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**Saturday, 9 April 2011, 12:00 pm**  
**Public rally in Ottawa to commemorate the Smolensk**  
**Polish Air Crash Tragedy of April 10<sup>th</sup> 2010**

**12:00 pm – Polish Embassy, 443 Daly Avenue, Ottawa**

**12:45 pm – Russian Embassy, 285 Charlotte Street, Ottawa**

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**for Komunikaty Ottawskie (komott.net)**

**Komunikaty Ottawskie (Ottawa Bulletin komott.net) is a Polish language electronic bulletin distributed through e-mail subscription since 1987.**

## **Interview with Polish-Canadian from Ottawa**

### **Why are you protesting?**

We want the truth! It has been a year since the Smolensk disaster and Poles are still waiting for a genuine, independent investigation to begin. Putin has said that he is personally responsible for collecting and publishing all the facts. Russia took over the investigation, appropriated all the material evidence and produced a report that simply repeated its initial, unsubstantiated claims that Polish pilots and their superiors were to blame for the crash. This is reminiscent of the campaigns of lies and manipulation surrounding the poisoning of Alexander Litvinenko in England or the murders of leading Russian investigative journalists like Anna Politkovskaya.

### **Why do you find the Russian investigation of the crash inadequate? Why do you reject the conclusions of the final Russian report (prepared by the Interstate Aviation Committee IAC/MAK)?**

The Russian report was conducted on a faulty legal basis, applicable to only civil, non-military cases as it was in Smolensk. As a result, Polish investigators were excluded from the investigation. During last year we saw several examples of the violation and complete disregard for international investigative standards.

When the “investigation” had ended, MAK’s report was prepared as propaganda material suggesting the guilt of Polish pilots and commanders. These accusations are baseless and completely false. In fact, it is possible that these charges could have been prepared even before the accident, as the Russians published them immediately after the crash, long before the start of investigation.

On the other hand, the report does not explain many important facts. For example, why did the

plane fall apart even though the pilots decided not to land but instead began to ascend? MAK's accusations are similar in nature to Yury Chaika's (the Prosecutor General of Russia) allegations that a former vice president of Yukos, Leonid Nevzlin, was involved in the poisoning of Alexander Litvinenko. Modern-day Russia is an empire of lies! Mr. Putin is a manipulator and a liar!

### **Are you suggesting that Russians are responsible for what happened?**

After a year, it is quite obvious that this is true. The Russians destroyed all of the important material evidence. For example, they chopped the remains of the aircraft wreckage into pieces. In all investigations of air accidents, the key action is to collect all remains, and best combine them into a whole. The idea is to analyze what is missing and what could have been the cause of disaster. The Russians did the opposite!

Shortly after the accident, one of the commentators on Russia's policy suggested: if Russia is not responsible for what took place in Smolensk, Mr. Putin will immediately appoint an international committee to investigate the causes. Mr. Putin decided to destroy all the key evidences! That alone is a conscious crime!

### **Are you trying to accuse Russia of intentional murder?**

No! There is no evidence that the Russians had deliberately destroyed the Polish plane, killing all those on board. On the other hand, there are many facts, which indicate that this tragedy could be no coincidence. The reasoning is as in any criminal forfeiture: Mr. Putin had a motive, the Russians had technical means, and they benefited from the disaster.

The purpose of the flight was to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Katyn massacre, a mass murder of Polish intellectuals, politicians and the military. Many high-ranking Polish politicians, military, and social activists were coming to take part in the ceremony. Polish President, Lech Kaczynski has prepared a very important speech. He planned on stating categorically that the complete disclosure of all facts about the Katyn genocide is a necessary element in the process of reconciliation between the Polish and Russian nations. This reconciliation was to allow the future partnership between Russia and NATO.

### **Technically, it was possible to destroy the Polish aircraft and pretending that it was an accident.**

We still do not know all the details, but some facts are very disturbing. Russian airport ground personnel (air traffic control), heading the navigation during landing, gave false information about their position, misleading the crew of the aircraft. This alone could have been the cause of the disaster. According to military procedures (both the aircraft crew and the ground staff were military), the decision to land is on the flight controllers. The death of all passengers on board, the total dispersal of wreckage (40% destruction of its mass), the inexplicable scope and scale of damage - all these facts do not agree with the Russian description of the disaster.

