

## Report from the Capitol Hill Conference “Katyn: Unfinished Inquiry”

On the eve of the 72<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the Soviet aggression on Poland, an important conference took place on the Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. A conference entitled “Katyn – Unfinished Inquiry” that took place on September 15, 2011, was co-sponsored by fifteen civic and academic organizations from all over the United States, including organizations representing Katyn families and Siberian deportees. Among the co-sponsors were the Katyn Forest Massacre Memorial Committee of New Jersey, Kresy-Siberia Foundation USA, National Katyn Memorial Foundation of Maryland, Polish Legacy Project of Buffalo, New York, Siberian Society USA, Siberian Society of Florida, the Poles of Santa Rosa in Chicago, the Polish Army Veterans Association in America and the Polish American Congress. The conference was co-organized by Libra Institute and the Institute of World Politics with the support of Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur.

While commemorating the Polish victims of the Soviet aggression of September 17, 1939, the participants deliberated how to achieve healing of the wounds and genuine reconciliation between the people of Russia and Poland in the twenty first century. The participants acknowledged that the path to reconciliation leads through revealing the full truth.

Professor David Crane who served as Chief Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone presented Expert Report from the Katyn Symposium that took place at Case Western Reserve School of Law in February 2011. Referring to the Expert Report, he pointed out that genuine reconciliation must be built on truthful accountability through full disclosure, atonement, contrition and compensation. He also stated that although various experts offer different classifications of the Katyn crime, according to him Katyn qualified as a genocide. Prof. Crane also stated that the United States should consider forwarding the evidence, findings and recommendations of the Madden Committee to the General Assembly of the United Nations with the recommendations that the United Nations take appropriate steps to have the case forwarded to the International Court of Justice and/or seek the establishment of an international commission that will investigate this case. The other ways in which the United States could assist in seeking justice for the Katyn crime would be the full disclosure of documents related to Katyn that are in the possession of the US Government and adopting legislation that would recognize the wrong that has been done by the United States as a result of the suppression of evidence. The United States should also consider issuing an apology to the Katyn victims and the Polish people, providing compensation to the Katyn families who are US citizens either directly or through the establishment of the Katyn Truth and Reconciliation Research Institute, and should sponsor an educational outreach program on the Katyn crime and the cover-up.

Dr. John Lenczowski, President of the Institute of World Politics, in his opening remarks pointed out that the Katyn crime aimed at eliminating the leadership class of Poland. He criticized the Russian *anti-Katyn* strategy by pointing out that the Soviet soldiers taken as prisoners of war by Poland as a result of the 1920 Polish-Russian War represented the invading army and died of communicable diseases. He also elaborated on the role of the US Government in covering up the Katyn crime and suppressing all Katyn related information, including the destruction of the key eyewitness reports by the top US Military Intelligence Officer, in order not to upset Moscow. He pointed out that the key Katyn-related documents have never been released by the US Government. Apparently, there is never a good time to do so, he concluded.

Frank Spula, President of the Polish-American Congress, spoke about the significance of the Katyń crime for the Polish-American community. He stated that he was honored to be in this congressional office building and participate in such a historical event, especially considering that this building was named after Sam Rayburn who initiated the original investigation into the Katyń crime sixty years ago. Back then Roman Pucinski, the Chief Investigator of the Madden Committee led the struggle for truth and justice. Today his daughter, Aurelia Pucinski, came to this congressional building to continue her father's struggle for justice. Katyń has a special significance to the Americans of Polish heritage. It also has a distinct personal meaning to President Spula, who was invited to travel to Katyń with President Lech Kaczynski on April 10, 2010. He is still with us because he was unable to accept this invitation. President Spula pointed out that the Katyń crime has the same importance to the Polish community as the Holocaust has to the Jewish community.

The appearance on the Capitol Hill of the daughter of Roman Pucinski - Honorable Aurelia Pucinski - sixty years after the issuance of the Madden Committee Final Report was of painfully symbolic significance. The world shall wonder whether the lack of resolve of the US Congress to act on the 1952 recommendations of the Madden Committee brought back the cry for justice for the Katyń victims to the Capitol Hill sixty years later. Honorable Aurelia Pucinski discussed her father's struggle with the bureaucrats of the US and British governments who for reasons of political expediency and short-term gains purposely and deliberately suppressed all evidence of the Soviet guilt in the Katyń crime. In her remarks, Honorable Aurelia Pucinski stated that the execution of the Polish officers in the Katyń forest and other locations throughout the Soviet Union constitute the most brutal act of genocide against the leadership of any nation ever recorded in history.

