

J. K. Zawodny

DEATH IN THE

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The Story of the
Katyn Forest Massacre

J. K. Zawodny

DEATH IN THE FOREST

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Katyn Forest Massacre

Zawodny Death in the Forest

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DEATH IN THE FOREST

By J. K. Zawodny

This is a chilling, brilliantly reported analysis of the infamous Second World War annihilation of fifteen thousand Polish prisoners of war, historically the largest assassination of prisoner-soldiers since Ghenghis Khan. Responsibility for this mass execution became a point of international controversy and intrigue. Both the Governments of the Soviet Union and Germany accused each other of the crime. Twenty years later, the facts of that slaughter and the far-reaching political and moral implications of the Katyn woods' murders are still largely suppressed and avoided.

Death in the Forest is the first objective answer to: Who killed these men? Why were they killed? How were they killed? Why did the American and British Governments take official action to suppress the case? Why did some of the greatest Allied leaders of the Second World War lie by omission? Why was the Katyn woods case dropped at the Nuremberg Trials?

(Continued on Back Flap)

(Continued from Front Flap)

Death in the Forest should be read by any individual who does not choose to, or cannot, accept the atrocities of war and the inhumanity of man to man.

J. K. Zawodny is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania. A recipient of many academic honors, he has been a Fellow of the Social Science Research Council and of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences. Professor Zawodny's interest and area of research is International Politics and Behavior with particular stress on violence as an instrument of social change and its impact on the operational values of society. He has contributed articles to many scholarly journals, among them the *Annals* of the American Academy of Political and Social Science and the *American Scholar*.

Professor Zawodny's research on this book has included interviews with one hundred and fifty Polish former prisoners of war of the Soviet Government and with the former Prime Minister of Poland, and analyses of testimonies of German and Russian witnesses. He has surveyed all available primary sources bearing on the subject in Russian, Polish, German and English, encompassing, for the first time, official positions (through 1961) of all governments involved, including both the Polish People's Republic and the Polish Government-in-Exile.

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July 20, 1963

Dear Editor,

In this dramatic 12-part serialization of DEATH IN THE FOREST, your newspaper can attract the attention of countless thousands within your circulation area.

- Those of Polish and East European descent...
- Americans interested in social justice...
- Minority groups which have been oppressed at one time or another...
- Veterans who have served their country honorably...
- Young people searching for truth and understanding.

These and other readers will comprise a ready-made audience to serve as the "jury" in the promotional phase of the serialization. As part of the promotion, we will provide five free copies of the book as awards for the best "verdicts" and sentences" written by your readers in response to the serialization.

Allow the enclosed material to fully explain the details of this serialization-contest. Then return the enclosed postal card, and I will contact you to discuss our reasonable rates.

Thanks for your time and interest.

Respectfully,
James F. Andrews
James F. Andrews, Editor

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For Release: August 4, 1963 or after.

Death In The Forest

Annihilation of 15,000 Polish prisoners of war in the Katyn forest, near Smolensk, remains one of the macabre mysteries of World War II. Who was responsible for this the largest assassination of prisoner-soldiers since Ghenghis Khan? When did it take place? Why were these men killed? How were they killed? Now J. K. Zawodny, associate professor of political science at the University of Pennsylvania, has surveyed all primary sources on the Katyn slaughter and reports his findings in his new book "Death in the Forest", from which The offers the first of 12 serialized excerpts.

By J. K. Zawodny

KATYN - #1

The German public believed that the Second World War began with a number of Polish attacks on the German frontier. A typical episode was the attack on a radio station deep in German territory on August 31, 1939.

"Poles" had commenced military activity by shooting their way in and out of a radio station, and, having seized it, broadcast an abusive speech in Polish and German. One dead Pole was found at the door of the station; his glassy eyes, blood-smeared face and the wreckage of the station were mute testimony to the raiding action which lasted three or four minutes.

The German press marvelled at the remarkable knowledge of the terrain and of the building displayed by the "Poles" and announced that after a furious gun battle with the police, one of the raiders was killed and all others arrested.

Details of the raid on the German station became known after the war. The leader of the raiding party testified to the actual circumstances at the Nuremberg trial of war criminals. His name was A. H. Naujock. He was not a Pole, but a German, a long-standing member of the SS.

