

## Lost photographs 'prove' Russians executed Poles at Katyn

By Andrew McEwen

Photographs which are claimed to prove the truth of the German version of the Katyn massacre, and to show a deliberate cover-up by the Russians, have come to light after languishing in a cardboard box in the United States for 44 years.

Mr Louis FitzGibbon, a historian of the massacre, said yesterday that he was satisfied that the photographs were genuine and that they showed that the Soviet authorities had been lying since 1943.

The pictures were traced by Mr Zdzislaw Rurarz, a former Polish Ambassador to Japan who defected to the United States. Mr Fitz-

Gibbon said Mr Rurarz found them in the US National Archives in Alexandria, Virginia.

They had been captured together with huge amounts of other material at the end of the war. But their significance was not spotted at the time, even though one of the photographs was marked "Katyn".

Mr FitzGibbon said they were kept in a cardboard box in the Architectural and Cartographic Branch.

The photographs are date-marked and show changes at the site at different stages. Mr FitzGibbon, who has written a series of books on the massacre, says they prove that the Russians tried to prevent their version of the

massacre being disproved by digging up the graves and destroying them. "It is absolutely conclusive that they destroyed everything", he said.

"The Germans have been falsely accused since 1943. They deserve some justice".

Since the middle of the Second World War, Germany and the Soviet Union have blamed each other for the murder of 4,000 Polish officers at Katyn.

They had been taken prisoner by the Soviet Army in 1939 and were killed in an area which repeatedly changed hands.

Until now the dispute over which side killed them turned on conflicting forensic evidence. The

Germans, who discovered the graves in 1943, established that they had been killed in March or April 1940, more than a year before they invaded. The Germans published their claims in 1943, with great propaganda effect.

But Soviet troops retook the area soon afterwards and conducted their own "investigation". Mr FitzGibbon said the Russians put forward a number of prominent people who were unqualified to give an opinion on forensic matters. They said the officers were killed between August and October, 1941, during the German occupation.

This failed to convince most Polish people, but the Russians

stuck to their story. In the past year historical inconsistencies came to light, but official Soviet news reports reiterated the claims that the Germans were responsible.

—The first sign that *glasnost* might permit an admission of the truth

emerged in February, when a Soviet radio report raised the possibility that the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, (NKVD) the predecessor of the KGB, could have been "the perpetrator of the action".

Mr FitzGibbon said the photographs were easily identifiable to anyone familiar with the area. They showed a distinctive bend in the River Dnepr with the Katyn site nearby. In one of the pictures,

taken in 1943, four large communal graves were visible and a German officer had written "Katyn" next to them with an arrow pointing to the site. But in subsequent pictures the graves had disappeared.

He said the men were taken by rail from Kozielsk camp to a station called Gniezdovo, then by road to the killing site just off a main road leading to Minsk.

More than 6,000 other Polish officers were murdered at Bologoye, and 3,681 at Dergachi, he said.

The Foreign Office said in June that it had urged the Soviet authorities to end speculation and solve the case.