the plaques for the “Katyn Epitaph” (containing names from the so-called Ukrainian Katyn list, commemorating those buried at the Polish Military Cemetery at Bykivnya near Kyiv).

The House of the Katyn Relics

On September 17, 2015, the Katyn Museum was officially opened; in attendance were the President of the Republic of Poland Andrzej Duda, Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz, Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of National Defence Tomasz Siemoniak, Minister of Culture and National Heritage Prof. Małgorzata Omilanowska, members of the Katyn Families and priests of all faiths (*Otwarcie* 2015). The exposition of the Katyn Museum is located on two storeys of the Caponier. The museum was intended to fulfil its main goal of documenting the Katyn massacre and paying tribute to its victims by creating a space of remembrance. The heroes of the Katyn Museum were not only the victims of the crimes and their families, but also all those who had fought for decades to reveal the truth about Katyn. The museum was therefore intended to be both

a meeting place and a place of contemplation for the Katyn Families, as well as to be a modern educational institution that allows the visitor to get acquainted with the basic information regarding this crime. The Katyn massacre, as one of the most dramatic subjects in the history of Poland, required special treatment through the use of expressive means of exposition. According to the creators of the winning project, the Museum is a place of memory and documentation for the Katyn massacre, a tribute to its victims, and an educational institution where special emphasis is placed on reaching young visitors through specially prepared educational programmes, intended to serve as a modern lesson in patriotism.

III. THE MISSION OF THE KATYN MUSEUM: THE INTENTIONS, ASSUMPTIONS AND MESSAGE

Before the Katyn Museum was organised in Sadyba, Bożena Łojek sent an appeal by the Federation of Katyn Families to the deputy prosecutor general, Stefan Śnieżko, asking that

material evidence in the form of preserved documents, uniforms, elements of military equipment and personal belongings [...] extracted and brought to Poland be placed in the Katyn Museum, which should be set up [...] following the example of the State Museum in Oświęcim and the Museum at Majdanek (Łojek, Mikke, Sawicki, Trznadel 2000, p. 67).

In the same letter, the Federation of Katyn Families clarified its plans and expectations regarding the new museum, which

should have a broader dimension: namely, apart from the collection of memorabilia, it should collect all the documents related to the Katyn massacre (...). In addition to museum collections and the archive of documents, it should be equipped with a library collection and a research laboratory that would conduct relevant scientific research (Łojek, Mikke, Sawicki, Trznadel 2000, p. 67).

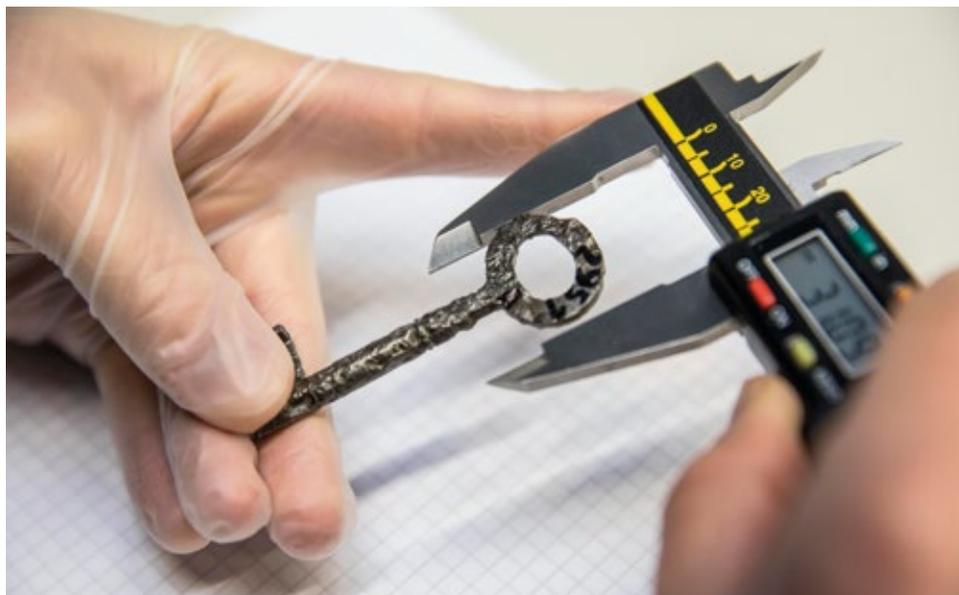


The entrance to the Caponier.
© Katarzyna Adamów, 2021

The Katyn Museum, the Martyrology Branch of the Polish Army Museum, has carried out a timeless mission since it started its operation in 1993 until today, in accordance with its founding principles. Apart from the obvious, general statutory provisions regarding the collection and care of the museum's collections, it is primarily a place of remembrance. From the beginning, the Museum's mission has been focused on the presentation (in various forms) of the grave artefacts, which, due to their specificity, can appeal to the visitor in an unprecedented way. In this case, as in other museums of martyrdom, the choice of which of the victims' belongings to display is also intended to serve a warning to future generations. The presentation of the mass-scale nature of the crime, which affected over 20,000 citizens of the Republic of Poland, is related to the question of how one group of people could have prepared such a fate for another group. An extremely important and undeniably fundamental element of the Katyn Museum's mission is the symbolic "revival" of objects, which in practice is carried out through their research, and ultimately results in assigning them to specific people known by name and displaying their "Testimony" in the museum space. These objects—which serve as evidence

of the crime, being actual silent witnesses—contribute to the creation of completely new trends in educational activities in the narrative of the museum's mission.

In the Katyn Museum, the statement made by the nearly 40,000 artefacts in the collections today is unambiguous. The objects that the victims had with them in their last moments not only indicate their identity and lifestyle, but also their interests and passions. The museum exhibition also includes fragments of ammunition (of both German and Soviet manufacture) recovered from the mass graves, and which constitute direct evidence of the crime. The display of these items is intended not only to show the specific crime, but also to have an educational effect; historical and human-rights education (in this case the right to life and protection against genocide) is part of the Museum's mission of educating the public. The popularisation of history among Polish society has been part of the Katyn Museum's work from the very beginning: it is an indispensable element of the Museum's aim to complement general education and popular historical awareness. The influence of the Museum's message on shaping patriotic attitudes in Poland is also significant, especially among the young generation, which unfortunately shows less and less interest in history. Among the educational activities, one of the most important elements is the skilful combination of the core exhibition with a narrative matched to the age, interests and perception of the visitors. Taking into account the collections (both the mass graves artefacts as well as the archives, photographs, reports and testimonies) and the issues raised by the Katyn Museum, it may seem to be a mono-thematic museum, devoted exclusively to commemorating the martyrdom of the Home Army officers. Nothing could be further from the truth: the permanent exhibition shows many threads of the lives of the victims, presented by the objects, symbols and spaces; these things can coexist, and also be separate elements of the museum's narrative. The universal message of the external and internal exhibition shows that, in parallel to the museum's main message, focused on the Katyn massacre, there are paths dealing with the history of the Russian Citadel in Warsaw, the mass deportations of Polish citizens by the Soviets, Poland's struggle for independence, the restoration of the truth of history since 1989, and the commemoration of people and past events.



