

Public Hearing

Smolensk Crash

THE REJECTED TRUTH

www.SmolenskCrash.eu



Photos: Fundacja Niezależne Media and Gazeta Polska (The Independent Media Foundation and Gazeta Polska weekly)

Smolensk Crash

THE REJECTED TRUTH

I. INTRODUCTION.....	3
II. PREPARATION OF THE VISIT.....	4
III. THE AIRPORT.....	5
Airport - no entry.....	5
Missing lights.....	5
Inaccurate approach cards.....	6
Trees obscuring the approach path.....	6
IV. ACTIONS OF THE RUSSIAN FLIGHT CONTROLLERS.....	6
The lost recording.....	7
Failure to close the airport, secret regulations.....	8
Who gave the order to bring TU-154M down?.....	8
Chaos at the tower.....	9
No rescue action.....	12
V. MADE UP THEORIES.....	12
They were not landing.....	12
Pressures? The general was not in the cockpit.....	14
Media disinformation.....	14
The steel birch tree.....	15
VI. THE DISGRACEFUL INVESTIGATION.....	15
What is MAK.....	15
Refusal of international assistance.....	16
Unprotected crash site and wreck.....	16
Destruction of the wreck.....	16
Seizure of evidence.....	17
The mysterious experiment.....	18
Classified documents.....	18
Fake autopsies.....	18
Sealed coffins.....	18
Footage from the crash site.....	19
What is Russia afraid of?.....	19
VII. REVEALING THE TRUTH.....	20
Unofficial investigation.....	20
The steel birch tree.....	21
Ignored parameters.....	21
The mysterious photographer.....	21
VIII. WHAT WE DON'T KNOW.....	22



foto: Maciej Chojnowski/www.przydyent.pl

introduction

The Smolensk crash was an unprecedented occurrence in the history of worldwide aviation and in the history of politics. The head of the sixth largest EU Member State, as well as NATO generals and the Polish elite died on board of the TU-154M. They lost their lives while travelling to a sacred place for the Poles: to the forest where in 1940 pursuant to Stalin's order over twenty thousand Polish military officers were shot in the back of the head. The truth about this horrendous murder was concealed for over 50 years. Anyone trying to reveal the truth about it risked death. Only in the 1990s did politicians in Moscow admit who was responsible for that massacre, although they were still creating obstacles – and they still do so – with rehabilitation of the victims and reluctant approach to disclosure of documents. It is customary in our country to consider the Katyń lie a founding myth of the People's Republic of Poland – the post-war Polish state under the Soviet Union's control. After 70 years, cruelly and almost unbelievably history went full circle. Another tragedy occurred in the very same place based again on lies and half-truths. The world must ensure that it does not take another 50 years to uncover the truth.

On 10 April 2010, a tragedy struck which did not have the right to occur. Government aircrafts of civilised countries, flown by well trained pilots used to difficult conditions, with supreme delegations on board, do not normally crash. We must know how this one did. The formal investigation of the crash appears for all intents and purposes now over. A report was drawn by a Russian institution, entirely subordinate to the authorities in Moscow, and another report by a Polish governmental committee, which to a large extent depended solely on Russian findings and evidence. Opinion polls in Poland show that none of these documents are considered as credible. Almost two years after the crash, numerous facts have come to light casting serious doubts over the officially presented version of events. It is high time for international public opinion to learn the details of the multiplying doubts and to assist in determining what we should care about first and foremost – the truth, honour and transparent, fair process.

Poland has proven its loyalty many times in its history, fighting for justice for others regardless of the price; Polish citizens have proven their courage and willingness to sacrifice their lives for other nations.

It is therefore not too much to expect support in reviewing the mystery of this inconceivable catastrophe, in asking some fundamental questions and perhaps in assisting in finding answers to those questions.

In the run up to the second anniversary of the crash we already know that the key Russian findings can no longer be defended. Manipulated theories of pilot errors and that they acted under pressure contained too many loop holes and were not based on any verifiable evidence.

What we demand and what we will continue relentlessly to demand is fair process, in accordance with generally accepted and recognised international standards. Such standards so far have either not been applied or have been repeatedly breached as illustrated by some of the examples below.

II. preparation of the visit

Lech Kaczyński was a courageous politician, who had high principles and was always led by the truth. This was universally acknowledged by many global leaders; unfortunately, in some cases only after he was gone. During his term of office in the highest political position in Poland, his actions were not always agreed with as they were not guided by political correctness, something that so often binds the hands of politicians.

One of the symbolic events of his presidential term was his trip to Tbilisi on 12 August 2008. It was at that time when Kaczyński quickly encouraged four European leaders – Viktor Yushchenko, President of Ukraine, Valdas Adamkus, President of Lithuania, Toomas Ilves, President of Estonia, and Ivars Godmanis, Prime Minister of Latvia – to travel together to the capital of Georgia to support President Mikheil Saakashvili during the war with Russia.

That evening at a rally he said in the presence of several hundred thousand Georgian people:

We are here to take up the fight. For the first time in years our eastern neighbours show their true face that we have known for hundreds of years. This is Russia, this is the country that wants to bring the neighbouring countries under its control. We say no!

This country believes that the era of the fallen empire is coming back. We are familiar with this domination, it is a tragedy. It is breaking the people, imposes a foreign language and a foreign rule. Today, we are here together. The world had to react, even if it was averse to this situation.

When I proposed this visit, some thought we would be afraid – but nobody was afraid. Central Europe has courageous leaders. I would also like to say this to the European Union: our whole region, and Georgia, will count. We know that today it's Georgia, tomorrow it will be Ukraine, the day after tomorrow it will be the Baltic States, and later perhaps even my country. We are able to counteract this as long as Europe champions common values.

This unprecedented speech went down in history. It could not have been well received at the Kremlin. It is common knowledge that, the Polish President was not popular in Russia, this was not due to his alleged Russophobia but due to his principles and relentless demand for the truth and justice, historically as well as in the present. Moscow did not like his firmness in attempting to secure energy sources for Poland independently of the Russian natural resources.

No wonder that our neighbour's authorities preferred to deal with Prime Minister, Donald Tusk, who originated from the same legendary "Solidarity" team but who placed much lesser emphasis on history. He was perceived as an easy avenue for doing business together.