**Material evidence of this accident has disappeared in Russia. There are missing electronic records and no witness testimonies explaining the circumstances of the accident. No one saw anything, no one heard anything, no one filmed anything, and no one recorded anything with his-a mobile phone. There is evidence that Russians erased all recordings made using mobile phones.**

Immediately after the tragedy in Smolensk, presidential power in Poland was taken over by the Speaker of Polish Parliament (Sejm), Mr. Bronislaw Komorowski. He was the only member of the Polish legislature PO (Civic Platform; Polish: Platforma Obywatelska) party, who voted against the dissolution of WSI (Military Information Services)\*. He does not hide his warm support for the pro-Russian subservient policies. Within a year after the disaster, many political and personal changes were made in Poland. As a result, despite the obvious facts, many members of the Polish government fully cooperated with Russia in order to hide the truth about what happened in Smolensk.

**The airplane crash in Smolensk eliminated a significant part of Poland's political elites. This is why so many Poles refer to this disaster as a "Second Katyn". Never in NATO's history have they lost so many generals in a single incident.**

**I would like to be able to fully believe that tragedy in Smolensk was simply an unfortunate accident caused by errors in the activities of a control tower. Therefore, it is so important that all the materials remaining from the crash be immediately returned to Poland, especially, the airplane parts, black boxes and all electronic records. We have to remember they are the property of Poland! In the present situation it is necessary to launch an independent international investigation into the crash in Smolensk. Only such an investigation will have a chance to objectively verify all of the facts.**

**How do you justify your demand for an international commission?**

First of all, a commission is justified by the enormity of the political and security ramifications of this disaster for both Poland and the world. This unprecedented crash killed Poland's President and a large proportion of its highest ranking political and military elite (including chiefs of staff of army, air force and navy). The presence of several NATO generals among the victims and the appropriation by Russia of their top secret electronic equipment is very important internationally.

We expect the existence of satellite photos and other evidence gathered by foreign intelligence that might be made available to an international commission. Only international pressure could force Russia to release the material evidence collected at the crash site. Also, only a commission of the most highly qualified international experts could be able to cope with the complexity of this investigation undertaken so late after the crash itself.

We believe in the ability of an independent international body to deal with the huge number of unanswered questions related to the preparation of the trip, the circumstances of the crash and its immediate aftermath. Furthermore we believe in their ability to investigate the subsequent machinations and deceptions on the part of both the Russian and Polish authorities. We need external help facing the Polish government's failure to show the will and the ability to conduct an independent inquiry and to observe the scandalous nature of the Russian "investigation".

**I do not understand Putin's interest in elimination of Polish President, Lech Kaczynski.**

For Putin, Polish President, Lech Kaczynski, was the toughest opponent in the European Union. He tried to prevent the creation of stronger ties between the NATO / EU and Russia until Putin's government fully disclosed all known facts about the genocide of Polish intellectuals, politicians, and the military during the Soviet occupation. Soviet crimes of the last century still remain unpunished.

President Lech Kaczynski was a major proponent of the EU commitment to protect the independence of Ukraine, Georgia and other republics of the former Soviet Union. He demanded real, democratic changes in Russia as a condition for the recognition of this country as an equal partner of a united Europe.

### **Why did the Polish government not respond to the MAK's report?**

The current Polish government does not have the will and strength to stand up to Russia. Giving full investigation rights into the hands of Putin did not protect Polish interests in explaining the Smolensk disaster. This government is also responsible for the abysmal preparation of the visit of the president, and the lack of security during the flight to Smolensk. Still, there are many Poles who are trying to uncover the truth.

The most famous is a member of Polish parliament Mr. Antoni Macierewicz. He is a chairman of the parliamentary team investigating the disaster. Despite many difficulties on the part of the ruling party (PO), he managed to collect many facts explaining what happened in Smolensk. The Polish Inquiry Commission (a military team of experts, Vice-President, Mr. Miroslaw Grochowski), published a document with critical remarks in response to the MAK's final report draft. This Polish answer was sent to Russia in December.

