

Spring 2017

The Katyn Massacre: Cover-up, Suppression, and the Politics of War, From an American Perspective

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The Katyn Massacre: Cover-up, Suppression, and the Politics of War, From an American
Perspective

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An Honors Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for graduation with honors in History
from Hamline University

April 2017

Abstract

In the spring of 1940, roughly twenty two thousand Polish officers, the cream of Poland's intelligentsia, were executed in Katyn forest. While the Soviet Union blamed Nazi Germany for the massacre, in the past seventy years all gathered evidence including documents from the Soviet archives, point out to the Soviet Union as responsible for the killings. However, the British and American governments, who had knowledge of the Katyn Massacre, were engaged in a suppression of the truth, during the war and into the early years of the Cold War, even while they confronted the Soviet Union over Poland's independence. The question is why? By examining the memoirs of the main officials in Truman administration who were involved in the cover-up—Dean Acheson, George Kennan, William Averell Harriman and Truman himself—as well as studying the recent declassified 1951-1952 Congressional Report on Katyn Massacre, which shows that several U.S. governmental agencies, particularly the State Department, were directly responsible for suppressing information about this event, this study offers explanations for the United States' decision to withhold that evidence from the American public.

Acknowledgments

I want to take this opportunity to thank all those who greatly assisted me in my research and writing of this project. First, I want to thank librarian Kimberly Feilmeyer at the Bush Memorial Library at Hamline University, who helped me obtain many of the primary and secondary source material I needed to complete my research. Secondly, I would like to give a special thanks to professor's Nurith Zmora and John Mazis from the history department at Hamline. Dr. Zmora is an American historian, who not only aided me tremendously in my research and always made herself available to me when I had questions, but she also spent countless hours reading and revising this paper, and provided me with important feedback and criticisms of my writing. Most importantly however, Nurith was truly an invaluable asset since her knowledge and insights regarding the Cold War is vastly superior to that of my own. Dr. Mazis is an European historian who specializes in Russian history, who not only led me to a treasure trove of excellent sources on Lenin, Stalinism, Communism, and the history of the Soviet Union in general, but he was also extremely instrumental in providing me with the unique understandings of Poland's history. He also gave me significant comments on my writing as well, and I have had the pleasure of taking many courses with him during my time at Hamline. I also want to thank Dr. Binnur Ozkececi-Taner of the political science department at Hamline and Dr. Robin Bowden, who teaches U.S. history and specializes in American diplomacy at Century College. Both were part of my honors panel and their evaluations of my work was truly rewarding. Most importantly however, I want to thank my beautiful wife Tammi and my lovely daughter Megan. My research consumed an enormous amount of my time outside of my regular studies, and that was time away from them. Yet, never once did they complain. They both supported me throughout the process and my college career in general. And for that, I will be forever grateful.

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Let those who have hitherto not imbrued their hands with innocent blood beware lest they join the ranks of the guilty, for most assuredly the three Allied powers will pursue them to the uttermost ends of the earth and will deliver them to their accusers in order that justice may be done.¹

Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin (1943)

Introduction

Shortly after the outbreak of WWII, roughly fifteen thousand Polish officers were executed by the Soviet Union in the spring of 1940 near the Russian city of Smolensk. When the Germans entered the city in the spring of 1943, and discovered the mass graves, they quickly accused the Russians of the killings. The Soviet Union, which was part of the Allied camp since 1941 (with Great Britain, and the United States), denied their involvement, and in turn, blamed the Nazis for the crime. A diplomatic debacle erupted thereafter, in which the Polish Government-in-exile indicated Moscow's guilt for the executions, while the Allies for a variety of reasons, chose to ignore the murders and suppressed any information in regards to the event. Even though by late summer 1945 the end of hostilities in Europe and the Pacific were officially over, for nearly six more years, U.S. policy makers in Washington continued to censor this atrocity in order to keep this information hidden from the American people. It wasn't until 1951 in which the Katyn massacre became public knowledge after the U.S. House of Representatives conducted a massive investigation about the affair. The question therefore becomes why? Why did President Truman and those in his administration continue the policy of concealment of the Katyn tragedy, especially since it was his administration that developed strong foreign policy initiatives against the Soviet Union almost immediately after the war? Furthermore, why did Congress only in 1951, after

¹ Foreign Policy, "Basic Documents, 1941-49." *Washington, Government Print* (1950), <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015019162257;view=1up;seq=35>. 14. See also Moscow Conference October 1943.

Poland was under the control of the Soviet Union, did they choose to conduct an extensive investigation into the deaths of thousands of non-U.S. citizens?

In an attempt to answer the above questions, this essay will examine the memoirs, personal writings, and testimonies before the Congressional Hearings, of George F. Kennan, William Averell Harriman, Dean Acheson, and Truman himself, in order to provide possible explanations for why, or why not, these individuals remained silent about the murders at Katyn leading up to the Congressional enquiry. The reason for highlighting these individuals exclusively is because these political figures, excluding Truman, held key positions within the U.S. State Department during both the Roosevelt and Truman administrations (1933-1953). Each were well aware and highly informed about the current events taking place in Poland during and immediately following the war. But several also had close ties to the Soviet Union before, throughout, and after WWII as well, which leads one to suspect that they may have had ulterior reasons for not wanting to draw attention to the Katyn issue.

While not all of the above mentioned individuals were necessarily near the epicenter of the Katyn controversy, each nonetheless were joined by a common bond in their professional life, and played a major part in assisting Truman and others in developing the Cold War policies against the spread of communism and Soviet influence around the globe. It should be noted however, that this is not a study which exposes or reveals these individuals as key architects of some vast conspiracy to cover-up the Katyn affair. Instead, the following attempts to explain what persuaded these individuals to overlook the Katyn tragedy, and the likely reason(s) as to why. Moreover, the subsequent will endeavor to answer who these individuals believed was responsible for the crime. This is particularly important since some, more so than others, had greater access to the evidence and details that concluded the Soviets were guilty, but the information they had at their disposal

didn't necessarily translate to who they personally thought was accountable for the Katyn massacre.

In addition, the following will likewise take a closer look at declassified documents from the Congressional Hearings (which became available in 2012), in order to demonstrate that there was a pro-Communist fervor emanating from within several U.S. governmental agencies during and after the war. Finally, the Katyn controversy will also be discussed on a much broader scale as to why studying this historical event is an important case study for understanding why policy makers select and choose which wrongdoings by a foreign power should be brought to the attention of the American public, and which ones should go relatively ignored. Most importantly however, the subsequent will explain why the murders at Katyn has come to symbolize the sufferings of hundreds of thousands of Poles at the hands of the Soviet Union during the Nonaggression period of WWII.

What Scholars Say About Katyn and the Cold War

How does the tale of the summary execution of thousands of Polish officers by the Soviet Union differentiate from other mass killings that transpired throughout Second World War? The answer to that question has captivated and intrigued historians, scholars, and journalists alike for nearly seventy-years. At its core, Katyn represented more than just another brutal crime that emerged during the WWII period. Katyn became a lie, an invention, a smokescreen, and most importantly, a plot to undermine the sovereignty of an established state: Poland. It is from this perspective contemporary works regarding the story of Katyn were fashioned. For authors telling this story, their endeavors answered three important questions from the ashes of Katyn: Who was

responsible for their deaths? How did the world's most powerful governments during WWII respond to this crime? And most importantly, why were the Polish officers killed in first place?

For the most part, by the end of WWII, the Katyn massacre would fade into obscurity, leaving much of the world populace unaware of this event. Indeed, jubilation over the fall of Nazi Germany, Fascism, and Imperial Japan, and seeing justice delivered to war criminals, preoccupied the thoughts of Western societies. However, with the rise of the Soviet Union as a superpower by the late 1940s, and the threat of communism spreading around the globe, several notable individuals would bring the Katyn affair to the forefront of Western politics. The overabundance of books, articles, and journals written about Katyn, in due course, would call attention to Soviet ideology regarding their revolutionary ambitions in achieving a world dominated by communism. It is along these lines that publication of *The Katyn Wood Murders*, authored by Joseph Mackiewicz in 1951, became one of the first books which highlighted the Katyn massacre, and this work would be the first to emphasize the Soviet's culpability in the deaths of the Polish officers.

Mackiewicz's book offers a fascinating and persuasive narrative of the Katyn massacre, but his eyewitness account of the mass graves in 1943 is by far the most intriguing aspect of his work. Mackiewicz, a Pole himself, spent much of the war living near the outskirts of the Polish city of Wilno (today it's the Lithuanian city of Vilnius). During the Soviet occupation of Eastern Poland in 1939, Mackiewicz's radical views against communism forced him to give up his profession as a "writer and journalist," leaving him to quietly take up work as lonely "wagon driver."² Fortunately for Mackiewicz, by the time the Germans seized control of Eastern Poland from the Russians in 1941, they appeared uninterested in his nationalistic views. However, when

² Joseph Mackiewicz. *The Katyn Wood Murders*. London: Hollis & Carter, 1951. 137.

the discovery of several mass graves in the Katyn Forest was unearthed by the Nazis during the spring months of 1943, the Polish Underground Movement, who fought against Nazi occupation, wanted Mackiewicz to go to Katyn and investigate the crime personally. Mackiewicz explains that his initial journey to Katyn had to be approved by the top echelons of the Third Reich. To his great astonishment, the sanctioning of his trek, required “no pledges, no signatures, no compulsion, no statement,” the Germans simply wanted him to “see” the slaughter for himself.³ Which of course is understandable from the Germans point of view, considering Katyn was now a propaganda tool for the Nazis to use against the Soviets and their Western Allies.

Nevertheless, in May of 1943, Mackiewicz, along with three other reporters and ten factory workers from Warsaw, joined the Polish Red Cross at Katyn. When Mackiewicz arrived at Katyn, he wrote extensively on the Polish Red Cross’s exhumations of the corpses, and he thoroughly discussed the material evidence that he and others gathered at the scene of the crime. The decaying composition of the bodies, the condition of the victims’ uniforms, and most importantly, the volume of personal effects found on the victims, which included “letters...newspapers...diaries...prayer books, and medals,” all indicate, according to Mackiewicz, that the Polish officers had been killed near the end of April 1940.⁴ Mackiewicz also highlights how the Germans permitted him and other officials complete and unregulated “freedom of movement” around the grave sites, in addition, German authorities authorized all those who were present at the scene, “to look at anything” or “talk to anyone [they] wished,” without the need of an escort.⁵ Although Mackiewicz contends, that without question, the Nazis wanted to exploit the Katyn tragedy for propaganda purposes, their allowance of unfettered outside analyses, stresses

³ Mackiewicz. *The Katyn Wood Murders*. 139.

⁴ Mackiewicz. *The Katyn Wood Murders*. 144-6.

⁵ Mackiewicz. *The Katyn Wood Murders*. 149.

how the Germans clearly wanted to establish to its foreign onlookers that the deceased were not tampered by German forces, and that the personal materials could not have been planted prior to their visit to the mass graves. Therefore, as Mackiewicz writes, it was this limitless access that gave credence to German claims that the Soviets were indeed responsible for the killings, and not the Germans.

As a whole, Mackiewicz's book is a gripping and gruesome tale of the Katyn massacre. His firsthand encounter with the crime, and his personal reflections on the evidence he and others gathered at the scene, leaves little guessing as to "who" was overall responsible for executing the Polish officers. Furthermore, Mackiewicz's use of personal accounts from former Polish prisoners of war, who either escaped from slave labor camps in Russia, or were subsequently released after the Polish-Soviet Treaty was signed in July of 1941, offers a vivid account to the brutal and inhuman conditions these individuals had endured, but not just in the labor camps themselves, but in their journey to these camps thereof as well. Yet, while Mackiewicz is by trade a journalist and a writer, and his book reads somewhat like a mystery novel, this is also one of the shortcomings of his work. Behind the scenes of Katyn was more than just a story about the liquidation of POWs. He neglected not only the Allied response to this crime, but also how that response affected Anglo-American-Soviet relations, and how the future of Poland would be decided without representation from the official Polish Government-in-exile in London. This aspect is not discussed in great detail in Mackiewicz's book. But in fairness to Mackiewicz, perhaps the "who was responsible" was more important to emphasize, considering his Polish background, his anti-communist beliefs, and his eyewitness experience.⁶

⁶ Mackiewicz. *The Katyn Wood Murders*. 10-19, 137-66.

Nearly ten years after Mackiewicz's book captured the attention of world audiences, came the 1962 publication of *Death in the Forest; The Story of the Katyn Forest Massacre*, which is perhaps one of the best overall accounts on the Katyn controversy. Indeed, the book's author, Janusz K. Zawodny, skillfully, critically, and scholarly, "reconstructs" the Katyn crime in immense detail.⁷ Zawodny himself had lived in Warsaw during the Nazi occupation of Western Poland. He initially fought for the Polish Army at the beginning of the German invasion, and eventually became a resistance fighter in the Polish underground. After the war, rather than attempting to live under the communist puppet regime of the People's Republic of Poland, he decided to immigrate to the United States. He later earned a Ph.D. from Stanford University, and went on to serve as a historian and political scientist at two prestigious universities: Harvard and Princeton. In his book, Zawodny studies all available materials on the Katyn tragedy from 1943-1952. This includes the 1943 Official German Documentary Evidence on the Katyn Case; the 1951-1952 Congressional Hearings before a House Select Committee, that was charged with investigating the Katyn crime on behalf of the United States; all fifteen volumes of the 1947 International Military Tribunals, which was tasked with adjudicating war criminals at Nuremburg by war's end; numerous collections of documents concerning Polish-Soviet relations from the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (M.S.Z.); and the Polish Government-in-exile's Council of Ministers confidential reports. Even the Soviet Official Statement on Katyn, and Joseph Stalin's personal correspondence with Roosevelt and Churchill, are all subject to Zawodny's analysis and inquiries.⁸

But beyond Zawodny's diligent evaluation of numerous primary source material and documentation, the added efforts of several noteworthy scholars that guided Zawodny's research

⁷ J. K. Zawodny. *Death in the Forest; The Story of the Katyn Forest Massacre*. United States: University of Notre Dame Press, 1962. ix.

⁸ Zawodny. *Death in the Forest*. xv-xvii.

brings a certain level of uniqueness to his telling of the story. Several of these academics, such as, Stanislaw Swianiewicz, Joseph Czapski, and Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, shared a personal connection to the Katyn affair. Professor Swianiewicz was a Polish historian and economist, who was the only survivor of the Katyn massacre, and as Zawodny writes, was “lucky to have been taken away from the vicinity of the slaughter minutes before the execution.”⁹ As for Joseph Czapski, he offered Zawodny “firsthand information” of the harsh conditions of the Soviet prison camp Starobelsk—where Czapski himself was interned, and where several hundred victims at Katyn had also been imprisoned.¹⁰ And Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, who had succeeded Wladyslaw Sikorski as Prime Minister of the Polish Government-in-exile (1943-1945), provided Zawodny with his valuable “experience and rich memories” into Polish-Soviet relations, during the time the Katyn massacre was brought to the world stage.¹¹ These men, along several others not mentioned here, furnished Zawodny’s examination with a personal point of view, thus lending credibility to many of his conclusions.

There is also two key aspects to Zawodny’s book that differentiates his publication from that of Mackiewicz’s. First, Zawodny had personally conducted 150 interviews with officers and soldiers of the 2nd Polish Corps, 8th British Army, who were all former Soviet prisoners of war and interned at camp Kozelsk (most of the corpses recovered at Katyn came from this camp), but were subsequently transferred to camp Grazovec, sparing them the fate that had befallen their comrades. Even so, these men “confirmed” that the number of diaries the Germans and others found on the victims remains at Katyn, were “written by the hands of their friends with whom they were imprisoned,” and as Zawodny points out, “all [of those] diaries end in April 1940.”¹² This

⁹ Zawodny. *Death in the Forest*. vii.

¹⁰ Zawodny. *Death in the Forest*. viii.

¹¹ Zawodny. *Death in the Forest*. viii.

¹² Zawodny. *Death in the Forest*. 89.

and other accounts of camp conditions, as well as NKVD (see footnote below) attempts to indoctrinate Polish prisoners into communist ideology, became a chilling, but insightful, part of Zawodny's work.¹³ It also supplied him with enough evidence to conclude that the NKVD was responsible for the deaths of the Polish officers. Secondly, Zawodny scrutinizes the positions that the United States and British Governments embraced in regards to the Katyn massacre. While he determines that both Churchill and Roosevelt "believed victory" over the Germans was more important than to be preoccupied with the Katyn tragedy, Zawodny does raise one significant question: "why *after* the cessation of hostilities in Europe [was] the Katyn affair still suppressed by governmental officials in the United States?"¹⁴ However, Zawodny's answer to that question doesn't implicate anyone in the Truman administration, nor Truman himself, who may have had reasons for continuing to suppress the knowledge of this event from the American people.

Similar to that of Zawodny's book, the 1965 publication *The Crime of Katyn: Facts & Documents*, written by a team of several scholars working under a single editor—Zdzislaw Stahl—utilizes an extensive range of Polish, German, Soviet, and U.S. sources and documents in its narration of the Katyn crime. Although this work was originally published in 1948, and both an English and Polish version were "prepared simultaneously," only the Polish edition was published. And unfortunately, the 1948 edition was not widely circulated, nor was it available to American or Polish audiences, therefore, only Britons fluent in the Polish language or ethnic Poles living in Great Britain were able to comprehend its contents.¹⁵ One could theorize that British-Soviet relations, political tensions, and the beginnings of the Cold War, no doubt played a role in the

¹³ The NKVD stands for The People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs. In essence, this organization was the secret police force of the Soviet Union before, during, and shortly after WWII, and would eventually become the precursor to the KGB. See Louis FitzGibbon, *Katyn Massacre: A Crime Without Parallel*. Torrance, Calif: Noontide Press, 1971. 31.

¹⁴ Zawodny. *Death in the Forest*. 185, 101-24.

¹⁵ Zdzislaw Stahl, ed. *The Crime of Katyn: Facts & Documents*. Polish Cultural Foundation, 1965. v.

semi-suppression of this work from British audiences in 1948. Regardless, while exact reasons are unclear, according to General Wladyslaw Anders, who authored the foreword to the 1965 edition, the English version was finally realized after “the Polish Cultural Foundation made it possible”—which also happened to correspond with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the crime.¹⁶ Thus, at long last, the reports regarding the Katyn massacre became available to British and American readers by 1965. In addition, the release of the 1965 publication did benefit from one particular source which was not included in the 1948 version: The United States’ 1951-1952 Congressional Hearings on the Katyn tragedy.

While *The Crime of Katyn: Facts & Documents* is a book that methodically dissects the evidence surrounding the massacre, perhaps the most unique aspect of this work is Wladyslaw Anders’ personal involvement in the project. Anders was captured by the Red Army in 1939 near the city of Lwow (now Lviv), but he was eventually released after Hitler ordered operation Barbarossa—the invasion of the Soviet Union—and after the Polish-Soviet Treaty was signed in 1941. Under the terms of the Polish-Soviet agreement, Stalin granted “amnesty” to all Polish citizens, Polish prisoners of war, and Polish political detainees that were taken during the Soviet invasion of Poland in 1939.¹⁷ Following Anders’ release from prison, he became the Commander-in-Chief of all Polish forces in Russia. Consequently, Anders was tasked with organizing and uniting Polish armed forces into a cohesive army to fight against the Nazi war machine. As a result, “finding...many thousands of Polish [officers],” became the goal of his many endeavors in creating such an army.¹⁸ Anders’ telling of his struggles with locating the whereabouts of these individuals for nearly two years, as well as his repeated conversations and interactions with

¹⁶ Stahl, Zdzislaw. *The Crime of Katyn*. v.

¹⁷ Stahl, Zdzislaw. *The Crime of Katyn*. 76.

¹⁸ Stahl, Zdzislaw. *The Crime of Katyn*. vi.

Premier Stalin on the matter, provides an exclusive narrative to this story. And when the mass graves were unearthed in 1943, Anders' no longer "had any doubts," that those killed at Katyn, "were the very officers...destined for [his] army."¹⁹ Hence, the loss of the "very cream" of Poland and its army, provided the reason for his personal involvement in the publication of this book.²⁰

Another interesting feature to *The Crime of Katyn: Facts & Documents*, is that the wide variety of records and evidence used in the telling of this story, came directly from Polish civilian and military sources that was assembled by the Polish Government-in-exile before, and after this governing body learned of the massacre. This includes Prime Minister Wladyslaw Sikorski's recorded conversations with General Anders, Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs Vyacheslav Molotov, and Premier Stalin, where the issue concerning the missing Polish officers was discussed extensively between 1941-1943. And the added efforts of Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, who not only succeeded Sikorski as Prime Minister of the exiled government in 1943, but endeavored quite fervently to uncover the truth of the affair during his tenure, is all thoroughly examined in great detail throughout the book. Also presented are the personal interviews and statements from former Polish prisoners of war, and the written testimonies from the family's victims who had lost all contact with their loved ones in the spring of 1940. Furthermore, the Official German Documentary Evidence of the Katyn Case; the report by the International Medical Commission; the Soviet's Official Statement, and even a handful of Soviet eyewitnesses to the crime, are all thoroughly discussed and evaluated. Similar to that of other works previously mentioned, the evidence presented in this publication confirm that the Polish officers were executed by the

¹⁹ Stahl, Zdzislaw. *The Crime of Katyn*. vii.

²⁰ Stahl, Zdzislaw. *The Crime of Katyn*. viii.