Diplomatic documents gathered by the Polish prosecutors and the Parliamentary Committee investigating the circumstances of the Smolensk crash, as well as the facts that occurred during the period from December to March 2010 imply that the Russian side did not wish to share the celebration of the Katyn anniversary with the Polish President. Vladimir Putin simply did not want to meet with Lech Kaczyński at the place of the Polish officers' massacre.

The Polish government allowed this as the appearance of Vladimir Putin, the Russian Prime Minister, in the Katyn forest was perceived as historically more important than apparent unity of the government of the Republic of Poland.

The visits were thus split. On 7 April, ceremonies were held with the Polish and Russian Prime Ministers. 3 days later, the President was expected to arrive in Katyn, together with a parliamentary representation, various chiefs of the Polish armed forces, heads of central government, and a large representation of the Katyn Families.

The President was supposed to land at a derelict military airbase, with archaic and not fully working infrastructure, without any of the extra safety measures which accompanied the visit of the most prominent Russian politician on 7 April.

The split itself of the visits of the Polish Prime Minister and the President can be perceived as a root cause of the Smolensk tragedy. However, this was not the immediate cause of the crash.



III. the airport

The "Severny" airport [*Smolensk North Airport*] is a military airbase, which has been closed since October 2009, after the dissolution of the regiment based there. On 5 April, only two days before the Prime Ministers' visit, an approval was given of its temporary use. That approval was given by... MAK, the same authority which was later in charge of the investigation of the causes of the crash. MAK allegedly did not discover any issues with the condition of the airfield or the functioning of its equipment that could jeopardize landing safety that it certified.

However, a report by the Polish committee headed by Jerzy Miller, Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration, clearly indicates certain fundamental errors.

Airport - no entry

We should first of all emphasize that the Polish side was in fact unable to inspect the actual condition of the airport. Officers of the Government Protection Bureau wanted to carry out a customary reconnaissance, but the Russians did not approve it. They only repeatedly assured that the host would take responsibility for all safety-related issues.

Missing lights

The "Severny" airport is fitted only with the most basic navigation aids. It does not have the precision ILS system but only a radar for the flight control group, a lighting system, and two non-directional beacons (*NDB*). We know that the inner NDB did not work properly on the day of the crash. Its indications deviated from the actual position by approx. +/- 10 degrees. According to the Polish commission, this could be due to such factors as the trees growing in the vicinity of the pole, exceeding its height.

Airport preparation to receive the aircraft is well illustrated by the following paragraph of the Polish committee's report:

The "Test Flight Protocol" of 2010-04-15 indicates that "the approach lights, depending on the location and altitude of a flight, at 400, 700 and 800 metres from the DS 26 threshold, may be concealed by surrounding trees and shrubs".

The same document states that second and third group of lights (800 and 700 metres from the DS 26 threshold) do not exist: there are remnants of lamps and the power supply cable was torn. Light filters were broken on first group of lights (900 metres), and only one of the three lamps was actually on. On the basis of the reconnaissance of the accident site by the Committee on 2010-04-14 it can be concluded that out of six lamps of the KNS-4U code beacon installed at the inner NDB, only three were in working order. It is worth adding that the above conclusions were drawn by the Russians themselves, who did not furnish a detailed report regarding this matter to their Polish counterpart. Apart from the approach lights, the runway lighting system did not work properly, either. A few days after the crash, photographs of Russian military replacing bulbs in the lamps near the runway were published. The report notes that: "The Committee's photographic documentation indicates that the elements forming part of the lighting system of the Smolensk North Airport came from an unidentified system".

Inaccurate approach cards

The Russians furnished the Polish Air Force with out-of-date and inaccurate airport approach landing cards. Their flight content was simply inconsistent with the reality. They did not specify the system used for presentation of coordinates. Navigation aids information referred to items of equipment that had been out of service for six months. As we can see in the Polish report, a lot of important information from the operational viewpoint — such as "limitations of altitude, gradient descent, vertical descent speed, non-precision approach procedure depending on aircraft category, altitude guaranteeing required gain in height above obstacles" — was missing.

Trees obscuring the approach path

Approach to landing was obstructed by trees:

"Height of many trees exceeded the acceptable height across the distance from the end safety way to 900 m from the runway threshold. Tree density was very thick along the runway axis in the vicinity of approach lights. Trees and shrubs concealed the light system components to aircraft crews and significantly reduced visibility of approach to runway for the crew".

Interestingly, after 10 April the Russians simply cut down the majority of trees that posed the hazard to the landing, despite that the airport was not in service and was not expected to ever return to service again and despite their importance to the investigation. Moreover, they did so without notifying the Polish party. The whole chapter of the Polish report dedicated to the airport ends with the following sentence:

"The above analysis indicates that the Smolensk North Airport was not properly prepared to receive aircrafts."

IV. actions of the Russian flight controllers

The MAK report does not address the issue of how the Russian flight controllers from the "Severny" Airport acted. It was only stated that the flight controllers' behaviour had not contributed to the crash. The Polish document on the other hand does list breaches in the actions of the ATC team on the ground, but lists them as simple errors. Today we know that what happened at the ATC station of the Smolensk Airport had major impact on the tragedy.

Two persons who were working at the control tower were: Lieutenant Colonel Pavel Plusnin, air traffic controller and Major Victor Ryzhenko, head of the ATC operations, who was communicating with crews during the last seconds of the flights. However, the third and the most important person at the ATC station was Colonel Nikolay Krasnokutskiy, deputy of military regiment in nearby Tver, from which the other soldiers came to control air traffic at the "Severny" airport on that day. He was a direct superior of Plusnin and Ryzhenko, competent to give them orders. The MAK report comments briefly on the role of Colonel Nikolay Krasnokutskiy as follows:

This person was temporarily present at the inner runway control station (including the time of the aviation incident) to

engage in general coordination of operations of various services, to notify various officers (by telephone) of the actual situation concerning acceptance of aircrafts and the meteorological situation, and to arrange alternate airports. This person did not participate directly in air traffic control activities.

The reality was completely different. Krasnokutskiy at times even exchanged messages with the aircraft crew, and he was the one making (or rather to forwarding) the key decisions.