### **Could you give more details about the Polish Inquiry Commission's response?**

"Remarks of the Polish side to the MAK's final report draft" was shipped to the Russians, dated December 19, 2010. It is a very detailed technical document (148 pages in Polish language [http://www.naszdziennik.pl/zasoby/raport-mak/comment\\_polsk2\\_opt.pdf](http://www.naszdziennik.pl/zasoby/raport-mak/comment_polsk2_opt.pdf)), describing many errors and omissions in the MAK's report. This response also lists documents not received and unanswered questions submitted earlier to Russians. It proves (in great detail) that conclusions from the MAK's report cannot be trusted. Poland has not received any response to this document, and it was not included in the final version of the MAK's report.

### **Why did the president of Poland travel to Smolensk?**

The purpose of the President Lech Kaczynski's visit was to take part in the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Katyn massacre. The President was accompanied by his spouse, the last President of Poland in exile Ryszard Kaczorowski, Deputy Marshals of the Polish Parliament (Sejm) and Senate, a group of parliamentarians, the commanders of Armed Forces, the representatives of church organizations, employees of the President's Office, the representatives of ministries, and members of veterans' organizations. In total, 96 people were killed.

Polish President Lech Kaczynski prepared a speech for the official ceremony. The speech was meant to respect victims of the Katyn massacre and to stress the need for reconciliation and improvements of Polish-Russian relations based on truth and partnership, rather than on the falsehoods and subservient relationships with Russia. Although we could not hear the words of the president, this extremely important document has been published in Polish (Wolność i Prawda - <http://www.rp.pl/artykul/463145.html>), and English (Freedom and Truth - <http://www.president.pl/en/archive/news-archive/news-2010/art,12,125,freedom-and-truth.html>). It is worthwhile to carefully read these documents.

### **Why is the massacre in Katyn case still so important?**

The massacre in Katyn was the mass execution of Polish officers by the Soviet NKVD carried out in April-May 1940. The murder was committed as a result of decision by the Political Bureau of the KC WKP(b) on March 5<sup>th</sup>, 1940. NKVD murdered no less than 21 768 Polish citizens - prisoners of war from the special prison camps of NKVD in Kozielsk, Starobielsk and Ostashkov. This murder was a step in the implementation of the joint Russian-German plan to annihilate Polish nation. This step was aimed at the liquidation of Polish leaders, intelligence, and socially active people. Soviets hoped that without leaders it will be much easier to destroy Polish nation.

The hiding of truth about the massacre in Katyn has a long history\*\*. After the discovery of graves in Katyn, the soviet authorities decided to blame the Germans. Polish Western allies, looking for more cooperation with Russia did not try to seek the truth. Even after the war, the U.S. authorities supported Soviet claims for a long time, and prevented any attempts to disclose the truth. In Poland, the communist authorities were the Soviet propaganda mouthpiece.

### **Despite the admission by Russia that NKVD shot the Polish officers, the manipulation of facts related to the massacre in Katyn still prevent the improvements in Polish-Russian relationships.**

On March 22, 2005, the Parliament (Sejm) of the Polish Republic unanimously passed the Resolution #293 (<http://www.nettax.pl/dzienniki/mp/2005/18/poz.293.htm>), which commemorates the 65th anniversary of the Katyn massacre, and calls for the full declassification of Russian archives, and the ultimate recognition that it was genocide of the Polish POWs.