In the late summer of 1939 A. H. Naujock had been ordered personally by Heydrich, Chief of Sipo and S.D. (organs of the German security system), to attack the radio station at Gleiwitz and to allow a Polish-speaking German to make an inflammatory speech in Polish and German. Naujock and his band were to be dressed in Polish uniforms for the action; and, some "Polish" bodies were to be left at the station as indisputable evidence of Polish aggression.

At noon on August 31, 1939, the coded order from Heydrich to attack the station reached Naujock at Gleiwitz. At the same time a German criminal, according to Mr. Naujock, was delivered to him by the Gestapo

of Gleiwitz. The man was "alive but completely unconscious" and dying from some kind of injections, introduced into his veins by Gestapo doctors; "blood was smeared across his face." Six raiders attacked the station at 8 p. m.

Shots were fired. As planned, a short speech announcing the seizure of the station and of the city by the Poles were made. Naujock and his assistants then escaped, leaving behind the already dying and bloody "Pole," where they "had him laid down at the entrance to the station."

The particular significance of this episode lies in the fact that at dawn the next day, the steel of German bombs was ripping apart homes and bodies in all the major cities of Poland. In fact, both the German and Soviet armies attacked Poland. After thirty-five days of struggle, organized Polish resistance collapsed and the Polish Government fled to Romania.

It is now known that the German and Soviet Governments coordinated their action on the basis of prearranged plans for the territorial dismemberment of Poland. Accordingly, the country was divided into two spheres of interest by the "Ribbentrop-Molotov line," with a gain for Germany of 72,866 square miles and for the Soviet Union of 77,620 square miles of Polish land. Subsequently, the Supreme Council of the U.S.S.R. incorporated these lands into the Soviet Union.

In Soviet-occupied Poland an immediate mass deportation of Poles commenced. Whole families were put forcibly into trains and dispatched toward northern Soviet territories. A sober and cautious estimate of the total number of the deportees can be established as approximating 1,200,000. This number does not include 230,670 Polish soldiers, from privates to generals, captured in the eastern part of Poland by the Soviet Army.

Some 15,000 of the prisoners, including approximately 8,300 to 8,400 officers, completely disappeared from the earth. Their fate became a matter of international controversy and an open wound for Poles.

The officers who had disappeared constituted a loss of about 45 per cent of the total of the Polish Land Army Officers' Corps at that time. The Poles intensified their search on the diplomatic level.

The Polish Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Tadeusz Romer testified that more than fifty formal inquiries were addressed to the Soviet Government on the subject of the missing men, but no information was received.

On October 15, 1941, General Sikorski, representing the Polish Government, addressed a special note to the Soviet Ambassador in London, Bogomolov, stating that "the fate of several thousand Polish Officers... who have not been found in Soviet military camps, continues to remain uncertain. Their presence in the Polish Army camps is indispensable." A month later, Bogomolov replied that "all Polish officers on the territory of the U.S.S.R. have ... been set free." This the Poles scarcely believed, and decided that a direct appeal should be made to Stalin. On November 14, 1941, the Polish Ambassador, Professor Kot, had an audience with Stalin. The Ambassador came to the point: "... my request to you, Mr. President, is that you will give instructions for the officers, whom we need for the organization of the army, to be released. We possess records of when they were removed from the camps."

The discussion of the subject closed when Stalin, telephoning to the N.K.V.D., asked if all Poles had been released from prison, listened to the reply, then added: "I have with me here the Polish Ambassador, who tells me not all." (He again listened to the reply, then put down the receiver and returned to the conference table.)

General Sikorski decided to talk to Stalin personally and flew from London to Moscow. The two leaders met at the Kremlin on December 3, 1941. To the persistent question, "Where are the men?" Stalin replied, "They escaped." General Anders, who was also present, asked, "Where could they escape to?" "To Manchuria," Stalin replied.

Though Sikorski had flown thousands of miles over enemy-controlled territory to reach Moscow this was all the information he obtained. The escape of 15,000 men in 1941 across Russia "to Manchuria" was hardly a serious possibility.

The case attracted the attention of foreign offices of Allied Governments. On May 27, 1942, Admiral William H. Standley, United States Ambassador to the Soviet Union, informed Mr. Andrei Vyshinsky that "the Soviet Government had delayed giving effect to certain clauses of the Polish-Soviet Agreement, particularly in regard to ... the release of Polish prisoners-of-war." Vyshinsky promised to convey the Ambassador's views to his government. When months elapsed and no news forthcoming, Standley again referred to the missing Poles while talking with Molotov (the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs). The latter replied angrily that "there are too many people interesting themselves in Polish politics." The British Ambassador inquiries likewise yielded nothing.