The most serious accusation of the Russian military officers is that they misled the TU-154M crew at the final kilometres of the flight. With bad weather conditions, significantly reduced visibility, during the trial approach to decision altitude, they repeatedly provided the crew with false information regarding aircraft location. The controllers were confirming to the crew that they were on the correct descent path:

(all times from the transcripts are given according to Poland time)

8:39:11,7 *One hundred, distance nine, entering the path.*

8:39:33,1 *Eight, on course, on path.*

8:39:52,8 *You are approaching the outer, on course, on path, distance six*

8:40:16,4 *Four, on course and on path*

8:40:29,7 *Three, on course, on path*

8:40:41,6 *Two, on course, on path*

All the above messages were false. The crew, in possession of unclear approach landing cards (which, as it turned out later, were also inaccurate), supported by non-precision beacons, flying the aircraft in thick fog, were convinced they were flying correctly. In fact, they were too low and at no point in time were they on the approach path, as per Major Ryzhenko's claims.

The lost recording

One of the versions to explain these irregularities was the lack of accuracy of equipment used by the controllers. However, two problems occur here.

1. The manager of the landing zone — which is recorded in the Polish report — did not inform the crews of possible failure of the radar system, or of any other difficulties in observation of approaching aircrafts. Even though flight controllers are the eyes and ears on the ground of the pilots, whom they trust completely. In this case, this elementary rule has turned out to be particularly disastrous.

2. The performance of the tower equipment is recorded on cameras. This is especially the case for landings of aircrafts carrying VIP passengers. The Russians were originally expected to furnish the tape with the control tower footage to their Polish counterpart. Ultimately, it was never done. Why? Justification versions vary. There were mentions of damaged recording equipment and of a lost tape. Polish prosecutors still do not know whether the recording has ever existed and whether they will ever be able to view it.





Failure to close the airport, secret regulations

After the last of the above quoted messages (2 km before the runway), at the altitude of 100 metres, the Captain who could not see the ground decided to abandon descend. This was confirmed by the First Officer. The crew wanted to lead their aircraft away (a go-around manoeuvre) and circle the airport around, but it kept descending at a dangerously high speed.

Why? Even today we don't know.

These critical moments would not have happened had the controllers closed the airport. The testimony given by one of them and published by the Polish media revealed that closing the airport had been within their jurisdiction according to applicable regulations. However, this testimony was subsequently withdrawn by the Russian prosecutors from the case and the controllers were re-interviewed. The new protocols are classified. So are the applicable regulations that were relied on by the controllers. At the beginning of this year, the Polish General Prosecutor was informed in Moscow that this document would not be forwarded to Poland, for reason of military secret. The Russians only decided to send in... a description of selected parts of the document.

Officially, the Russians claim that it was not possible to close the airport and that the pilots were solely responsible for taking the decision to land. This is one of the main forgeries in the MAK report.

Firstly, there is no proof of the crew's willingness to land. The crew only made a trial approach to safe – and conforming – altitude of 100 metres; secondly, the airport could have been closed. The officers at the tower were even willing to do so, up till a certain point in time.

Who gave the order to bring TU-154M down?

We know from the transcripts of telephone communications and open mikes at the control tower that initially, all the control station personnel did not consider it possible to allow the landing of the aircraft carrying the Polish President.

7:42:37 Krasnokutskiy to "Logic": *Well then in such case we have to search an alternate for him, that's the first thing, if he's ready. There's Wnukowo or something.*

8:14:09 Plusnin by telephone (recipient not known): *Yes. I don't know, Nikolayevich, they'll probably just push him to the alternate immediately, without descending, there's no sense, I can't see leading him here, shit absolutely none.*

8:23:14 Plusnin by telephone to South Smolensk Airport station, regarding the Moscow control: *Well they must be told somehow, as long as they work normally, that we have fog here, damn it, visibility under four hundred metres, damn it. What's the point of pushing him here to us now?*

We know, however, that it was not the controllers who were making the key decisions. Who pressured them? As it they are both part of the military, it simply must have been their superiors from Moscow, who else?. The tower officers repeatedly communicated with the air operations centre coded as "Logic". The order to receive the aircraft with the Polish delegation arrived after the conversations between Colonel Krasnokutskiy and an unknown "comrade general". We know some shreds of one of these conversations.

7 minutes before the crash, Krasnokutskiy (only his voice is recorded, he might be talking on his private phone) says:

8:33:53 Krasnokutskiy: *Comrade general, it's approaching the beam. It's approaching the beam, five hundred metres.*

8:33:57 Krasnokutskiy: *All on, everything. And beacons in daytime mode. ... All set/ready.*

8:34:02 Krasnokutskiy: *In daytime mode, in daytime mode, both on the left and on the right.*

8:34:08 Krasnokutskiy: *I didn't get you, well on the left at the thresh, at the threshold, standing on the left and on the right.*

8:34:13 Krasnokutskiy: *Certainly, daytime mode, certainly.*

8:34:22 Krasnokutskiy: *Well yes, I, I get you, all right, all right.*

We do not know any more details of this conversation. However, we know that Krasnokutskiy must have heard an order to receive TU-154M earlier, as he instructs Plusnin a quarter of an hour before the catastrophe:

8:26:19 Krasnokutskiy: *Pavel, you will lead to one hundred metres. One hundred metres. No discussion, damn it,*

This is another great mystery of this tragedy. Why was the decision to ignore the weather conditions and to accept the aircraft with the Polish delegation taken far away from Smolensk?

Chaos at the tower

Many quotations from the presented transcripts show, to put it gently, lack of professionalism of the Russian soldiers leading the Polish aircrafts down.

8: 28:29 Plusnin: *Fuck, if only we did not oversee it, if only it ... I think it is going at forty, damn it, if only we managed to reverse it in time (translator's comment: to put it on proper course). Where the fuck is it now?*

8:28:36 *I don't know, damn it*

8:28:38 *Don't know yet*

8:28:41 *Yes.*

8:29:06 Plusnin: *Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, fuck, it must be somewhere.*

8:29:16 Plusnin: *O!*

8:29:20 Plusnin: *Motherfucker, all one to one, fuck.*

This is one of the many dialogues concerning the weather forecast confusion:

8:33:13 Plusnin: *Listen, the meteo guy, is he out of his mind, or what? Well the weather*

8:33:20 Plusnin: *He gives eight hundred metres now.*

8:33:22 Krasnokutskiy: *What do you mean eight hundred?!*

8:33:29 Krasnokutskiy: *Exactly, now the eight hundred metres, and there at all. Look, there must be certainly some two, three hundred metres, and there is a maximum of two hundred metres.*

