



THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND
Commissioner for Civil Rights Protection

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Warsaw,

09/04/2010

Dr Vladimir P. Lukin

**Commissioner for Human Rights in the
Russian Federation**

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RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Dear Commissioner,

The ceremony marking the 70th anniversary of the Katyń Crime will be held tomorrow. This was the event which for decades has exerted a great influence on the relations between our nations. The memory of those 15 thousand Polish officers and 7 thousand civilian prisoners of war murdered on Stalin's orders as well as the incessant problems connected with an explanation of all the circumstances of this crime are a significant obstacle in the establishment of good neighbourly relations. I think that the time has come to look at this matter from a different perspective — closer to the truth and giving the opportunity for a better common future.

As Ombudsmen, we know that crimes and violations of elementary human rights are not committed by nations. They are committed by concrete institutions and by people possessed by insane ideologies; by criminal political systems depriving ordinary citizens of their subjectivity. The nation in fact becomes the enemy of these ruthless leaders and totalitarian ruling parties. From this point of view, it is worth noting that the first and most numerous

victims of Stalin's Communism were Russians and other nations of the former Soviet Union and that it is not only Poles who are buried at Katyń. The aspirations to rule of the Communists at that time had a supra-national nature and aimed at shaping the semi-enslaved human masses in accordance with defined parameters.

I am, therefore, turning to you with an appeal: that we should both recognise Katyń as a symbolic place of reconciliation between Poles and Russians. This would be a bringing together of nations damaged for decades by Communism but which have still retained their identity and fundamental values and today have the free will to cooperate and to be good neighbours. Let us pay homage to the victims, let us work together on uncovering the whole historical truth, let us hunt down the perpetrators. Let us call evil evil and genocide genocide. But let us also draw conclusions from history and give the future a chance. Let us make Katyń a place of meetings, particularly between young people. Let us teach the new generations wise patriotism which, in the closeness of nations, allows us to see more opportunities than threats. And which links love for one's own country with respect for the liberty of individuals and human rights.

Participation in the ceremony commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Katyń Crime has been declared by representatives of the highest authorities in Poland and the Russian Federation. I think that this event should not take place without the voices of Ombudsmen, who hold the good of citizens so close to their hearts. Wise Poles and Russians have a great deal to offer to each other in a uniting Europe.

*Yours sincerely,
Jan Kobanow*