The cataloguing and identification works: one of the many keys found in the mass graves – the victims still had the keys to their flats on them.
© Katarzyna Adamów, 2021

When, at the beginning of the 1990s, the new and hitherto unknown circumstances of the Soviet genocide against citizens of the Republic of Poland were discovered, the Katyn Museum, which was established at that time, naturally became a place connecting all the research circles and the families of the victims. Thanks to the inspiration of its co-creators and the result of their efforts, it was established as a branch of the Polish Army Museum in Warsaw, the largest military museum in Poland, and one of the most important national centres of knowledge about the history of the Polish army. The creation of completely new exhibitions devoted to the crimes committed by the Soviets against the citizens of the Republic of Poland and the creation of the unique Katyn Museum led to a reinforcement of the historical message, which is directed not only to Polish society, but also more and more often for foreign visitors. The unquestionable success of all the permanent and temporary exhibitions of the Katyn Museum, beginning with the fort in Sadyba, is the timeless message which brings all visitors closer to both the history of Poland and its contacts with its neighbours in the 20th century, the tragedy of September 1939, the deportations of civilians in 1940–1, and above all, the history of the Katyn massacre. Before 1989, these events had been subject to the monopoly of Communist propaganda, which resorted to censorship and the



The cataloguing and identification works: the *Virtuti Militari* cross, the highest Polish military decoration. As the military regulations required the military to wear their decorations on their uniforms, it was a copy for daily use – without the number, the identification of the decorated soldier is impossible. © Katarzyna Adamów, 2021



The cataloguing and identification works: comb found with the remains of one of the victims. © Katarzyna Adamów, 2021



The evidence of the crime:
shells and cartridges found
in the mass graves.
© Katarzyna Adamów, 2021

The Nowe Miasto Gate
(Tsar Alexander Gate)
of the Warsaw Citadel –
the main entrance
to the Katyn Museum.
© Franciszek Dąbrowski, 2021

falsification of the educational message. The freedom to both research and popularise knowledge about the Katyn Massacre and its commemoration, along with the establishment of the Katyn Museum, were significant elements of the democratic transformation in Poland after 1989. The function and element of the Museum's concept, therefore, is not only the long-term protection of the collections, and therefore the material heritage of Katyn, but also of the immaterial heritage which operates in the collective memory of the Polish people.



IV. THE EXHIBITIONS OF THE KATYN MUSEUM: OUTDOOR INSTALLATIONS AND EXHIBITIONS

The Outside Space: in Front of the Entrance to the Museum

In its new location, the Katyn Museum found not only a suitable external space, but also the opportunity to present a comprehensive and well-thought-out vision of its displays, selected elements of which were presented at the headquarters of the Polish Army Museum during the exhibition *Memory could not be destroyed...* The assumptions that guided the creators and originators could only be presented in their full splendour in a new location. Due to the size of the premises, as well as the vegetation which covered a significant part of the new building, it was decided that the set of spatial installations would also become an important, often symbolic part of the museum. Each element of the installation which creates the external narrative touches the subject of the Katyn massacre in a different, often metaphorical way, commemorating the victims, places or events. The Museum's space at the Warsaw Citadel is limited by the historic military architecture, but at the same time it is filled with modern visual and historical messages. It is a kind of new interpretation of a public facility, which is also a memorial site combining many modern and historic architectural elements, sculptures, spatial objects and greenery.

Nowe Miasto Gate (Brama Nowomiejska)

The first element showing the use and adaptation of the former tsarist fortress for museum purposes is the Nowe Miasto Gate (i.e. facing the Nowe Miasto district; a.k.a. the Tsar Alexander Gate), which, together with the guardhouse, was erected in the 1880s as the fourth gate of the Warsaw Citadel. After crossing the gate, guests find themselves on the



Concept drawing of "The Watch" (Warta) and "The Scar" (Blizna) installations by Jerzy Kalina, 2010.
Source: Katyn Museum



"The Watch" (Warta) and "The Scar" (Blizna) installations designed by Jerzy Kalina.
Katyn Museum entrance area. © Katarzyna Adamów, 2021



Concept drawing of "The Sarcophagi" (Sarkofagi) installation by Jerzy Kalina.
Source: Katyn Museum



The "Sarcophagi" installation and the entrance to the Caponier. Source: Katyn Museum

premises limited by an earth and brick embankment, which perfectly muffles the sounds of the city. In the guardhouse directly adjacent to the gate there is the cash desk, the museum shop and a café.

The Watch (Warta)

The first installation that catches the eye of the visitor is “the Watch” [*Warta*], a symbolic reference to the soldiers standing in the ranks—silent trees from the “Katyn forest”—who are both witnesses to the crime and guardians of memory. The unnatural, geometric shape of this symbolic Katyn forest, as intended by the authors, refers to Communism—a totalitarian system that limited its victims on all sides. An extremely interesting and purposeful treatment in this small area is the combination of the play of the shadows from the trees (hornbeams with specially formed canopies) and the biting cold. The twilight is intended to give the impression of an impenetrable, dark forest, concealing an opaque secret.

The Scar (Blizna)

Through the trees that make up the “Warta” installation, there is a path called “the Scar” [*Blizna*], shaped to resemble unstable and shifting ground. It is a dynamic sign of the harm done to thousands of people by the Katyn massacre—not only to the victims, but also to their relatives and families. The “scar” is also a symbol of the never-healed wound suffered by the entire nation.

The Sarcophagi-Wagons (Sarkofagi-Wagony)

While traveling through the “Watch” and “Scar”, visitors come across the installation “Sarcophagi” installation, which is made up of three stone railway carriages. These refer to the shape of the wagons used to transport prisoners from the

camps in Starobielsk, Kozielsk and Ostashkov to the places of execution. They are also a kind of reminder that apart from them, hundreds of thousands of citizens of the Republic of Poland were deported to the East in the same carriages. On the opposite side of the “Sarcophagi” installation, on the northern side of the “Watch” installation, there is the Katyn Cross and the roll-call square, where official ceremonies and gatherings are held.

The Katyn Bell (Dzwon Katyński)

Right next to the walls of the Warsaw Citadel, from the side of the Vistula River, in the area adjacent to the caponier of the first bastion which is the seat of the Katyn Museum, there is the Katyn Bell, weighing one and a half ton. The bell, although intentionally damaged (by a shot hole), is not deprived of sound. Next to the hole, there is a Polish military eagle, and on the opposite side, the text of the “Rota”, a patriotic hymn written by Maria Konopnicka, known as the unofficial Polish national anthem. The bell was first rung during the opening of the Katyn Museum on September 17, 2015.

The Museum’s Interior Exhibitions

The Katyn Museum’s exposition consists of two levels: “Discovery”, which shows the political context and the search for the truth about Katyn; and “Testimony”, which is a collection of the mass graves artefacts, the evidence that directly testifies to the Soviet crime.

As visitors follow the path, they reach the main entrance of the Katyn Museum, leaving the “Watch” installation. The black stone plaque at the entrance with the inscription “Katyn Museum”, funded by the Katyn Families, was transported there from the Museum’s first seat in Sadyba. The mighty double-leaf metal doors are decorated with images of several dozen military buttons bearing the state symbol of the eagle. The “Katyn button” (one of the most common finds in the Katyn mass graves) is one of the museum’s most important symbols.



The entrance gate to the Caponier, the “Katyn button” (copy of the button from the Polish military uniform, one of the most frequent finds in mass graves).

© Franciszek Dąbrowski, 2021

The Katyn Bell (*Dzwon Katyński*).
© Franciszek Dąbrowski, 2021



The “Discovery” Level (“Odkrywanie”)

Visitors going down to the caponier are accompanied by blurry silhouettes symbolising those who went into Soviet captivity. This is a multimedia installation called “Lost” (“Zaginieni”); it leads to the conference and exhibition hall, which in turn is linked to the entrance to the exhibition, the conference room and the cloakroom for guests.

