

Polish Americans protest Sen. Menendez's version of the Katyn Resolution

May 8, 2020

The American Polonia protests against inappropriate wording in S. Res. 566 commemorating the 80th Anniversary of the Katyn Massacre, as introduced to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee by Sen. MENENDEZ on 5/7/2020. While we support the idea of a resolution commemorating the victims of the Katyn massacre, we condemn the attempt to minimize the gravity and change the character of the Katyn crime through deceptive and inappropriate generalizations. In particular, we strongly object to the following blatantly false and deeply offensive statement:

"Whereas the Katyn Massacre fits into a larger pattern of Communist governments around the world persecuting their citizens and denying their people freedom, which has resulted in the deaths of up to 100,000,000 people since the Russian Revolution of 1917." See: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-resolution/566/text> The Polish officers held as prisoners-of-war by the Soviet Union were NOT murdered because "the Communist governments [...] persecuted their citizens." This statement is historically false and morally repulsive. The Katyn victims were brutally murdered because they valiantly defended their homeland against the Soviet aggression of September 17, 1939. The Katyn victims were NOT Soviet citizens at the time of their murder, and the Soviet Union was NOT their government! To the contrary, they were Polish Prisoners-of-War, soldiers of the Polish Armed Forces that constituted a part of the Allied Coalition during WWII. They were murdered because they defended their homeland against the Soviet aggression, and remained loyal to their country to the end. Accordingly, the Katyn victims do not fit "a larger pattern of Communist government persecuting their citizens and denying their people freedom." To the contrary, they fit a larger pattern of similar conduct by Stalinist Russia aimed at destroying the Polish people because of their nationality. This is evidenced by the Polish Operation of 1937, Katyn Operation of 1940, and persecution of the Polish patriots after 1945. All those operations aimed at annihilating the Polish national group, as such. The Katyn victims were murdered not because they wanted to overthrow the Soviet government or demanded more freedoms in the Soviet Union but because they belonged to the Polish national group that the Soviet Union intended to annihilate.

The incorrect wording that Katyn "fits a pattern of Communist governments persecuting their citizens" implies that the Katyn atrocity was committed for political reasons, hence does not meet the standard of genocide because it was not aimed at any protected group such as national, ethnic, racial or religious group. Such contrary to facts policy is called anti-Katyn. The execution order of March 5, 1940 of the Soviet Politburo, ("Katyn Execution Order") states that there were 14,735 Polish officers held in various prisoner-of-war camps who were **"more than 97% Polish by nationality."** Accordingly, the Katyn Execution Order itself reveals that it is aimed at the Polish national group, as such. According to the UN Genocide Convention, even if the motive for the atrocity is mixed, i.e. political and national, the coexistence of the other motives is no defense if the genocidal motive is present. Therefore, we urge the US Senators to delete the offensive and factually incorrect statement that dilutes and diminishes the significance of the Katyn Genocide. Please replace it with the following statement made by Hon. Dennis Kucinich in 2011 and declare the Katyn atrocity as the crime of genocide. ***Whereas, Katyn was aimed at eliminating the very idea of Poland ... to exterminate the people and the memory of the people... Katyn presents a moral crisis to this day because the moral calculus with respect to Katyn has not been worked out. We look back at Katyn as a marker in human history that has not yet been fully inscribed;***

Therefore, we recognize that the systematic mass murders of the Polish people, conducted pursuant to the order of March 5, 1940 issued by the Soviet Politburo, raises to the level of the crime of genocide.

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