The runway was not secured. The controllers repeatedly told off the security officers for walking on the runway:

7:12:52 Plusnin: *Fuck, the soldiers! Motherfucker!*

7:12:59 Plusnin: *Fuck!*

7:13:17 *Call Kovalov, let*

7:13:18 *You tell the soldier to the right, let Call Kovalov, tell him: (put away?) security guards to the right*

7:13:24 Plusnin: *Seriozha, I will fucking kill you! These soldiers are on the runway again, damn it!*

Fifteen minutes later, the Il-76 transporting cars for the Presidential column landed. The conditions were dreadful; it was a miracle that accident was avoided. At the critical moment, the following can be heard at the tower:
7:27:56 Plusnin and Krasnokutskiy:!! *Motherfucker! Oh shit! Oh fuuuuuck!*

Despite the near miss, the controllers allow the Il crew to make one more approach. Meanwhile, the situation at the tower continues to spiral out of control. Someone is walking on the runway again, and Krasnokutskiy is surprised by fog at that time of day:

7:29:41 Plusnin: *Fuck, these security guards, I'll kill them, fuck.*
(...) 7:29:58 A: (incomprehensible)
7:30:05 Krasnokutskiy: *But where is the fog coming from at ten o'clock, fuck, this is crazy.*
7:30:30 A: (incomprehensible)
7:30:35 Plusnin: *... I told them 10 times, let them explain, from the left, from the right from the runway. I mean you go to the front edge of runway and chase those guys away, damn it, they'll be writing explanations of them running back and forth, fuck.*
7:30:48 Krasnokutskiy: *Did you explain it to them?*
7:30:49 Plusnin: *Yes, I was explaining it 10 times, I was calling them to us, I showed them right here.*
7:31:01 Plusnin: (incomprehensible) *do not go out to the runway, those idiots from security, and (incomprehensible) from the front edge, they are going, wave to them there.*
7:31:15 Krasnokutskiy: *Yes, let him approach.*
7:31:17 Krasnokutskiy: (incomprehensible) *one more approach, how many does he have left?*

"Professionalism" of the controllers is also evidenced by the exchange below. They were "learning" English in between the landings:

8:07:14 A1: *Down*
8:07:17 Plusnin: *Down?*
8:07:18 A1: *Go*
8:07:19 Plusnin: *How?*
8:07:20 A1: *Go.*
8:07:22 Plusnin: *Call again?*
8:07:24 A1: *Go around.*
8:07:27 Plusnin: *Call around?*
8:07:28 A1: *Go! Go!*
8:07:29 Plusnin: *Go ... Go around, right?*
8:07:32 A1: *Yeah, yeah, go around again.*
8:07:39 Plusnin: *Go around again.*
8:07:42 A1: *It means go around.*
8:07:43 Plusnin: *Oh.*

This was the tower reaction to loss of communication with TU-154M:

8:41:03 *But he's out all*
8:41:05
8:41:05 Plusnin: *Go around!*
8:41:09 Plusnin: *Go around.*
8:41:11 Plusnin: *Fuck,*
8:41:14 Plusnin: *Go around.*
8:41:17 Plusnin: *Fuck, where is it?*
8:41:18 Ryzhenko: *Who the fuck knows where it is!*
8:41:21 Plusnin: *One hundred one!*
8:41:22 Plusnin: *Motherfuckeeeeeer!*
8:41:23 Krasnokutskiy: *You motherfucking, shiiiiit!*
8:41:25 Plusnin: *Go around, one hundred one.*

Several incomprehensible utterances.

8:41:31 Krasnokutskiy: *I think he, fuck...*
8:41:32 Krasnokutskiy / Plusnin: *Fuck!*
8:41:35 Plusnin: *Y, one hundred one.*
8:41:38 Krasnokutskiy / Plusnin: *Fuck!*
8:41:45 Plusnin: *One hundred one.*
8:41:49 Krasnokutskiy: *Fuck, give the brigade (translator's comment: fire brigade), where the fuck!*
8:41:51
8:41:57 Krasnokutskiy / Plusnin: *Fuck!*
Several incomprehensible utterances.
8:42:13 Krasnokutskiy: *Motherfucker!*
8:42:16 Krasnokutskiy: *Come on, fuck!*
8:42:21 Plusnin: *One hundred one, PLF.*
8:42:23 Krasnokutskiy: *Fuck!*
8:42:30 Plusnin: *PLF, one hundred one.*

Several incomprehensible utterances.

8:42:34 Mobile phone tone.
8:42:34 *Fuck!*
8:42:35 *The NDB/locator (calls?)*
8:42:36 *there.*
8:42:37 *Well did it reach you or not, at the NDB/locator, to the NDB/locator? Where is it now?*
8:42:42 *It passed the NDB/locator, right?*
8:42:44 *Where is it?*
8:42:54 *It passed the NDB/locator, on the left and somewhere on the way.*

It's two minutes after the catastrophe. The controllers already know that the catastrophe has taken place, but they don't know the exact spot. Help will not arrive immediately.



No rescue action

Even the MAK report clearly indicates that the rescue activities were a fiction:

- 5th minute after the incident. First fire truck leaves the airport base.
- 7th minute. A truck with three people leaves the Smolensk South Airport (10 km straight-line distance).
- 10th minute. Departure of the Emergency Control Ministry security service on duty at the airport – 40 people, 11 technology units.
- 13th minute. Enclosing the place of crash (80 people).
- 14th minute. Arrival of the first fire truck.
- 17th minute. Arrival of the first ambulance team.
- 18th minute. Putting out the open fire.
- 22nd minute. Putting out the fire completely.
- 29th minute. Arrival of 7 ambulance teams.
- 59th minute. All passengers pronounced dead.

Was there a chance to rescue anyone with this procedure? We will never know. Did anyone survive? According to media reports, secret files of the Polish investigation include testimony of a Government Protection Bureau officer admitting that he saw three ambulances leaving the accident site with the sirens on. Spokesman of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs communicated in his first report that three persons had survived the crash. This was later denied.

V. made up theories

Two years after the tragic event in Smolensk, we are able to clearly state that the official findings have collapsed. The MAK report, which is the primary document in terms of international law, cannot be defended in any of its key findings. According to the Russians, the pilots of the TU-154M are responsible for the catastrophe as they were pressured by the top passengers and did not discontinue descending at the "decision altitude", trying to land no matter what. The MAK report states that:

According to the opinion of aviation experts and psychologists, the presence of the Polish Air Force Commander in the cockpit until the collision put psychological pressure on the PIC's decision to continue the descent in the conditions of unjustified risk with a dominating aim of landing at all costs.