One of the hall’s walls is a polished stone slab with multimedia screens showing the visualisation of the museum and diagrams of the exhibition. It fills the space of the walls of the museum’s entire exhibition with elements resembling single halves of military identity signs. This is a deliberate reference to another symbol of the Katyn Museum, the military dog tag. As these were discovered, they made it possible to identify the victims of the Katyn massacre, and also to indicate the locations of the mass graves.

The exhibition at the “Discovery” level offers viewers the chance to learn (naturally, in a very simplified manner) about the history of Poland in the years 1918–39, as well as the causes, course and consequences of the Katyn massacre. An important, yet often underestimated element of the exhibition is the stone plaques showing the profiles of people who have significantly contributed to the explanation and commemoration of the Katyn massacre in Poland and around the world.

“Neighbourhood” (“Sąsiedztwo”)

The first room, which teaches about the period of the Polish-Bolshevik war of 1919–20 and the elements of cooperation between the German Third Reich and Soviet Russia, is called “Neighbourhood”. With the help of photographs and multimedia elements, it shows the image of Poland as it was rebuilt after World War I, and had to engage in armed struggle not only with its neighbours, but also with the new geopolitical system in Europe. The elements of the exhibition showing the Soviet Union’s anti-Polish activities in this system include the presentations of the treaty of Rapallo (1922), the NKVD’s “Polish Operation” in 1937–8, and the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact.



The light installation "Lost"
[Zaginieni] in the entrance
corridor to the Caponier
interiors and exhibition rooms,
symbolising prisoners who
went into Soviet captivity.
© Katarzyna Adamów, 2021

“Absence” (“Brak”)

The next space of the exhibition, entitled “Absence”, begins with the history of the outbreak of World War II and the Soviet attack on Poland on September 17, 1939. It shows the convergent elements of both invaders’ occupation policy, and the most important moments of their cooperation, including a joint parade of German and Soviet troops in Brest, as well as the parallel actions carried out by both the Germans and the Soviets, which were aimed at the elimination of the Polish elites and socially active groups. This creates an important context for the Katyn massacre.

“Search 1” (“Poszukiwania 1”)

“Search” is another element of the exhibition at the “Discovery” level. It presents the deportations that affected families of POWs and political prisoners. This part of the exhibition describes the four major deportations involving almost 800,000 citizens of the Republic of Poland, which were carried out in 1940–1 onto the territories occupied by the Soviet Union. Special displays resembling chests contain memorabilia and items made by the deportees. One of the most important exhibits is the letters sent by the POWs to their relatives, which allowed the Soviet security authorities to detect them and include them on the lists for deportation. In the spring of 1940, this correspondence suddenly ceased.

“Search 2” (“Poszukiwania 2”)

The next space, called “Search 2”, shows the world after the German attack on the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. It was a turning point: war broke out between the erstwhile allies, and the hitherto broken diplomatic relations between the governments of Poland and the Soviet Union were re-established. One consequence of these events was the temporary normalisation of Polish-Soviet relations, an announcement of amnesty for the imprisoned Poles, the signing of the Polish-



Soviet military convention, the so-called Sikorski-Maysky Agreement, and the commencement of the formation of Polish armed units on Soviet territory. It was also the moment when the search for the missing officers known to be in Soviet captivity began. This space also includes a multimedia portrayal of Józef Czapski, who was a co-creator of the “list of missing persons”.

“The Discovery” (*Odkrywanie*) level of the exhibition.
“The Neighbourhood” (*Sąsiedztwo*) space.
© Katarzyna Adamów, 2021

“Discovery 1” (“Odkrycie 1”)

The rapid advances by German troops in 1941 led to the occupation of the vicinity of Smolensk. It was there that the mass graves of murdered Polish officers were discovered in spring 1943. The installation consisting of photos immersed in water is a characteristic element of this space. This is reminiscent of an old photographic workshop that uses chemicals to develop and fix the image. The first of the photos in the exhibition are blurry—you can only see the contours of the silhouettes and the condensed steam on the glass pane; this presentation is supposed to represent the process of discovering the truth about the Katyn massacre. The history of the discovery of the graves in Katyn is described on special metal plaques.



"The Discovery" (Odkrywanie)
level of the exhibition.
© Katarzyna Adamów, 2021



"The Discovery" (*Odkrywanie*)
level of the exhibition.
"The Discovery 1" space.
© Katarzyna Adamów, 2021

"Exhumations" ("*Ekshumacje*")

A multimedia presentation of original German and Soviet film chronicles showing the work of the two research commissions, the German one in 1943 and the Soviet one in 1944. Both films, prepared for propaganda purposes, document the crime scene and its immediate surroundings, as well as the people present at the scene.

"Discovery 2" ("*Odkrycie 2*")

Another element of the exhibition presents the political consequences of the German discovery in Katyn, the war of propaganda, as well as how the "Katyn affair" influenced the severing of Polish-Soviet relations in 1943. An important role is played by the presentation of the great powers' attitude to the Soviet murder of the Polish officers, and their tacit consent to the Soviet version which blamed the Germans.

