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Katyn

A Crime Without Punishment

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Yale University Press
New Haven & London

as well as 7,300 prisoners held in NKVD jails in Belorussia and Ukraine (see Part II). Soviet responsibility was concealed and vigorously denied for half a century until it was admitted in the Soviet press on 13 April 1990 (doc. 117) when Russian President Mikhail Gorbachev also handed the NKVD spring 1940 camp departure lists to President Wojciech Jaruzelski of Poland. However, it was not until 14 October 1992 that, because of a political decision by Russian President Boris Yeltsin, the Politburo resolution was published in the Moscow press. On the same day, it was also delivered to President Lech Wałęsa in Warsaw, together with documents on the Soviet cover-up of the crime (doc. 119).

• 47 •

Beria Memorandum to Joseph Stalin Proposing the Execution
of the Polish Officers, Gendarmes, Police, Military Settlers, and Others
in the Three Special POW Camps, Along with Those Held in the Prisons
of the Western Regions of Ukraine and Belorussia, Accepted by the Politburo
5 March 1940, Moscow²⁹⁰

No. 794/B
Top Secret

Central Committee of the All Union Communist Party (b)
To Comrade Stalin

In the USSR NKVD prisoner-of-war camps and prisons of the western regions of Ukraine and Belorussia, there are at present a large number of former officers of the Polish Army, former workers in the Polish police and intelligence organs, members of Polish nationalist c-r parties, participants in exposed c-r insurgent organizations, refugees, and others. They are all sworn enemies of Soviet power, filled with hatred for the Soviet system of government.

Prisoner-of-war officers and police in the camps are attempting to continue their c-r work and are conducting anti-Soviet agitation. Each one of them is just waiting to be released in order to be able to enter actively into the battle against Soviet power.

The NKVD organs in the western oblasts of Ukraine and Belorussia have exposed several c-r insurgent organizations. In all these c-r organizations, an active guiding role is played by former officers of the former Polish Army and former police and gendarmes.²⁹¹

Among the detained refugees and those who have violated the state border, a significant number of individuals who are participants in c-r espionage and insurgent organizations have also been uncovered.²⁹²

The prisoner-of-war camps are holding a total (not counting the soldiers and the NCOs) of 14,736 former officers, officials, landowners, police, gendarmes, prison guards, [military] settlers, and intelligence agents, who are more than 97 percent Polish by nationality.

Among them are:

generals, colonels, and lieutenant colonels	295
majors and captains	2,080
lieutenants, 2nd lieutenants, and ensigns	6,049
police officers, junior officers, border guards, and gendarmerie	1,030
rank-and-file police, gendarmes, prison guards, and intelligence agents	5,138
officials, landowners, priests, and [military] settlers	144

In the prisons of the western oblasts of Ukraine and Belorussia a total of 18,632 arrested people (including 10,685 Poles)²⁹³ are being held, including:

former officers	1,207
former police, intelligence agents, and gendarmes	5,141
spies and saboteurs	347
former landowners, factory owners, and officials	465
members of various c-r and insurgent organizations and of various c-r elements	5,345
refugees	6,127

Based on the fact that they are all hardened, irremediable enemies of Soviet power, the NKVD USSR believes it is essential:

*1. To direct the NKVD USSR to:**

1) examine the cases of the 14,700 former Polish officers, officials, landowners, police, intelligence agents, gendarmes, [military] settlers, and prison guards who are now in the prisoner-of-war camps

2) and also examine the cases of those who have been arrested and are in the prisons of the western oblasts of Ukraine and Belorussia, numbering 11,000, members of various c-r espionage and sabotage organizations, former landowners, manufacturers, former Polish officers, officials, and

* The phrase in italics was underlined by hand. Parts I-III of Beria's memorandum were used in Protocol no. 13 of the Politburo of the Central Committee as formulated in points I-III, which were evidently drawn up by Stalin's secretary; see *KD1/217*; *KDZ1/217*.

refugees, [and] using the special procedure, apply to them the supreme punishment, [execution by] shooting.