NKVD, not the Red Army, in the spring of 1940, and that the British and American governments conspired to conceal the truth in order to protect their alliance with the Soviet Union.²¹

In contrast to the aforementioned works, the 1971 book, *Katyn Massacre: A Crime Without Parallel*, authored by Louis Fitzgibbon, is perhaps one of the most uninformative versions to the Katyn story. Indeed, in the very beginning of his book, Fitzgibbon declares that his reasonings for writing the book is to once and for all “clear...all the obscurity” that has “shrouded” the Katyn controversy, and to “remove any doubt as to who is the culprit” behind the Katyn massacre.²² As powerful as this statement is, Fitzgibbon’s work offers no new evidence, and his book mostly consists of testimonies of former Polish prisoners of war and other documents—all of which, was already exhaustively examined in previous works. However, the book is well written, and the list of illustrations of the grave sites provides a more emotional feeling to the story of Katyn. Oddly enough, this tale was also republished in 1979, but other than adding an extensive preface, no other part of this publication varies from that of the original version. Nonetheless, Fitzgibbon does affirm that the sales from his book will provide financial assistance to the families of the victims of the murdered men, and in time, also help fund a memorial in honor of the Polish officers.²³ With this in mind, perhaps one could assume that this work was designed to keep the story of Katyn alive, so that the families of the murdered Polish officers may one day live at peace knowing that the memory of their loved ones, and what happened at katyn, will never be forgotten.

By 1980, a young Polish American graduate student named Robert Szymczak (who would later become a professor of American History and Politics at Penn State University) wrote his

²¹ Stahl, Zdzislaw. *The Crime of Katyn*. 76-97, 114, 126-32, 139.

²² FitzGibbon, Louis, *Katyn Massacre: A Crime Without Parallel*. Np.

²³ FitzGibbon, Louis, *Katyn Massacre: A Crime Without Parallel*. 5-14.

Ph.D. dissertation on the Katyn massacre. Under its title, *The Unquiet Dead: The Katyn Forest Massacre as an Issue in American Policy*, Szymczak's dissertation would become just that—the Katyn affair seen through the lens of American foreign policy. Unlike others before him, Szymczak's thesis concentrates on the how and the why, for a brief period of time, the Katyn controversy came to the forefront of American politics in the early 1950s. Therefore, his discourse centers around the Congressional investigation of the Katyn Forest Massacre that was conducted in 1951-1952—just as the height of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union began to dominate the political landscape of U.S. foreign policy. While other books previously mentioned have also included the House Select Committee's special report in their investigations, Szymczak argues that the Katyn affair and the timing of the Congressional report, coincided with America's "fear" that the Soviet Union and communist expansion was a serious threat to Western societies.

In addition, Szymczak contends that the United States' anxieties over communist expansionism had intertwined with the important Presidential election cycle of 1952. Indeed, Szymczak writes that the Katyn investigation became a driving force for Republicans to steer the "ethnic vote," away from "traditionally Democratic Eastern European[s]" to the Republican side of the aisle.²⁴ However, he also reasons that the House investigation into the Katyn massacre did not capture the interest of Congress and the American people based solely on the fear of communism or the procuring of votes. Senator McCarthy's "witch hunts" for communist sympathizers within the State Department, the fall of China to Mao Zedong and his communist forces, and of course, the Korean War, all led to United States' "revival" of the Katyn crime.²⁵

²⁴ Robert Szymczak. "The Unquiet Dead: The Katyn Forest Massacre as an Issue in American Policy." ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1980. 6, 284.

²⁵ Szymczak, Robert. *The Unquiet Dead*. 283.

According to Szymczak, the latter was “extremely important” to the Congressional investigations into the Katyn crime, particularly since the reported brutalities being committed against American soldiers serving in Korea, “bore a remarkable resemblance to the method[s]” the Soviets used against the Polish officers nearly a decade earlier.²⁶

In short, Szymczak’s dissertation is an excellent case study of the Polish tragedy, which ultimately turned into a very political, highly-publicized, Cold War issue within the United States. In truth, his study is the first to look at Katyn from an American perspective. He investigates the rather large role that the American press played in exposing this tragedy for political purposes, and how the powerful Polish American Congress (PAC) began ramping up their voices and criticisms of the Roosevelt and Truman administrations that spent nearly a decade concealing the affair from the American people. All in all, Szymczak’s manuscript is a must read for anyone interested in examining how politics will always undermine actual truths and actual justice.²⁷

In 1991 former Associated Press journalist and political speech writer, Allen Paul, would author one of the most widely acclaimed publications on the Katyn Massacre. Paul’s book, *Katyn: The Untold Story of Stalin’s Polish Massacre*, along parallel lines to that of Szymczak’s manuscript, hinges heavily on the findings of the 1951-1952 House Select Committee’s report on Katyn. Paul utilizes the Congressional report to trace the Katyn affair from the very beginnings of the signing of Nazi-Soviet Nonaggression Pact; to the formation of the Polish Government-in-exile in London; to the Polish-Soviet Treaty; to the discovery of the murdered Polish officers; to the Allied whitewash of the crime, and finally, to its decade’s worth of embittered consequences. He also uses a wide array of unpublished Polish documents, together with books and interviews to support his overall interpretations and conclusions. In addition, Paul incorporates the recent

²⁶ Szymczak, Robert. *The Unquiet Dead*. 283.

²⁷ Szymczak, Robert. *The Unquiet Dead*. 255-87.

revelations concerning the Katyn massacre by Soviet President Mikhail S. Gorbachev. In April of 1990, Gorbachev, for the first time in nearly forty-seven years, “publicly acknowledged...his nation’s guilt” of the Katyn crime.²⁸ Gorbachev’s acknowledgement of Soviet responsibility for the extermination of the Polish officers, happened to correspond with his policy of glasnost (“openness”), and as a result, this guiding principle limited censorship and encouraged “political discussion” into Stalin’s past transgressions.²⁹

However, the brief introduction of the book written by Allen Paul’s publisher is quite deceiving. To be clear, Paul has not “unearthed the terrible truth” about Katyn—as the book jacket suggests.³⁰ The evidence and facts surrounding the Katyn affair has been crystal clear long before the release of Paul’s book. Hence, one should not be lured into this story thinking some new revelation concerning the massacre has finally been brought to light. Nevertheless, there is one aspect to his work that is indeed “untold” as the title suggests. Paul develops a distinctive and broader narrative in his account of Katyn by following the stories of three families: “the Hoffmans and Pawulskis of Lwow, and the Czarneks of Krakow.”³¹ In that order, an attorney, a regular army officer, a physician, and most importantly, three husbands and fathers, were all victims of the Katyn massacre.³² But the hardships that the wives, sons, and daughters had to endure at the hands of the Soviets after their loved ones were murdered, by far is the most gripping and emotional tale to Paul’s story. Yet his ability to weave their struggles against the cruelest forms of tyranny and oppression throughout the text, also becomes an inspiring testament in their capacity to find courage in the face of such difficulties.

²⁸ Allen Paul, *Katyn: The Untold Story of Stalin's Polish Massacre*. Toronto: C. Scribner's Sons, 1991. ix.

²⁹ Thomas M. Magstadt, *Understanding Politics: Ideas, Institutions, & Issues*. 11th ed. Cengage Learning, 2015. 190-192.

³⁰ Paul, Allen. *Katyn: The Untold Story*. See book jacket.

³¹ Paul, Allen. *Katyn: The Untold Story*. xiv.

³² Paul, Allen. *Katyn: The Untold Story*. xiv.

Nearly twenty-years after *Katyn: The Untold Story of Stalin's Polish Massacre* was published, Allen Paul would reproduce this book in 2010. Under a new title, *Katyn': Stalin's Massacre and the Triumph of Truth*, this edition includes much of same content as his 1991 edition, however, Paul includes the efforts and research of historians Anna Cienciala (an American), Natalia S. Lebedeva (a Russian), and Wojciech Materski (a Pole), whose 2007 book, *Katyn: A Crime Without Punishment*, provided Paul with Russian translations into some “of the most important documents” concerning the Katyn massacre since the collapse of the Soviet Union.³³ Furthermore, Paul adds a single chapter to this edition—“Echoes of O'Malley,”—where he analyzes official documents and records (that were declassified in 2009) by the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee, which was responsible for approving the House Select Committee's recommendations regarding the crime of Katyn.³⁴ However, according to Paul, the Presidential and Congressional elections of 1952, not only saw Dwight D. Eisenhower (Republican) winning the presidential election in a landslide, but Republicans across the country that were competing for Congressional seats, would gain control of Congress for the first time since the Great Depression. Thus, under Republican leadership, and Eisenhower's widely popular campaign promise of ending the war in Korea, led to the Foreign Affairs Committee rejecting the proposals of the Select Committee—since bringing American troops home from Korea required the cooperation and support from the Soviet Union. Hence, “continuing the drumbeat over Katyn” would only further

³³ Allen Paul. *Katyn': Stalin's Massacre and the Triumph of Truth*. updated pbk. ed. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press. 1939. xi.

³⁴ Paul, Allen. *Katyn': Stalin's Massacre and the Triumph of Truth*. 341. The “principal conclusion” and recommendations by the House Select Committee's investigation regarding Katyn in 1952 was “unanimous... that the Soviets were guilty of murdering the Polish officers and their deaths could not have occurred later than 1940, or before Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union. The Committee recommended that the full House refer the case to the United Nations and requested a trial before the International Court of Justice at the Hague” be convened, in order to punish those who were either directly, or indirectly responsible for the massacre.

disrupt or distract the Eisenhower administration and Congressional Republicans from achieving this goal.³⁵

In all, Allen Paul's books on Katyn are well written, researched, and easy to follow. While his inclusion of the personal lives of the three families who lost loved ones at Katyn provides some dramatic flair to his telling of the story, his discovery of declassified documents from the Congressional Hearings, does shed new light on how politics continued to undermine the work and diligence of those that wanted to bring this atrocity to the center stage of international affairs.

In contrast to all other works mentioned, the 2007 publication *Katyn: A Crime Without Punishment*, provides the most complete collection and exhaustive study into the Soviet archival documentation on the Katyn massacre. However, *Katyn: A Crime Without Punishment*, could not have been possible without the added efforts of Russian President Boris Yeltsin. In fact, it was Yeltsin who permitted the release of these records in October of 1992, which included "the key Politburo decision" to execute Polish prisoners of war in March of 1940, along with documentation that highlights Soviet endeavors to cover-up their crimes.³⁶ In addition, copies of these documents were sent to Polish President Lech Walesa, and in February of 1993, representatives of the Head Office of State Archives in Poland and the Federal Archival Agency in Russia came to an agreement which "established the principles for the publication of the Katyn documents."³⁷ In total, two versions of these documents were published: a Russian volume in its original texts and a Polish version with Polish translations. The three historians and authors of *Katyn: A Crime Without Punishment*—Anna Cienciala, Natalia S. Lebedeva, and Wojciech Materski, who were briefly mentioned in the above section—wanted to deliver the circumstances regarding the Katyn

³⁵ Paul, Allen, *Katyn!: Stalin's Massacre and the Triumph of Truth*. 343.

³⁶ Anna M. Cienciala, Natalia S. Lebedeva, and Wojciech Materski. *Katyn: A Crime Without Punishment*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 2008. xv.

³⁷ Cienciala, Anna M., Lebedeva, and Materski. *Katyn: A Crime Without Punishment*. xv.

massacre to English speaking audiences, who for the most part, were not fully aware of this historical event.

Katyn: A Crime Without Punishment is divided into three parts, and each section is accompanied by considerable comments and explanations by Anna M. Cienciala. Aiding Cienciala in her research, Natalia S. Lebedeva, of the Institute of General History, Russian Academy of Services, Moscow, was chiefly responsible for the Russian side of the story, and Wojciech Materski, director of the Institute of Political Studies, Polish Academy Services, Warsaw, was responsible for the Polish side, and both served as co-editors of the American volume. Part one of the book, “Prisoners of an Undeclared War, 23 August 1939-5 March 1940,” begins with the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Nonaggression Pact, and continues by telling the story of war, capture, and Polish life during Soviet imprisonment.³⁸ Part two of the book, “Extermination, March-June 1940,” presents documents written by Lavrenty Beria (the head of the People’s Commissariat Internal Affairs [NKVD] from 1938-1953), who proposed to the Politburo and Stalin for the mass execution of 25,700 Polish officers.³⁹ In addition, multiple Soviet records produced in this section list the names and ranks of the victims of Katyn, along with railway and train dispatches, schedules, assignments, which in all, lead up to the initial execution of the Polish officers.⁴⁰ The final section of the book, “Katyn and Its Echoes, 1940 to the Present,” highlights documentation concerning Polish and Russian responses to the German announcement of the discovery of the mass graves at Katyn. Finally, the third section examines how the Katyn

³⁸ Cienciala, Anna M., Lebedeva, and Materski. *Katyn: A Crime Without Punishment*. 1-121.

³⁹ Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s. v. “Lavrenty Pavlovich Beria,” accessed July 24, 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Lavrenty-Pavlovich-Beria>.

⁴⁰ Cienciala, Anna M., Lebedeva, and Materski. *Katyn: A Crime Without Punishment*. 121-205.

affair was handled by the Allies at Nuremberg, and numerous documents relating to the Soviet cover-up of the crime throughout the mid-late twentieth century are also produced.⁴¹

Katyn: A Crime Without Punishment is by far one of the most comprehensive and best documented books concerning the Katyn massacre. Intended for English speaking audiences, this book delivers an abundance of footnotes, endnotes, biographical notes, references, photographs, and a “Glossary of Organizations and Political Parties,” all of which put the finishing touches on this exceptional volume.⁴² This publication is a must read, and is extremely beneficial for students, historians, or scholars alike, who are interested in studying Russia, Stalinism, Communism, Poland, WWII, mass murder, and the horrible nature and consequences of extreme ideologies. On a final note, Anna Cienciala observes that documents concerning Stalin’s “motives” in his decision to have the Polish officers executed are “still missing,” therefore, the most fundamentally question as to “why” the Polish officers were killed in the first place, remains “unresolved.”⁴³ While numerous works cited above have generated a host of theories as to why, the lack of exact reasons and finite answers concerning the Katyn affair from Stalin’s perspective, continues to shroud this historical event in mystery to this day.

The countless publications written about the Katyn undoubtedly demonstrate that the Soviet Union was responsible for killing the Polish officers during the spring of 1940. The story of the crime at Katyn has been methodically researched and well documented over the last seventy years. Yet during the war and postwar periods, the United States government continued to remain silent on the issue. In order to understand the reasons why U.S. governmental officials kept their knowledge and details of the Katyn affair confidential from the American public between 1943

⁴¹ Cienciala, Anna M., Lebedeva, and Materski. *Katyn: A Crime Without Punishment*. 206-353.

⁴² Cienciala, Anna M., Lebedeva, and Materski. *Katyn: A Crime Without Punishment*. 415.

⁴³ Cienciala, Anna M., Lebedeva, and Materski. *Katyn: A Crime Without Punishment*. 141.

and 1951, several publications that discuss the United States' foreign policy directives during this period of time must be explored.

The 1957 publication *Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin: The War They Waged and the Peace They Sought*, delivers an excellent account into the diplomatic history of Anglo-American-Soviet relations from the beginnings of their coalition in 1941 to the eve of the Potsdam Conference of 1945. The book's author, Herbert Feis, made use of a great deal of hitherto unpublished State Department records, and the personal papers of W. Averell Harriman (who was the American Ambassador to the Soviet Union from 1943-1946), throughout his examinations. Also subject to Feis's analysis, is Truman's personal and official correspondences with Churchill and Stalin during the spring of 1945. The magnitude of evidence produced in his book is quite extensive—nearly 650 pages of primary documents are contained within this volume. However, Feis' ability to stick to the facts, as they are known, and refrain from alternative points of view or interpretations, is also one weakness of his work.

This becomes particularly relevant in Feis' scrutiny of the Allied response of Katyn. Essentially Feis' describes the massacre as nothing more than a minor diplomatic annoyance for both the United States and Great Britain. According to Feis, after the Polish Government-in-exile had requested the International Red Cross to investigate Katyn in 1943, the American and British governments tried to convince Stalin not to break off diplomatic relations with the exiled government, after he objected to Polish claims that the Soviet Union was responsible for the crime.⁴⁴ While Feis' assessment of this event is accurate, (Churchill and Roosevelt mutually struggled to persuade Stalin against cutting off diplomatic ties with the Polish Government-in-exile), there are other reasons why the U.S. and Great Britain responded to Katyn the way they did

⁴⁴ Herbert Feis. *Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin: The War They Waged and the Peace They Sought*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957. 192-194.

which Feis fails to mention. For instance, by 1943, British and American officials—particularly Churchill and Roosevelt—were concerned that Stalin might make a separate peace deal with the Germans if their governments don't increase their efforts in the fight against the Nazis. And for the United States specifically, they wanted Soviet assistance in fighting the Japanese in the Pacific after the Germans were defeated.⁴⁵ Therefore, there were broader implications as to why the West responded to the massacre that Feis fails to illuminate. Nonetheless, while his failures to explain the events outside the United States' diplomatic scope that resulted in their reaction to Katyn, his book is an exceptional study into the diplomatic history of the three great powers during WWII.

Along similar lines to that of *Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin: The War They Waged and the Peace They Sought*, the 1958 publication, *Allied Wartime Diplomacy: A Pattern in Poland*, authored by Edward J. Rozek, also provides the diplomatic history of Anglo-American-Soviet relations during WWII. However, Rozek examines these relationships from the Polish perspective. Thus, his book is a thorough analysis of Soviet actions concerning Poland between 1939 and 1945, and how the Polish Government-in-exile fought tirelessly with the British, American, and Soviet governments for a free and independent Poland throughout the war. In his evaluation of the diplomatic events, Rozek utilizes official documents and records from the Polish Government-in-exile, and the personal files from Prime Minister Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, all of which, delivers a powerful image of real war-time negotiations among Polish leaders, Ambassadors, Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin. While Rozek quotes heavily from primary sources throughout the text, his publication is mostly devoted to the issue of Poland's pre-war eastern boundaries, and the means in which the British and American governments were willing to concede those territories to the Soviets by wars' end.

⁴⁵ Zawodny. *Death in the Forest*. 40, 186.

Although the Katyn massacre is discussed in various sections throughout his book, Rozek's analysis of the Allied response to Katyn fails to mention other circumstances that influenced their reaction. Rozek reasons, that regardless of who, at the time was believed to be responsible for the crime (the Germans or the Soviets), the "appearance of Allied unity" was more important to the defeat of Hitler and his Nazi regime for the United States and Great Britain.⁴⁶ Therefore, the alliance between the "Big Three" outweighed all other issues, including Katyn. This may be a rather simplistic argument for the Allied response to Katyn, and no doubt historically accurate, but like the aforementioned book, Rozek neglects to highlight other factors that affected the Western response to the murder of the Polish officers. However, Rozek's book provides immense insight into the internal struggles, and at times, the frequent heated exchanges that took place between the British, American, and Polish Governments whenever the question of Poland, its sovereignty, or Polish fears of a communist takeover were discussed.

All told thus far, the sources listed above deliver an intriguing account into the political, economic, and social conditions which guided the foreign policy initiatives of the United States against the Soviet Union throughout the 1940s and 1950s. They also provide possible motives in the suppression of the Katyn affair from the American people and other European nations while President Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin, allied their governments in the fight against fascism. Yet, after Roosevelt's death in 1945, over the course of President Harry Truman's first term in office (albeit not a full term), and halfway into his second, the information surrounding the massacre was still being withheld from the American public at large. This is rather strange when considering those within the Truman administration, and he himself, designed and developed hardened policies against the spread of

⁴⁶ Edward J. Rozek. *Allied Wartime Diplomacy: A Pattern in Poland*. New York: Wiley, 1958. 440.

communism both home and abroad throughout his tenure in office. Would it not have been more prudent for the Truman administration to highlight the Katyn atrocity, especially after it was clear by 1946 that the U.S.-Soviet alliance was deteriorating, and that the principles of Western democracies were not palatable to that of the Soviet Union's? Would it not strengthen the administration's argument that the ideology of communism was a serious threat to those values? Or did American leaders simply have to make rapid decisions in a very fluid environment? That is, did the circumstances of the massacre have to fade into the shadows of public opinion and international law, as much larger events forced policy makers to react decisively, but cautiously, in an age of atomic power? As for the role in which President Roosevelt played in suppressing the crime, perhaps his actions may have been an embarrassment to those that admired him the most. Hence, did policy makers decide to withhold their knowledge of Soviet culpability for the massacre in order to protect Roosevelt's legacy?

While the answers to the above questions ultimately becomes the subject of this paper, a more general understanding of Poland's historical position spanning several centuries in Europe must be explored in some slight detail. In addition, a further examination of the foreign policy objectives of the U.S. during the Cold War against the Soviet Union between 1945 and 1951, will also be considered in order to grasp the political environment which led to a Congressional Hearing's regarding the crime at Katyn in 1951.