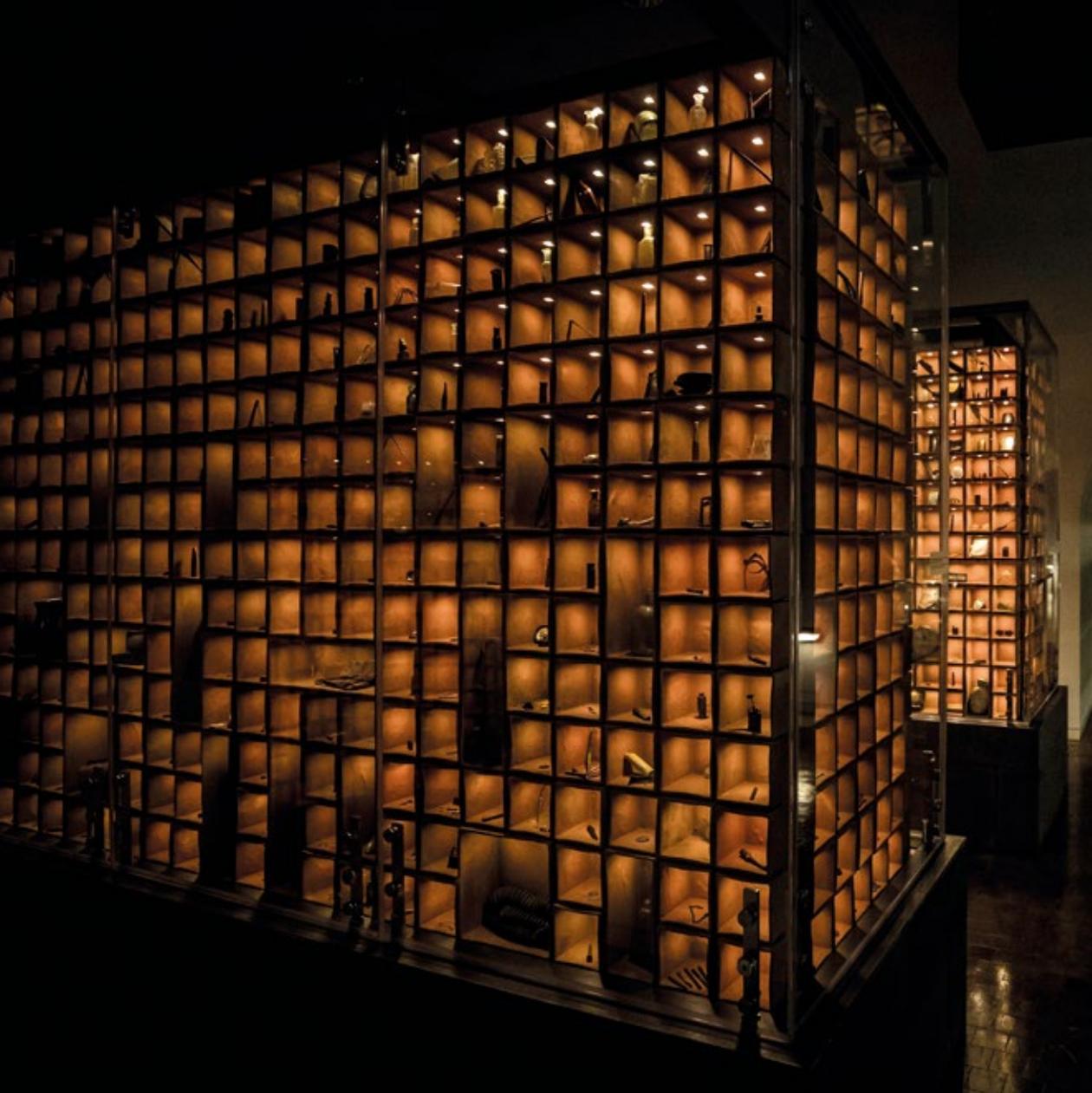


“Lie” (“Kłamstwo”)

The next space is devoted to the search for the truth and the Katyn lie which was repeated for years in Sovietised Poland. An integral element of this room is the history of the work of the so-called Burdenko commission, and the subsequent attempt to blame the Germans during the Nuremberg trial. The first reliquary, containing artefacts retrieved from the death pits in Katyn, is located at the junction of these two rooms (“Search 1” and “Lie”).

The “Lie” space also presents a wide spectrum of the activities undertaken by Polish emigrants in Western Europe which were aimed at exposing the falsehood of Soviet propaganda. The vertical boxes display the most important publications about the fight to identify the crime’s real perpetrators. The books and publications include works by Janusz K. Zawodny, Jerzy Łojek, Adam Macedoński, and the report by the Madden Commission. The drawers hide official documents that, forged by the offices of the Polish People’s Republic, give the dates

“The Discovery” (Odkrywanie)
level of the exhibition.
The uniform of the Polish
Army general.
© Katarzyna Adamów, 2021



The “Reliquaries” constructed of clay containers—“Urns”—with artifacts found in mass graves.
© Katarzyna Adamów, 2021

of deaths as being much later than the reality. This room also shows the attempts to commemorate the Katyn massacre, which were illegal under Communism in Poland.

“Breakthrough” (“Przełom”)

The breakthrough in the history of the Katyn affair is marked by a change in the exposition’s colour tone to a brighter one, symbolising the triumph of truth over lies. The images include

photos of Mikhail Gorbachev handing over documents from the Soviet archives to Wojciech Jaruzelski. The plaques show the history of the creation of the Katyn Museum, as well as the Polish War Cemeteries in Katyn, Kharkiv-Pyatikhatky, Kyiv-Bykivnya and Tver-Mednoye. Part of the exhibition is devoted to Fr. Zbigniew Peszkowski, chaplain of the Federation of Katyn Families. This space also presents some of the scientific and popular literature on the Katyn massacre which were published in free Poland. Andrzej Wajda's film "Katyn" is also commemorated in this space.

Behind the "Breakthrough" space there is a multimedia list of the names of people known to have been murdered in the Katyn massacre, classified by cemeteries, as well as multimedia kiosks showing the map of the crime and the profiles of selected victims. From here, you can go to the next level of the permanent exhibition of the Katyn Museum, called "Testimony".

The "Testimony" ("Świadectwo") Level

As on the "Discovery" level, one element of the exhibition are the "Reliquaries", concrete illuminated structures that refer to the military identity symbols present everywhere, the so-called dog tags. In this space, items extracted from the death pits in Bykivnya, Kharkiv, Katyn and Mednoye have been collected in specially constructed illuminated display cases. In these enormous Reliquaries, divided into individual clay containers ("urns"), the individual artefacts are presented. The items found with the remains are presented in such a way as to constitute evidence of the crimes, as well as at indicating their origin and use in order to enable the at least partial identification of the victims and their fate.

The term "Katyn relics" was used for the first time by Fr. Prelate Z. Peszkowski, who described all the artefacts recovered from mass graves in this way.

Among the artefacts exhibited in the Museum and recovered during the exhumation and archaeological works in Bykivnya in Ukraine, the dog tag of Józef Naglik, a sergeant of the Border Protection Corps, deserves special attention. The discovery of his military tag was a breakthrough in



Dog tag of Sgt. Józef Naglik, soldier of the Border Protection Corps (*Korpus Ochrony Pogranicza*), commander of the KOP post in Skafat near Tarnopol (today Ternopil in Ukraine), found in the mass grave in Kyiv-Bykivnya, Ukraine. Sgt. Naglik was among the Polish POWs listed on the so-called "Ukrainian Katyn List", containing names of victims executed in the NKVD prisons in Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. The finding of Sgt. Naglik's dog tag is one of the key pieces of evidence that Polish prisoners of the "Ukrainian Katyn List" were executed in Kyiv, and their bodies hidden in Bykivnya. © Katarzyna Adamów, 2021



Badge of the Polish Touring Association (PTTK) in Podole region, belonging to Wincenty Urbański, a teacher from Buczacz. It was found in mass grave in Kyiv-Bykivnya.
© Katarzyna Adamów, 2021

the research conducted there. It clearly confirmed that the bodies of the people on the so-called “Ukrainian Katyn List” (including Naglik) had been buried at Bykivnya. Another artifact confirming the victims’ origin is a comb, the so-called “delouser” (which had especially thick teeth for combing hair lice; such items were necessary due to the unhygienic conditions in the POW camps), on which the scratched names and surnames of the victims can be read: Franciszek Strzelecki, Ludwik Dworzak, as well as the surnames of Gronowski and Szczyrad[owski]. It should be mentioned that Ludwik Dworzak, whose data was found on the comb, was one of the most outstanding Polish criminal lawyers of the Second Polish Republic. In the same reliquary there is a badge of the Podolia Tourist and Sightseeing Society belonging to Wincenty Urbański, a teacher and activist of the Polish Teachers’ Union and the Polish Socialist Party.

The next two Reliquaries contain burial artefacts from Kharkiv-Pyatikhatky (Ukraine). Among the numerous elements from uniforms, the equipment and personal items, the seemingly ordinary wooden boxes for tobacco, cigarettes or tissue papers are of particular interest. Their special value results



from the inscriptions carved on them with specific places and dates—none later than April 1940. Among the “Katyn relics” recovered in Pyatikhatky there are two unusual items: a gold watch belonging to Col. Military Gendarme Stanisław Sitek and the Officer’s Badge of Gendarmerie No. 9 belonging to Col. Military Gendarme Stanisław Kuciel. These two very different items are connected by the extraordinary story of the friendship between two officers, one of whom was murdered in Kalinin and the other in Kharkiv. In a strange and so far unexplained way, an inscribed watch belonging to Col. Sitek ended up in one of the death pits in Kharkiv; perhaps Colonel Sitek gave his watch to Colonel Kuciel before being taken prisoner.

