

## 6. Stalin's Order for the Katyn Forest Massacre<sup>1</sup>

5 March 1940

Top Secret

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### USSR People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs

Moscow

To Comrade Stalin

A large number of former officers of the Polish Army, employees of the Polish Police and intelligence services, members of Polish nationalist, counter-revolutionary parties, members of exposed counter-revolutionary resistance groups, escapees and others, all of them sworn enemies of Soviet authority full of hatred for the Soviet system, are currently being held in prisoner-of-war camps of the USSR NKVD and in prisons in the western provinces of Ukraine and Belarus.

The military and police officers in the camps are attempting to continue their counter-revolutionary activities and are carrying out anti-Soviet agitation. Each of them is waiting only for his release in order to start actively struggling against Soviet authority. The organs of the NKVD in the western provinces of the Ukraine and Belarus have uncovered a number of counter-revolutionary rebel organisations. Former officers of the Polish Army and police as well as gendarmes have played an active role in all of these organisations.

Amongst the detained escapees and violators of the state borders a considerable number of people have been identified as belonging to counter-revolutionary espionage and resistance organisations.

14,736 former officers, government officials, landowners, police, gendarmes, prison guards, settlers in the border regions and intelligence officers [more than 97% are Poles] are being held in prisoner-of-war camps. This number includes soldiers and junior officers. Included are:

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| generals, colonels and lieutenant colonels  | 295        |
| majors and captains   | 2080       |
| lieutenants, second lieutenants and ensigns   | 6049       |
| officers and juniors of the police, gendarmes,<br>prison guards and intelligence officers | 1030       |
| rank and file police officers, gendarmes,<br>prison guards and intelligence personnel     | 5138       |
| government officials, land owners, priests,<br>settlers in border regions                 | 14,418,632 |
| detained people are being kept  |            |

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<sup>1</sup>For a long time it was believed in the West that about 4243 Poles were shot at Katyn; 4143 that the Nazis exhumed from seven graves in 1943, and a further 100 allowed for in the "eighth" grave that the Nazis opened but did not exhume. In his 1993 book "Memoirs of a prisoner of war of Kozielsk", at page 157 Rev Msgr Zdzislaw Peszkowski gives a figure of 4403 Poles shot at Katyn from a Soviet document he was shown dated 14 May 1940. Karta lists 4410 for the dead at Katyn, 3739 for those at Kharkov and 6314 for those shot at Tver. Although the total of the Stalin order is given as 25,700, he understands that a 1959 KGB report gives the figure of 21,857 as the number of Poles actually shot as a result of this order.

in the western region of the Ukraine and  
Belarus [10,685 are Poles]

They include:

|   |      |
|---|------|
| former officers   | 1207 |
| former intelligence officers of the police and<br>gendarmerie   | 5141 |
| spies and saboteurs   | 347  |
| former land owners, factory owners and<br>government officials  | 465  |
| members of various counter-revolutionary<br>and resistance organisations and other counter-<br>revolutionary elements | 5345 |
| escapees  | 6127 |

In view of the fact that all are hardened and uncompromising enemies of Soviet authority, the USSR NKVD considers it necessary:

[1] To instruct the USSR NKVD that it should try before special tribunals:

[a] the cases of the 14,700 former Polish officers, government officials, land owners, police officers, intelligence officers, gendarmes, settlers in the border regions and prison guards being held in prisoner-of-war camps;

[b] together with the cases of 11,000 members of various counter-revolutionary organisations of spies and saboteurs, former land owners, factory owners, former Polish officers, government officials, and escapees who have been arrested and are being held in the western provinces of the Ukraine and Belarus and apply to them the supreme penalty: shooting.

[2] Examination of the cases is to be carried out without summoning those detained and without bringing charges, the statements concerning the conclusion of the investigation and the final verdict should be as follows:

[a] for persons being held in prisoner-of-war camps, in the form of certificates issued by the NKVD of the USSR NKVD;

[b] for arrested personnel in the form of certificates issued by the NKVD of the Ukrainian SSR and the NKVD of the Belarus SSR.

[3] The cases should be examined and the verdict pronounced by a three person tribunal consisting of comrades Merkulov, Kobulov and Bashtakov.

People's Commissar for the Internal Affairs of the USSR

L. Beria

*(Signed by: Stalin, Voroshilov, Molotov, Mikoyan, Kalinin and Kaganovich)*

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