The search produced contradictory and confused statements from Soviet officials. Mr. Vyshinsky on one occasion assured the Poles that "we have records of everyone, alive or dead. I have promised the details and I will produce them," and several months later stated with equal strength of conviction "unfortunately we have no such lists." Lists were available for the more than one million Poles herded into the Soviet Union, but not for the 15,000 who had vanished.

Informal pleas and inquiries did not yield much for the Poles. General G. S. Zhukov used his position, within the limits of propriety, to intercede informally on behalf of Poles. Some liberations of Poles still detained took place through his intervention. But when approached by Polish Major-General Bohusz-Szyszko, Chief of the Polish Military Mission in Moscow, on behalf of two officers listed among the 15,000 missing, Zhukov told him bluntly, "Please do not ask me about these men, because in this particular case, I cannot help you."

The search continued from July 1941 until April 1943. For a year and eight months no efforts were spared, no contacts overlooked to obtain from Soviet authorities information about the missing men - all in vain. Not a single clue was discovered.

In the last week of February 1943 the teletypes of German Communication Regiment 537 stationed several miles west of Smolensk, deep in Soviet territory, reported that German field police had found the bodies of Polish officers within the area of their bivouac. They did not know precisely how many, but they were sure there were thousands. The dead were dressed in high leather boots, with leather belts across their chests, many of them with medals for merit and valor. Each man had been shot through the head. They were found in several mass graves in Soviet soil but the bullets which had killed them were of German manufacture.

Tomorrow: Events in the Katyn Woods.

Excerpted from "Death in the Forest." By J. K. Zawodny, University of Notre Dame Press.

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Second of 12 articles in a series excerpted from "Death in the Forest," the story of the Katyn forest massacre in which 15,000 Polish prisoners of war were murdered.

By J. K. Zawodny

KATYN - #2

In the personal diary of the German Minister of Propaganda, Goebbels, the following entry may be found under the date of April 9, 1943: "Polish mass graves have been found near Smolensk. The Bolsheviks simply shot down and then shoveled into mass graves some 10,000 Polish prisoners...." Presumably it was a German war correspondent who had brought the gruesome discovery to Goebbels' attention.

On April 13, 1943, at 9:15 a.m., New York time, the German radio broadcast a propaganda broadside aimed at cracking the unity of the Allies. It announced to the world that Polish officers had been murdered by the Soviets. On the basis of the German statements, it appeared that one Allied government had murdered nearly half of the officers' corps of another.

The Soviet response, after two days, was disseminated by all possible means of public communication. The Soviet Information Bureau issued a statement April 15, 1963, announcing that "...Polish prisoners-of-war who in 1941 were engaged in construction work west of Smolensk and who ... fell into the hands of the German-Fascist hangmen..." had subsequently been executed. A Soviet reconnaissance plane appeared above the territory where the Germans had discovered the graves and hovered over the area.

The Katyn Forest lies about ten miles west of Smolensk. The area originally belonged to two families: Kozlinski and Lednicki. The latter had owned the land from 1896 to 1917. After the Revolution of 1917 the area was under the jurisdiction of Soviet political police.

In 1941 the area was seized by German troops and at the time of the discovery of the graves, February 1943, a German unit was billeted in the former N.K.V.D. villa. Immediately after the discovery of the graves the German Military Field Police, with propaganda officials discreetly lurking in the background, took command.

No one who had lived under the German occupation was apt to believe the German description of the discovery, nor would the Allies. At the time of discovery about half a million Poles were fighting against Germany. Their contribution to the war effort was well known among the free people. The Poles were appealing throughout the Allied camp for facts.

Public opinion pointed an accusing finger at the Germans. The fact the men had been killed with German-made bullets induced the German Government to invite an independent International Commission, the Polish Red Cross Commission, and the German Special Medical-Judiciary Commission to make a study on the spot.

Moreover, if the guilt could be shifted to the Soviet Government, a rift between the Polish Government-in-Exile and the Soviet Government would follow and the Allies might be hopelessly split. Toward that purpose Himmler (Chief of the German Police and SS) and Goebbels bent all efforts.

The International Commission was drawn from twelve countries other than Germany. The participants consisted of distinguished scholars and specialists in forensic medicine. There is no evidence to indicate that

these men were pro-Nazi or that they were under pressure to participate in the Commission.