The last two Reliquaries show artefacts excavated in Tver-Mednoye (Russia), where the murdered prisoners from the Ostashkov camp, mainly policemen and soldiers of the Border Protection Corps, are buried. You can see the characteristic navy blue uniforms of the State Police and the Police of the Silesian Voivodeship, as well as police badges, eagles from police caps, buttons, shoulder straps and handcuff keys. In these Reliquaries, there are also items related to the officers of the Prison Guard, of whom over 300 were murdered in

Gold watch of Col. Stanisław Sitek (L) and Officer’s Badge of Gendarmerie No. 9 belonging to Col. Stanisław Kuciel (R), found in mass grave in Pyatikhatky, Kharkiv, Ukraine. Col. Sitek was murdered in Kalinin (today Tver), and Col. Kuciel was murdered in Kharkiv. Apparently Col. Sitek gave his watch to his friend Col. Kuciel before being taken prisoner.
© Katarzyna Adamów, 2021



The "Reliquiaries" constructed of clay containers—"Urns"—with artifacts found in mass graves.
© Katarzyna Adamów, 2021



Remains of a German autopsy table, used during the German exhumations in Katyn in 1943. Source: Katyn Museum collections

Kalinin, together with the policemen. The line of Reliquaries is crowned with a semicircular recess in which are found items found during the survey and exhumation works in Katyn.

Around the Reliquaries, right under the semicircular symbolic “dog tags” incorporated into the walls, there are display cases holding items retrieved from the death pits. Among the elements of the uniforms gathered in horizontal displays, a special place is occupied by a summer flight suit and police cloaks. Among the leather goods shown at the permanent exhibition, a significant place is occupied by all kinds of map bags, leather bags and shoes, which were repaired many times in the camps by makeshift methods. Among them are the so-called roll-offs, that are wooden soles fixed under the soles of shoes with strings or tapes, designed to protect them against snow, mud or moisture.

Among the artefacts in the Katyn Museum, one of the most important and, at the same time, most tragic pieces of evidence of the crime is a fragment of the German exhumation (dissection) table from 1943. Together with the only known and preserved German medallion with a victim’s identification number (they were pinned to the bodies examined in 1943), it constitutes unique evidence of the investigation into the Soviet crime.

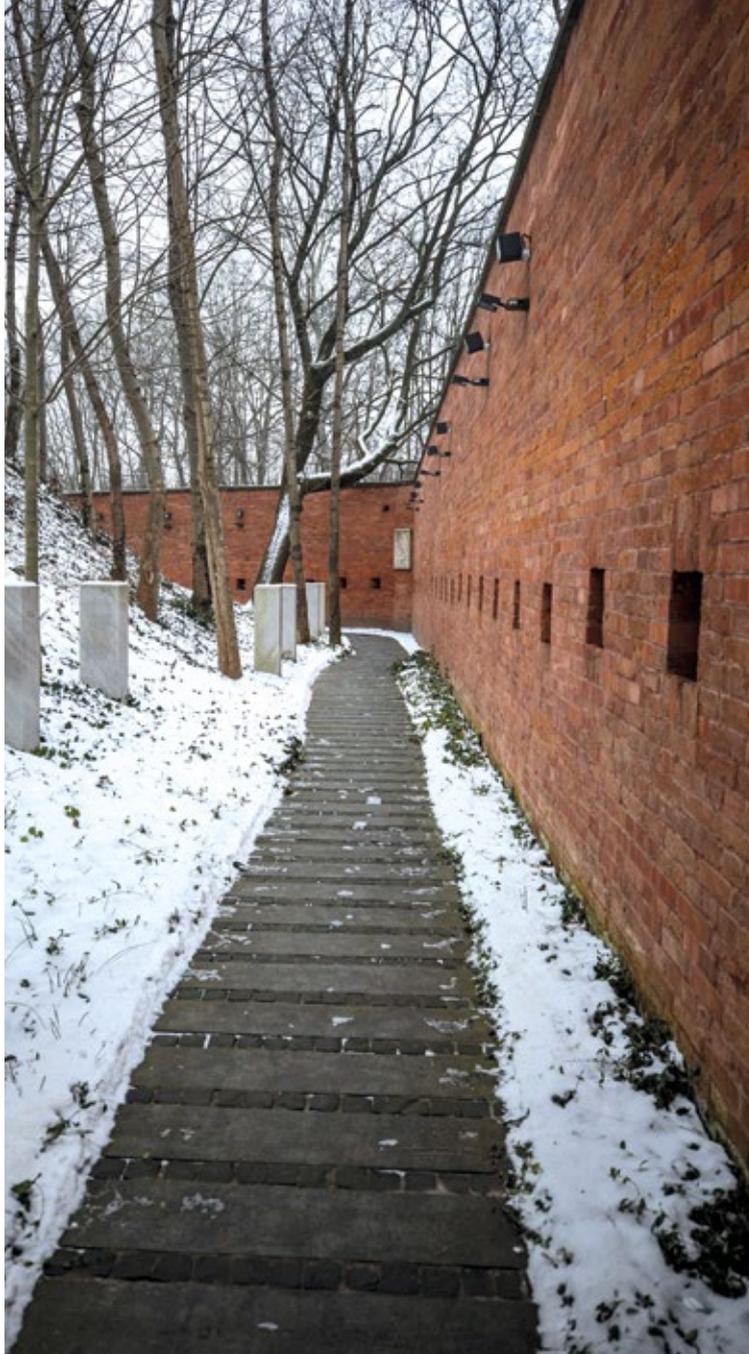
The “Testimony” level, apart from the Reliquaries and display cases, is filled with another special kind of testimony: the letters and postcards taken from the death pits, digitised and displayed on the walls. On the same level, there are also separate spaces where visitors can see the profiles of the victims. The unique collection is complemented by a collection of unique watercolours by Stanisław Westwalewicz documenting his time in Soviet captivity.

In a specially designated area, there are two displays with a cassock (*vestis talaris*), perhaps belonging to one of the murdered Roman Catholic military chaplains, as well as devotional items belonging to Polish citizens of various denominations. Religious objects belonging to Catholics have survived in the greatest number, but it should be remembered that among the victims there were also Jews, Orthodox, Protestants, Muslims, as well as non-denominational citizens of Poland.

The “Testimony” level ends with a multimedia exhibition presenting selected profiles of the victims of the Katyn massacre and their executioners, both the decision-makers and the immediate perpetrators and their helpers. Although the images and names of many of them are known, none of them had been brought to trial by the end of the 1990s. The Katyn massacre, as a crime of genocide, a war crime and a crime against humanity, has never been accounted for. All the perpetrators walked free until the end of their days, with the blood of thousands of innocent victims on their hands.

Commemoration in Space: After Leaving the Exhibition

The arrangement of the exterior space in front of the Museum is based on a set of installations and greenery running on the inside of the Warsaw Citadel along the walls, to which visitors have access after leaving the Caponier. Its first element is the “Passage” (“Przejście”) called “The Tunnel of Death” (“Tunel Śmierci”), located right after leaving the “Testimony” level. It is a 16-metre-long stone structure that is always in shade. The visitors are cut off from all external stimuli when passing through it. You only see the light at the end of the tunnel guiding you in the right direction.