The Commonwealth of Poland

Poland's history in Europe throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries is truly one of a kind. Indeed, at the height of its power by the early-1600s, the Polish-Lithuanian

Commonwealth was considered one of the greater powers of Europe. Its territory was vast, extending from the Baltic Sea in the north almost to the Black Sea in south, and comprised of nearly 400,000 square miles of land between the Prussian, Austrian, Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian territories.⁴⁷ While the Commonwealth saw some fifteen-million people inhabiting its land, Poland at this time was by no means a homogenous state. In fact, nearly two-thirds of its citizens consisted of groups from either Eastern Slavic or German descents. In addition, the northeastern part of Commonwealth, the province of Lithuania, was populated by people (Lithuanians) who shared a distinct culture and language that was separate from that of the Poles. But the Commonwealth was unlike the other autocratic states of Europe. Not only did Poland suffer greatly from numerous military conflicts with Sweden and the Muscovite (Russian) empires during the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—which in the end proved disastrous and weakened Poland both militarily and economically—the Commonwealth’s true downfall was the result of its rather inept political structure that came into being by the turn of the early 1600s.

When Sigismund II Augustus, the last king of the Jagiellonian line, died in 1572, the nobility of the Commonwealth assumed the role of electing its future kings. An assembly of nobles, more commonly referred to as a Diet or Sejm, became the main governing body of Poland. However, while other autocratic states during this time “strengthened and centralized” the powers of the king or emperor, which created “consistency and stability to the state” against the cruelty and abuses of feudal lords against lower gentry and peasantry classes, the opposite was true of Poland.⁴⁸ The Commonwealth Diet consisted of wealthy landowners of noble rank who only succeeded in strengthening their own powers and control at the expense of the Polish state. In fact, throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Diet reduced the powers of the king so

⁴⁷ Bertram Benedict. *A History of the Great War*. Vol. 2. New York: Bureau of National Literature, 1919. 21.

⁴⁸ George Shaw-Lefevre Baron Eversley, *The Partitions of Poland*. Dodd, Mead and Company, 1915. 19.

much so, that essentially the king of Poland was a ceremonial figurehead, whose exercise of powers came on orders and direction of the Polish nobility, not the king himself. Furthermore, unique to the Commonwealth's Diet was the *leberum veto*. This meant that any single representative of the Diet could "veto [any] decision," even if it was "approved by a majority" of nobles.⁴⁹ As a consequence of this rather dysfunctional political body, a system of payoffs and coercion in order to obtain a noble's vote became a common feature of the Polish Diet. Furthermore, elections for the Polish crown often resulted in princes from other nations using "bribery, force, or threats of force" to secure the election of a candidate of their choice.⁵⁰ In short, this corrupt and diluted process of electing its future kings left the Commonwealth vulnerable to foreign influence, and this is precisely what happened in the events leading up to the first partition of Poland by 1772 by the Russian Empress, Catherine the Great.

The Partitions of Poland

Catherine II's role in the three partitions of the Polish Commonwealth between 1772 and 1795, was a brilliant act of cunning on her part. Her master stroke of foreign collusion against Poland began when the Polish King Augustus III died in 1763. With the Polish throne vacant, the Russian Empress wanted a monarch in Warsaw who would not intervene in her plans for war against the Ottoman Turks. Catherine therefore favored the candidacy of a native Pole to sit on the Commonwealth throne—actually, she already decided on who that man should be: Stanislaw Poniatowski, her former lover. Stanislaw Poniatowski belonged "to one of the greatest Polish families," and Catherine knew that she could count on his support during her foreign exploits.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Isabel de Madariaga, *Catherine the Great: A Short History*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990. 42.

⁵⁰ Eversley, George Shaw-Lefevre Baron, *The Partitions of Poland*. 20.

⁵¹ Madariaga, Isabel de, *Catherine the Great: A Short History*. 43.

Prussia, Poland's northwestern neighbor, also supported Poniatowski's ascension to the Polish throne—especially since it meant keeping out an Austrian candidate. Austria on the other hand, Poland's southwestern neighbor, may have preferred a member of the Saxon ruling house to sit on the throne, but their previous conflicts with the Turks meant they were willing to support Poniatowski since they were aware of Catherine's plans to wage war on the Ottoman Empire. This Catherine knew, and with the support from the other Central European powers, the empress bribed and intimidated the Polish nobility into electing Poniatowski as the next king of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in August 1764.⁵² But several years later, when Catherine “embarked on a campaign to abolish religious discrimination” in Poland—which at the time was dominated by Roman Catholicism, having only small minorities in Orthodox, Lutheran, and Jewish faiths—factional differences in Poland against these reforms led to civil war in the Commonwealth by 1768.⁵³

After a succession of violent protest against Catherine's religious reforms, a group of conservative Polish magnates formed a “Confederation” in the Polish town of Bar (located in the southern region of modern day Ukraine). The Confederation quickly gained allies, including Catholic dominated France, and the Ottoman Empire. But while the Turks supported the Confederation under the guise of protecting “Polish liberties,” their support was merely a pretext to declare war against their longtime rival Russia.⁵⁴ Regardless, both Austria and Prussia stayed out of the conflict, forcing the Russian Empress to fight the war alone. Nevertheless, with two large armies at Catherine's disposal, and after four years of fighting, the Russians finally defeated

⁵² Madariaga, Isabel de, *Catherine the Great: A Short History*. 42-43. and Anita Prazmowska. *Poland: A Modern History*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2013. 7. and Nicholas Valentine Riasanovsky, and Mark D. Steinberg. *A History of Russia*. 8th ed. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. 260-261.

⁵³ Madariaga, Isabel de, *Catherine the Great: A Short History*. 43.

⁵⁴ Riasanovsky, Nicholas Valentine, and Steinberg, Mark D. *A History of Russia*. 266.

the Confederation in 1772. Yet, in order to reassure the Austrians and Prussians that she had no major territorial ambitions in eastern Europe, thereby threatening their sovereignty, Catherine decided to “spread the wealth” of her victory over Poland. The empress arranged for a three-power agreement between Prussia, Austria and Russia, which “marked the first stage of the destruction of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.”⁵⁵ Over thirty percent of the Commonwealth’s territories, and nearly one-third of its population, was partitioned among the three states, with lands in the west going to Prussia, lands in the southwest going to Austria, and lands in the east going to Russia.⁵⁶

Ironically over the next twenty years, Poland underwent a remarkable recovery, seeing widespread changes in its economy and educational systems. And a new liberal constitution was adopted by the Commonwealth Diet in 1791. Under the new constitution (also known as the “May 3 Act of Reform”) new laws were enacted to strengthen the Polish monarchy and Diet, with the intention of ridding Poland of foreign influence.⁵⁷ In short, the monarchy of Poland was to become hereditary, not elected. Moreover, the king was to be given greater executive authority and power over foreign and military affairs. The Polish Diet would also be converted into a two-chamber body, with the lower body being the superior and most dominate of the two. Increased representation from the middle-classes as well would be included, and the “dysfunctional” *leberum veto* was abolished, favoring the concept of majority rule instead.⁵⁸ However, the Act of Reform sparked a conservative (wealthy nobles who supported Russian influence) rebellion in Poland, which once again left Poland vulnerable to foreign intervention. In 1792, on Catherine’s orders,

⁵⁵ Prazmowska, Anita. *Poland: A Modern History*. 8.

⁵⁶ Madariaga, Isabel de, *Catherine the Great: A Short History*. 44-7. and Prazmowska, Anita. *Poland: A Modern History*. 7. and Riasanovsky, Nicholas Valentine, and Steinberg, Mark D. *A History of Russia*. 265-6.

⁵⁷ Eversley, George Shaw-Lefevre Baron, *The Partitions of Poland*. 70.

⁵⁸ Riasanovsky, Nicholas Valentine, and Steinberg, Mark D. *A History of Russia*. 266.

troops from Russia entered Poland, and joined her partisan forces. Shortly thereafter, Prussia entered the conflict. Although the Poles put up a heroic defense under the command of General Tadeusz Kosciuszko, who was the leader of the Polish nationalists in the fight against the invasion, the superior numbers of the Russian and Prussian armies meant the situation was essentially hopeless for the Poles, and they could not prevent another partition. Thus, after Kosciuszko's insurrection failed, the second partition of the Commonwealth occurred in 1793, which ceded further Polish lands in the east to Russia, and in the west to Prussia (Austria being the only power of three that did not participate in the affair).⁵⁹

In spite of the second partition, General Kosciuszko once again formed and led another nationalist uprising against the partitioning powers a year later, but after some initial success, the Poles were ultimately defeated. As a result of the insurrectionists' failures to regain Polish independence, the third partition of Poland divided the remainder of Polish territories between Prussia, Austria, and Russia, which brought about the "end of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth," and effectively erased Poland from the map of Europe.⁶⁰ Over the next 123 years, Poland existed as a partitioned land. While the national uprisings in 1830 and 1863 attempted to liberate Poles from the arbitrary rule of the partitioning powers, the young Polish officers, students, and so forth, who took part in these uprisings, were unable to rally enough support among Polish serfs and average peasants to be victorious (the political and civil rights of the peasants were rarely discussed during these uprisings).⁶¹ Ultimately the partitions of Polish lands left a lasting and embittered legacy. But the efforts by the Prussians to destroy the Polish language and establish "high-quality compulsory" schools in the German language, by no means

⁵⁹ Riasanovsky, Nicholas Valentine, and Steinberg, Mark D. *A History of Russia*. 266.

⁶⁰ Prazmowska, Anita. *Poland: A Modern History*. 10.

⁶¹ Prazmowska, Anita. *Poland: A Modern History*. 10, 14-21. and Riasanovsky, Nicholas Valentine, and Steinberg, Mark D. *A History of Russia*. 267.

prevented future generations of Poles from learning their own language.⁶² Furthermore, in areas controlled by the Austrians, censorship was least oppressive. Polish villages and villagers in Austria were permitted to publish books and newspapers in the Polish language, and were even allowed to practice their own religion. But the partitions had negative consequences as well. Several Ukrainian historians have argued that oppression of Polish serfs and Polish commoners by Polish nobles actually increased under Russian occupation since Russian authorities asserted law and order more aggressively than their Polish counter-parts.⁶³ Consequently, the Russian Empire, in many ways, was responsible for the growth of anti-Russian sentiments in these areas, and the “hostility” and efforts at the Russification of Polish elites, Jews, and other groups throughout the Russian controlled regions of the Poland, also contributed to anti-Russian nationalism.⁶⁴ In fairness to Russia however, Poland (also referred to as the Kingdom of Poland or Congress Poland after the Congress of Vienna) after its third partition, was allowed to have its own “legislature, army, currency, school system, and administration,” all while allowed to conduct official business using the Polish language.⁶⁵ In short, the Kingdom of Poland was essentially a constitutional monarchy, with the Russian emperor or empress acting as its king, and it was only after the national uprisings of 1830 that Tsar Nicolas I (reigned 1825-55) ultimately began dismembering some of these practices and institutions.

The Reemergence of a Polish State

⁶² Prazmowska, Anita. *Poland: A Modern History*. 28.

⁶³ Riasanovsky, Nicholas Valentine, and Steinberg, Mark D. *A History of Russia*. 267.

⁶⁴ Riasanovsky, Nicholas Valentine, and Steinberg, Mark D. *A History of Russia*. 267.

⁶⁵ Riasanovsky, Nicholas Valentine, and Steinberg, Mark D. *A History of Russia*. 328.

By the early twentieth century, Poland would regain its independence after the great powers of Europe engaged one another in one of the bloodiest conflicts in world history. Between 1914 and 1918, millions of civilians and soldiers alike were killed or wounded as a result of the First Great War. As the powers of the France, Great Britain, and Russia (Triple Entente or Allies), were pitted against the German, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman Empires (Central Powers) in an epic struggle, the weakened military position of the Central Powers by 1917, combined with the United States' entry into the war in April of that same year, eventually led to an Allied victory. After suffering four and half grueling years of trench warfare, World War I officially came to an end on November 11, 1918. It was on this day in a railroad car in the Compiegne Forest in which an armistice was signed between the United States, Great Britain, France and Germany. While the victors of the war established the terms for Germany's unconditional surrender, it also signaled to the rest of the world that the remaining vestiges of the old empires of Europe had completely withered away. The Russian Empire ceased to exist as well, after the Russian Revolution of 1917 effectively ended over three hundred years of Imperial rule, and destroyed any remnants of the tsarist regime in its wake. The Allies imposed upon the Central Powers a series of peace treaties (the Treaty of Versailles being the most notable among these), which did more than demand economic reparations from the now toppled autocracies of Europe. These treaties also called for the near dismantling, and in some instances, complete abolishment of the military organizations and institutions of the Central Powers. Without military hegemony, the Central Powers lost political control over areas which were inhabited by national groups who shared strong ethnic and cultural identity. As a result, national leaders in these areas, who "claimed to represent the will of a given national group," appealed to the Allies for independence and full autonomy, more

specifically, they claimed the right of self-determination under the guidelines of President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points.⁶⁶

It is along these lines that the Allies approved the break-up and formation of new states among the territories of the now collapsed empires of Europe, and the map of Eastern Europe was completely transformed by the end of 1919. The new states that emerged shared a distinct historical connection to the German, Austro-Hungarian, and Russian Empires. These Successor States, as they are more commonly referred to as, Poland surfaced as the greatest among these. For little over a century, several historians argue that "the Polish question...had been the subject of international agreements and disagreements in equal measure."⁶⁷ The collapse of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the late eighteenth century attracted the attention of numerous enlightenment thinkers throughout Europe to the Polish cause of independence and self-government. Thus, as other Western societies spread the ideas of tolerance, progress, individualism, nationalism, and constitutional government, this made it difficult for those same nations "to deny that the Poles had a right to independence."⁶⁸ And so, as numerous Polish elites fought bitterly against the auspices of the partitioning powers throughout the nineteenth century, the reemergence of the Polish state by the end of WWI was indeed a historic turnaround to this great "international injustice," and it became a "touchstone" of postwar "European morality."⁶⁹

But it can hardly be said that tensions between the former partitioning powers and Poland was completely eradicated as a result of Poland's revival. The scars ran too deep for many Poles. And while the specter of the Great War was behind the whole of Europe, new conflicts over the

⁶⁶ Prazmowska, Anita. *Poland: A Modern History*. 1.

⁶⁷ Prazmowska, Anita. *Poland: A Modern History*. 1.

⁶⁸ Prazmowska, Anita. *Poland: A Modern History*. 1-2.

⁶⁹ Prazmowska, Anita. *Poland: A Modern History*. 1-2.

Eastern frontiers of Poland would materialize as the newly created Polish state would once again find itself pitted against its old adversary in the 1920s.

The Russians Again

Tensions between Poland and the future Soviet state began at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. Though the Allies were responsible for reconstituting new states out of the wreckage of the old German, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman Empires at the Paris accords, defining the borders of these newly established states became a constant thorn in the Allies side. The needs of different national groups in various areas, proved to be irreconcilable.⁷⁰ But as Russia became engulfed in civil war while the Paris Peace talks were officially underway—which saw anti-Bolshevik (the Whites) Russians attempting to overthrow Lenin's Bolshevik Party (the Reds) from power—a strong, not just independent Poland, became necessary for the Allies long-term foreign policy initiatives.

Indeed, an economically and militarily strong Poland would make a powerful partner in Central Europe, moreover, it could serve as a buffer between the Germans in the West and the Reds in the East. Then again, neither the British nor U.S. governments were willing to accept Poland's excessive territorial demands. The Polish National Government along with the Polish delegation at the Peace Conference, ultimately rejected the Allied proposals concerning Poland's borders. Those proposals, issued by the Supreme Council of the Allied Powers in December 1919, suggested that a line should be drawn, starting in the northwestern most corner of East Prussia, to the edge of Galicia's most eastern corner in the south, whereby Eastern Europe would be divided around cultural demographics—in short, ethnic Poles would live west of the line, while other

⁷⁰ Prazmowska, Anita. *Poland: A Modern History*. 90.

Slavic people would live east of the line. However by 1920, Polish demands for further territorial gains—particularly in east Prussia with its foremost port city of Danzig—combined with the Red Army’s virtual defeat of General Anton Denikin’s White (anti-Bolsheviks) Army by early November 1919 in Soviet Russia, witnessed the Polish National Government (encouraged by the French government) launching an attack on the Soviet state in April that same year.⁷¹

Under the command of Josef Pilsudski (General and Head of State of Poland), the Polish Army achieved early successes against the Ukrainians in East Galicia, but the Polish offensive quickly lost momentum, and Polish forces in the east fell to the superior might of the Red Army. Indeed, by the mid-summer of 1920, the Red Army had pushed so deep within the Polish territory, that for a time, it appeared that Poland might be “bolshevized at the point of a Russian bayonet.”⁷² Meanwhile, Poles in Warsaw reached out to the Allied governments for assistance, yet, upon the condition of mediation between the Poles and the Soviet state (a government in which neither the British or French governments officially recognized), the Polish Government had to accept the withdrawal of its forces to the boundaries that the Allies suggested back in December 1919. That demarcation line, more famously known as the Curzon Line (the brain child of British Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon), was dispatched to the Soviets in July 1920. But the Soviets (actually Lenin) rejected that offer, mainly on grounds that any negotiated peace settlement should take place between officials from Poland and Soviet Russia directly, without interference from the other European powers. Meanwhile, the Red Army continued their advance towards Warsaw. Yet over the course of several weeks, the Polish army successfully defended the city against the Soviets, and launched a counter-offensive against the Red Army in Eastern Poland. The Soviets, who by

⁷¹ Prazmowska, Anita. *Poland: A Modern History*. 90-6. and William Averell Harriman and Elie Abel. *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin 1941-1946*. Random House, 1975. 319.

⁷² Harriman, William Averell and Elie Abel. *Special Envoy*, 319.

this time were completely exhausted after three years of revolution, civil war, famine, and economic disorder, finally agreed to a negotiated peace with the Poles during the winter of 1921. The Treaty of Riga was signed in March of 1921 between Soviet and Polish authorities, which ultimately established the eastern borders of Poland—and actually extended Polish lands beyond that of Lord Curzon’s proposed demarcation line. In addition, Poland’s eastern frontiers established at Riga were officially recognized on March 15, 1923, by the Allied Powers in accordance with Article 87 of the Treaty of Versailles, which “authorized these Powers to fix Poland’s eastern boundaries,” and three weeks later, the United States formally accepted the conditions put forth by the Riga Treaty.⁷³

Although Poland by 1922 was an independent state with well-defined and agreed upon borders, the political and economic situation in Poland was far from harmonious. After Poland created a democratic constitution that same year, the subsequent national elections saw Pilsudski transferring his powers to the newly elected president Gabriel Narutowicz in December 1922. But Narutowicz’s assassination just several days later by radical elements of the right-wing National Democratic Party of Poland (ND), united various peasant parties and other left-wing groups around the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), which in the end, saw Stanislaw Wojciechowski, a friend and colleague of Pilsudski, becoming the next Polish president. As for Pilsudski, he grew tired of politics, and decided to retire the following year. By 1925 however, economic and political instability continued its strangled hold over the nation. Dissatisfied with the ineffectiveness of the parliamentary system, in addition to the Polish Government’s overall ineptness to defend the national interest of Poland in general, combined with Poland’s poor economic conditions, Pilsudski decided to emerge from retirement, and staged a coup against Wojciechowski’s

⁷³ Harriman, William Averell and Elie Abel. *Special Envoy*, 319-20. and Prazmowska, Anita. *Poland: A Modern History*. 96-99. and quote from Rozek, Edward J., *Allied Wartime Diplomacy: A Pattern in Poland*. 18.

government in May 1926. Supported by the Polish armed forces, Pilsudski marched on Warsaw and forced Wojciechowski to resign within a few days. Even though the Polish parliament elected Pilsudski as President, he refused the honor, and instead appointed another one of his old confidants, Ignacy Moscicki, as president and Head of State of Poland. Pilsudski on the other hand, did assume total control over the Polish Ministry of Defense, and over the next nine years, he used his power and influence to guide the direction of the nation's foreign and domestic policies.⁷⁴

The Rise of Totalitarian Regimes

Poland eventually began to stabilize its economy and government after the events highlighted above, but with the rise of fascism in Italy and Germany, and communism in the Soviet Union between the 1920s-30s, Poland, for the fourth time, experienced its final partition by way of foreign collusion. After Adolf Hitler and his Nazi Party assumed power, their hostility towards the Treaty of Versailles, as well as their bitterness against the loss of Germany's former territories to the Polish state, was well-known. Forming the core of Hitler's ideology, was the idea that humanity's constant struggles has always been between "races...or communities of blood."⁷⁵ Hitler therefore was determined to achieve a long-term goal of "race and space," or *Lebensraum* for the German people. Under Nazism, *Lebensraum* suggests that any race that "was not expanding...was doomed to disappear," and according to Hitler, if the German race was going to expand, then "living space" was needed to for a "new generation of soldiers and mothers."⁷⁶ Of

⁷⁴ Prazmowska, Anita. *Poland: A Modern History*. 115-27. and *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, s. v. "Jozef Pilsudski," accessed November 05, 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jozef-Pilsudski>.

⁷⁵ Doris L. Bergen. *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust*. 2nd ed. United States: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009. 36.