It should be firmly confirmed that this sentence – holding a crucial importance to the entire report – is completely untrue.

They were not landing

One often hears in the context of the Smolensk crash that the crew should not have been landing at all in these conditions. The issue is – that they were not landing. They only made a trial approach to a so-called decision altitude. Without knowing the actual conditions at the airport, the pilot leads the craft down to a safe altitude. In this case, it was 100 metres. Unless he can see the runway at this altitude, he should cease the descent, go-around and go to an alternate airport. This is exactly what the Polish pilots did. From the voice recordings of the cabin alone, we know for certain that the pilots proceeded with the go-around manoeuvre at 80 metres, ultimately without success. There is no slightest proof of the crew landing "at all costs". On the contrary – this hypothesis was denied many times in the footage from the voice recorder. 23 minutes before the tragedy, the First Officer asks the PIC:

8:18:15.9 *What if we can't manage to land?*

The Captain answers:

foto: Rafał Dziegielowski



8:18:19.5 *Well, we'll go around.*

Almost fifteen minutes later, the PIC repeats:

8:32:57.4 *If the approach fails, we'll go around automatic.*

The engineer confirms:

8:33:00.8 *Automatic.*

And then there's the key moment. 20 seconds before the tragedy. At the regular altitude of 100 metres, the crew took the right decision:

8:40:45.4 Navigator: *One hundred.*
TAWS- PULL UP

8:40:46.4 *TAWS- PULL UP*

8:40:47.4 *TAWS- PULL UP*

8:40:48.4 *TAWS- PULL UP*

8:40:49.5 *TAWS- TERRAIN AHEAD*

8:40:51.0 *TAWS- TERRAIN AHEAD*

8:40:51.5 Navigator: *One hundred.*

8:40:51.9 Captain: *- (-)o around.*

8:40:52.4 Navigator: *Ninety, eighty*

8:40:52.6 *TAWS- PULL UP*

8:40:53.1 First Officer: *We're going around.*

There is no hint of wanting to land at any cost. There is a lot of evidence supporting the belief that the crew did not want to land. However, the aircraft did not start to rise, as the pilots expected. Why? This has not yet been explained and it is one of the mysteries of this crash. Interestingly, the Russian version of the transcript is trying to mislead us into thinking that the PIC said "we're approaching" instead of "we're going around". In the Polish language, only one letter is different between these two commands. As it turned out months later, there could be no way that the word was read incorrectly. The Russians must have been intentionally giving false information. With such disinformation lasting months, the false theories of fatal pilots' error.

Pressures? The general was not in the cockpit

Another key issue incriminating the Polish counterpart were the alleged pressures. In the opinion of MAK, exertion of pressure on the pilots was one of the immediate causes of the catastrophe. According to the Polish committee, this was an indirect cause. One year after publication of the MAK report and half a year after the Miller's report, this hypothesis collapsed. After months of analysing black box recordings by experts from the Institute of Forensic Research in Krakow, it turned out that there were no slightest grounds to claim that Andrzej Błasik, Polish Air Force Commander, was in the cockpit. All statements attributed to him (including altitude readings at certain points) appeared to have been said by the First Officer. Members of Jerzy Miller's committee admitted after months that they had associated certain utterances with the general without substantiation. The theory was further undermined on the basis of the place where the general's body was found in relation to the cockpit. Originally the theory was allegedly supported by the fact that he was found in the front section of the crashed airplane. In fact, more than ten bodies were found at that location, while bodies of two crew members were found in a different section.

Analysis of communications shows that in case of failed approach and proceeding to an alternate airport the PIC expected negative reaction from the Main Passenger.

This sentence from the MAK report is not supported by any evidence whatsoever. Further, there is no single utterance by crew members which would indicate any concern of anger of the "Main Passenger", i.e. the President.



Media disinformation

As early as of 10 April, without any evidence there were attempts to create an impression that it was the pressure by the President and his staff that led to the tragedy.

First, the world was informed of four approaches to land. It was contrary to common sense but still repeated in the Polish, Russian and world media.

Then, accusations of General Andrzej Błasik followed, as he was allegedly leaning on the pilots as the Air Force Commander and forcing them to land. The Russians even wrote in their report (without referring to any proof whatsoever) that this man, trusted by the President, was drunk – blood alcohol level of 0.6 was allegedly discovered. European papers wrote about a drunken general, responsible for the death of nearly a hundred people. Russian papers (such as, for instance, Komsomolskaya Pravda) would go even further, claiming that... the general was sitting at the controls of the airplane. This was never verified by anyone.

The lies were spreading.

MAK was also very eager to analyse the mental state of the dead Polish pilots. The analysis was supposed to support the hypothesis of the alleged dilemma faced by them, them being stuck "between a rock and a hard place": between the need to keep the flight safe and fulfilment of the expectations of important passengers.

Many books could be written about the extent of the Russian apparent manipulations regarding the Smolensk crash

(and some have already been published in Poland). Classical disinformation tactic includes, for instance, the mysterious sentence from the Russian version of the transcript, revealed only several weeks after the catastrophe, which kindled the imagination of supporters of the pressure theory for a few months:

He'll freak out if we don't land...

This sentence was allegedly said by one of the crew members. In fact, we know today that these words were never spoken. Yet another example of a misleading information, similar to the above mentioned non-existent "we're approaching" command.

Pavel Plusnin, flight controller from the "Severny" airport, shared another untruthful theory incriminating the Polish counterparts with the public opinion on the day of the tragedy. He gave an interview to the Russian Web portal Lifenews.ru. In the interview, he complained that the Tupolev crew did not speak Russian. This is an obvious lie. The Captain, who exchanged messages with the tower, spoke perfect Russian, which was confirmed by the transcripts revealed later.

It is reasonable to wonder why Lieutenant Colonel Plusnin made such claims. We know that he was arrested immediately after the crash and was then interviewed. We do not know whether he spoke to the press voluntarily, or he was ordered to do so by his superiors.

The Russians have frequently attacked the tragically deceased pilots, also by claiming that their landing decision was taken against the advice of the controllers. The MAK report states that:

Permission to land was not given by the flight controller.