The Avenue of the Absent (*Aleja Nieobecnych*): this row of stone posts with names of professions symbolises the large and diverse community of people irretrievably lost to the Republic of Poland.
© Katarzyna Adamów, 2021

After passing the “Tunnel of Death” we find ourselves on a narrow passage between the wall of the Warsaw Citadel on one side and the ramparts. At their foot, stone pedestals have been set up on which the names of the professions of the murdered were carved. The last of the pedestals, disappearing deep into the ground, is to symbolise the large and diverse (and still not fully enumerated) community of people



irretrievably lost to the Republic of Poland. In this “Avenue of the Absent” (*Aleja Nieobecnych*) there are also two reliefs made of lead-filled sandstone, with images of the Madonna from Kozielsk and Katyn.

The Epitaphs – the interior of former battery housing the Epitaphs with the names of victims.
© Katarzyna Adamów, 2021

Through the “Avenue of the Absent”, visitors reach the glazed spaces of the former cannon station where the Epitaphs have been placed. These monumental structures commemorate all the victims. The glass panels separating the “Avenue of the Absent” from the cannon station are covered with symbols of many religions. This underlines the ecumenical nature of the place, and is intended to remind visitors that people of many faiths were among the victims of the Katyn massacre. Directly from the Epitaphs, visitors go up the stairs and then go out to the “Trooping Square” (*Plac Apelowy*) in front of the entrance to the Museum, where they see a cross and the “Watch” and “Sarcophagi” installations in the background.



The stairs from
the Museum's entrance
area to the Epitaphs and
the "Avenue of the Absent".
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Temporary Exhibitions

Until 2009, work on the temporary exhibitions was carried out at the Museum's premises, along with the presentation of the core exhibition. One of the first was the exhibition of photographs by Aleksander Załęski and Paweł Kopczyński, which opened on April 4, 1994, the 54th anniversary of the Katyn massacre, entitled *Pamiętamy* [We remember]. In September of the same year it was replaced by a temporary exhibition entitled *Samotna placówka* [A lonely post], organised on the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising. In the following years, the Katyn Museum organised a number of subsequent temporary exhibitions, including *Losy Żołnierzy Polski Podziemnej* [The Fate of Polish Underground Soldiers] (1994), and *Gabinet Orderu Virtuti Militari* [The Cabinet of the Virtuti Militari] (1999). In April 2000, in cooperation with the Central Museum of Prisoners of War in Łambinowice, the exhibition entitled *Działalność Kulturalno-Oświatowa Polskich Jeńców Wojennych w Niemieckich Obozach Jenieckich 1939–1945* [The cultural and educational activity of Polish prisoners of war in the German POW camps 1939–45] was organised. In April 2003, for the first time, at an occasional exhibition in the Arch-cathedral Basilica of Saints Florian Martyr and Michael the Archangel in Warsaw, the *vestis talaris* of the military chaplain and officer uniforms retrieved from the death pits in Kharkiv were shown.

Apart from its own projects, the Katyn Museum has lent out numerous artefacts, including to the Memorial Chamber at the Police Headquarters in Katowice (over 300 museum pieces in 1995), the Naval Museum (April 2001), the chaplain's cassock recovered during the exhumation in Kharkiv, for the exhibition entitled *I Podaje Wiek Wiekowi* [And age gives to age], as well as to its parental institution, the Polish Army Museum (August 2001). Its exhibits have also been made available to the Archdiocesan Museum in Katowice (45 artifacts, January 2003) and the "medical" exhibition at the Polish Army Museum (13 artifacts, April 2003). Moreover, the Museum has prepared exhibits for the exhibition entitled *Zagłada polskich elit. Akcja AB – Katyń – Warszawa* [The destruction of the Polish elite. The Action AB-Katyn-Warsaw], organised by the Institute of National Remembrance (September 2006),

and the exhibition entitled *Katyń pamiętamy – synowie wolni* [We, the free sons, remember Katyn] exhibited at the seat of the Ossoliński National Institute in Wrocław (April 2008).

The opening of the new headquarters in the Warsaw Citadel made it possible to prepare new temporary exhibitions, both domestic and international. Among the significant exhibitions it is worth mentioning the 2016 exhibition *Żydzi w Wojsku Polskim* [Jews in the Polish Army], the main organiser of which was the HADAR Committee; the exhibition *They were shot in the back of the head*, which opened in the same year in Tallinn, and then in Tartu, as well as its next instalment at the Latvian War Museum in Riga from February 2017 (*Last chance* 2016).

Also in 2017, the exhibition *Zbrodnia 1940* [Crime 1940] was opened at the Kyiv Fortress Museum. In Georgia, from autumn 2018, the exhibition *Katyń – od świtu dzień rozpoczął się szczególnie* [Katyn—the day began from dawn in a special way], which received extremely positive reviews, opened at the National Museum in Tbilisi, then transferred to the National Defence Academy in Gori, and the following year to the Historical Museum in Kutaisi (*Wystawa* 2019). In August 2019, as part of the commemorations for the European Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Totalitarian Regimes, the Museum of the Cursed Soldiers and Political Prisoners of the People's Republic of Poland in Warsaw hosted the exhibition *Mogiłami jestznaczona historia Polski... Takiej mogiły jeszcze nie było* [Graves mark the history of Poland... There has never been such a grave before]. In November, meanwhile, the Memorial of Deportations and Interns in Compiègne hosted a temporary exhibition *Katyń. Dzień rozpoczął się szczególnie* [Katyn. The day started in a special way] (*Wystawa Katyńska* 2019). In February 2020, the 80th anniversary of the Katyn Massacre exhibition was held at the Kennan Institute of the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars (*Honoring the victims* 2020). On September 17, the same year, two exhibitions had their premieres: the first at the NCK Kordegarda Gallery in Warsaw, entitled *Niepamięci* [Oblivions], which presented the artistic output of the POWs held in camps in the Soviet Union ("*Niepamięci*" 2020). The second, held at the Polish Institute in Sofia, was part of the 80th anniversary of the Katyn Massacre exhibition, and was accompanied by a short documentary about the Katyn Museum (*Wystawa dokumentalna* 2020).

V. THE MUSEUM'S EDUCATIONAL, RESEARCH AND POPULARISATION ACTIVITIES

In the years 1993–2009, most of the working time of the Katyn Museum's employees was related to educational activities. More than 3700 lessons were conducted in the museum, together with the showing of documentary films depicting issues linked to Katyn. After the permanent exhibition devoted to the history of the Fort in Sadyba was opened, lectures devoted to this subject became an additional duty of the employees of the Katyn Museum. In total, in the years 1993–2009, the museum was visited by over 350,000 people, of which about 30% were school and university students. The exhibition was also visited by numerous groups from the Katyn Families, veterans and soldiers of the Polish Army, and many foreign delegations, as well as private individuals from Poland and abroad. Consultation and information work, as well as participation in symposia and conferences, were important items in the activities of the Katyn Museum, as were youth meetings, lectures for the Katyn Families and library workers, participation in opening exhibitions around the country, TV programmes, press interviews, preparing reports for the mass media, promoting books, participating in competition juries, opening the exhibitions up to press photographers and publishers, and so on.

Since the institution's foundation in 1993, all those who have come to the Museum, and who have made requests by letter and by phone, have been provided with available information and consultations on various aspects of the Katyn massacre, as well as responses to individual inquiries based on archival and iconographic collections, and the constantly expanded database of personal data covering several thousand surnames; during the existence of the facility, about 10,000 such queries have been answered.