⁷⁶ Bergen, Doris L.. *War and Genocide*. 36.

course, these “new generations of soldiers and mothers” would become Hitler’s idealistic “master race,” who are the most pure and unpolluted elements of the German people.⁷⁷ Along these lines Hitler looked to the east to expand the German empire, and the territories of Poland and the Soviet Union were particularly enticing. These areas contained Slavic people—Poles, Russians, Ukrainians, Czechs, and so forth—who by and large, were considered by Hitler as a “prime threat” against the “survival and dominance” of his Thousand-Year Reich.⁷⁸ Furthermore, the large Jewish populations which also inhabited these regions, likewise fell prey to Hitler’s racial theories—because it was the Jewish people who have long endeavored to “infiltrate, weaken, and destroy” the German race.⁷⁹

But as Hitler began disregarding the stipulations of the Treaty of Versailles, which prohibited the Germans from reconstituting a large military force, and when he later ordered troops into the demilitarized area of the Rhineland (west German territory, and became a demilitarized zone after the Versailles Treaty) in 1936, European leaders remained somewhat oblivious to Hitler’s actual intentions. Even when Hitler completed the Anschluss (annexation) of Austria in 1938, and agreed to the Munich accords that same year (Germany, Great Britain, France, and Italy permitted the annexation of the Sudetenland in western Czechoslovakia to the Germans), neither the British or French governments considered these actions by Hitler as hostile takeovers. In their eyes, these exploits by Hitler were merely attempts to reincorporate ethnic Germans back into greater Germany. However in March the following year, Hitler would annex all of Czechoslovakia. Consequently, the French, British, and Polish Governments now believed Hitler and his Nazi regime were not only determined to restore glory to the German empire, but also that

⁷⁷ Bergen, Doris L.. *War and Genocide*. 36.

⁷⁸ Bergen, Doris L.. *War and Genocide*. 18, quote on 36.

⁷⁹ Bergen, Doris L.. *War and Genocide*. 36.

another world war was drawing nearer. Yet in order to unleash the Nazi war machine on Poland, Hitler needed one European power in particular to remain neutral in the forthcoming conflict: the Soviet Union.⁸⁰

In 1928, Joseph Stalin, leader of the Communist Party, successfully consolidated his power, and eliminated his political rivals by any means necessary—exile, assassination, and imprisonment. Having strengthened his power base, Stalin prepared to initiate his objectives of collectivizing and industrializing the Soviet economy. Known as First Five-Year Plan, Stalin embarked on a campaign to highly centralize the Soviet economy. Stalin reasoned, that in order to “foster rapid development” of the economy, then the Soviet Union must invest heavily in industry, all while extracting every ruble of profit from agriculture—the backbone and traditional foundation of the Russian economy.⁸¹ Thus, under Stalin’s collectivization plan, private ownership of land, livestock, and even farming equipment, would be eliminated, and agricultural production would take place on “large cooperative units” (*kolkhozy*), whose members shared whatever profit remained after making mandatory payments to the Soviet state—in sum, every farm, along with its equipment and domestic animals, would belong to the state.⁸² Stalin reasoned that the massive transfer of wealth and resources from farms to the industrialized cities, “could double or even triple” industrial production over the course of the First Five-Year Plan.⁸³ But this rather “draconian system of tax collections” and “compulsory deliveries” to the Soviet state, saw Stalin employing extreme and “indiscriminate brutality” upon millions of his own people.⁸⁴

⁸⁰*Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, s. v. “Anschluss,” accessed November 05, 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Anschluss>. and *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, s. v. “Munich Agreement,” accessed November 05, 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Munich-Agreement>.

⁸¹ Magstadt, Thomas M., *Understanding Politics*, 130.

⁸² Magstadt, Thomas M., *Understanding Politics*, 130-1.

⁸³ Magstadt, Thomas M., *Understanding Politics*, 131.

⁸⁴ Magstadt, Thomas M., *Understanding Politics*, 131.

Indeed, wealthy peasants, such as the *kulaks*, would virtually cease to exist as a class all by itself over the next ten years. The effectiveness of the First Five-Year Plan greatly improved Soviet industry and helped modernize the nation by 1934, but this came at a great expense to the Russian people. As the death toll among Russian peasants continued to rise (either from starvation, murder, or living under the harsh conditions of gulags or other forced labor camps), the Soviet dictator responded to these events by declaring that he uncovered a vast conspiracy by foreign agents to revive capitalism in Soviet Russia. And when the young and rather energetic party chief of Leningrad (formally Petrograd), Sergei Kirov, was assassinated in 1934, Stalin decided that a “Great Purge” of “Old Bolsheviks” from within the Communist Party was of the utmost importance.⁸⁵

Most of the victims during Stalin’s purges, that began in January of 1935, were “loosely identified” as conspirators of large movement by party officials to resurrect capitalism in the Soviet Union.⁸⁶ Conversely, Kirov’s assassination served as a pretext for Stalin in order to eliminate “Lenin’s original circle of revolutionary leaders,” thereby ensuring that any challenge to his control over the Communist Party and the Soviet state went unopposed.⁸⁷ Ultimately Stalin’s cleansing of the Communist Party came about in two phases, the first of which saw membership to the party decreasing by nearly 25%, as harsh reprisals, numerous arrests, summary executions, and mass deportations of thousands of party administrators were carried out over two year period. Stalin’s second phase of purges occurred between 1936 and 1938, and was highlighted by a series of “show trials,” whereby top-ranking party leaders were placed on trial and forced into making

⁸⁵ Magstadt, Thomas M., *Understanding Politics*, 130-1. and Ronald Grigor Suny. *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. 277.

⁸⁶ Magstadt, Thomas M., *Understanding Politics*, 131.

⁸⁷ Magstadt, Thomas M., *Understanding Politics*, 131.

outlandish “confessions” about their crimes against the Soviet state and the Communist Party.⁸⁸ But perhaps the most serious consequences of the Great Purges was the elimination of high-ranking military officials. Three out of five Soviet Field Marshals (the highest-rank among generals), fifteen out of sixteen army commanders, the entire Soviet admiralty (eight in total), and sixty of the sixty-seven corps commanders, and many more, were executed on Stalin’s orders.⁸⁹ While Stalin stood alone as the top communist and Soviet leader by 1938, in the West, Adolf Hitler’s territorial ambitions, combined with the Nazi’s overall strong sense of nationalism, militarism, and anti-Communist, anti-Soviet rhetoric, meant that the Soviet Union was not just a target under Nazi ideology, but Stalin’s purges meant that the Soviets were totally unprepared for war. Furthermore, although Stalin’s collectivization plan initially saw industrial production increasing drastically over the First Five-Year Plan, and gained in strength by the Second Five-Year Plan by the late 1930s, Soviet industrialization nonetheless simply couldn’t match that of Germany’s. In addition, Stalin’s liquidation of the officer corps left the Soviet armed forces virtually leaderless, and the Red Army in general severely lacked in the necessary weapons and vehicles to engage in open warfare. Therefore, Stalin, who was suspicious of Hitler’s war ambitions in Europe, decided what the Soviet Union needed the most was time; time to rebuild its military forces and continue to re-invigorate the Soviet economy.⁹⁰

Meanwhile, as France, Britain, Poland, and other nations were becoming extremely concerned about Hitler’s war ambitions by 1939, the Soviet Union on the other hand, found themselves being the most wanted prize of prewar Europe. Indeed, if war was imminent, Polish officials understood that it would most certainly begin in their territories—as did British and

⁸⁸ Magstadt, Thomas M., *Understanding Politics*, 131.

⁸⁹ Magstadt, Thomas M., *Understanding Politics*, 131. and Suny, Ronald Grigor. *The Soviet Experiment*. 285.

⁹⁰ Magstadt, Thomas M., *Understanding Politics*, 130-132.

French governments.⁹¹ And although the French committed their support for the Poles in the event of a German attack, these pledges often played-out behind “political announcements,” which carried little weight and exact substance as to what military action the French were willing to take if Hitler decided to declare war on Poland.⁹² As for the British, their Guarantee of Mutual Assistance, signed between the British and Poland in late-August 1939, stated neither Britain’s military response in the likely event of a German-Polish war, nor did it surmise what Britain’s response would be if Poland were attacked by another European power other than Germany. Therefore, exactly what course of action the French or the British were willing to employ if an assault by Hitler’s armies on Poland was to occur, remained relatively unclear and unspecified. Moreover, both the French and British governments adopted the position that unless a viable eastern front was established in Poland against the Nazis, and since neither nation had the economic or military clout to build-up Polish forces against Hitler’s armies, then Poland’s demise was already “assumed to be a foregone conclusion.”⁹³ Still, France and Britain did look towards the east to solve this dilemma. Talks between the French, British, and Soviet governments against Hitler’s regime began in early August 1939, with the hopes at least, as far as French and British were concerned, that the Soviet Union could serve as a buffer, or at the very minimal, could stall Hitler’s armies in the east, thereby allowing the French and British to build up its own forces in the West. Yet, lack of concrete commitments on part of the French and the British pushed Stalin to seek accommodations with Hitler. Consequently, on August 23, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union had stunned the West by signing a Nonaggression Pact with one another, which

⁹¹ Prazmowska, Anita. *Poland: A Modern History*. 135.

⁹² Prazmowska, Anita. *Poland: A Modern History*. 134.

⁹³ Prazmowska, Anita. *Poland: A Modern History*. 135.

fundamentally shifted the balance of power in Europe, and would also seal Poland's fate in the process.⁹⁴

Poland's Fourth Partition

Under the terms of the Nazi-Soviet (or Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact) Nonaggression Pact, Germany and the Soviet Union agreed not to engage one another in military action over the next ten years. In addition, if either nation had become involved in war, then neither side would aid the enemy; and unlike treaties of this era, this agreement went into effect immediately after both powers had signed the accord. There was also a secret protocol in the deal that specified the spheres of power in Eastern Europe. Once Hitler and the Nazis invade western Poland, the Soviet Union, at a later date, would advance on the eastern frontiers of Poland. And after achieving victory, Poland would be divided along the Pisa, Vistula, San, and Narew rivers—or in short, Germany would control the western parts of Poland, while the Soviet Union commanded the eastern half (along with Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia).⁹⁵ As a result of their new accord, on September 3, 1939, Hitler gave the order to invade Poland. Roughly two-weeks later, the Soviet Union put into action their part of the secret agreement—it should be noted however, that the secret protocol of the Nazi-Soviet Pact was completely unbeknown to the British, French, or Polish Governments, it wasn't until after the war that this revelation came to light. Under false pretenses, the Red Army marched on eastern Poland, all while proclaiming their presence on Polish lands was to protect their “unfortunate brethren”—the Ukrainians and Byelorussians—against Nazi

⁹⁴ Prazmowska, Anita. *Poland: A Modern History*. 133-6.

⁹⁵ Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s. v. “German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact,” accessed October 28, 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/event/German-Soviet-Nonaggression-Pact>.

aggression, but this was merely a ploy by the Soviets to carry-out their true objectives, which was to re-incorporate eastern Poland back into the Soviet Union.⁹⁶ Other propaganda tactics accompanied the Red Army's march through eastern Poland. Town after town, city after city, the Soviets proclaimed to the Polish people that they were coming as an ally against the Nazi invaders.⁹⁷ Truthfully, many Poles did indeed believe Soviet intentions. After all, the two nations several years earlier, signed a Nonaggression agreement (Polish-Soviet Pact), in which both parties agreed to "abstain from all aggressive action or from attack against each other" for the next ten-years.⁹⁸ Granted, treaties throughout history have been broken before, as the Soviets actions in Poland can testify, but the mere semblance of friendship was enough to blur Polish senses concerning the true nature of Soviet objectives in Poland. But in the end, it would be the acts of the Soviets in eastern Poland "which dispelled any illusions" to the real ambitions of the Soviet Union.⁹⁹

While France and Great Britain immediately declared war on Nazi Germany after Poland was invaded on September 3, 1939, no military action by Poland's allies was taken against Hitler's forces. British and French authorities limited their engagements against Germany to "verbal protest," all while rejecting the use of their air-forces to come to Poland's aid.¹⁰⁰ This later became known to as the Phoney War, that is, while the governments of France and Britain had declared war on Hitler's Germany, no military action was taken against the Germans, leaving Poland isolated and alone. Shortly after the initial attacks on Poland began, the Nazi war machine started assaulting Poland with utter relentlessness. Fortunately, hundreds of Polish officials, including

⁹⁶ Rozek, Edward J., *Allied Wartime Diplomacy: A Pattern in Poland*. 35.

⁹⁷ Rozek, Edward J., *Allied Wartime Diplomacy: A Pattern in Poland*. 35.

⁹⁸ Rozek, Edward J., *Allied Wartime Diplomacy: A Pattern in Poland*. 35.

⁹⁹ Rozek, Edward J., *Allied Wartime Diplomacy: A Pattern in Poland*. 31-5. quote on 35.

¹⁰⁰ Prazmowska, Anita. *Poland: A Modern History*. 136.

the Polish president, most of his ministers, and entire governmental departments, were evacuated from Warsaw and managed to flee to the Rumania border. As German war planes bombed railways, roads, communication lines, and bridges, these same Polish representatives who managed to escape the carnage fled Poland in order to establish an exiled government in Allied territory, whereby they could control Polish resources abroad and coordinating a plan of defense for Poland.¹⁰¹ After two weeks of fighting, Poland was on the verge of defeat, and many Polish leaders who had originally escaped now found themselves arrested by Rumanian authorities—who were acting on German instructions (a handful of these top Polish officials nonetheless did reach French territory, where they established a Polish Government-in-exile, but were forced to flee to London after Germany invaded France in May 1940). And when the Red Army began its advance on Poland's eastern frontiers, this event virtually hastened the inevitable: Poland's fourth partition. As a result of trying to fight a war on two fronts, by early October 1939, Poland was essentially finished after a single month of combat, but what happened throughout Poland and other territories that were seized by both the Nazis and the Soviets after the invasion by the Germans and later the Soviets tells another story. Hitler and his Nazi regime would apply their extreme racial ideologies on millions of Polish people. Homosexuals, Roma, (or Gypsies), Jehovah Witnesses, Communists, the mentally handicapped, and of course Jews, would be liquidated in substantial numbers under the theories of Nazism. This the Nazis applied on all their conquered territories, not just Poland, but Jews, both Polish and non-Polish, were exterminated in much greater numbers than any other group aforementioned by the Nazi regime.¹⁰²

Meanwhile in eastern Poland, hundreds of thousands of Polish civilians and military personnel were captured and taken prisoner by the Red Army in late September 1940—it should

¹⁰¹ Prazmowska, Anita. *Poland: A Modern History*. 137.

¹⁰² Prazmowska, Anita. *Poland: A Modern History*. 135-139. and Bergen, Doris L.. *War and Genocide*. 1-18.

be noted, that the act of taking prisoners of war was not all that uncommon after a belligerent power's formal declaration of war, but no such declaration against Poland was ever made by the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, heavy deportations and mass executions, especially of Polish judges, police officers, army officers, professors, doctors, and the like, by the Soviets, brought about the extermination of the Polish intelligentsia. Under Soviet theory, all leadership, potential or actual, must be destroyed in "order to communize and victimize" the less educated, less sophisticated elements of a given society.¹⁰³ Moreover, by removing any hopes that a certain group would ameliorate their condition, this in turn would create a complacent society in which the very "necessities" of life are dependent upon the will of their Soviet masters.¹⁰⁴ Hence, the ultimate aim of the Communists was to impose a system of government in Poland that left the population into "passive submission," leaving any challenges to the Soviet regime nonobtainable.¹⁰⁵ Beyond Soviet acts of violence, Communist officials during the occupation of eastern Poland began to forcibly introduce the Stalinist system on the Poles. Instruction into communist ideology; the forbidding of teaching universal history; the removal of native teachers in favor of Russian teachers; and the limited instruction of the Polish language, were by and large, carried out with brutal and exacting efficiency on Polish institutions and its citizens.¹⁰⁶

However, Soviet ambitions in Poland came to a swift end by 1941. In late June that same year, Operation Barbarossa began—the invasion of Soviet the Union—and the Nonaggression Pact between the Soviet Union and Germany was officially over. As the Nazi war machine set its sights on Soviet forces, eastern Poland was the first to fall, and within several weeks after the initial German attacks, the Red Army was in full retreat. Stalin during this time was completely shocked

¹⁰³ Rozek, Edward J., *Allied Wartime Diplomacy: A Pattern in Poland*. 40.

¹⁰⁴ Rozek, Edward J., *Allied Wartime Diplomacy: A Pattern in Poland*. 40.

¹⁰⁵ Rozek, Edward J., *Allied Wartime Diplomacy: A Pattern in Poland*. 40.

¹⁰⁶ Rozek, Edward J., *Allied Wartime Diplomacy: A Pattern in Poland*. 40.

and dismayed by Hitler's actions. While he and many of his military commanders were well aware that one day the Germans would no doubt engage the Soviets in all-out war, it never occurred to them it would arrive so suddenly. But Germany's speedy victories in France, Denmark, Norway, and other places in Europe during the preceding year, allowed Hitler to expedite his plans against the Soviet Union. In just a few months after the attack on the Soviet Union began, the Germans were winning decisive victories; they controlled all of the eastern Poland, including Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, and most of the Ukraine, and by October that same year, the Germans were only several kilometers away from capturing the Soviet capital of Moscow.¹⁰⁷

The Unearthing of a Crime

After Nazi Germany's decision to invade the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941, the United States entered the European conflict in December that same year, following the Japanese Empire's surprise attack on U.S. naval forces stationed at Pearl Harbor. After war was declared, the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and other Western powers, formed an alliance (Allied powers) to topple the Axis powers (Germany, Italy, and Japan).

By early April 1943, a German military unit operating in the vicinity of the Russian city of Smolensk (nearly four-hundred kilometers west of Moscow), discovered several mass graves, where the bodies of roughly fifteen-thousand Polish officers (who had been slain in the nearby Katyn Forest) were buried. Soon after the discovery, Adolf Hitler and Reich Minister of Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, attempted to capitalize on the situation. Their hope was to exploit the Katyn tragedy in order to divide the Allies at a crucial point in the war. But many Poles after the initial discovery of the mass graves by German authorities believed it was nothing more than

¹⁰⁷ Rozek, Edward J., *Allied Wartime Diplomacy: A Pattern in Poland*. 39-40.

a Nazi hoax to drive a wedge between the Allies. Then again, when the first list of names and pictures of the deceased appeared in the daily (German-controlled) newspaper, and over the German radio, they became convinced in the validity of the crime.¹⁰⁸ Yet who was ultimately responsible, was still open to Polish scrutiny. After all, the Poles had been subject to brutal and horrific acts of violence by both Soviet and Nazi regimes. Therefore, the Poles refused to accept that the Soviet Union, although capable, was to blame; especially as the Germans' "pathological hate for Polish citizens of Jewish origin" had erupted in Warsaw on April 19 that same year, in which the Nazi's oversaw the mass murder of Polish Jews in the Warsaw ghetto over the following four weeks.¹⁰⁹

As for the Allied powers, their preliminary reaction to Katyn was likewise skeptical of Nazi claims, as was the response by the Polish Government-in-exile in London. Indeed, public opinion at this time pointed the finger at the Nazis. However, the Germans were eager to dispel these rumors, and invited an independent International Commission, the Polish Red Cross, and a German Special Medical-Judiciary Commission, to investigate Katyn.¹¹⁰ The International Commission consisted of well-known scholars and specialists in forensic medicine from twelve different countries other than Germany. None of these individuals had any affiliation, or were proponents of the Nazism, and they were under no pressure to participate in the investigation by Germany authorities.¹¹¹ As for the Polish Red Cross, their role and examinations of the Katyn site was of particular importance for two reasons. First, its twelve members were very distrustful of the Germans, considering what they had witnessed under German occupation over the last three years. Secondly, a handful of these representatives were in fact, and unbeknown to the Germans and

¹⁰⁸ Zawodny, J. K., *Death in the Forest*. 30.

¹⁰⁹ Zawodny, J. K., *Death in the Forest*. 1-30 quote on 30.

¹¹⁰ Zawodny, J. K., *Death in the Forest*. 16.

¹¹¹ Zawodny, J. K., *Death in the Forest*. 17.

others in the group, members of the Polish underground, who were even more distrustful of the Nazis rather than the Soviets. Additionally, the Polish underground maintained secret radio communications with the Polish Government-in-exile. Furthermore, Polish nationals at the grave sites refused to be pawns in German propaganda. They adamantly rejected speaking about their assessments of the mass graves over the German radio, and refrained from making any anti-Soviet statements. Nonetheless, by April 28, 1943, all three groups arrived at Katyn, and over the next few days, their findings and reports unanimously determined that the Polish soldiers were “killed and buried about three years before the exhumations,” or a little more than a year prior to Germany’s invasion of the Soviet Union.¹¹² It is suffice to say, that the heart of the initial investigation by the International Commission and the Polish Red Cross centered around when the Polish officers were killed. Hence, “if it could be determined *when* the men were shot, [then] the identity of the executioners would be known.”¹¹³

Yet even before the Polish Government-in-exile began receiving reports from the Polish underground about the Katyn affair, the London Poles on April 15, 1943, decided to appeal to the International Red Cross in Geneva for an impartial investigation. Ironically on that same day, German officials had also formally requested the presence of the International Red Cross to come to Katyn. To outside observers, this turn of events appeared suspicious, especially to the Soviets, who now believed that a Polish-German co-conspiracy was taking place. Regardless, the International Red Cross was willing to send a group of impartial delegates to Katyn, but only if all parties involved (the Germans, the Poles, and the Soviets) officially requested their support. But the Soviet Union remained silent on the issue, and never sent the International Red Cross a formal

¹¹² Zawodny, J. K., *Death in the Forest*. 24.