The International Commission arrived at the Katyn Forest on April 28, 1943. The Germans on the spot provided all necessary staff and facilities. The members of the Commission had complete freedom of movement and were permitted to choose any corpse they wished for autopsy.

At approximately the same time a nine-person medical team (subsequently increased to twelve) of the Polish Red Cross from occupied Poland was allowed by Germans to carry on its own investigation at the spot. The findings of this team are of particular importance for two reasons. First, its members were, in fact, extremely suspicious (having lived under the German occupation for the preceding three years) of German concern for Poles, living or dead. Second, there were in this team, unknown to the Germans and the rest of the group, members of the Polish Underground Movement, whose assignment was to gather data concerning the identity of the murderers and to dispatch it through the Underground radio system to the Polish Government-in-Exile in London.

Besides the International Commission and that of the Polish Red Cross, a German Special Medical-Judiciary Commission was also active. Members of the three commissions acted independently during the investigations, and arrived independently at conclusions stated in their three separate final reports. Since the reports coincide in the most important details, the following description of the findings in Katyn Forest is based on all these reports, with pertinent supplements gathered from other sources.

In Katyn Forest eight mass graves were found, in depth from six to eleven feet, filled with bodies. Generally, there had been a particular system in their burial. They were lying face down, hands beside or tied

behind their bodies, legs straight, one upon another in ten or twelve layers of corpses. Without exception all of the men had been shot in the back of the head. In most cases, the men had been shot once.

There were some who had been shot twice; and in one case a man's skull was crushed by three shots. As a rule, the entry of the bullet was above the neck, its course upward, the bullet leaving the skull on the face side between nose and hair line. Two individual graves were located; and in them two fully uniformed Polish generals were found, each shot as the men had been. Microscopic analysis of the uniforms, with the assistance of infra-red rays, established that the men had been executed by firing a revolver against the raised collar of each victim's winter coat or directly against his head.

Many of the corpses, particularly the cadets and younger men, had their hands tied.

The technique of tying the knots was identical in all instances. The ropes were evidently methodically prepared in advance, since all of them were of the same length. Microscopic analysis of the rope - made by a German scientist on the spot - showed it to be Soviet-made. The same kind of knots was found on the bodies of several men and women dressed in the remnants of garments of Soviet origin, who also were found in a separate common grave in Katyn Forest.

Close examination of these cadavers established that the persons had been killed in the same manner between five and ten years earlier - many years before the Germans had come to this area.

The mouths of some of the Poles were filled with sawdust and also with pieces of felt with strings attached at each side and passed around the cheeks.

Gagged, bound, blinded by their coats thrown over their heads, the officers apparently had struggled, until subdued by thrusts of bayonets. On body number 378, identified as Lieutenant Stefan Mejster, holes from a bayonet were quite visible on the coat, jacket, two shirts, and on the arms, thighs, and the buttocks.

They evidently had to be overpowered and held while the executioner shot them, otherwise the death wounds would not be so uniform on all victims. The bayonet thrusts could be easily detected and the members of the medical teams investigated these under microscopes. The wounds and holes in the material were made by four cornered bayonets. It was observed that this type of bayonet was used by the Soviet Army at that time.

There were many observers eager to find evidence that the German discovers had committed the massacre. The Poles, particularly, expected the graves to yield some data which would abolish the German accusation. At this time, the Soviet Government was unable to defend itself with facts, since it did not have access to the graves.

Meanwhile the graves were giving up their evidence. The bodies were separated with iron hooks, shovels, "even picks." They had been compressed by their own weight and adhered to each other with the acids of decomposition. Each body was lifted out of the grave, given a separate number, and, according to an American officer brought to the graves as a prisoner of war, "...was searched very carefully, examined, and identified.... The articles removed from each body were placed in a large manila envelope for safekeeping. A search of the bodies was very thorough..... A typist was present recording the findings on each body."

The identity of the murdered men could be established because in the pockets of their uniforms a wealth of personal data was found. On the basis of these materials it was rather easy to ascertain the first and second name, rank, age, profession, home address, and even, as the Report pointed out, the religious faith of the victim.

It was expected that there would be personal jewelry such as watches, rings, golden trinkets, or fountain pens, on the bodies, but nothing of this sort was found unless hidden in seams or in boots. Were these soldiers even robbed before their death? Or did the men change their criteria of values while imprisoned and exchange gold for something which was of more immediate importance? Some of the findings were touchingly universal in their appeal. Children's letters, pictures of women with graceful, longing dedications, and assurances of love.