The nature of the Museum and the expanding knowledge of the Katyn case means that the institution's priority is its educational activities, and at the same time the laying

of the foundations of a academic and research facility with the appropriate facilities. A very important domain of the Museum's work is the provision of information and consultations on the fate of individual persons murdered or missing in the East (including authors of printed monographs concerning the Katyn, Kharkiv and Mednoye cemeteries, graduate and doctoral students, and so on), as well as various institutions. For example, in 2008 more than 500 queries were researched. A separate area in the institution's consultative activities involves the preparation of expert opinions for the courts and the bar. Until 2009, the employees of the Katyn Museum prepared or acted as co-authors on a range of publications connected with the functioning of the institution, or otherwise involved with the Katyn case. After the museum at the 9th Fort was closed, the work refocused on the development of the new installation and exhibition *Memory could not be destroyed...*, which was presented at the headquarters of the Polish Army Museum and inaugurated the new Museum in the Warsaw Citadel. Nevertheless, until 2015 the Museum's employees continued to perform tasks related to the dissemination of knowledge about the Katyn massacre, for example during scientific symposiums such as the conference "Mass Violence, Justice and Memory: The Katyn Massacres of 1940 in History, Memory, Education and Law", organised by the University of Virginia in Charlottesville (*Konferencja w Charlottesville* 2013). Academic and educational activity, apart from daily work with organised groups and individual visitors to the MWP in 2009–15, was reflected in foreign lectures, such as those given at the seat of the Polish Social and Cultural Centre in London (2013) and in Kyiv, where the M. Malowski "Zgoda" Association organised a meeting devoted to the Katyn Forest Massacre (2013) at Kyiv Public Library No. 181. On the 75th anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Poland, the Kresy-Siberia Foundation, in cooperation with the Katyn Museum, organised an international conference with the participation of Roger Moorhouse and Anne Applebaum. In December 2014, museum representatives took part in the international conference "Conservatism and civic participation in the socio-political life of Central and Eastern Europe" organised in Ukraine (*Wyjazd delegacji* 2014).

Conferences and Special Events

Since its inception, the Katyn Museum has been an initiator or participant in many academic and popularising events, such as conferences, workshops, meetings with witnesses of history and countless museum lessons. Since 2015, representatives of the museum have taken part, among others, in the 2nd International “The Memory of Generations” Conference (2015), the 7th International scientific seminar in memory of Vyacheslav Lipinski in Ukraine (2015), the conference “Heroes and silent heroines; on the victims of Katyn and the fate of their families” (2017). Our museologists also participated in the 5th Worldwide Congress of Polish Scientific Societies (2017) and the International Interdisciplinary Academic Conference “The art of survival. Everyday life in extreme camp conditions in the 20th & 21st centuries” (2018). The international contacts established over many years also enabled the employees of the Katyn Museum to take part in the International Conference “75 years of fighting for the truth” (2018), and to train educators as part of the project “Poland in the Heart of European History” (2017) created by the Institute of National Remembrance. In September 2018, the Katyn Museum hosted representatives of the World Forum for the Education of the Polish Diaspora, which led to a visit and guest lectures by the Museum employees in 2019 to the Polish Institute in Vienna. In December the same year, a scientific conference “Victims of the Katyn massacre—students, graduates and lecturers of the Warsaw University of Technology” was held in the Small Hall of the Main Building of the Warsaw University of Technology, accompanied by two exhibitions: “Not just Katyn. Places where citizens of the Republic of Poland were deported in Siberia” by Prof. K. Heyke, and “The Warsaw University of Technology in the collection of the Katyn Museum”. Representatives of the Museum also participated in the Remembrance Forum at the 10th Seminar of Polish martyrdom museums (2018), and the Conference “War and the Sea: from the Middle Ages to the Present”, organised at the Naval Museum in Gdynia (2020).

The museum space in the Warsaw Citadel is also a place of cultural encounters, naturally within the framework of the

Museum's mission. In April 2016, Andrzej Wajda's film *Katyn* was screened there as a part of the meeting with its director. A meeting in the series "Come when you think of Katyn!" was accompanied by the film *The Officer's Wife*, directed by Piotr Uzarowicz with production & music by Oscar winner Jan A.P. Kaczmarek (2016). The museum was also the site of the "Piwnica Poetycka" poetry festival and a performance of the play "Deportations, labour camps, Katyn". The Assembly Square has hosted many musical performers, including the bands De Press and Panny Wyklęte, and the Choirs of the Military University of Technology and "Con Amore", among others.

VI. THE MUSEUM'S COLLECTION

The activity of the Katyn Museum, along with all the activities described above, is based primarily on the collection over 30,000 grave artifacts (about 7000 of which are on display), excavated from the mass graves in Katyn, Kharkiv, Mednoye and Bykivnya, as well as archives (including those retrieved from mass graves) and publications collected in the professional reference library, which form the constantly growing base of the museum's collection.

It should be emphasised that this unique collection, both in terms of its size and the individual items (the collections of grave artefacts) is some of the most important evidence of the crime. The Katyn Museum, while it performs many functions, is primarily a depository of the material evidence of a crime—the Katyn Massacre. Despite many years of efforts and attempts to conceal both the perpetrators and the identity of the Katyn massacre's victims, thanks to the work of the museum's staff and employees, it has been possible to identify objects attributed to specific victims of the Katyn massacre among the grave artefacts. Thanks to this, the murdered have regained their identity. The most important collection of identified objects consists of over 120 objects, including 61 personal military identity marks, dog tags (Polish: *nieśmiertelnik*, "immortality sign") (52 from Kharkiv, 7 from Katyn, and one each from Mednoye and



Glasses found in the mass grave. A significant number of the Katyn Forest Massacre victims were reserve officers — white collar employees in their civilian lives. The glasses and their frames are among numerous personal belongings found in the mass graves.
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Bykownia): two gorgets with dedications (belonging to Major Reserve Jan Ślaski and Second Lieutenant Marian Wenge); a badge owned by the Major of the General Staff of the Polish Army, Henryk Dawidowski; the officer badge of military police No. 9 of Lt. Stanisław Kuciel; and the gold watch of Lt. Col. Stanisław Sitek. The artefacts identified also include silver cigarette cases with engraved names and dedications (such as that of Capt. Albert Holan), a badge No. 1390 of the 5th Polish Rifle Division (Capt. Teodor Jesipowicz); a badge of the Armoured Forces (Major Roman Jędraszko); a badge of the Polish Touring Association (*PTTK*) in Podole region (Wincenty Urbański); a patch with its owner's name (Captain Ludwik Ciernik); and a badge with a dedication (Marine Captain Edward Rojek).

Among the many artefacts there is a comb from Bykownia bearing the names of “Ludw Dworzak s. Józefa” (Ludwik Dworzak), “Fr. Strzelecki Wł. Woł” (Franciszek Strzelecki), “Szczyrad” (Lt. Col. Bronisław Szczyradłowski), a washer from a canteen's cap (belonging to brothers Julian and Roman Janas), many wooden boxes made in the camps, and a collection of aluminium canteens and bowls with the names and initials of the prisoners scratched onto them. Some of



these items contain not one, but several dozen names of prisoners.