¹¹³ Zawodny, J. K., *Death in the Forest*. 17.

appeal for their assistance. Moreover, the Soviet daily *Pravda* on April 19, began publishing anti-Nazi and anti-Polish statements, arguing Hitler and the Polish Government-in-exile were collaborating against the Soviet Union. The Soviets' main emphasis was the timing of the request by both the Polish and German governments to the International Red Cross. Stalin later wrote to Churchill and condemned the action of the Polish Government-in-exile, all while maintaining that the Nazis were responsible for the crime. Stalin also stated that any further belligerence on part of the Polish Government-in-exile regarding Katyn will result in the cessation of diplomatic relations with the London Poles. Of course, Churchill denied that the Polish Government-in-exile was colluding with the Germans, and even President Roosevelt at this time sent a letter to Stalin assuring him no collusion between the London Poles and the Nazis was taking place. Yet, neither Churchill nor Roosevelt initially believed the Soviets were guilty of the massacre, especially since much of the details and circumstances surrounding the Katyn affair were not readily available to them. Most importantly however, Allied unity was extremely important for the Western governments, particularly for Roosevelt, because Soviet assistance in America's war against Japan was going to be needed to help bring the war in the Pacific to a rapid close. In addition, by the end of spring 1943, the Soviets were on the offensive in the East, forcing the Germans to take a defensive posture after their failed attempts to seize the Russian city of Stalingrad and other territories throughout Russia. Indeed, most of the fighting in Europe against the Nazis was taking place between the Germans and the Soviets, and by mid-August 1943, the Red Army regained control of Smolensk and the Katyn area. When they did, they too conducted an investigation into the Katyn massacre, which rather unsurprisingly, blamed the Nazis for murdering the Polish officers.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Zawodny, J. K., *Death in the Forest*. 32-38.

Meanwhile, relations between the Big Three and the Polish Government-in-exile began to deteriorate over the remainder of the war. It should be noted however, that from the autumn of 1941, until the discovery of the mass graves at Katyn in April 1943, and after Stalin granted amnesty to all Polish citizens and prisoners of war in the Soviet Union after the German invasion, General Wladyslaw Sikorski, who was the Prime Minister of the exiled government and Commander-in-Chief of Polish forces until his death in early July 1943, along with General Wladyslaw Anders, were tasked with locating and assembling Polish forces in the Soviet Union. So when Sikorski and Anders came to the conclusion that roughly fifteen-thousand Polish officers were still missing, their repeated attempts and conversations with Stalin on the matter ultimately yielded little results. Stalin claimed that the missing officers may have escaped to Manchuria, or perhaps returned to Poland without reporting to the Sikorski government of their whereabouts. Neither Sikorski nor Anders accepted these assertions however, yet at the same time, they also had no evidence to prove otherwise. Nonetheless, when the Germans announced that roughly fifteen-thousand Polish officers were discovered at Katyn, Polish suspicions of foul play on part of the Soviet's grew immensely. Under pressure from Churchill though, the Sikorski government was compelled to withdraw their request to the International Red Cross, and Sikorski was specifically instructed to make no further inquiries about his missing officers. While Sikorski privately complained to British officials about this decision, no alternatives to rectify the situation were available to him. And since Allied unity, and the fact that the Soviets, not the British or Americans, were the primary defenders against Hitler's forces, then any disruption in those relations could significantly undermine the war effort. Stalin nevertheless decided in June 1943 to break off diplomatic ties with the Polish Government-in-exile as a result of the Katyn affair.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Zawodny, J. K., *Death in the Forest*. 35-38.

On the other hand, the Katyn episode did provide Soviet authorities with an opportunity to act upon their long-term goals of realizing a communist Poland. Several months prior to the announced discovery of Katyn, a “Union of Polish Patriots” was created in Russia under Soviet sponsorship.¹¹⁶ This group was comprised of Polish Communists, and after Stalin broke off diplomatic relations with the Polish Government-in-exile, he recognized the Union of Polish Patriots as the legitimate representatives of the future Polish state. Fatefully, the whole Katyn affair gave Stalin the occasion to discredit the Sikorski government, and allowed him to begin his postwar plans for Poland, but Stalin’s actions also strained his relations with the United States and Great Britain for the remainder of the war. In fact, neither governments in the West could officially recognize the Union of Polish Patriots as the legitimate government of Poland, especially since Great Britain declared war on Germany on behalf of Poland, and both the U.S. and the British officially acknowledged the Polish Government-in-exile as the rightful authority over Polish affairs. Moreover, there was a large group of Polish forces fighting alongside the British and the Americans in North Africa, most of whom, “did not easily forget Soviet-German co-operation in 1939,” and the mass deportations, executions, and imprisonment of thousands of Poles that followed thereafter.¹¹⁷ So breaking ties with the Polish Government-in-exile was obviously not going to happen. There was little Churchill and Roosevelt could do at this point in regards to Katyn. Both Roosevelt and Churchill had a growing concern that Stalin and Hitler might make a separate peace with each other, which was not all that unreasonable considering the Germans and the Russians made a separate peace deal in WWI. At the same time, they couldn’t come out directly and blame the Germans for the Katyn crime either, mainly since they could not determine with exact certainty that the Nazis were responsible. And since the Soviet Union provided no

¹¹⁶ Zawodny, J. K., *Death in the Forest*. 38.

¹¹⁷ Zawodny, J. K., *Death in the Forest*. 39.

evidence to contradict German claims, then essentially Churchill and Roosevelt's were faced with an uneasy situation in regards to Poland and Katyn. In short, 1943 was a difficult time for the British and U.S. governments, their primary concern was seeing the defeat of Hitler and his Nazi regime, but in order for that to be accomplished, the Soviet Union and its Red Army were extremely important in obtaining that objective.¹¹⁸

Poland, Katyn, and the Postwar World

By April of 1945, the Second World War in Europe was drawing to a close, all but insuring an Allied victory by May that same year. Even so, the question of the future of Germany and Eastern Europe needed to be addressed by the Allies. In February 1945, the three main power brokers of the War—the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union—met in the Crimea (southern Russia) to discuss this very issue. The key agreements between the Big Three at this meeting—known as the Yalta Conference—were that the future governments of Eastern European nations that bordered the Soviet Union would be friendly to the Soviet government, and Stalin personally agreed to ensure that free elections in all territories liberated from Nazi Germany would take place. In regards to Poland on the other hand, Soviet negotiators insisted on the full inclusion of a Polish communist party (Polish Committee of National Liberation, also known as the Lublin Committee) in the postwar Polish Government. But the Lublin Committee had already established the Provisional Government of the Republic of Poland in Warsaw prior to the Yalta Conference. Thus, Soviet negotiators hardly needed the assurance from their Western allies for the presence of communist Poles in the postwar Polish Government because they were already firmly in place.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Zawodny, J. K., *Death in the Forest*. 38-40.

¹¹⁹ Zawodny, J. K., *Death in the Forest*. 61.

Although Stalin agreed to free and unfettered elections in Poland, the inclusion of Polish communists in the government of Poland after the war was extremely important for Stalin. Historically, Poland served as a gateway for foreign forces attempting to invade Russia. According to Herbert Feis, the presence of the communist party in Poland after the war would preserve the security interests of the Soviet Union, but Edward Rozek contends that this was also part of Stalin's long-term plans to turn all of Poland into a communist state. As for Churchill and Roosevelt, the agreements they made with the Soviet Premier at Yalta was perhaps the best deal they could make, considering the fact that by 1943 the Red Army was on the offensive in the East and almost singlehandedly turning the tide of the war in Allied favor. Furthermore, both Western leaders, to some degree, trusted Stalin, and they believed he would live up to his end of the bargain concerning Poland's borders after the war. And even though by 1945 the evidence and circumstances surrounding the Katyn massacre pointed towards Soviet responsibility, the greater crimes committed by the Nazis ultimately overshadowed those concerns for Roosevelt and Churchill.

In the meantime, the Germans maintained their innocence for Katyn over the course of the war—even after their defeat. But the issue over which nation was responsible for the massacre was hardly over. Ironically, it was the Soviets who raised the issue of culpability for the Katyn massacre during the Nuremburg trials. But Soviet attempts to blame the Germans was a complete failure. In fact, prominent U.S. attorney and chief council for the prosecution Telford Taylor “strongly urged Rudenko [chief Soviet prosecutor] not to go forward with the case.”¹²⁰ According to Taylor, “there was a feeling then that the Russians, not the Germans, were guilty” of committing

¹²⁰ Paul, Allen. *Katyn: Stalin's Massacre and the Triumph of Truth*. 325.

the crime.¹²¹ In the end, when the final verdicts at Nuremberg were announced in September of 1946, nothing at all was said about the Katyn massacre.¹²²

Nevertheless, as the war was drawing to a close, a new era was being ushered in, one that would completely impact the entire globe for generations to come. When President Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945, Harry Truman—then Vice-President—was somewhat of a “mystery to most Americans” when he became president in April 1945.¹²³ In time however, Truman would be responsible for the moral responsibilities use of atomic weapons, ending the war in Germany and Japan, managing the difficult relations with the United States’ faltering alliance with the Soviet Union, and initiating policies both home and abroad to strengthen the U.S. economy and rebuild a war-torn Europe.¹²⁴

Indeed, after being thrust into the American Presidency, Truman faced some of the most daunting and complex problems of any president since Abraham Lincoln. The decision by Truman to use the atomic bombs—“Little Boy” and “Fat Man”—on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, represented a fundamental shift in the way future armies of the world would conduct their strategic military objectives. Some historians debate whether or not the use of the atomic bombs was necessary for the defeat of Japan. But many officials within the U.S. military and government at the time feared that the human cost of invading the Japanese mainland would result in heavy loss of life—both military and civilian. Truman of course chose to use the bomb, thereby shocking “Japanese hardliners” into surrender and sparing the U.S. of any further

¹²¹ Paul, Allen. *Katyn': Stalin's Massacre and the Triumph of Truth*. 325.

¹²² Paul, Allen. *Katyn': Stalin's Massacre and the Triumph of Truth*. 325.

¹²³ Michael Schaller, Robert D. Schulzinger, John Bezis-Selfa, Janette Thomas Greenwood, Andrew Kirk, Sarah J. Purcell, and Aaron Charles Sheehan-Dean, eds. *American Horizons: U.S. History in a Global Context. Since 1865*. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. 970.

¹²⁴ Schaller, Michael and Robert D. Schulzinger, eds. *American Horizons*. 970.

casualties.¹²⁵ What's more, even though Stalin at the Conferences at Yalta and Potsdam had agreed to send troops to Japan three-months following the defeat of Hitler, many within the Truman administration were concerned that the presence of the Red Army in Northeast Asia would see the Soviets aiding and supporting communist forces in China. Perhaps then, detonating the atomic bombs and forcing Japan into a quick surrender would keep the Soviets out of Asia, all while demonstrating to Stalin "a graphic example of U.S. power in the Soviet's backyard."¹²⁶

The Beginnings of the Cold War

Prior to the atomic attacks on the Japanese Empire, tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union began to rise following Germany's formal surrender on May, 8 1945. During this point in time, U.S. military and political leaders became concerned as the Soviets occupied Berlin, East Germany, and controlled massive territories from the Black Sea in Rumania to Poland's Baltic coasts.¹²⁷ While the Big Three at the Yalta Conference in February 1945, agreed to divide Germany into occupation zones after the war, and that the liberated territories from the clutches of Nazi hands would have free elections, no official apparatus was put in place guaranteeing the three powers would fully cooperate with their agreements. Thus, when the Soviet Union began annexing most of eastern Poland before Germany's surrender, and when they intended to sign a "treaty of mutual assistance" with the Lublin (communist) Polish Government (not officially recognized by the U.S. or Great Britain), confirming Polish fears that the Soviets wanted to communize Poland, Truman, just eleven days after taking office, faced off with Soviet Foreign Minister Vyachslav

¹²⁵ Schaller, Michael and Robert D. Schulzinger, eds. *American Horizons*. 970.

¹²⁶ Schaller, Michael and Robert D. Schulzinger, eds. *American Horizons*. 973. and Volker R. Berghahn, *Europe in the Era of Two World Wars: From Militarism and Genocide to Civil Society, 1900-1950*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. 2006. 133.

¹²⁷ Schaller, Michael and Robert D. Schulzinger, eds. *American Horizons*. 972.

Molotov over the Polish question.¹²⁸ Molotov, who was in the United States awaiting the start of the San Francisco Conference in which a new charter for the United Nations was being crafted in September 1945, was scolded by Truman for breaking his nation's Yalta declarations to give Poland its independence. Truman declared that unless the Soviets observed their Yalta agreements, then the U.S. Senate "would never approve of American membership in the United Nations."¹²⁹ Stalin responded by maintaining that the Soviet presence in Poland was to establish a "security zone," but it was clear to U.S. officials that the interests of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe was more important than preserving the U.S., British, Soviet alliance.¹³⁰ But as the Big Three met again in Potsdam—suburb of Berlin—from July 17 to August 2, 1945, Truman and Secretary of State, James F. Byrnes, had no "clear understanding" of Stalin's postwar imperialistic objectives.¹³¹ Still hoping for Soviet assistance in the war against Japan, combined with the knowledge of a great weapon that could annihilate entire cities, and an unwillingness to engage the Soviets in all-out war, Truman ultimately tempered his position on Poland, and agreed in the meantime, for the Soviet occupation of eastern Poland.¹³²

Ironically, the start of WWII began with the invasion of Poland by Nazi Germany in 1939, but by the conclusion of the war in 1945, Poland came to signify the ideological Cold War that dominate world politics during the second half of the twentieth century. The future struggles between the emerging superpowers—the United States and the Soviet Union—would be take place in foreign lands, ultimately creating profound and lasting consequences for those nations.¹³³ As

¹²⁸ John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1972. 203.

¹²⁹ Gaddis, John Lewis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947*. 203.

¹³⁰ Schaller, Michael and Robert D. Schulzinger, eds. *American Horizons*. 972.

¹³¹ Schaller, Michael and Robert D. Schulzinger, eds. *American Horizons*. 972.

¹³² Gaddis, John Lewis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947*. 199-225. and Schaller, Michael and Robert D. Schulzinger, eds. *American Horizons*. 972.

¹³³ Schaller, Michael and Robert D. Schulzinger, eds. *American Horizons*. 973.

the United States emerged from the war relatively unscathed, both in terms of economics and lack of physical destruction of its homeland, the baton was passed by the former great powers of Europe to the United States to ensure that the peace, security, and the principles of democracy, were guarded against communist regimes. After the war in Europe and the Pacific by August 1945 was officially over, U.S. industry had expended tremendously. While the allies of the United States, and its enemies alike, suffered massive financial and physical destruction as a result of the war, the same cannot be said of the U.S. Not only did America's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) rise from \$91 billion in 1939 to \$166 billion in 1945, by war's end, the U.S. produced and consumed nearly 43 percent of the world's electricity, 57 percent of the steel, and 80 percent of automobiles.¹³⁴ Furthermore, the U.S. Navy and Air Force was completely unmatched, and the president and his military advisors had sole possession over atomic weapons and its technology. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union suffered horrible devastation during the war. Entire Russian cities and rural villages were destroyed by the Nazis, and tens of millions of military personnel and civilian lives had been lost.¹³⁵ Consequently, the United States had a clear advantage over the Soviet Union both militarily and economically.¹³⁶

Yet the Soviet Union was by no means a weak state. In fact, as the war destroyed the former colonial empires of Europe, a power vacuum in Asia, Africa, and the Middle-East, saw national revolutionaries demanding independence, modernization, and an overall higher quality of life. The interests of revolutionary forces around the globe after decolonization eventually became the postwar aims of the Soviet Union. By 1946, the Cold War was beginning to take shape, but Truman needed something more other than military and economic might to combat the Soviet

¹³⁴ Berghahn, Volker R., *Europe in the Era of Two World Wars*. 139.

¹³⁵ Schaller, Michael and Robert D. Schulzinger, eds. *American Horizons*. 974.

¹³⁶ Berghahn, Volker R., *Europe in the Era of Two World Wars*. 134-139. and Schaller, Michael and Robert D. Schulzinger, eds. *American Horizons*. 974.

Union's postwar plans. What he needed was a coherent ideology to oppose communist ideals, which was gaining popularity among the former colonial regions that were once controlled by the democratic and capitalistic powers of Western Europe. Then again, numerous revolutionary groups in former colonies saw capitalism, and its colonizers, as the main cause of war, economic depression, and fascism.¹³⁷

As a result, Truman strove to sell American ideology and culture throughout the world, making it the most effective weapon against communism—short of all-out war that is. The Truman administration had real cause for concern regarding the growth and expansion of communism by 1947, as southern Europe began to see a swell in communist ranks. Indeed, between 1935 and 1945, communist party membership in Greece increased from 17,000 to 70,000, and from 5,000 to 1,700,000 in Italy.¹³⁸ In Czechoslovakia, communist membership increased from 28,000 to 750,000.¹³⁹ Hence, communism was on the rise, but whether added membership of a communist party was the result of anti-democratic principles or admiration of Stalin's policies, or simply a reaction to fascism and Nazism, is a discussion for another time. By 1946, Truman needed to develop a clear policy in response to the rapid changes in global power in a nuclear age. Forming the core of Truman's foreign policy initiatives, came from Soviet expert George F. Kennan, whose famous and widely circulated "Long Telegram," provided U.S. officials of his insightful views of communist ideology in the Soviet Union.¹⁴⁰ Kennan, writing as "Mr. X," argued that communism in the Soviet Union was "impervious to the logic of reason," and that they are inherently expansionist, and can only be controlled through "long-term, patient but firm and vigilant

¹³⁷ Schaller, Michael and Robert D. Schulzinger, eds. *American Horizons*. 974-5.

¹³⁸ Schaller, Michael and Robert D. Schulzinger, eds. *American Horizons*. 975.

¹³⁹ Schaller, Michael and Robert D. Schulzinger, eds. *American Horizons*. 975.

¹⁴⁰ Schaller, Michael and Robert D. Schulzinger, eds. *American Horizons*. 976.

containment of Russian expansive tendencies.”¹⁴¹ As a result, Truman adopted the idea of “containment” against Soviet aspirations, which in time, would lay the foundation for U.S. foreign policy over the next forty-years.¹⁴²

Kennan’s appraisals concerning the Soviet Union rattled U.S. politicians, high-ranking military officers, and government officials, but Kennan assured policy makers that Stalin and the Soviets did not want war. Instead, the Soviets believed that the economic depression in Europe and Northeast Asia would carry these areas into the “Soviet camp.”¹⁴³ Nonetheless, Truman, in order to fund a massive effort to fight communists around the world, decided to step up his anti-communists rhetoric. In a speech to Congress on March 12, 1947, Truman told House and Senate members and the American people that “it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.”¹⁴⁴ This brave new responsibility to combat “communist tyranny” wherever it may occur around the globe, ultimately became known as the Truman Doctrine.¹⁴⁵ In several speeches thereafter while on the campaign trail seeking reelection, Truman painted a grim picture to the American people about the dangers concerning the spread of communism. Truman’s warnings were also the means to secure \$400 million from Congress to fight communism in Greece and Turkey, all while creating a high level of anxiety about communist ideology throughout the U.S. In response, a second Red Scare raced across the nation, over time, the so called Red Scare challenged the basic principles of democracy and individual freedom in the United States for many years to come. Truman ultimately gained support from Democrats and Republicans for his policy of containing

¹⁴¹ George F. Kennan, *Memoirs, 1925-1950*. New York: Pantheon Books, 557.

¹⁴² Kennan, George F. *Memoirs*, 551-7. and Schaller, Michael and Robert D. Schulzinger, eds. *American Horizons*. 975-6.

¹⁴³ Schaller, Michael and Robert D. Schulzinger, eds. *American Horizons*. 976.

¹⁴⁴ Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs: Volume 2: Years of Trial and Hope, 1946-1952*. Vol 1. Doubleday, 1956. 126.

¹⁴⁵ Truman, Harry S., *Memoirs: Volume 2: Years of Trial and Hope, 1946-1952*. 124.

communism, but in order to carry out this policy, the United States needed to completely overhaul certain governmental functions and institutions to prepare for a long and protracted Cold War against the Soviet Union. In the end, the Cold War between the U.S. and the Soviet Union was in full swing by the late 1940s. When that happened, politicians in Washington decided to sniff out communist sympathizers within the government. Against this backdrop, the circumstances of Katyn massacre would eventually play a pivotal role in that venture.¹⁴⁶

Cover-up, Suppression, and the Politics of War

Until 1951, when the Congress of the United States decided to investigate which nation was ultimately responsible for executing the Polish officers in the Katyn Forest, the knowledge and details surrounding the crime was suppressed, ignored, or many simply did not believe that the Soviets were responsible. The reasons why the Roosevelt administration, and his war time ally Winston Churchill, decided not to investigate the event has already been mentioned. But the question as to why Truman refused to investigate remains unanswered. However, a closer analysis of a handful of those who served in both the Roosevelt and Truman administrations, and how the Katyn controversy affected their convictions, provides clues as to their motives behind the answers to the latter. In addition, recently declassified documents from the Congressional Hearings will also be examined to demonstrate that the U.S. State Department and Army Intelligence both during and by wars' end acted under a veil of secrecy when it came to Soviet transgressions against the Poles.