The establishment of the date of the massacre was the crux of the whole investigation. The Soviet Government controlled the Katyn area until the late summer of 1941. At that time the German Army seized it. If it could be determined when the men were shot, the identity of the executioners would be known. Had the bodies been in the graves not longer than about twenty months, it could be assumed that the Germans committed the crime. Had the bodies been longer in the graves, it would appear that the government of the Soviet Union was responsible.

The findings of the three commissions agree that the men were killed and buried about three years before the exhumations, in approximately the spring of 1940, or a little more than one year prior to the outbreak of the German-Soviet war, when the area belonged to the Soviet Union and the forest was under the jurisdiction of the N.K.V.D.

According to the German Commission the number of bodies was 4,143; according to the Polish Red Cross Commission - 4,243. To this number about 200 bodies from the partially excavated grave number 8 ought to be added in making a total of approximately 4,443 bodies. The majority were officers. Privates and twenty-two men in civilian clothing were also found.

Tomorrow: The name lists are read.

Excerpted from "Death in the Forest." By J. K. Zawodny, University of Notre Dame Press.

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Third of 12 articles in a series excerpted from
"Death in the Forest," the story of the Katyn
Forest Massacre.

By J. K. Zawodny

KATYN - #3

The discovery of the graves in Katyn, it was generally believed by the Poles, was a hoax to drive a wedge between the Soviet Union and the other Allies and that Goebbels was wielding the hammer.

Then the first list of names and the pictures appeared in the daily (German-controlled) paper. The name-lists were read in radio broadcasts. The Polish delegations returned from Katyn spreading their observations. It was true! The Underground community had its own sources at the scene for verification - they confirmed. The crescendo of German propaganda might as well not have existed. The Underground knew for certain that the Polish prisoners-of-war had been killed on Soviet territory. But by whom?

The names of sons, fathers, brothers and fiances were identified by families from lists that came out daily. Public opinion demanded justice. Appearances were persuasive, but those Poles who were level-headed, while convinced that the men had been shot, still were not sure as to the identity of those who had killed them.

The German press in Poland kept Katyn before Polish public opinion every day from April 14 until August 4 of 1943. According to this press "the Jews did it!!" Jews were guilty of everything - even the Allied strength.

Of course, the Katyn affair and official German compassion for the Poles did not stop daily executions and manhunts by the German police

on the streets of Warsaw. The Germans' pathological hate for Polish citizens of Jewish origin exploded in Warsaw in a manner no less cruel than Katyn. On April 19, 1943, the mass murder in the Warsaw ghetto commenced. It lasted for four weeks.

These were the circumstances in which the German propaganda was telling the Poles that the Soviet Union was the only menace and the Germans were their real protectors.

The German administration was of such a character that their propaganda failed to convince. The Poles did not take the bait, did not officially collaborate with Germany in any area, and they refused to blame the Soviet Union for the Katyn Forest massacre, but they wanted to know who had done it, and were desperate in their intent to determine who had killed the prisoners.

Poles looked to Churchill and Roosevelt to see that truth and justice should triumph. The Underground radio stations pulsed with messages to the Polish Government-in-Exile. The occupied country demanded justice; the government in London had to act.

During the same period, German propaganda outside Poland was aimed at creating division among the Allies. Himmler wanted to accomplish this by contacting Poles in London and maneuvering them into direct accusation of the Soviet Union. Von Ribbentrop, the German Minister of Foreign Affairs, had a more sophisticated plan. Whatever the Polish reaction might be, German propaganda would provide "evidence" that it was instigated by the English Government. In this way the Katyn affair not only would split Soviet-Polish but also Soviet-British relations. Goebbels was elated. Hitler himself ordered that "the affair be given widest possible use."

On April 14, 1943, a relatively unknown German public official named Bohle wrote Himmler a "strictly secret" letter proposing that General Sikorski, the head of the Polish Government-in-Exile, be invited to inspect Katyn as a private person, and that representatives of the Allied governments be invited also. It was obvious, Bohle said, that the Allies would refuse to come, and that they also would prevent Sikorski's coming, even if he wanted to come. This might provide some material for propaganda to further assist in splitting the Allies.