One of the most valuable collections of the identified Katyn relics are the Crosses of the *Virtuti Militari* Military Order (including 4 identified members: Lt. Jan Grzywiński, Col. Jan Załuska, Col. Antoni Stefanowski, Major Paweł Łuczak), which indirectly testify that among the victims there were heroes of the Polish-Bolshevik War of 1920.

At the moment, the permanent exhibition of the Katyn Museum houses nearly 7000 artefacts recovered from mass graves in Katyn, Kharkiv, Kyiv-Bykivnya and Mednoye. They are all located in the Reliquaries section on the “Discovery” and “Testimony” levels. The remaining 20,000+ objects are in the museum warehouse. Items there are constantly being examined, photographed and exchanged for others in the permanent exhibition. Some of them, including some unusual objects which still conceal the secrets of their last owners, are waiting to be surveyed and identified.

The archival resources, consisting of tens of thousands of individual sheets of documents, collected in unique groups and individual collections with a total of about 60 metres, are an important element of the museum collection. Among

Dog tag of Second Lieutenant Zygmunt Romejko, surveyor, reserve artillery officer, found in a mass grave in Kharkiv-Pyatikhatky, Ukraine.
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the materials which have been collected in the Katyn Museum for nearly 30 years, there are documents recovered at exhumation sites and a similar number of the so-called non-grave items. The resources of the museum archive also include a collection of about 7000 reports, about 8000 copies of documents obtained from various state archives and from private collections, about 1000 newspapers and deposits, and about 3500 volumes in the professional reference library. The archival resource also includes several thousand photographs, the crime scenes, victims, and their loved ones. One of the most interesting and important collections of documents that make up the archival resource of the Katyn Museum is the comprehensive documentation of the exhumations carried out in Kharkiv and Bykivnya, and copies of similar materials from the work carried out in Mednoye. The largest museum collections concerning individual victims of crime include the collections of Jan Boroń (about 2200 individual documents) and Karol Glazur (about 1500 individual documents). At this point, it should be emphasised that the collections of the Katyn Museum come largely from thousands of donations from the descendants and families of the victims of the Katyn massacre, who are aware of the role that the Museum plays in the social identity of the Polish people and the academic community, and they often donate the only memorabilia of their relatives in a spirit of seriousness and generosity.

All the objects at the Museum are stored in constant and stable conditions in accordance with the relevant conservation guidelines and in compliance with strict safety rules. The storage rooms and the exhibition, which are specially designed for storing museum items and archives, operate in completely separate, independent zones. They provide appropriate conditions for the protection of the collection, in terms of both temperature and humidity. The objects at the museum exhibition are presented in specially designed display showcases equipped with neutral light that does not endanger the items. The artefacts extracted from the graves and the archival collections stored in the warehouses are kept in specialised, secure cabinets adapted to the museum's conditions. Additionally, in accordance with their requirements, individual items are secured in certified acid-free packaging (boxes, envelopes, paper); their condition

is constantly monitored and assessed. The vast majority of facilities have undergone conservation. Nevertheless, many of them sometimes require renewed conservation work, which we commission to the best specialists in the country, from centres in Toruń, Cracow and Warsaw.

A team of just 11 professional staff is responsible for compiling and documenting the collections, as well as educational, exhibition and academic activities, not to mention running the library and guiding the visitors. The Katyn Museum is probably an exception among museums, as it does not employ museum guides; the guided tours are done by the curators, often with extensive museum experience and academic achievements. The internships held in this special memorial site are organised on a voluntary basis, supervised directly by the head of the institution and the delegate curators.

VII. THE MUSEUM'S INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION

Since 1993, the Museum has been developing institutional cooperation with many research and study centres and specialised units. Invaluable help in examining the direct evidence of the crime and the Katyn relics has always been provided by the Central Forensic Laboratory of the Police in Warsaw, and by the Military Police [*Żandarmeria Wojskowa*]. Essential cooperation on the many national and international projects has been offered by the Council for the Protection of Memory of Struggle and Martyrdom, the Institute of National Remembrance, the Ministry of National Defence and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as the National Cultural Centre, the Centre for Polish-Russian Dialogue and Understanding, and museums and universities from all over the world. At this point we cannot overlook the Russian “Memorial” Association, or one of the most important foreign collaborators with the Katyn Museum, Dr. Aleksandr Guryanov, a researcher into questions of Soviet repression against the Polish people. Invaluable help in determining the state of preservation, protection and the possibility of

restoring the collections has been provided by Prof. Maciej Pawlikowski from the AGH University of Science and Technology in Cracow, and Prof. Anna Drązkowska from the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, among others. The long-standing, tried and tested friends of the Katyn Museum include the prosecutors, Prof. Dr Bronisław Młodziejowski and Stefan Śnieżko, the outstanding archaeologists Prof. Andrzej Kola, Mieczysław Góra, and Dr. Dominika Siemińska from the Institute of National Remembrance, as well as the sadly deceased guardians of the memory of the Katyn truth, Fr. Zbigniew Peszkowski and Dr. Bożena Łojek. As part of its mission, since the very beginning of its operation, the museum has cooperated with organisations associating the victims' families: the Katyn Families Federation, the National 1939 Police Family Association, the Warsaw 1939 Police Family Association and the 1939 Police Family Association in Łódź, as well as the 1939 Police Family Association in Kielce.

VIII. SELECTED AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS FOR THE KATYN MUSEUM

Since 1993, the Katyn Museum, its activities, publications, exhibitions and space have been the subject of many assessments and opinions. Thanks to the involvement of many people, the Katyn Museum has become both an important place of remembrance and an example of military architecture adapted to the needs of a museum. During the several decades of its operation, this modest branch of the Polish Army Museum has been repeatedly appreciated at international and national forums, starting in 1993 when the first permanent exhibition, *Memory cannot be destroyed...*, received an award from the Minister of Culture and Art. In the following years, the Katyn Museum received many awards, including the Award of the Association of Polish Architects SARP in 2015 for the best architectural structure erected in Poland from public funds (*Muzeum Katyńskie w Warszawie* 2016). In the same year, the museum also received an award in the “Martyrdom-related

project” category in the competition for the Sybilla Museum Event of the Year 2015 (*Laureaci Sybilla 2015*, 2016). A year later, the museum received the 1st Architectural Award in the 2nd Edition of the President of Warsaw’s Competition in the category of “Public utility architecture/public facility” (*Nagroda architektoniczna* 2016). In addition, in 2017, the Katyn Museum was among the five finalists of the Ludwig Mies van der Rohe European Union Prize (*Muzeum Katyńskie – jedyny polski obiekt* 2017). In 2019, it received the prestigious East Centric Architecture Triennale Award in Bucharest, and was recognised as the best public building in Central and Eastern Europe (*Muzeum Katyńskie najlepszym* 2019). A year later, in the 9th edition of the “Life in Architecture” competition, the Katyn Museum was recognised as the best public utility building in Poland in 2015–19 (*Zwycięzcy* 2020).

In addition to the awards honouring the architecture and functionality of the facility, the museum can also boast of receiving many awards related to its functions as a museum and educational and popularising institute concerning the Katyn massacre. These include the Pieta Mednoye 1940 Medallion awarded to the museum in 2017 by the Warsaw 1940 Police Family Association, the Katyn Button from the Katyn Families Association, the Pro Patria Medal and the Bronze Medal “For merits in penitentiary work”. In 2019, the Katyn Museum was among the finalists of the “BohaterON im. Powstańców Warszawskich” Award in the Institution category (*Znamy nominowanych* 2019).

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