Possibly one of the most knowledgeable figures in the Roosevelt and Truman years concerning the Soviet Union, and communism in particular, was George F. Kennan. Born in

¹⁴⁶ Schaller, Michael and Robert D. Schulzinger, eds. *American Horizons*. 976. and Truman, Harry S., *Memoirs: Volume 2: Years of Trial and Hope, 1946-1952*. 124-5.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1904, Kennan lived, and eventually served, in a time when the geopolitical structures of Europe, the United States, and the entire world, was fundamentally changing during the aftermaths of both WWI and WWII. After graduating from Princeton University in 1925, Kennan entered the Foreign Service (FS), and throughout his illustrious career as a Foreign Service Officer he witnessed some of the most extraordinary events of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. As the rise of totalitarian regimes, Fascism, Nazism, Communism and Stalinism, began to dominate world affairs, Kennan was placed at the forefront of these events, and his insights and experiences not only assisted Truman and others in their tough stance against the spread of communism after WWII, but it also put him in a position to recognize the importance of Poland for Stalin, and how the Katyn massacre effected his actions there.

In chapter eight of his *Memoirs, (Moscow Again—and Poland)*, Kennan describes how he, along with U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union Averell Harriman, were immersed in the breakdown of diplomatic relations between the Polish Government-in-exile and the Soviet Union. Also contained in this chapter is Kennan's only references to the Katyn massacre, and how that event, and other circumstances, paved the way for Stalin to ensure that a communist puppet regime would be established in Poland after the war. It should be noted however, that Kennan refrains from interpreting his thoughts in hindsight. According to Kennan, "the papers from which were taken the excerpts dealing with the Polish problem...were reproduced either entirely from private ones, shown to no one at the time, or memos written for the ambassador."¹⁴⁷ Thus, his perspectives on Katyn, the Polish question, the Soviet Union, and the Polish Government-in-exile, contained in this chapter, are from Kennan's personal diary, notes, or other unpublished documents he had in his possession between 1944 and 1945.

¹⁴⁷ Kennan, George F., *Memoirs*, 216.

Kennan's first conversation concerning Katyn transpired just before he returned to Moscow in 1944, when he and Jan Wszelaki (counselor to the Polish embassy in Washington), discussed "the motives and purposes of the Soviet government" for breaking off diplomatic ties with the Polish Government-in-exile after they requested the International Red Cross to investigate the Katyn crime.¹⁴⁸ Kennan says, that he "came away from [the] discussion with a strong feeling" that Stalin's hostilities towards the Polish Government-in-exile was not only the result of his nation's much improved military position in Eastern Europe by 1944, but most importantly, because Katyn, and other violent acts perpetrated against the Poles by Soviet authorities between 1939-1940, was an "embarrassment" to Stalin and the Soviet Union.¹⁴⁹ Therefore, Kennan theorized:

What was bothering Stalin was not, as many of our people tended to assume, just the desire to have a 'friendly government' on the other side of the Polish frontier. What was bothering him was the need for the collaboration of any future Polish political authority in repressing evidences and memories of actions by Soviet authorities in the period 1939-1940, for which no adequate and respectable excuse could ever be found.¹⁵⁰

In short, Kennan believed that Stalin wanted no government in Poland during the postwar era to either have the "inclination or the ability" to investigate the crimes of the past, and "make public issue of these actions" by the Soviet government.¹⁵¹ And yet, while this is an extremely insightful view of Stalin's actions, one in which others during this time failed to recognize, two important questions still remain: who did Kennan believe was responsible for the massacre at Katyn, and what role did he play in suppressing the circumstances of Katyn after the war?

¹⁴⁸ Kennan, George F., *Memoirs*, 202.

¹⁴⁹ Kennan, George F., *Memoirs*, 202-3.

¹⁵⁰ Kennan, George F., *Memoirs*, 203.

¹⁵¹ Kennan, George F., *Memoirs*, 203.

The answer to the former lies in a single passage in his *Memoirs* where Kennan declares, that “when it came to the murdered officers, I had no proof—nothing more than a general intuitive ideas—as to what was likely and what unlikely to have been the case.”¹⁵² He goes on to say:

I was not familiar with any of the documentation beyond what the Soviet government had itself seen fit to publish in the press. I could not take upon myself the burden of trying to prove, from my modest vantage point, charges of the most grievous nature against the Soviet government, and particularly ones which my own government did not wish to have raised or discussed. I therefore fell in, at least when it came to official correspondence, with the tacit rule of silence which was being applied at that time to the unpleasant subject in question.¹⁵³

According to Kennan, he was neither in the position to know the details of Katyn between 1943 and 1945, nor was the subject to be brought up in any official communications. Kennan was also not the U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union, the Secretary of State, or close advisor to Roosevelt. Therefore, considering Kennan’s relatively lower position in the Foreign Service, and the fact that Kennan had no formal or personal relations with the Polish Government-in-exile, then it is quite plausible that the details of the massacre were simply unknown to him. While Kennan throughout his *Memoirs* discusses in great detail his dislike for the Soviet system and communism in general, no reference to who he believed was accountable for the killings at Katyn is mentioned. The only exception to his beliefs is a brief passage in the same chapter where he discusses why he thought the Polish officers were executed by the Soviets not the Germans. But this passage is retrospective—these were not the perspectives Kennan held during his time in Moscow in 1944-1945.

To answer the final question, as to what role did Kennan play in suppressing the Katyn massacre after the war, that answer is not all that difficult to answer: probably none. When the war in Europe came to official end in May of 1945, Kennan remained in Moscow and served as

¹⁵² Kennan, George F., *Memoirs*, 207.

¹⁵³ Kennan, George F., *Memoirs*, 207-8.

“chargé d’affaires” of the U.S. embassy while Ambassador Harriman was assigned to “temporary duties elsewhere.”¹⁵⁴ Over the following nine months, Kennan carried out his responsibilities of entertaining dignitaries and acted as interpreter for U.S. Congressmen and Senators who arranged personal meetings with Stalin or other Soviet officials. It is also during this time in February 1946 when Kennan drafted his famous Long Telegram to Washington, which outlined the “basic features of the Soviet postwar” attitudes, and how the Soviet government would officially and unofficially effect “American [foreign] policy” in Europe.¹⁵⁵ So detailed and insightful were Kennan’s thoughts regarding the Soviet Union’s postwar aspirations, that President Truman read the telegram, and the Secretary of Navy, James Forrestal, “had it reproduced and made it required reading for hundreds...of higher officers in the armed forces.”¹⁵⁶ Even the State Department praised Kennan for his intuitive and well-developed narrative “to the dangers of the Communist conspiracy” within Stalin’s Russia.¹⁵⁷ The success of the Long Telegram changed Kennan’s life completely. “My name was now known in Washington,” Kennan says, and as a result, Kennan was transferred to Washington and was “assigned as the first ‘deputy for foreign affairs’ at the newly established National War College.”¹⁵⁸

For the next eight months, Kennan lectured future military officers and other students on a variety of subjects (most particularly on the Soviet Union) throughout the country, but in April of 1947, Secretary of State George C. Marshall requested Kennan’s presence back at the State Department to assist in the formation of a “Policy Planning Staff,” which would develop policies concerning the “European recovery” effort, and present those ideas directly to the Secretary

¹⁵⁴ Kennan, George F., *Memoirs*, 275.

¹⁵⁵ Kennan, George F., *Memoirs*, 294.

¹⁵⁶ Kennan, George F., *Memoirs*, 294-5.

¹⁵⁷ Kennan, George F., *Memoirs*, 294.

¹⁵⁸ Kennan, George F., *Memoirs*, 298.

(Marshall).¹⁵⁹ In time, Kennan, as head of the Planning Staff, helped draft some of the basic principles and ideas of the Marshall Plan. Of course, as Kennan so graciously states, “the authorship of the Marshall Plan lies...squarely with General Marshall and President Truman.”¹⁶⁰ Also during his time at the State Department, and as stated beforehand, Kennan authored his notorious X-Article, which appeared in the 1947 July issue of *Foreign Affairs*, under the title, *The Sources of Soviet Conduct*.¹⁶¹ The X-Article and the Long Telegram written by Kennan eventually became linked to the Truman Doctrine. That is, the idea that Soviet power and communism should be contained at all cost. However, Kennan asserts that the X-Article had “serious deficiencies,” and much of what he had written was either taking out of context, or he himself failed to make clear that “containment” was not to be achieved militarily, but “politically.”¹⁶²

Regardless, Kennan’s postwar service as chargé d’affaires at the U.S. embassy in Moscow to his time at the National War College and State Department, left him in no better position to reveal, suppress, or have knowledge of certain facts of the Katyn massacre. In short, Kennan, was engaged and preoccupied with other matters to be part of some vast conspiracy to conceal the circumstances surrounding the crime from the American public. Furthermore, to do so would have been uncharacteristic of Kennan. Indeed, throughout his *Memoirs*, Kennan discusses extensively how, he, throughout his life, was an introverted, very shy, and very reserved individual, and he didn’t do anything extraordinary to draw attention to himself. It was only after the Long Telegram where higher authorities of the State Department and the White House started to heed his advice regarding the Soviets. Finally, Kennan respected the chain of command. For him to reveal certain information concerning foreign policy to the American people, whether he agreed with it or not,

¹⁵⁹ Kennan, George F., *Memoirs*, 326.

¹⁶⁰ Kennan, George F., *Memoirs*, 343-44.

¹⁶¹ Kennan, George F., *Memoirs*, 354-55.

¹⁶² Kennan, George F., *Memoirs*, 358.

could only be done and approved through proper channels of the U.S. government—even his X-
 Article was “cleared for publication” by James Forrestal.¹⁶³ So for Kennan to take action outside
 of Department rules, was not something in his nature to do. On a final note, to emphasize his lack
 of involvement in the Katyn cover-up, Kennan never testified, or was ever subpoenaed to testify,
 to the Congressional Hearings on Katyn in 1951. Does that mean he’s innocent? Not necessarily.
 But the Hearings on Katyn by Congress (if one should read in its entirety), to reiterate, was one of
 the most comprehensive and thorough investigations ever taken up by Congress, therefore, any
 trace or evidence of Kennan’s involvement in concealing knowledge about the crime to the
 American people or other government officials certainly would have warranted his testimony.

If there was one individual who was in the position to know the facts and details of the
 Katyn massacre from all governments involved—the U.S., British, Soviet, and Polish
 Government-in-exile—that would be Averell Harriman. Harriman was born in New York City in
 1891, and was the son of the legendary railroad baron, Edward Henry Harriman.¹⁶⁴ As a young
 man Averell attended Groton Boarding School in Massachusetts, and it is here that Harriman
 befriended Eleanor Roosevelt’s younger brother, Hall Roosevelt, and came to know Franklin
 Roosevelt—who also went to Groton.¹⁶⁵ After graduating from Yale University in 1913, Harriman
 joined the family business—the Union Pacific Railroad—where he trained in “all aspects of
 railroading,” including “train operation, [and] track and shop maintenance.”¹⁶⁶ A few years later,
 Harriman was promoted to “vice president in charge of purchases” at the Union Pacific’s
 headquarters in New York.¹⁶⁷ By the early 1920s, Harriman, unable to confine his energies and

¹⁶³ Kennan, George F., *Memoirs*, 356.

¹⁶⁴ William Averell Harriman, *America and Russia in a Changing World: A Half Century of Personal Observation*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971. v.

¹⁶⁵ William Averell Harriman and Elie Abel. *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin 1941-1946*. 1975. 3.

¹⁶⁶ Harriman, William Averell, and Elie Abel. *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin 1941-1946*. 45.

¹⁶⁷ Harriman, William Averell, and Elie Abel. *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin 1941-1946*. 45.

ambitions working for the Union Pacific and recognizing that the United States was the leading creditor nation after WWI, decided to try his hand at “international banking and investment.”¹⁶⁸

Throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, Harriman and his investment company devoted much of their funds in European ventures—particularly in the Soviet Union. This also coincided with Harriman’s earlier beliefs that the Bolshevik Revolution would provide him with the opportunity to establish relations with Soviet Russia, but his initial interest in Russia was political, not economic.¹⁶⁹ But his firm’s enterprises in the Soviet Union were short lived. After Harriman personally went to Moscow in December of 1926, where he met and conversed with Leon Trotsky (who at the time was chairman of the Concessions Committee of the Supreme Economic Council, which was tasked with managing the nation’s industrial and forestry economies), regarding his firm’s investments in a manganese mine near Tiflis, located in the Soviet Caucasus, it was clear to him “that the days of the NEP [New Economic Policy], and foreign concessions were numbered.”¹⁷⁰ So Harriman left the Soviet Union with no alternative but to recommend to his associates that they should end their business dealings with the Soviets.¹⁷¹

Shortly after his business dealings in the Soviet Union, Harriman became interested in American politics. When FDR became President in 1933, Harriman got involved in Roosevelt’s New Deal reforms. Roosevelt ultimately appointed Harriman as the deputy administrator of his National Recovery Administration (NRA). He later became its chief administrative officer, until

¹⁶⁸ Harriman, William Averell, *America and Russia in a Changing World: A Half Century of Personal Observation*. vi.

¹⁶⁹ Harriman, William Averell, *America and Russia in a Changing World: A Half Century of Personal Observation*. v-vi, and Harriman, William Averell, and Elie Abel. *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin 1941-1946*. 45-47.

¹⁷⁰ Harriman, William Averell, and Elie Abel. *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin 1941-1946*. 49.

¹⁷¹ According to Harriman, he determined that “the Bolshevik Revolution, in fact, was a reactionary development. The dictatorship of the proletariat, providing that the few should make decisions for the many, and that the individual must be the servant of the state, seemed to me a regressive development substantially at odds with the legitimate aspirations of mankind.” See Harriman, William Averell, and Elie Abel. *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin 1941-1946*. 51.

the Supreme Court ruled the NRA was unconstitutional in 1935. However, his experiences working in the NRA provided Harriman with important knowledge about American industry, and that understanding helped prepare him for his next task of mobilizing America's resources in wartime.¹⁷²

With war raging on in Europe by 1941, Roosevelt asked Harriman to go to London “and recommend everything that we can do, short of war, to keep the British Isles afloat.”¹⁷³ Harriman acted as Roosevelt's personal representative in London, reporting directly to the President, and not the State Department.¹⁷⁴ As Roosevelt's “Special Envoy,” Harriman helped coordinate the Lend-Lease program (a program which supplied food, oil, weapons, warships, vehicles, and other material aid to Britain, Free France, and later the Soviet Union between 1941 and 1945) directly with Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Over the course of the war, Harriman became immersed in numerous aspects of the U.S. and Allied war effort in Europe, whether it involved economics or foreign policy. In 1943, Harriman was appointed U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union. During his time overseeing the Lend-Lease program and his ambassadorship in the Soviet Union, Harriman maintained constant one-on-one and written communications with Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin, and other high-ranking officials from all three governments. Furthermore, Harriman attended and took part in the discussions at all three major conferences of the war between the Big Three—Casablanca, Tehran, and Yalta.¹⁷⁵

After the war in Europe, Harriman continued to serve as ambassador to the Soviet Union under the Truman administration until January of 1946, moreover, he took part in the discussions at the Potsdam Conference and the United Nations Conference in San Francisco—both of which

¹⁷² Harriman, William Averell, and Elie Abel. *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin 1941-1946*. 53-55.

¹⁷³ Harriman, William Averell, and Elie Abel. *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin 1941-1946*. 3.

¹⁷⁴ Harriman, William Averell, and Elie Abel. *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin 1941-1946*. 3.

¹⁷⁵ Harriman, William Averell, and Elie Abel. *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin 1941-1946*. 57-233.

took place in 1945. In addition, Harriman became U.S. ambassador to the United Kingdom in April of 1946 following his ambassadorship to Moscow. In October that same year, he was nominated by President Truman, and later appointed by Congress, as U.S. Secretary of Commerce (a post he held until 1948). And finally, Harriman assisted greatly in coordinating the Marshall Plan throughout Europe between 1948 and 1950.

As one can see, Averell Harriman led an extraordinary life, to say the least. Actually the aforesaid are but just a few examples of his legendary life and profession as a wealthy businessman who turned politician and respected diplomat. Indeed, much more could be said about the man, but that is hardly necessary for this analysis. Nonetheless, Harriman, more so than Kennan, was in a much better position to know the details regarding the crime at Katyn. Yet like Kennan, what he knew and who he personally believed was responsible, or what role he played in suppressing the affair from the American public after the war, is a different matter altogether.

Unfortunately throughout Harriman's memoirs, Katyn is vaguely referenced. While he devotes an entire chapter to the problems of Poland, titled, *Poland, the Touchtone*, this chapter mainly details his efforts in getting Stalin to recognize the Polish Government-in-exile after their cessation of diplomatic relations in 1943, and also his problems getting the latter to make concessions to Stalin and the Soviet regime concerning the postwar boundary issues of the eastern frontiers of Poland. In regards to what Harriman does mention in his memoirs concerning Katyn, that information can be found in a single passage in his memoirs. According to Harriman, while he was in London in May of 1943—a month after the Germans announced the discovery of the mass graves at Katyn—Harriman had a discussion with General Sikorski about Sikorski's government's request for the International Red Cross to investigate the grave sites.¹⁷⁶ Harriman

¹⁷⁶ Harriman, William Averell, and Elie Abel. *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin 1941-1946*. 200.

states, that he “asked [Sikorski] bluntly why the message had been sent to the International Red Cross...[and]...I put it to him that whether the German accusations turned out to be true or false, the Polish statement was bound to have a disastrous effect in Moscow.”¹⁷⁷ Sikorski, in reply to Harriman, responded, “even though he [Sikorski] believed the Russians were responsible for the Katyn massacre, he would try to patch things up with Stalin.”¹⁷⁸ This is the only reference to the Katyn massacre that Harriman makes in his memoirs. But in 1951, Harriman, who was subpoenaed by Congress to testify about his knowledge of the Katyn massacre, stated to the Committee members that he “got to know General Sikorski well” during his time in London.¹⁷⁹ Thus, is it possible that these two individuals, who knew each other for several years, had a much more broader conversation about why Sikorski thought the Soviets, and not the Nazis, were responsible for the crime? That remains unclear in Harriman’s memoirs and his testimony. However, it is not all that unreasonable to assume that they did.

Going back to Harriman’s testimony before the Congressional Committee, Harriman claims that when the mass graves were discovered by the Germans, he recalled “the announcement of the Germans of this massacre, but [he] had no knowledge of it except what [he] saw in the British press at the time.”¹⁸⁰ Harriman continues to assert to the members of the Congressional Committee that he knew little about the details of the killings while the war was still ongoing.¹⁸¹ However, Harriman later testifies that in early January of 1944, he sent his daughter, Kathleen

¹⁷⁷ Harriman, William Averell, and Elie Abel. *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin 1941-1946*. 200.

¹⁷⁸ Harriman, William Averell, and Elie Abel. *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin 1941-1946*. 200.

¹⁷⁹ U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre*. 2105.

¹⁸⁰ U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre. Hearings before the Select Committee to Conduct an Investigation of the Facts, Evidence, and Circumstances of the katyn Forest Massacre*. 82nd Congress, 1st and 2nd Sessions, 1951-1952 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1952). 2104.

¹⁸¹ U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre*. 2103-4.

(who was with Harriman during his five years overseas in London and Moscow), along with John Melby (embassy staff member in Moscow), to accompany a U.S. delegation to investigate Katyn.¹⁸² This event took place shortly after the Soviets regained control of the Katyn area in the previous months, and after the Soviets invited the American press to examine the mass graves. Shortly after Kathleen's and Melby's inspection of the mass graves, each wrote a detailed report on what they witnessed, and Harriman sent their combined reports to the State Department along with a "brief message to the President and the Secretary of State," describing their "impressions" of the crime.¹⁸³ Those reports sent by Harriman concluded that the "general evidence and testimony are inconclusive, but Kathleen and Embassy staff member believe probability massacre perpetrated by Germans."¹⁸⁴ Thus, this perhaps answers the question regarding who Harriman believed was responsible for the massacre. Certainly his daughter's opinion on the matter influenced his beliefs. And although Harriman states to the Committee that the reports he sent to Washington "did not express any personal opinion" from his perspective, that doesn't mean he didn't nonetheless form an opinion, and it's not all that illogical to assume that Kathleen's estimations didn't sway his judgements, or cast doubts in his mind that the Soviets were responsible.¹⁸⁵

Yet, did Harriman play a major role in suppressing the Katyn affair after the war? Perhaps not deliberately, but he may have had other reasons for not drawing attention to the issue. Indeed, while Harriman, like Kennan, became involved in various government activities after the war, and

¹⁸² U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre*. 2105.

¹⁸³ U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre*. 2105.

¹⁸⁴ U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre*. 2124. See Exhibit 24 for full details.

¹⁸⁵ U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre*. 2125.

was far too engaged to be preoccupied with a single atrocity among the hundreds that occurred during the war, there are a few things within his memoirs that provide other motives why Harriman may not have been so forthcoming about his knowledge of Katyn. For example, it is clear in Harriman's memoirs that he was a Roosevelt loyalist. He greatly admired and respected his longtime friend, and was a staunch proponent of the New Deal reforms. Therefore, failures of Roosevelt and others to convince Stalin to reestablish diplomatic relations with the Polish Government-in-exile, and also Western governments failures to get Stalin to live up to his Yalta agreements—regardless of the Soviet Union's military control over the region—these events ultimately left a blemish on Roosevelt's legacy. So Harriman perhaps didn't want to draw attention to the more tarnishing aspects of the Roosevelt war years while he was still serving in government.