Himmler acknowledged the letter politely but with the air of a man who knows it all. He was pleased with the idea "particularly since myself, I have already thought about it ...," he wrote. Eight days later Himmler wrote to Ribbentrop, "It occurred to me...," then repeated what had been, basically, Bohle's suggestion.

Herr Ribbentrop was cool to the idea. In his reply dated April 26, 1943, he admitted that such propaganda could gain some advantage. However, he pointed out that the principles guiding German foreign policy in regard to the Polish Government-in-Exile were such that they prevented any contacts with the Poles. These principles were so important that they could not be impaired for "immediate gains of propaganda."

On April 19, 1943, a member of Ribbentrop's personal staff named Megerle sent a codified telegram to the German legations in Budapest and Geneva requesting them to look for "about four" Poles among the emigres, who would be willing to go to Katyn, and give at least an outward impression of co-operating with German authorities.

The telegram specified that they ought to have "anti-bolshevik or anti-Semitic convictions." Officials at the legations sought in vain among thousands of Polish emigres in Switzerland and Hungary to find even four willing to play such a role.

Meanwhile, the Poles in London acted, even before the first radiograms sent by the Underground members in the Polish Red Cross Commission reached them. It is quite possible that they had been prodded by a special telegram sent on April 15, 1943, at 7 p.m. by General Anders (who by this time had been evacuated with his army from the Soviet Union to the Middle East). In this telegram the general requested the government "to intervene in this affair with the object of obtaining official explanations from the Soviets, especially as our soldiers are convinced that the rest of our people in the U.S.S.R. will also be exterminated." The soldiers were fearful about their families still in the Soviet Union.

The Polish-language press in London was hopeful that "this terrible news taken up by the German propaganda will turn out - as it often has been the case in the past - to be lies."

As the problem of the disappearance of 15,000 Allied officers and men arose, on April 21, 1943, Stalin sent "personal and secret" messages to Prime Minister Churchill and President Roosevelt. The texts of the messages were identical. Because the anti-Soviet campaign had started simultaneously in the German and Polish press and followed similar lines, this was "an indubitable evidence of contact and collusion between Hitler ... and the Sikorski Government.... The Sikorski Government is striking a treacherous blow at the Soviet Union..." The letters continued: "These circumstances compel the Soviet Government to consider that the present Polish Government, having descended to collusion with the Hitler Government has, in practice, severed its relations of alliance with the U.S.S.R. and adopted a hostile attitude to the Soviet Union. For this reason the Soviet Government has decided to interrupt

relations with that Government." Although the basis for a breach of relations sounded rather weak, Stalin had one point which, in terms of diplomatic procedure, could be annoying to him as head of the Soviet Government. The Polish Government had not inquired directly of the Soviet Union about the facts relating to Katyn. Stalin was justified in resenting this. "The Sikorski Government has not found it necessary even to address questions to the Soviet Government or to request information on the matter," he complained.

The Poles, as a matter of fact, had addressed a note in this spirit to the Soviet Government on April 17, but the note was not handed to the Soviet Ambassador until three days later - for technical reasons," they said - which means that they officially delivered the note after they had approached the International Red Cross requesting an impartial investigation. The Poles were engaged in "politicking" themselves.

One has to realize that from the fall of 1941 until the discovery of the Katyn graves in April 1943 the Polish Government was continually addressing notes, inquiries and letters through formal and informal channels asking the Soviet Government about the missing men. The total number of these inquiries on both formal and informal levels was well over 200.

The answers elicited had yielded no results. Consequently they had decided to appeal as it were, to "a higher court," an international agency of repute, to ascertain the facts. Why did they appeal to the Red Cross first and inquire of the Soviet Government later? Here was a politically shrewd step on the part of the Poles. They gauged quite well what would be the answer of the Soviet Government - the Russians would maintain, as they in fact did, that the German Government

committed the crime. If the Poles then appealed to the International Red Cross, the Soviet Union would charge them with lack of faith, disbelieving another ally, etc. By notifying the Red Cross first, the Poles hoped to avoid the trap of challenging openly the statement of the Soviet Government. But they were vulnerable from any angle.