Nor was it given to Yak-40 (it landed) or, twice, to Il-76 (it did not land, it was within a hair's breadth of a disaster). The crews of all the three aircrafts heard the command: "Runway clear", meaning that... they were safe to land.

The steel birch tree

Perhaps one of the most significant Smolensk manipulation is theory of fatal collision of TU-154M with a tree, which allegedly initiated the process of aircraft disintegration, both according to the Polish and the Russian committees. The event was supposed to have taken place several hundred metres before the runway; as a consequence, the Tupolev was supposed to lose a few metres long piece of wing, rotate by nearly 180 degrees, to finally crash into thousands of pieces just before the air field, cutting down many trees on its way. However, there is more and more reasonable doubt regarding this theory, as summarized below.

VI. the disgraceful investigation

Anyone who took at least some interest in the way the Smolensk catastrophe is being explained had to come to the conclusion that the procedures adopted had nothing to do with professional investigations standards adopted worldwide. The Polish government made a gigantic and irreversible mistake by agreeing that the investigation be conducted pursuant to Annex 13 of the Chicago Convention. In this way, the government gave away practically all the control over the investigation to the Russian counterpart, waiving the options to pursue the truth before international institutions, or even to file a complaint against the report prepared by the Russians. It compromised the chances of obtaining lots of crucial and fundamental evidence, namely the black boxes and the TU-154M wreck. Agreeing for evidence to be solely at Russia's disposal meant that the Polish team was only able to work on copies of recordings and was at Russia's mercy in investigating the remnants of the aircraft. However, it must be remembered that no actual document was signed or prepared imitating and binding both parties to a set of rules and procedures whichever the wish to choose. Thus, no way of appeal to a body or institution, by the families in case of ill performed autopsies, or the Polish government itself if it wished to appeal to an organisation. This, due to the lack of any real evidence, contract, made between the parties initiating given procedure. Only Disastrous consequences of these decisions were revealed only a few days after the tragedy.

What is MAK

The Interstate Aviation Committee is an interstate organisation in nothing but name. In fact, this is a post-Soviet institution, dependent on Russian authorities, with representatives of the post-Soviet Commonwealth of Independent States acting as a cover-up.

Formally, it does not report to anyone; however, knowing the relationships at the top of the power system in Moscow,

one can understand the interdependency between Vladimir Putin's people and this organisation, headed by Tatiana Anodina, USSR Aviation General aged 73 (she has headed the MAK since the time of its establishment, i.e. for 21 years), the supreme governor of the sky above Russia and friendly states. In crash investigations, MAK is its own judge and jury. This organisation certifies everything that is related to aviation: aircrafts, aviation teams, repair plants; it certifies airport safety, etc. (in the Smolensk case, it approved an out-of-date "Severny" airport with faulty equipment, it certified the manufacturer of the TU-154M aircraft, the Aviacor repair plant in Samara, and the engine repair contractor in Rybinsk). Any failure or negligence pointed out in the above mentioned items would also point to failure and negligence of the Committee itself. If we trace down the catastrophes investigated by the Interstate Aviation Committee, we will find that in most cases MAK hold pilots guilty. This rule of thumb was applied by MAK to the 10 April tragedy.

Refusal of international assistance

Refusal by both countries of international aid has had significant consequences. We know that such aid had been offered. This was confirmed by Ms. Anodina herself during an official meeting with Vladimir Putin and the representatives of the Polish government on 13 April. Due to the refusal, almost all research and almost all evidence remained in Russia's hands and Poland has come to depend on Russia almost completely.

Unprotected crash site and wreck

Public opinion worldwide would most commonly associate investigation of air crash causes with scrupulously safeguarding the crash site, collecting all pieces of the damaged aircraft and meticulously putting the pieces together in a hangar. This is what happened after the most prominent catastrophes: the Lockerbie crash in 1998, or near Long Island in 1996. When Airbus A330 fell to the Atlantic in 2009, pieces of the aircraft and bodies of the victims were pulled out from the depth of a few kilometres even two years after the tragedy. In Smolensk, the ground at the crash site was ploughed up few days after the crash. A group of Polish archaeologists, which were finally allowed by the Russians to come after several months of requests, found several thousand (!) pieces of the Tupolev and human bodies, half a year after the tragedy.

What's more, Russians were so negligent in securing the place of the accident that they failed to restrict unauthorized access. As a consequence, pieces of the crashed aircraft were gathered by local inhabitants.



foto: Andrzej Hrechonowicz

Destruction of the wreck

The handling of the wreckage of the Polish plane can all be compared to systematic destruction of one of the most critical pieces of evidence in the investigation.

This destruction was illustrated through pictures disclosed by Polish TV where a Russian soldier is captured smashing windows of the Tupolev, using a crowbar, smiling, his fist clenched in satisfaction. Even Sergey Lavrov called this an act of vandalism at a press conference in Poland. However, the case was closed with ominous words of the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs. The footage also showed people sawing the body of the aircraft and cutting its cables.

The wreck, after such "pre-treatment", was not carried to a hangar but to the strip at the Smolensk air field, where the largest fragments were put against the outline of the aircraft while the smaller ones were thrown aside. Everything remained uncovered outdoors for half a year. International experts were astonished. The Russians, on the other hand, were indifferent.

As a result of increasing pressures from some Polish media and families of the victims, the wreck was covered with tarpaulin before the visit of Polish and Russian Presidents' wives in Smolensk. To protect the material from wind... it was weighed down with old tyres. Only a few weeks ago, after almost two years, a temporary roofed enclosure was built above the wreck.

Seizure of evidence

The Polish side had to wait 527 days before being allowed access to one of the key pieces of evidence. Nevertheless, only visual inspection of the wreckage was generally allowed. There was no opportunity of carrying out stress tests of the structure or chemical analyses at a laboratory. The Russians concluded in their report:

Expert conclusions No. 897 of 13.04.2010 and No. 3451 of 23.04.2010 on the pyrotechnical expertise contain conclusions that no explosives (trotyl, cyclonite or octogen) were found in the wash-offs of the Tu-154M 101 aircraft parts.

This sentence is supposed to prove unreasonableness of attempting to verify the theory of third party involvement in the crash. However, it is difficult to believe a report which mentions expert reviews but does not reveal them.