Finally, Harriman was well respected by the Soviets, both during, and long after the war. In fact, in 1963, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev once told Harriman that:

I and my comrades regard you, Mr. Harriman, with highest esteem. Your work as Ambassador left a deep and favorable impression here. We all agree that we would like to return our relations to the state they were in during the period you served here.¹⁸⁶

That relationship which Harriman developed throughout his career with the Soviets might have been “friendly and frank but firm” according to Harriman, but that would not have been the case if he exposed the Katyn controversy in a public manner—which most certainly would have drawn the ire and indignation from the Soviets.¹⁸⁷ And so, protecting Roosevelt's legacy, and preserving his well-established associations with the Soviets, conceivably meant Harriman had personal reasons for remaining silent on the Soviets' crime at Katyn. However, there appears to be no evidence to prove that Harriman was part of a substantial conspiracy within the State Department

¹⁸⁶ Harriman, William Averell, *America and Russia in a Changing World: A Half Century of Personal Observation*. x.

¹⁸⁷ Harriman, William Averell, and Elie Abel. *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin 1941-1946*. 206.

to suppress the crime though either. It is therefore more sensible to assume that he didn't believe the Soviets were guilty of the crime, and the influence of his daughter's opinion helped sway him to that conclusion.

If there is one person in this analysis who is shrouded in slight bit of controversy regarding Katyn, than that person may very well be Dean Acheson. Born in Middletown, Connecticut, on April 11, 1893, Acheson lived a privileged life since his mother, Eleanor Gooderham, was the daughter of "a wealthy banker and distiller in Toronto."¹⁸⁸ His father, Edward Acheson, became an Episcopal clergyman after he fought in the Crimean War (1853-1856), and later became Bishop of the Episcopalian rectory in Middletown.¹⁸⁹ Five years after FDR graduated from Groton Boarding School, Acheson also attended Groton in 1905, and this is where he met and came in contact with Averell Harriman, who was in his final year there. After Groton, Acheson attended Yale, and graduated from college in 1915 before deciding to continue his post-graduate studies at Harvard Law School. But with the possibility of war breaking out with Mexico in 1917, Acheson joined the Yale Battery National Guard unit that was stationed near the Pocono Mountains in Northeastern part of Pennsylvania before eventually serving in a Brooklyn Navy Yard naval auxiliary unit during WWI.¹⁹⁰ Following his brief stint in the Naval Reserve, Acheson returned to Harvard Law in 1918. After earning his law degree, Felix Frankfurter landed him a job as clerk to the new Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis.¹⁹¹

By 1921, Acheson decided to leave his clerkship with Brandeis for the rising law firm of Covington, Burling and Rublee. Several years later, he made partner. It is also during this time

¹⁸⁸ Robert L. Beisner, *Dean Acheson: A Life in The Cold War*. illustrat ed. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. 9.

¹⁸⁹ Beisner, Robert L., *Dean Acheson: A Life in The Cold War*. 9.

¹⁹⁰ Beisner, Robert L., *Dean Acheson: A Life in The Cold War*. 9

¹⁹¹ Beisner, Robert L., *Dean Acheson: A Life in The Cold War*. 10.

that Acheson became heavily involved in the Democratic Party, as “Republican protectionism,” which Acheson opposed, began to dominate the political landscape in the late 1920s.¹⁹² When FDR assumed the presidency in 1933, Acheson, upon the request of Secretary of the Treasury William Woodin, was asked by Woodin and Roosevelt to serve as undersecretary of the Treasury, but when Woodin fell gravely ill, Acheson became the “virtual Secretary of the Treasury.”¹⁹³ However, Roosevelt and Acheson got into a very heated dispute concerning Roosevelt’s decision to raise the nation’s income and create jobs by “deliberately stirring inflation.”¹⁹⁴ Having strongly opposed this course of action, Acheson decided to resign, and returned to law and his firm—which was now Covington, Burling, Rublee, Acheson, and Shorb.¹⁹⁵ Throughout the rest of the 1930s, Acheson’s firm grew quite prosperous as New Deal regulations brought in a multitude of new clients. Overtime, Roosevelt and Acheson reconciled their differences, and many attempts were made by FDR to lure Acheson “back to public service,”—all of which Acheson declined.¹⁹⁶ But on February 2, 1941, with war raging on in Europe, Roosevelt asked Acheson to serve as Assistant Secretary of Economic Affairs under Secretary of State Cordell Hull, and this time, Acheson accepted.¹⁹⁷

Like Averell Harriman, but in much greater capacity, Acheson assisted in implementing the Lend-Lease program to deliver economic and military aid to Great Britain, but he also played a key role in supporting and promulgating the oil embargo against the Japanese Empire in 1941, further escalating the tensions between the U.S. and Japan. During the war in Europe, and eventually Japan, Acheson remained as Assistant Secretary of State, until President Truman

¹⁹² Beisner, Robert L., *Dean Acheson: A Life in The Cold War*. 10.

¹⁹³ Beisner, Robert L., *Dean Acheson: A Life in The Cold War*. 11.

¹⁹⁴ Beisner, Robert L., *Dean Acheson: A Life in The Cold War*. 11.

¹⁹⁵ Beisner, Robert L., *Dean Acheson: A Life in The Cold War*. 12.

¹⁹⁶ Dean Acheson. *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department*. 1st ed. New York: Norton, 1969. 3.

¹⁹⁷ Acheson, Dean, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department*. 3.

selected him to serve as Undersecretary of the State Department in 1945. Acheson remained Undersecretary and worked closely with Secretaries Edward Stettinius, Jr., James F. Byrnes, and George Marshall, before ultimately becoming Secretary of State himself in 1949.

Some of Acheson's most noteworthy achievements in the Truman administration included drafting Truman's speech (Truman Doctrine) before a joint session in Congress on March 12, 1947—which of course stressed the dangers of totalitarian regimes, and that the United States would provide political, military and economic aid to any democratic nation that was threatened by authoritarian forces.¹⁹⁸ Furthermore, Acheson assisted in designing many features of the Marshall Plan. According to Acheson, the United States' "objective was not relief, but to revive agriculture, industry, and trade so that stricken countries [free areas of Europe] might be self-supporting."¹⁹⁹ Finally, Acheson was the key architect in the creation of NATO, and on April 4, 1949, it would be Acheson, not President Truman, who signed that accord. Actually Truman requested that Acheson sign the treaty as reward for his diligence and work in persuading the original members of NATO to agree to the terms and conditions of the alliance.²⁰⁰

In regards to Katyn, and what information or reports concerning the massacre was accessible to him, and most importantly, who he believed was responsible for the crime, neither the former nor the latter is mentioned in Acheson's memoirs. Furthermore, the issues in relation to Poland's postwar problems is briefly discussed by Acheson. The question then becomes why does Acheson refrain from discussing these events? Certainly Acheson's involvement and position in the State Department throughout WWII meant that the tensions between the Big Three and the Polish Government-in-exile afforded him with the knowledge of how and why those

¹⁹⁸ Acheson, Dean, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department*. 220-25.

¹⁹⁹ Acheson, Dean, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department*. 229.

²⁰⁰ Acheson, Dean, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department*. 284.

relationships deteriorated. And the Polish problem was by no means a trivial issue during or after the war. Silence on the issues about Katyn and the many problems facing Poland is in many ways Acheson's own omission that he didn't want to get into the controversial aspects of history. Actually, avoiding controversy in Acheson's personal writings is not the first time that has happened. According to Robert L. Beisner, Acheson, in his memoirs, *Morning and Noon*, (which details the significant aspects of his early life, from his birth to his swearing in as Assistant Secretary of State) omits entirely his years at Groton Boarding school. Beisner claims this was because Acheson's experience at Groton wasn't a pleasant one, and he was nearly expelled for his constant misbehavior, irresponsibility, and poor grades—a trait that carried with him in his college years.²⁰¹

There is one source that might explain why Acheson may have refrained from discussing Katyn. In a magazine article written in the *American Mercury* by Felix Wittmer in April 1952, titled, *Freedom's Case Against Dean Acheson*, Wittmer claims that after the “Soviet satellite government of Poland applied to the United States for a loan of \$90,000,000” in 1946, it was Acheson's law firm—Covington, Burling, Rublee, Acheson, and Shorb—that secured that loan.²⁰² Furthermore, Wittmer also asserts that Donald Hiss, the brother of the accused and eventual convicted Soviet spy Alger Hiss, was directly responsible for securing the loan.²⁰³ Wittmer goes on to state, that after “Acheson announced that the loan, to be made through the Export-Import Bank, had been approved” by the United States, Acheson's law firm received over \$50,000 in fees for procuring the loan.²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ Beisner, Robert L., *Dean Acheson: A Life in The Cold War*. 8.

²⁰² Felix Wittmer, *Freedom's Case Against Dean Acheson*. *American Mercury*, 1952. 7.

²⁰³ Wittmer, Felix, *Freedom's Case Against Dean Acheson*. 7.

²⁰⁴ Wittmer, Felix, *Freedom's Case Against Dean Acheson*. 7.

To corroborate Wittmer's claims, Arthur Bliss Lane—who was U.S. Ambassador to Poland between 1945 and 1949—writes in his memoirs that he warned U.S. officials to not go through with the loan. In 1946, Lane claims he informed Washington that the current Polish Government was controlled by Polish Communists, and he stressed that those funds will go directly into the pockets of Soviet authorities who were orchestrating the events behind the scenes prior to the upcoming election. Lane writes that he urged Acheson specifically to halt “all further financial assistance from the Polish Government” until the elections of 1947 in Poland were fully “fulfilled.”²⁰⁵ But Lane declares, that “Acheson's attitude” in regards to his request “was characteristically non-committal,” and that Acheson refused to have any further discussion about the matter.²⁰⁶ While this is a smoking gun against Acheson, it does substantiate Wittmer's accusations, and raises suspicious activities about Acheson's role in his firm's business dealings with the Soviet Union after WWII. Then again, in 1949, at Acheson's confirmation hearing for Secretary of State, he claims that he “severed his connection with the firm when he entered government in 1941.”²⁰⁷ Yet he also admits that he returned to his law firm after he briefly left the State Department in 1947.²⁰⁸ Wittmer however, counters this argument by claiming that what Acheson meant by “out,” was to be understood by those around him as “temporary.”²⁰⁹ And that's why, according to Wittmer, Acheson received “mail at both the law office and the State Department” while he was in government.²¹⁰ Again, this is hardly damning evidence against Acheson, especially as it relates to Katyn. But on the other hand, Wittmer points out other

²⁰⁵ Arthur Bliss Lane, *I saw Poland Betrayed: An American Ambassador Reports to the American People*. Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill Company, 1948. 271.

²⁰⁶ Lane, Arthur Bliss, *I saw Poland Betrayed*, 271.

²⁰⁷ “Acheson Confirmation.” In CQ Almanac. 5th ed. 1949. 05-390. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, 1950. accessed on January 13, 2017, <http://library.cqpress.com/cqalmanac/cqal49-1400168>.

²⁰⁸ “Acheson Confirmation.” In CQ Almanac. 5th ed. 1949. 05-390. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, 1950. accessed on January 13, 2017, <http://library.cqpress.com/cqalmanac/cqal49-1400168>.

²⁰⁹ Felix Wittmer, *Freedom's Case Against Dean Acheson*. American Mercury, 1952. 6.

²¹⁰ Felix Wittmer, *Freedom's Case Against Dean Acheson*. American Mercury, 1952. 6.

occurrences where Acheson and his firm had dealings with the Soviet Union before, during, and after the war as well. In short, Wittmer portrays Acheson as a communist sympathizer in his article. Consequently, further research into Wittmer's allegations and Acheson's connections with the Soviet Union should be investigated more thoroughly. Then perhaps a greater understanding of what role Acheson played in suppressing the Katyn massacre after the war, and what he knew, and who he believed was responsible, might become clearer.

Of all the sources discussed, if there was one individual who was not only in the position to know the facts and circumstances surrounding the Katyn controversy, and who, without question, had the power to release that information to the American people, that man would be none other than President Harry Truman. Harry Truman was born in Lamar, Missouri on May 8, 1884.²¹¹ After Truman's family moved to Independence, Missouri, Truman attended the Presbyterian Church Sunday School and excelled in his early studies. Truman respected his teachers and became an avid reader. He even claimed to have read the bible twice by the time he was twelve years of age.²¹² Encouraged by his mother, with whom he was very close, Truman developed a passion for music, the study of war, but most importantly, history. In addition, Truman was also one of the few boys in Independence to attend high school—in fact, his class consisted of thirty girls and just eleven boys. One year after graduating from high school in 1901, calamity struck the Truman family. Truman's father's "luck on wheat futures" left the family nearly bankrupt, and they were forced to move to Kansas City shortly thereafter. As a result of his father's financial troubles, and since West Point had turned him down on account of his poor eyesight, Truman was unable to attend college. To assist his family in their financial woes, Truman took several jobs, which included working in the mailroom at the Kansas City *Star*, timekeeper on

²¹¹ David G. McCullough, *Truman*. 1st ed. New York: Touchstone Book, 1993. 37.

²¹² McCullough, David G., *Truman*. 44.

the Santa Fe Railroad, clerk at the National Bank of Commerce in Kansas, and he even enlisted in the Missouri National Guard in 1905 and served until 1911.²¹³

As the United States was prepared to enter the First Great War in Europe in 1917, Truman was already thirty three years old at that time—“which was two years beyond the age limit set by the new Selective Service Act.”²¹⁴ Truman nonetheless was allowed to rejoin the Missouri National Guard, and helped recruit fellow Missourians in his old artillery unit. Eventually Truman and his unit were deployed to France in 1918, he was promoted to captain, and became commander of Battery D of the 2nd Battalion, 129th Field Artillery unit, also known as “Dizzy D.”²¹⁵ After numerous battles throughout the war, Truman’s unit lost not a single man under his command, but most importantly, his experiences in Europe and the leadership qualities he gained there prepared Truman for his postwar political career in Missouri.

When Kansas City political boss and chairman of the Jackson County Democratic Party Tom Pendergast, was looking for an “honest and honorable man” that could help his organization win the “country vote,” Pendergast turned to Truman.²¹⁶ Pendergast, who used a vast network of friends and family to get local politicians elected to public office by handing out government contracts and patronage jobs, approached Truman to see if he was interested in running for eastern judge of Jackson County—“a courthouse job in Independence, which under the Missouri system was not a judicial post but administrative,” similar to that of county commissioner.²¹⁷ Truman having accepted, had won the election in the fall of 1923. Three years later, Truman decided to run for the post of presiding judge in Jackson County, a position which not only paid more, but

²¹³ McCullough, David G., *Truman*. 37-73.

²¹⁴ McCullough, David G., *Truman*. 102.

²¹⁵ McCullough, David G., *Truman*. 116-17.

²¹⁶ McCullough, David G., *Truman*. 153-59.

²¹⁷ McCullough, David G., *Truman*. 159.

also came with greater authority and responsibility. With the aid and support of the Pendergast political machine, Truman was once again easily elected, and ended up serving consecutive terms from January 1927 to January 1935.²¹⁸ Throughout his time as presiding judge in Jackson County, Truman was respected and well-liked among his fellow Missourians, but with the Great Depression still gripping the nation, and since Truman declared “his all-out faith in the New Deal,” and was involved in implementing federal reforms in Jackson County, Truman decided he could make a greater contribution to that effort by running for the U.S. Senate in 1934.²¹⁹

In time, Truman was elected and reelected in the 1934 and 1940 senatorial campaigns, and achieved some notoriety while in public office. But when President Roosevelt’s health started to deteriorate by 1944, and since many in the Democratic party had strongly opposed then Vice-President Henry Wallace, those closest to the President wanted a vice-president who would not only be competent enough to become commander-in-chief of the United States in the likely event Roosevelt died while in office, but they also needed someone “who would do the ticket the least harm” in the 1944 presidential election.²²⁰ Much debate transpired throughout this time on who that man should be, and while Truman was considered throughout, Truman won the nomination, and he considered others within the party were more qualified than he to assume those responsibilities. Additionally, Roosevelt hardly knew the Senator from Missouri, and Truman by no means was his first choice. Political infighting among Democrats plagued the Democratic National Convention of 1943 over the issue of the vice-presidency, but Truman ultimately emerged as the top choice among the delegates, securing 1,031 votes in the process to join the Roosevelt ticket in the 1944 election.²²¹ When Roosevelt died while in office in early April 1945, Truman,

²¹⁸ McCullough, David G., *Truman*. 172-3.

²¹⁹ McCullough, David G., *Truman*. 174-211.

²²⁰ McCullough, David G., *Truman*. 297.

²²¹ McCullough, David G., *Truman*. 295-319.

who initially didn't want to become Roosevelt's vice-president, became the thirty-third President of the United States.²²²

In regards to Katyn, it is difficult to ascertain what Truman knew about the affair, who he believed was responsible, and what role he played in concealing the circumstances of the crime from the American people. The reason for this is because Katyn is not mentioned in either volumes of Truman's memoirs—*Year of Decisions* or *Years of Trials and Hope*. This is astonishing considering that Truman devotes a significant portion in both volumes to the Polish question. Indeed, according to Truman, and after he just assumed office, "it had become apparent [to him]...that what we actually faced in Poland was not merely a political situation but one that threatened civil war."²²³ Truman goes on to state that the reports presented to him by the State Department, and after reading "secret messages and cables" between the Big Three regarding the Polish question, he concluded "that the Russians had no intentions...of seeing a new provisional government of national unity organized on the lines to which they had agreed at Yalta."²²⁴ It is clear that the issue of Poland dominated Truman's early thoughts, and he rightfully understood that Stalin wasn't going to live up to the Yalta accords. But in 1945 with the United Nations Conference in San Francisco about to begin, and since the Soviet Union was a major power during those negotiations, this meant Truman had to tread lightly on certain matters, but stand firm on other issues where he could.

Nonetheless, what facts did Truman have at his disposal concerning the Katyn massacre? That answer too remains unclear in Truman's memoirs. However, Truman does mention that the situation in Poland arose as a result of the "cooled" relationship between the British and the Polish

²²² McCullough, David G., *Truman*. 292-324.

²²³ Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs: Year of Decisions*. Vol 1. Doubleday, Incorporated 1955. 36.

²²⁴ Truman, Harry S., *Memoirs: Year of Decisions*. 37-38.

Government-in-exile.²²⁵ Certainly then, Truman was well aware that that “cooling” was the product of the Katyn controversy. And he must have also comprehended that the Polish Government-in-exile’s persistent accusations against the Soviets for the crime is what led to breakdown of the relations between the two. Furthermore, Truman proclaims that he has a “retentive” memory, and “on that first full day as President I did more reading than I ever thought I could.”²²⁶ One can only surmise that the top secret documents, memos, and reports concerning the war effort being fought on both fronts during the Roosevelt years occupied his studies. Therefore, is it possible Truman came across George Howard Earle III’s report which highlighted Soviet culpability concerning the Katyn massacre? This report will be explained in more detail in the subsequent section, but if he had, then Truman may very well have known about the killings shortly after taking office.

There is perhaps one slight bit of evidence on the other hand that proves Truman was well aware of the details about Katyn and the Soviets guilt of the affair after he took office. According to the author and historian Robert J. Donovan in his 1977 book, *Conflict of Crisis. The Presidency of Harry S. Truman, 1945-1948*, cites an interview he conducted with John Snyder (United States Secretary of Treasury from 1946-1953, and close and personal friend of Truman’s) in 1974, where Truman apparently made an off the cuff remark to Stalin about the Katyn massacre at the Potsdam Conference in 1945. According to Snyder, Truman, on his return home from Potsdam, confided to Snyder that in “one of his casual chats with Stalin and he” Truman asked Stalin bluntly what happened to the Polish officers at Katyn, to which Stalin “coldly” replied, “They went away.”²²⁷

²²⁵ Truman, Harry S., *Memoirs: Year of Decisions*. 36.

²²⁶ Truman, Harry S., *Memoirs: Year of Decisions*. 39.

²²⁷ Interview with John W. Snyder, December 17, 1974. Quoted in Robert J. Donovan, *Conflict and Crisis: The Presidency of Harry S. Truman, 1945-1948*. 1st ed. New York: Norton. 1977. 75-76.

Snyder claims in his interview with Donovan that Truman was “appalled” by Stalin’s answer.²²⁸ While Truman discusses extensively in his memoirs his time and dealings with Stalin at the Potsdam Conference, this reference to the Katyn massacre that Donovan quotes unfortunately is not mentioned by Truman. Yet if true, it would indicate that Truman, more so than Roosevelt and others, suspected the Soviets were responsible, and that there was evidence as early as 1945 which pointed in that direction. Furthermore, Truman’s omission of this rather unsettling first conversation he had with Stalin doesn’t mean it didn’t take place. It could very well be that Truman wanted to neglect mentioning it for other reasons—whether he simply regretted it, or felt it was simply un-statesman like for him to act in such a way to another head of state.

However, the final question, did Truman purposely suppress the Katyn massacre from the American people? No definitive answer can be derived from his memoirs either. And since the sheer scope of what Truman had to deal with after he became president was enormous, it is therefore more likely to say that he was far too disposed and engaged with other circumstances to actively take part in the cover-up the Katyn massacre, at least, not to the extent in which Roosevelt did. Actually, Truman’s memoirs provides one with just a glimpse of the troubles that confronted him, especially considering he was thrust into the presidency not knowing the exact details of the military, diplomatic, and economic conditions of the war effort. “[I]n my first five days as President...I was beginning to realize how little the Founding Fathers had been able to anticipate the preparations necessary for a man to become President so suddenly,” Truman states.²²⁹ He goes on to say, that “[n]o Vice-President is ever properly prepared to take over the presidency...The President is the man who decides every major domestic and...foreign policy and

²²⁸ Donovan, Robert, *Conflict and Crisis*, 76.