John Van Oudenaren, Director of the World Digital Library at the Library of Congress reported on the UNESCO Declaration adopted on May 21, 2011 in Warsaw ("Warsaw Declaration") on the protection of documentary heritage with respect to culture, memory and identity of the world. He remarked that the Twentieth Century brought about tremendous suffering for millions of people around the world. Thus today many groups compete for the recognition by the world opinion of the suffering of its people. Nevertheless, he recognized that Katyń represents a special case and expressed his willingness to work with the Polish-American community along the lines of the spirit of the Warsaw Declaration with respect to Katyń documentary heritage.

Three members of the 112th US Congress made their appearance at the Katyń conference. Senator Mark Kirk was honored by the Illinois Division of the Polish-American Congress with the 2011 Roman Pucinski Award for Outstanding Leadership by undertaking legislative initiative for the inclusion of Poland in the visa waiver program and for supporting the strengthening of the defensive alliance between Poland and the United States. Senator Kirk declared that he would work towards assuring that Poland remains free, independent, peaceful, and an integral member of the Western Alliance.

The Roman Pucinski Award was established in honor of Representative Roman Pucinski (1919-2002) for his unyielding courage and determination to seek truth and justice for the Katyń victims. Roman Pucinski served as Chief Investigator of the Special Congressional Committee for the Katyń Forest Massacre. In spite of great political pressure, Roman Pucinski led the congressional investigation into the Katyń Forest Massacre with the highest professional standards, open-mindedness, fairness and impeccable objectivity. Through the Roman Pucinski Leadership Award, the PAC Illinois desires to encourage political leaders to follow the highest professional standards in public service as set forth by Honorable Roman Pucinski.

Representative Dennis Kucinich in his remarks pointed out that Poland shall serve as an example that the cruel history can be overcome. He discussed the ways in which the United States can help in healing the wounds of Katyń. Referring to the resolution of the Russian Duma of November 2010, he emphasized that Russia must have the courage to face its past and the United States can play a constructive role in this process. He also declared his support for the efforts to commemorate the lives of twenty two thousand Polish officers murdered by the Soviets and find a meaningful path towards healing the heart of Poland over this gravest assault on humanity. Representative Dennis Kucinich was presented with the Honorary Membership in the National Katyń Memorial Foundation in Baltimore, Maryland, by the Foundation Chairman - Richard Poremski. Foundation Director Carla Tomaszewski presented Congressman Kucinich with eight drawings of the National Katyń Memorial Monument.

Representative Marcy Kaptur, who was the congressional sponsor of this conference, was honored with the Congressional Leadership Award by the Ohio Division of the Polish-American Congress. Congresswoman Kaptur from Toledo, Ohio, is the most senior democratic woman in the House of Representatives of the 112<sup>th</sup> US Congress. In her remarks Honorable Kaptur underscored the persevering nature of the Polish people. This quality of perseverance is demonstrated in the 112<sup>th</sup> US Congress where the most senior congressman in the House of Representatives is Representative John Dingell of Polish heritage, Representative Kaptur, herself of Polish heritage, is the most senior Democratic Congresswoman, and the most senior female Senator is Barbara Mikulski also of Polish heritage. Honorable Kaptur also pointed out that it troubles her that the history of World War II remains incomplete to this day. Regrettably, heroic stories of the Polish veterans of World War II for all these years could not be properly told either in Poland or in the United States.

The closing remarks belonged to Wesley Adamczyk, Son of the Polish Officer imprisoned in Starobelsk, murdered in Kharkov and buried in the Piatichatki forest. Having searched for his father's burial site for six decades, finally in June of 1998, while accompanied by his American-born son, Mr. Adamczyk had an opportunity to pay last respects to his father at the Piatichatki cemetery. Upon leaving, he appealed to his son never to forget that even the grinding of the bones and planting of the trees over the graves does not stop the truth from coming out. Mr. Adamczyk stressed that today, nearly seventy years later, there still exist a "universal cover-up" of the Katyń crime in its entirety. He also explained that the origin of the cover-up, referred to as "conspiracy of silence," began by the Big Four during the London meeting in the summer of 1945, where the details of the prosecution of major war criminals during the upcoming trials by the International Military Tribunal to be held in Nuremberg were worked out. It was there that the Big Four decided that the Soviets would handle the indictment and prosecution of the Katyń crime, even though the Western Allies knew that all arrows pointed to the Soviet guilt in this crime. The Western Allies won the war against Nazi Germany but justice for the victims of the Katyń crime was never sought. In closing, Mr. Adamczyk appealed to the Government of the United States to undertake pro-active steps towards full disclosure and dissemination of all documents related to the Katyń atrocity in the possession of the US Government because without revealing full truth justice cannot be served.

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