Churchill, in response to Stalin's letter, used reasonable arguments pleading for unity and denying Stalin's accusations that the Poles had collaborated with Hitler. He was disappointed that Stalin had not consulted him before undertaking such an important step as breaking diplomatic relations. He pointed out that the exiles had been and still were willing to co-operate with the Soviet Government. At the same time he slammed his fist into the agitated Poles. "I am examining the possibility of silencing those Polish newspapers in this country (England) which attacked the Soviet Government," he wrote. Subsequently, the Polish press in England was forbidden to express hostility to the Soviet Union, and Churchill advised Sikorski to make no further inquiries about the missing men. "If they are dead, nothing you can do will bring them back." Roosevelt's reaction was along similar lines. He assured Stalin that he could not "believe that Sikorski has in any way whatsoever collaborated with the Hitler gangsters. In my opinion, however, he has erred in taking up this particular question with the International Red Cross." But, Stalin was not to be deterred from his course of action.

At 12:15 a.m. on April 26, 1943, the Polish Ambassador in the Soviet Union, Mr. Romer, was summoned to the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, where Mr. Molotov read to him a note reiterating mainly the points covered in Stalin's letters to Churchill and Roosevelt and, after bluntly denouncing the Polish Government for "contact and

accord" with Hitler, notified him that "on the strength of the above, the Soviet Government has decided to sever relations with the Polish Government."

The alert ambassador refused to accept such a note, informing Molotov that it was "couched in language no ambassador can receive." This was the argument of the weaker party and was treated as such. After returning to his hotel, Mr. Romer was awakened much later the same night by sharp knocking on the door. He opened the door to be handed a letter by a messenger, who left immediately. After opening the envelope the ambassador discovered in it Mr. Molotov's note. Neither the content nor the manner of delivery of the note was according to commonly respected diplomatic custom.

In addition, it was most distressing to Romer, since he visualized the difficulties such a step created in promoting unity among the Allies. He immediately consulted the British and the American ambassadors in Moscow. Both of them, however compassionate as persons, were helpless as ambassadors. The American Ambassador, Admiral Standley, revealed a Yankee spirit and sense of humor, advising Romer to take the note back "to the Kremlin gate, give it to a messenger and tell him it was sent to you by mistake." This advice did not cheer the Polish Ambassador, although the attitudes of the two Allied colleagues did. When he left the Soviet Union for England he was seen off at the station by both the American and the British Ambassadors, who brought him farewell presents, as one of them said, "to show where our sympathy lies."

This feeling of sympathy apparently was not shared by the Allies on the highest level of policy formation. With the Polish press

forcibly silenced and the pro-Soviet papers keeping the Poles under constant fire by charging them with the slandering of the Soviet Union and collaborating with Hitler, the policymakers literally forced the Polish leaders into a position from which the American and British Governments could deal with Stalin. The day after the break of the diplomatic relations General Sikorski, the head of the Polish Government, was "invited" to participate in a chain of conferences with Churchill, Eden, and the American Ambassador, Mr. Drexel Biddle.

The outcome was a statement by the Polish Government, issued through its Telegraph Agency, that the Polish Government considered its request to the International Red Cross for the investigation of the Katyn massacre to be withdrawn. Sikorski complained privately about British pressure but there was no alternatives available. Even this step did not change the attitude of the Soviet Government.

Behind the Soviet action was a potent diplomatic secret. On the surface it appeared that Stalin was merely annoyed with the Polish Government. One needed Mr. Churchill's incisiveness and his ability to get at the core of the matter to discover Stalin's intention and pinpoint it as the real reason for the Soviet behavior.

Tomorrow: Soviet moves.

Excerpted from "Death in the Forest." By J. K. Zawodny, University of Notre Dame Press.

Death In The Forest

WHO

was responsible for the largest assassination of prisoners-soldiers since the ruthless Ghengis Khan?

WHAT

facts were never answered by U.S. and British Intelligence team which investigated the massacre?

WHERE

besides the Katyn Forest can the answers be found to produce proof of guilt?

WHEN

did it take place? And when will steps be taken to bring the criminals to an international court of justice?

WHY

were 15,000 Polish officers and soldiers killed, and why has the slaughter remained a political puzzle?

HOW

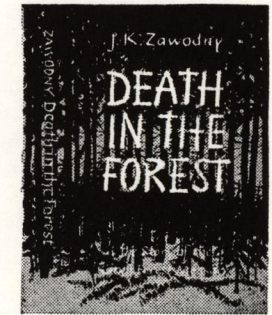
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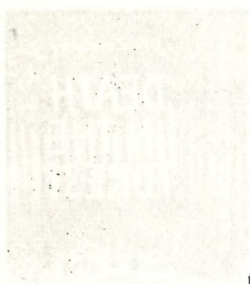
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