²²⁹ Truman, Harry S., *Memoirs: Year of Decisions*. 67.

negotiates treaties.”²³⁰ What Truman is arguing is that the two offices are often separated from one another, for either political reasons, where fear over intentional or unintentional release of certain information can damage the sitting president, or because policy disagreements can undermine the executive’s authority. In short, a vice-president is usually left in the dark concerning most matters, and is rarely consulted about specifics about policy. This is no more so true when Truman became the Chief Executive. He was completely unaware of the Manhattan Project and the atomic bomb; the agreements made by his predecessor at the Casablanca, Tehran, and the Yalta Conferences; current war projections; which nations were facing dire food shortages; the personalities and leadership qualities of both Churchill and Stalin, and much, much, more. Truman had to adapt quickly and decisively when he took office, and one can only imagine the amount of stress that was placed upon him after becoming President in the wake of a man who held the presidency for over a decade.

On a final note about Truman, perhaps the following passage from his memoirs illustrates how American perceptions regarding Russia fundamentally changed after the Germans invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, and how that new outlook, meant that too many good and decent people were blinded by Soviet true ambitions and nature:

The American people now looked at Russia more sympathetically as the menace of Hitler became more frightening. It was during this period of America’s growing sympathy for Russia that many extremists and pro-Russian supporters began to agitate for all-out support for the Soviet Union. With this surge of sentiment for Russia, it had become the duty of those responsible for our security to take additional precautions to protect the vital interests of this government and nation. [But the] Russians exploited this sympathy with typical Communist duplicity by subverting sympathizers in many walks of life and duping scores of others. Some of the most patriotic citizens, including top military and political figures, believed then that Russia could be trusted to help establish a durable peace in the world.²³¹

²³⁰ Truman, Harry S., *Memoirs: Year of Decisions*. 67.

²³¹ Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs: Volume 2: Years of Trial and Hope, 1946-1952*. Doubleday, 1956. 276.

This statement possibly sums up the Katyn debate in the U.S. That is, many, not just in government, but elsewhere around the country as well, fell prey to their idealistic perceptions of the Soviet Union. They thought that a government, led by a dictator, and regardless of its political ideology, could be bargained with and common ground could be sought. Of course, what these very same individuals knew about Soviet atrocities during the height of Stalin's purges in the 1930s, raises other questions entirely.

The 1951-1952 Congressional Hearings and the Declassified Documents

In 1951, the House of Representatives decided to conduct a massive investigation on the killings at Katyn. The enormity of facts, details, first-hand accounts, and intelligence reports from various governments involved in the affair, that were gathered and presented to the Congressional Hearings, provides overwhelming evidence against the Soviet Union for the massacre. But it also draws attention to America's role in whitewashing the event. One piece of evidence in particular the members of the Congressional Committee draw attention to, is a report that was pieced together by George Earle III in 1944. According to the Congressional documents, Earle's report not only contained specifics about the massacre which implicated the Soviets, but that report was also given to Roosevelt in May that same year. Before WWII, George Earle III was the former ambassador to both Bulgaria and Austria. He later served as Roosevelt's Special Emissary in Turkey for Balkan Affairs between 1944 and 1945. When Earle testified before the Committee, he stated that his "agents," a White Russian and three Red Cross contacts (two from Bulgaria and the other from Rumania) were at Katyn in 1944 when the Soviets began conducting their examinations of the grave sites (actually, this occurred the same time Harriman's daughter was there in January).²³²

²³² U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre*. 2203-4.

Earle claimed that his contacts managed to smuggle out pictures and other evidence from the scene of the crime, which were given to him sometime thereafter.²³³ So damning was their findings, that Earle decided to consult with the President directly. He thought it was best to present that evidence in person rather than relay this information over official channels. Coincidentally, Earle was recalled for consultation by Roosevelt in May of 1944, and upon his return to Washington, Earle showed Roosevelt the documents and pictures that his contacts had smuggled out of Katyn. But upon reviewing Earle's report, Roosevelt sternly replied, "George, this is entirely German propaganda and a German plot. I am absolutely convinced the Russians did not do this."²³⁴ Earle later testified that he left the report with the President, and asked Roosevelt too "please look those over again" because the weight of evidence against the Soviets was quite convincing.²³⁵ In addition, Earle told the Committee that he solicited the President's permission to release his findings to the press, but Earle said he would only do so with Roosevelt's approval. According to Earle however, Roosevelt prohibited him from doing this, and nothing more was said about the matter.²³⁶ Did Truman, while pouring through the hundreds of classified reports after taking office come across the Earle report? Again, one can only speculate. It's just as likely to assume that Roosevelt disposed of the report Truman simply did not see it. Or it may have never existed at all because Earle didn't produce a copy of his report to the Committee. But it might explain why Truman confronted Stalin at Potsdam about the deaths of Polish officers, as told by Snyder to Donovan. Moreover, it may be the one source of information that led Truman to that conclusion after taking office.

²³³ U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre*. 2203.

²³⁴ U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre*. 2204.

²³⁵ U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre*. 2204.

²³⁶ U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre*. 220-4.

The most relevant, if not conclusive evidence, that the Committee produces which illustrates America's role in the plot to cover-up the crime, came from the testimonials of Colonel John Van Vliet and Colonel Donald Stewart. Both of these American infantry officers were captured by the Germans during the North African campaign on February 1943, and were later sent to a POW camp (Oflag, IX A/Z) in Germany. When the Germans discovered the bodies at Katyn, Nazi officials wanted the two U.S. Army officers (along with two other British officers) to go to the mass graves to inspect the sight for themselves. But Van Vliet and Stewart testified that each vehemently protested against "this propaganda effort [by] the German[s]."²³⁷ While the Germans supplied the two Americans with written orders which forced them to go anyway, they were able to keep those orders with them throughout the remainder of the war. Both also stated that although they were searched several times thereafter by other German guards, no German soldier removed those orders from their possession. And they presented those German orders to the Committee to verify their claims. Though the extent of their testimonials is far too detailed to explain fully here, it is suffice to say that neither Van Vliet nor Stewart held the Germans in high regard, and they were constantly suspicious of the Nazis' motives while they were at Katyn. In fact, both testified (separately that is) that the Soviets were their allies, and they were more inclined to prove that the Germans were attempting to deceive the Americans into thinking the Russians were responsible. However, after inspecting the sight, and reviewing the evidence put forth by the Germans, and since it appeared to both Van Vliet and Stewart that the evidence "could not have been falsified and planted" by the Germans, both came away with the opinion that the "Russians had executed those men."²³⁸

²³⁷ U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre*. 3.

²³⁸ U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre*. 22. For their full testimonies see above report 2-77.

Van Vliet and Stewart later testified to the Committee that in May of 1945—after the two were liberated from the German POW camp by American forces and returned to Washington that same month—it was decided that Van Vliet would report what they witnessed at Katyn to Army intelligence. Van Vliet reported his observations to a Major General Clayton Bissell, who was Army Assistant Chief of Staff in charge of Army Intelligence (G-2). On orders of General Bissell, Van Vliet dictated his conclusions and remarks on what he observed at Katyn, which again, unequivocally stated that the Polish officers were murdered by the Soviets. General Bissell then labeled the Van Vliet report “Top Secret,” and ordered Van Vliet “to maintain absolute secrecy concerning his report.”²³⁹ During General Bissell’s testimony before the Congressional Hearings, he claims that he forwarded that report directly to the State Department.

However, State Department officials later gave statements to the Committee that had they received the report from Bissell, they would have most certainly remembered it because of the “political significance” the report represented.²⁴⁰ In addition, State Department regulations, as well as Army regulations, require a receipt of transfer for any top secret or classified document that is passed from one federal agency to another, which neither Bissell nor the State Department had in their possession. The most troubling aspect in regards to his handling of the report, General Bissell “admitted to the committee that had the Van Vliet report been publicized in 1945, when the agreements for creating a United Nations organization reached at Yalta were being carried out in San Francisco, Soviet Russia might never have taken a seat in this international organization.”²⁴¹

²³⁹ U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre. Final Report of the Select Committee an Investigation and Study of the Facts, Evidence, and Circumstances of the Katyn Forest Massacre* 82nd Congress, 2nd Session, 1952 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1952). 7.

²⁴⁰ U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre. Final Report*. 7.

²⁴¹ U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre. Final Report*. 7-8.

Therefore, Bissell labeled the report top secret because he “saw in it great possibilities of embarrassment” to the American government.²⁴² Clearly then there was a concerted effort by General Bissell to suppress this information for political purposes. In the Committee’s Final Report—which was declassified in 2012—regarding Bissell’s handling of the Van Vliet report, they concluded the following:

Our committee is sending a copy of this report, and volume 7 of the published hearings, to the Department of Defense for such action as may be proper with regard to General Bissell. We do so because of the fact that this committee believes that had the Van Vliet report been made immediately available to the Department of State and to the American public, the course of our government policy toward Soviet Russia might have been more realistic with more fortunate postwar results.²⁴³

Is it probable that the Van Vliet report and the Earle report would have furnished Truman and others with important information on the crime at Katyn? One can only speculate, and “what-ifs” are never a good tool to measure when investigating historical events. But further declassified documents show that in April of 1953, one year after the Committee released its initial findings to the American public, General Bissell—who at the time was retired from active service—did receive an administrative reprimand for his “dereliction” in not “properly safeguarding” the Van Vliet report.²⁴⁴ But as to the exact extent of Bissell’s reprimand, that unfortunately is not stated in the documents. Yet another mystery arises from the Congressional Hearings. Why was the

²⁴² U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre. Final Report*. 8.

²⁴³ U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre. Final Report*. 11.

²⁴⁴ U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre. Final Report*. See documents 41-44 which pertain to Bissell’s reprimand.

information about Bissell's reprimand, and the Committee's declaration to have the Defense Department take action against the General, classified for nearly sixty years? What was the purpose for concealing this information for so long? Since the Committee's underling argument was to expose pro-Communist agents within the U.S. government, why classify this small piece of evidence?

Other portions of the declassified files also raises accusations against the State Department, Army Intelligence, and other governmental agencies of the United States and their involvement in the cover-up of the Katyn massacre. The following events however, took place during the war, not after. But they are worth mentioning. According to the Committee's "Final Report," three high-ranking American Army officers had testified that when General Bissell was in command of the agency, there was a pool of "pro-Soviet civilian employees and some military in Army Intelligence...who found explanations for almost everything that the Soviet Union did."²⁴⁵ If this is true, who were these individuals? How deep did the pro-Communist fervor in Army Intelligence stretch? Of course, neither the Committee nor the Army officers who made this accusations specifically identified who these individuals are or were. The Final Report also declares that news commentator, and head of the Office of War Information (OWI)—Elmer Davis—was the person responsible for broadcasting a May 3, 1943 address to the nation where "he accused the Nazis of using the Katyn massacre [for] propaganda" purposes.²⁴⁶ Davis' acknowledged to the Committee that he reported directly to President Roosevelt while serving at the OWI, but he maintains that in this instance he was acting under his own initiative. Yet one has to wonder, was Davis truly acting under his own initiative?

²⁴⁵ U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre. Final Report*. 8.

²⁴⁶ U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre. Final Report*. 9.

Indeed, the Final Report goes on to state that staff members at the OWI and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), “engaged in activities beyond the scope of their responsibilities” during the war.²⁴⁷ For instance, in early May of 1943, both agencies silenced radio commentators in Detroit and Buffalo, shortly after they began “broadcasting in foreign languages” that the Soviets “might be guilty of the Katyn massacre.”²⁴⁸ These radio pundits, who also happened to be Polish, became targets of the OWI and the FCC when they started discussing the facts of the crime on the open airwaves. As a result, officials in the FCC and the OWI intimidated the owners of these radio stations, and informed them that unless their commentators refrain from discussing Katyn, then their broadcasting licenses’ might not be renewed.²⁴⁹ In response to those pressures, the owners ultimately acquiesced, and the Polish broadcasters from that point on only reported on “straight news items, and only those [put forth] by the standard wire services.”²⁵⁰

Insofar as the State Department, on April 22, 1943, the Final Report produces a memo which states: “on the basis of the various conflicting contentions (concerning Katyn) of all parties concerned, it would appear to be advisable to refrain from taking a definite stand in regard to this question.”²⁵¹ Does this memo illustrate what George Kennan meant when he said that he fell into the “tacit rule of silence which was being applied at that time to the unpleasant subject in question?”²⁵² Clearly the State Department, Army Intelligence, the OWI, and the FCC, are

²⁴⁷ U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre. Final Report.* 9.

²⁴⁸ U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre. Final Report.* 9.

²⁴⁹ U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre. Final Report.* 9.

²⁵⁰ U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre. Final Report.* 9.

²⁵¹ U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre. Final Report.* 9.

²⁵² Kennan, George F., *Memoirs*, 208.

responsible for the suppression of information about Katyn during the war. But what about after the war? According to the Final Report, the Committee members concluded that there “was no excuse for not using [Katyn for America’s] propaganda war truths” towards the Soviet Union after the war.²⁵³ The Committee then highlights an account by a witness for the State Department who testified that the Voice of America (which was controlled by the State Department) “did not broadcast the fact of Katyn behind the iron curtain...because they did not have sufficient facts on it.”²⁵⁴ Yet the Committee concludes in their Final Report, that answer was unconvincing because “the preponderance of evidence presented...about the cover-up came from the files of the State Department.”²⁵⁵ Thus, the Voice of America (VOA), according to the Committee, “in its limited broadcast” about Katyn during and after the war, followed a “wishy-washy, spineless policy.”²⁵⁶

While this statement by the Committee against the VOA is a rather crude assessment, it does nonetheless demonstrate that there was a concerted effort by government officials to conceal the facts about Katyn from the American people. In regards to the overall cover-up by the U.S. Government during and after WWII, the Committee claims, that they had “only scratched the surface” of the role in which the OWI, the FCC, and the VOA played in the suppression of information about the massacre.²⁵⁷ They further express, that Congress should conduct an independent investigation into these agencies to uncover how deep this conspiracy went. But no such investigation has ever taken place. Therefore, further research regarding the role of these

²⁵³ U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre. Final Report.* 14.

²⁵⁴ U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre. Final Report.* 14.

²⁵⁵ U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre. Final Report.* 14.

²⁵⁶ U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre. Final Report.* 14.

²⁵⁷ U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre. Final Report.* 14.

agencies should be investigated more thoroughly, then perhaps, the actors behind the whitewash of Katyn could be revealed.²⁵⁸

Conclusion

In the end, it is not all that unreasonable to assume that politics, and protecting the United States' standing in the world, outweighed the decision to inform the American people by those in the U.S. government who had knowledge of the Katyn atrocity. As for those individuals mentioned in this study, a common theme develops among them. Each, to some degree, refrained from discussing the Katyn massacre and the United States' response to the crime for a particular reason. George Kennan perhaps emerges as the least controversial figure, given his relatively open discussion on the matter, and the fact that he was a mid level Foreign Officer in the State Department. And since many of the details and circumstances of the crime were being censored by the Roosevelt administration and the top echelons of the State Department and other federal agencies, it appears that his involvement in the whitewash of Katyn was nonexistent. As for Averell Harriman, he may have been motivated by personal desires to remain silent on the issue. His devotion for Roosevelt was well-known, and Harriman thoroughly discusses his unyielding admiration and respect for Roosevelt throughout his memoirs. Not to mention, beating the drum over Katyn most certainly would have tarnished his diplomatic relationship with the Soviet Union. And Harriman most certainly valued the opinion of his daughter Kathleen, (who he also praises and holds in high regards in his memoirs). Thus, for Harriman, Kathleen's judgements concerning Katyn may have settled the issue. Dean Acheson on the other hand, possibly surfaces as the most controversial figure. His exclusion in his memoirs of the crime at Katyn, and his lack of significant

²⁵⁸ U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre. Final Report.* 14-15.

discussion on the Polish question in general, leaves one wondering what he was hiding. Moreover, if the allegations are true that his law firm benefited financially from the Polish puppet regime of the Soviet Union, and since he was a prominent figure in the State Department when the lost Van Vliet report was either disposed of by State Department officials or Army intelligence, then if anyone in the above analysis is culpable for suppressing the massacre for either personal or political purposes, then it just may very well be him. Truman on the other hand is another individual who refrained from discussing the Katyn controversy in his memoirs as well. And since he often stated that the “buck” stops at the White House, then he, whether rightfully or wrongfully so, he must accept the ultimate blame for continued repression of this crime from the American people.

But beyond the cover-up of the Katyn massacre, there are other reasons why studying this historical event is important for interpreting the political elements that eventually shaped Cold War policies. Katyn demonstrates the role in which power politics play as sovereign states engage other nations in international relations when an affair such as Katyn arises and drastically alters the dynamics of those relationships. Indeed, Churchill and Roosevelt decided to ignore this atrocity because the alliance with the Soviet Union was too important in defeating Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan. The Polish Government-in-exile however, needed to establish which nation was responsible for the execution of the Polish officers, because they were an essential asset in rebuilding war-torn Poland after WWII. Furthermore, the London Poles required American and British economic and political support in that endeavor. Consequently, if the evidence from Katyn implicated the Soviets, then ensuring that a Communist subversion of Poland orchestrated by Stalin did not come to fruition, was also going to need British and American assistance. As for the Stalin, he ordered the execution of Polish officers because they represented a class, one that

had the potential of undermining Soviet attempts to spread communist ideals over the less-educated elements of Polish society in eastern Poland. Eastern Poland was also important to Stalin because he wanted to regain Russian lands that were lost after WWI, and likewise desired to create a buffer zone between the Soviet Union and Hitler's Germany. Moreover, some claim that Stalin used Katyn to his advantage. His accusations that the Polish Government-in-exile was colluding with the Germans after the London Poles called for the International Red Cross to investigate Katyn, freed Stalin's hands to delegitimize the Polish Government-in-exile, thereby forcing the other Allied powers to choose between either the greater (the Soviet Union) or lesser (Poland) contributors to the war effort. And since Stalin knew the British and the U.S. would obviously choose the former, this allowed Stalin to establish a communist regime in Poland in the process.

As for Truman, his hands were essentially tied when it came to the issue of Poland after he assumed office. The Red Army was firmly embedded on Polish soil by 1945, and the breakdown of relations between the Soviet Union and the Polish Government-in-exile was completely irreconcilable. In addition, perhaps Truman, and others, simply decided that retaliating against Stalin and the Soviets over the atrocious acts at Katyn was simply not worth the battle. That is, did policy makers, at some level, believe that the United States was just as culpable in committing questionable acts during the war? One could argue that the fire bombings of Dresden and Tokyo and the use of atomic weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki by American forces could be perceived as highly questionable acts. Still, others could claim that those actions were necessary evils to achieve a quicker end to Nazism and Fascism. In the end, Truman too used the Katyn massacre for political capital. The Congressional Hearings was chaired by Ray J. Madden, a Democrat from Indiana, and three out of the six members of the Committee were also Democrats. In the Committee's opening statement, Madden, along with the other Committee members, thanked

President Truman for whole “heartily” endorsing the hearings, and for instructing “all departments of the Government to cooperate 100 percent in presenting evidence and files to this committee.”²⁵⁹

One has to remember, that the Korean War had been going on for nearly a year by the time the Committee started its investigation. Thus, as Robert Szymczak reasons, Truman sanctioned Congress’ enquiry (even though Congress constitutionally needed no such approval) and instructed all Federal agencies to comply with the Committee’s request because highlighting past Soviet atrocities that took place during WWII, could then be juxtaposed to the events taking place on the Korean peninsula, which would bolster American support for the war effort there.

On a much broader scale, the Katyn controversy raises other questions as well—beyond that of which nation was responsible and why the information and knowledge of the crime was concealed. For instance, what did American leaders or military officials know about the Nazi concentration camps? When did they learn of these events? What was their response when they learned what the Nazis were doing to those they deemed as subhuman and undesirable? Furthermore, why did Congress not conduct a similar investigation like the Katyn inquiry for the thousands of American POW’s that were captured, tortured, and died at the hands of their Japanese captors during the war in the Pacific? This is especially relevant considering many Japanese who engaged in such acts of brutality against American POW’s went relatively unpunished for their crimes. Finally, there are aspects of the Katyn massacre that is still shrouded in mystery to this day. Indeed, while approximately 15,000 bodies were discovered at Katyn, Anna Cienciala and her co-authors in *Katyn: A Crime Without Punishment*, discovered Soviet documents that illustrates that nearly 22,000 Polish officers were actually executed by the NKVD in 1940.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁹ U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on the Katyn Forest Massacre, *The Katyn Forest Massacre*. 32.

²⁶⁰ Cienciala, Anna M., Lebedeva, and Materski. *Katyn: A Crime Without Punishment*. See *Part II. Extermination, March-June 1940* of their book.

These Poles however were not killed at Katyn. They were removed from their Soviet POW camps and executed at other sites in Russia. But as to where those locations are, that information unfortunately cannot be determined. According to Cienciala, the Soviet documents don't disclose their whereabouts, they only highlight that they were killed. Thus, thousands of Poles to this day lay buried in undisclosed locations. Katyn then has come to represent not just those who were killed in the forest during those days in the spring of 1940, but most importantly, for the thousands of Poles who were either slain by their Soviet captors, or died while being transported to prison camps during the Nonaggression period. Finally, to this day, there still remains classified documents from the original 1951-1952 Congressional Hearings on Katyn. We know in 1991 Russia has taken responsibility for the crime, therefore, what possible information about Katyn is the U.S. government still keeping secret, and what is the possible reason(s) for this?

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