The following is an excerpt from this act:

**" The Parliament (*Sejm*) of the Republic of Poland expresses (...) regret that to this day the Katyn massacre is a subject of political manoeuvring that attempts to relativize, minimize and blur the perpetrators' responsibility. We are convinced that the process of healing and an advancement of the neighbourly relations between Poland and the Russian Federation can only be possible if the full truth about this crime is made public and its**

**perpetrators are denounced and punished. Reconciliation and friendship between nations are possible only when founded on truth and memory and not on enforced silence, half-truths and lies. That is why – faithful to the memory of those innocent victims of Katyn, Miedwoje and Charkov – we expect that the Russian nation as well as the authorities of the Russian Federation will finally and unequivocally acknowledge that, in keeping with the definition provided by the Nuremberg Trials, the mass murder of the Polish prisoners of war was a case of genocide. Furthermore, we expect that all the circumstances of this crime are fully exposed and, in particular, the specific locations of many hitherto not identified mass graves are revealed. We also believe that the names of all those culpable of the Katyn massacre – both the architects of this crime and those who executed their orders – must be publically disclosed and denounced. We are profoundly disappointed by the decision of the Russian Prosecution Office to discontinue their investigation of the Katyn murders. We expect to receive from the Russian authorities all the documents gathered through the Russian investigations. The Parliament of the Polish Republic supports the decision of the Institute of National Remembrance to launch a Polish investigation of the Katyn massacre and deems it essential that all the activities initiated with this respect be continued.**

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In 2008, the Polish Foreign Ministry asked the Russian government to transfer images of the massacre shot by the NKVD at the time of committing the crime. These recordings, as well as other documents pointing to the cooperation of NKVD and Gestapo during the operation, may be the causes of Russia's decision to keep classified the most relevant documents about the massacre.

**After the Smolensk disaster, Russia had suggested to Polish authorities their intention to take some steps in meeting Polish demands. At the same time, on the international arena, Russia tried to present NKVD actions in Katyn as being done in the accordance with law.**

Since the most important Polish demands were still not met, the points made by the President Lech Kaczynski are still very relevant:

**“Lasting relationships cannot be built on lies. Lies divide people and nations. Lies bring with them hatred and anger. This is why we need truth. Arguments are never of equal importance but those who fight for freedom are right. We Christians know it very well: truth, however painful it might be, sets us free. It connects us. It brings justice with it. Truth guides us on the road to reconciliation.”**

**Why should we not trust Putin's Russia?**

The twentieth century was a time of the greatest crimes of genocide carried out in the name of two similar ideologies: Communism and Nazism. These ideologies have been one of the causes of monstrous crimes committed on Polish territory through its two large neighbours, Russia and Germany. Fortunately, today in Germany it is not acceptable to promote ideological and physical symbols of the Nazi regime. On the other hand, in Russia, communism is still not settled. Its inhumane acts have never been fully disclosed and condemned. There exists a communist party and this country continues to observe communist celebrations. The Prime Minister of Russia, Mr. Vladimir Putin, openly treats Stalin, the greatest killer of the twentieth

century, as a hero.

If we add to this the lack of freedom of speech, criminal acts (such as the poisoning of Alexander Litvinenko and the murders of journalists), and the aggressive war in Chechnya and Georgia, it is difficult to trust any statements from Russia. Canada and NATO should not risk forging closer relations with Russia.

**Why do you think that cooperation with Russia will not increase the security of Canada and Poland? Why do believe it will not help to improve international security?**

NATO ignores these unpleasant facts about Putin's Russia. Western countries, which flirt with Putin, are hoping to gain economic and political benefits. It is a policy similar to that in the past, when the West had hoped that "appeasing" Hitler would prevent the outbreak of war. It is a suicidal policy of moral compromises. If it were not for this appeasement, Hitler could have been stopped sooner, and the world could avoid the horrors of World War Two, if only the West world had uncompromisingly defended human rights, truth and justice from the beginning!

Putin's Russia has launched a huge program of militarization on the basis of aggressive nationalism inherited from Soviet imperial communism. Modern-day Russia can still be stopped. Waiting to take action will cost us greatly, in both capital and lives, and waiting too long may result in a successful Russian conquest, not only of Poland, but of Canada as well.