There is still no mention of returning the remnants of the aircraft. The Russians claim they need it for their investigation and potential court proceedings. The case of black boxes from TU-154M is similar. The original recordings were never accessed by the Poles.



foto: materiały Anity Gargas

The mysterious experiment

On 15 April, the Russians carried out a "test flight of radiotechnical and lighting equipment of the airport". The results of this experiment, involving AN-26 laboratory aircraft, are very broadly touched upon in the MAK report as follows:

According to the results of the standard checklist for fly-around the mentioned nav aids and lighting equipment were operative which was confirmed by the relative task sheets.

These task sheets were never revealed. Polish experts did not participate in the test flight because Russia did not approve it. This was an obvious violation (one of many) of the provisions of Annex 13 to the Chicago Convention, which is a piece of international legislation applied by the Russians themselves.

The test flight was an important experiment, as it was expected to provide answers to the questions regarding operations of all the navigation systems at the airport: the radar, the NDBs and the lighting. However, the Russians kept this knowledge to themselves.

Classified documents

This was also true in relation to a multitude of documents which Poland had difficulties in obtaining. Polish comments to the MAK report begin with a 20-page enumeration of such missing documents. The list includes but is not limited to the following items:

- data of the "Severny" airport,
- scope of air traffic controllers' duties,
- video footage and photographs of the crash site and proceedings by the Russians on that site,
- results of expert technical reviews carried out by the Russians.

The Russians did not answer the question regarding service quality of the radar at the airport nor the question as to whether the equipment at the "Severny" airport was the same on 10 April and 7 April.

With respect to wreck investigation, it is not the case that we do not know its results – we do not even know what kind of investigation was conducted, if any. We also do not know the basis on which Colonel Krasnokutskiy was giving orders to the controllers and the Polish crew, as he was not formally an air traffic controller. We do not know who he consulted on the phone, what was the purpose of that call and what decisions were taken by his interlocutors.

Finally, all copies of documents furnished by MAK were made in the absence of the Polish side which, according to the Polish remarks to the MAK report, "renders them inadequate in terms of evidence".

Fake autopsies

Autopsy examinations of the victims of the crash should have been carried out in collaboration with Polish experts. The Russians knew that such experts were going to Moscow. They arrived as early as 11 April. As it turned out, autopsies had allegedly already been completed.

Autopsy documents which continue still to arrive in Poland (not all of them have yet been provided) have caused numerous scandals. It was found that autopsy procedures were carried out in breach of basic rules (without taking photographs, in an unbelievably superficial manner, etc.) and that the data in the documentation completely differed from the facts. In some cases, descriptions of the bodies would differ to such an extent (height difference ranging around 20 cm, descriptions of internal organs that had been cut out from the victim's body 20 years before, etc.) that the Polish prosecutors even ended granting an exhumation. One body has already been exhumed; documentation is currently being prepared after the second autopsy in Poland, and two more exhumation procedures are scheduled soon.

To which institution or organisation could the families or the Polish government appeal to ill-mannered procedures and scandalous procedures?

Sealed coffins

The reason for the second autopsies in Poland so late in the date has been caused by the fact that the families were forbidden to open the coffins after they returned to Poland. Families of the tragically deceased learned from the Ministers of the Polish government during their stay in Moscow, a few days after the catastrophe, that all the identification procedures had to take place in Russia because opening of the coffins would not be allowed after bringing

them to Poland. As it turned out later, this requirement was enforced upon the Russians' request. We still do not know the motivations of the Russian party for this request. The bodily remains were ultimately placed in galvanised metal coffins which were then inserted into wooden coffins. None of the coffins were opened in Poland at any time before each burial.

Footage from the crash site

Another issue is the mysterious video footage from the site of the catastrophe, which was placed on-line soon after the tragedy. It was captured with a mobile phone 2 – 5 minutes after the crash, most probably (the author has not been determined with 100% certainty) by a worker of a nearby car repair shop. The footage shows the site of the crash with small fires, before arrival of the fire brigade. There are unidentified people running in the background, exclamations can be heard, but the most mysterious are the four explosions, sounding like gunshots.

A few Russian militia officers testified that they had heard gunshots at the site of the crash. The footage was examined by the Internal Security Agency and by experts from the Police Headquarters. The footage was confirmed as authentic and not interfered with; however, the source of shooting was not verified. Perhaps these were explosions of ammunition in weapons held by the deceased Government Protection Bureau officers, but we have not yet been able to familiarise ourselves with any analyses of these weapons. The MAK report contains the following brief mention:

The findings of the ballistic expertise confirm the presence of weapon (several hand guns) and ammunition (cartridges). It was impossible to identify the date of last shots made from those guns.

What is Russia afraid of?

It would seem that with such a delicate, important and unprecedented matter, the State on whose territory the crash occurred and another State's President and patriotic elite died should be relied on in terms of cooperation. The Russian authorities have repeatedly declared their full openness; however, these were always empty declarations. We must question why Russia presented so many baseless facts, why it erased evidence, why it demonstrated so much bad faith. What do they have to hide? Why did they on the one hand declare their understanding and even empathy with the Polish nation and on the other hand conceal the truth. In December 2010, having heard Donald Tusk's criticism of the scandalous draft report by MAK, the Russian President accused the Polish Prime Minister of being guided by emotions, and added the following significant comment:

I hope that our Polish colleagues will have enough reason and will to accept the proper conclusions, without any unnecessary comments.

Why does the leader of a country which is still perceived as a tormentor by many Poles resort to threats again?



foto: materiały Anity Gargas



foto: Maciej Chojnowski/www.prezydent.pl

VII. revealing the truth

From the very beginning, the tragic events of 10 April 2010, have been viewed predominantly by relying on the Russian version of events about pilots' error and pressures by passengers, with any other theories simply being rejected. If the President of a foreign state dies in the territory of a state which may by some be even perceived as hostile (and where the President is not popular), according to official alliances and international relations, in a mysterious air crash, unmatched throughout history, then surely third party involvement in such an incident should be among the main hypotheses to be investigated and for everyone's sake credibly discounted.

In this case, such hypothesis was rejected on the very first day without any investigation into the facts.

There are no immediate reasons to assume that there was a conspiracy, an assassination attempt, or that favourable crash circumstances were instigated. However, the officially presented version is filled with so many loop holes and undermined to such extent that we are obliged to re-examine the evidence in order to resolve the mystery of the Polish elite's death in the Smolensk forest.