II. Examine [these] cases without calling in the arrested men and without presenting [them with] the charges, the decision about the end of the investigation, or the document of indictment, according to the following procedure:

a) [examine the cases] against individuals in the prisoner-of-war camps on the basis of information presented by the USSR NKVD UPV

b) [examine the cases] against individuals who have been arrested on the basis of information from files presented by the UkSSR NKVD and the BSSR NKVD

III. Assign the examination of cases and the carrying out of decisions to a *troika* [threesome] consisting of Comrades Beria,* Merkulov, Kobulov,† and Bashtakov (Head of 1st Special Department NKVD USSR).²⁹⁴

USSR People's Commissar of Internal Affairs
L. Beria‡

* Crossed out by hand in blue pencil.

† "Kobulov" was added by hand after "Merkulov"; both were written above the line in blue pencil, evidently by Stalin.

‡ On the document, written across the text: "Za" [For] with the signatures "I. V. Stalin, K. Voroshilov, A. Mikoyan" in blue pencil and "V. Molotov" in regular pencil (page 1).

In the margin, evidently written by Stalin's secretary: Kalinin—za, Kaganovich—za" (page 1).

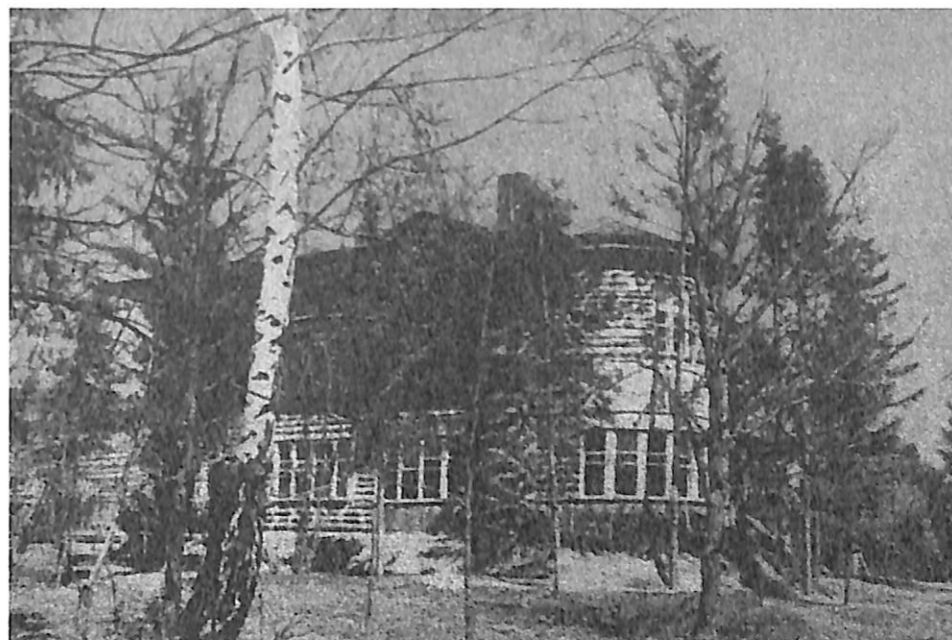
Before point 1: the symbol Z, signifying the beginning of the decision (page 3).

In the margin: "Special folder. USSR NKVD question" (page 3).

Below Beria's signature on the document, on the left side of page: "Vm Beria. [Implement Beria]." Below that by hand: "Protocol 13/144." Below that: "5 March 1940" (page 4 of the facsimile in *KDZ1/216*, p. 475; *KD1/216*, p. 388).



View of Katyn Forest from the Dnieper [Dnepr] River with the NKVD dacha visible through the trees. Spring–summer 1943.



The NKVD dacha, called Dnjepr-Schlösschen [Little Castle on the Dnieper] by the Germans. It stood 300 meters from the execution site in Katyn Forest. Spring–summer 1943.