**NATO, including Canada, must demand a fair investigation into the crash of Smolensk. It is very important to establish an independent international commission. It is necessary to force Putin to publish all documents related to the genocide in Katyn. It is necessary to request a complete moral reckoning with communism. Canada should require the punishment of all crimes committed by Putin's Russia. Canadians of Polish origin are confident that this is the only way to increase the security of Canada and Poland, while helping the Russian people.**

**Additional Notes:**

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WSI (Military Information Services). This organization was a direct continuator of the services used earlier by the Soviet Union (GRU). On occupying Poland in 1945 and installing a puppet government, the Soviet Union needed efficient intelligence and internal-security agencies. The Soviet special services had begun training Special Forces as early as 1943. Later Military Intelligence (using different names at different times) became a main, hidden vehicle in the Soviet control of Polish affairs. WSI was liquidated by the government of Mr Jarosław Kaczyński, but later, under the government of Mr Donald Tusk, many WSI agents were hired back in the new formations.

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The Katyn massacre, also known as the Katyn Forest massacre, was a mass execution of Polish nationals carried out by the Soviet secret police NKVD in April–May 1940. It was based on Lavrentiy Beria's proposal to execute all members of the Polish Officer Corps, dated 5 March 1940. This official document was then approved and signed by the Soviet Politburo, including its leader, Joseph Stalin. The number of victims is estimated at no less than 21 768. The victims were murdered in the Katyn

Forest in Russia, the Kalinin and Kharkov prisons and elsewhere.

About 8,000 were officers taken prisoner during the 1939 Soviet invasion of Poland, the rest being Polish doctors, professors, lawmakers, police officers, and other public servants arrested for allegedly being "intelligence agents, gendarmes, landowners, saboteurs, factory owners, lawyers, officials and priests." Since Poland's conscription system required every un-exempted university graduate to become a reserve officer, the NKVD was able to round up much of the Polish intellectuals, and the Russian, Ukrainian, Tatar, Jewish, Georgian, and Belarusian intellectuals of Polish citizenship.

As the winners of war, Soviets declared that Katyn's genocide was committed by Germans. This was a beginning of the long lasting "Katyn genocide denial". Wanting to keep their Soviet allies happy, the West willingly participated in these propaganda lies. In 1951 and 1952, a U.S. Congressional investigation chaired by Rep. Ray J. Madden and known as the Madden Committee investigated the Katyn massacre. It concluded that the Poles had been killed by the Soviets and recommended that the Soviets be tried before the International Court of Justice. It did not happen. In the United Kingdom in the late 1970s, plans for a memorial to the victims bearing the date 1940 (rather than 1941) were condemned as provocative in the political climate of the Cold War. In Communist Poland, the authorities covered up the matter in concord with Soviet propaganda, deliberately censoring any sources that might provide information about the crime. Katyn was a forbidden topic. Not only did government censorship suppress all references to it, but even mentioning the atrocity was dangerous.

After the changes in Eastern Europe, in March 2005 the Prosecutor's General Office of the Russian Federation concluded the decade-long investigation of the massacre. Chief Military Prosecutor Alexander Savenkov announced that the investigation was able to confirm the deaths of 1,803 out of 14,542 Polish citizens from three Soviet camps who had been sentenced to death. He did not address the fate of about 7,000 victims who had been not in POW camps, but in prisons. Savenkov declared that the massacre was not genocide, and that Soviet officials who had been found guilty of the crime were dead and that, consequently, "there is absolutely no basis to talk about this in judicial terms". 116 out of 183 volumes of files gathered during the Russian investigation, were declared to contain state secrets and were classified.

On 22 March 2005 the Polish Sejm unanimously passed an act, requesting the Russian archives to be declassified. The Sejm also requested Russia to classify the Katyn massacre as a crime of genocide. The resolution stressed that the authorities of Russia "seek to diminish the burden of this crime by refusing to acknowledge it was genocide and refuse to give access to the records of the investigation into the issue, making it difficult to determine the whole truth about the murder and its perpetrators." Russia and Poland remained divided on the legal description of the Katyn crime, with the Poles considering it a case of genocide and demanding further investigations, as well as complete disclosure of Soviet documents. In 2008, Polish Foreign Ministry asked the government of Russia about alleged footage of the massacre filmed by the NKVD during the killings. Polish officials believe that this footage, as well as further documents showing cooperation of Soviets with the Gestapo during the operations, is the reason for Russia's decision to classify most of the documents about the massacre.

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Translation by the author

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