Unofficial investigation

Due to the lack of co-operation by Russian authorities, the passive attitude of the Polish government and total lack of independence of the Polish prosecutors (who had to rely on Moscow in gathering majority of evidence), the real progress in uncovering the true circumstances of the crash in less official manner has in fact been made by the victims' families, some of the Polish mass media, bloggers (including scientists and individuals experienced in the field of aviation) and the Parliamentary Committee headed by Antoni Macierewicz, member of the lower house of the Polish Parliament. The latter has revealed a multitude of inconsistencies, contradictions and false facts in the official communications, of which many are mentioned above. Many of them were also set out last year in the so-called White Book of the Smolensk Tragedy. After its publication, new findings have come to light, perhaps even more important ones.

The contributors to those new findings are the two Polish engineers working in the United States: Professor Wiesław

Binienda, Dean of the Engineering Department at the University of Akron, Ohio, who cooperated with NASA (in investigating the Space Shuttle Columbia disaster), specialising in resistance parameters of composite materials used in aviation, and Kazimierz Nowaczyk, Ph.D. at the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at the University of Maryland.

The steel birch tree

According to the official version, the decisive point which determined the tragedy was the aircraft's collision with a birch tree in the vicinity of the inner NDB. 855 metres before runway threshold, the aircraft caught the tree with its left wing at the height of 6.2 metres (MAK refers to an altitude of "approximately 5 metres" elsewhere in the report). As a result of this collision, the aircraft lost a piece of its wing (which fell to the ground 111 metres further), began to tilt to the left, rotated and fell, to finally break into thousands of pieces.

Professor Binienda carried out laborious research (employing computer software used by NASA in such cases), proving that this course of events was not plausible. Professor Binienda is of the opinion that there was no possibility of a piece of wing breaking off as a result of contact with a 45 cm diameter tree (trunk width was specified in the report as 30 – 40 cm). In such case, the birch tree would have been cut in half and the aircraft wing would remain only slightly damaged at the edge, without any major impact on the entire structure.

Further, Professor Binienda holds that even if the wing had come off the body, it would have fallen to the ground in the proximity of the tree at most within ten metres (and not 111 metres). Through reverse engineering (accounting for such parameters as the weight and shape of the wing, air resistance, aircraft speed, vertical speed), Professor Binienda tested the position of where the piece of the wing must have been detached to land in its final destination. It turned out that this position must have been at least 26 metres above ground level and 69 metres behind the birch tree (or 42 metres before the place where it was found).

No such studies were ever officially conducted in Poland or in Russia. No scientific analysis of the aircraft structure disintegration was carried out either, despite that it seems necessary, particularly considering such extensive damage associated with falling down over ten metres on a soft, swampy soil.

Professor Binienda's research cannot be questioned without careful and through analysis of the aircraft and all the evidence.

Ignored parameters

A group of people led by Dr. Nowaczyk analysed the officially available data published in both reports and their enclosures. Their most important finding relate to the flight trajectory determined on the basis of TAWS (Terrain Awareness and Warning System) and FMS (Flight Management System) data, studied in the United States as the manufacturer's country. On the drawings presented in the MAK report and the Miller's Committee report, these diagrams are shorter than those drafted on the basis of black box records. They break off suddenly. They do not account for the last TAWS (38th record) and FMS messages, which are inconsistent with the commonly accepted version. They show that the aircraft was about 24 metres above the first birch tree and 20 metres above ground over the second tree. In the opinion of the Parliamentary Committee, a lot more can be drawn from the TAWS and FMS data, but the Russians (as the party in charge of the formal investigation)... failed to request transmission of all the readings.

According to the trajectory drawn on the basis of the two systems, the aircraft was flying above the trees all the time. Experts have also determined through calculation that at the time of the alleged wing break-off (at the 26 m above ground level altitude), the aircraft made two sudden swings (which may be interpreted as shocks) which are visible on the diagrams presented by the official committees. Afterwards, power supply was cut off, the aircraft half-rolled and crashed against the ground.

The mysterious photographer

How should we explain all the cut down trees known from the photographs contained in official reports and presented on multiple websites?

The problem is that most of these photos were taken by non professional with no investigative training or experience. His name is Sergey Amelin, an amateur photographer from Smolensk. He took over 100 photographs after the crash. These photographs, among other items, were used as a basis for the committees to recreate the path of the TU-154M along the last several hundred metres. The most interesting aspect of Amelin's work is that he arrived at the place of the crash only 3 days after the incident. In his book, he wrote that he had earlier been trying to make up his mind but would repeatedly come to the conclusion that the State services would let him see only a tiny piece of the site. One may be

surprised by the conservative approach taken by a man who documents the daily life of Smolensk with his photographs with respect to such an important and extraordinary event of his home town. It is also worth remembering that before Amelin's photos had been published, no-one ever mentioned a collision with a birch tree. At the beginning, there was even a hypothesis of the TU-154M having possibly caught the pole of the inner NDB.

VIII. what we don't know

There are hundreds of unanswered questions regarding the Smolensk case. Although we are officially convinced that most of these questions have already been answered, the truth is more complicated. For example, we still don't know:

- why the aircraft kept descending after the attempt to interrupt descent?
- what and at what exact time caused a piece of the wing to break off?
- why and upon whose order the air field was not closed?
- why international assistance and expertise for such international incident was not accepted?
- why evidence was destroyed and documentation was falsified; why the site of the crash was not properly secured?
- why the Russians were never willing to investigate the causes of the tragedy in a transparent manner?

We must ask ourselves: do the Russian authorities have something to hide? What is the source of this chronic reluctance to furnish necessary documents to Poland, of preventing investigation, unwillingness to return the Polish property to the Poles, namely the black boxes and the TU-154M wreck?

It is obvious that there were irregularities on the Polish side as well. The most glaring of these may include excessive trust in the Russian party, ignoring the alarming signals concerning the condition of the air field (prosecutors have charged the deputy head of the Government Protection Bureau), chaos in the 36th Special Regiment (two persons have been charged by prosecutors for default in crew formation and training), errors in training in the Air Forces of the Republic of Poland (including lack of simulator training).

Some people are already awaiting trial for irregularities on the Polish side.

However, their negligence did not contribute to circumstances that had a direct impact on the tragedy. Existing findings prove that it is not the Polish side that is more responsible for the catastrophe, as the Russians wish to see it.

We sometimes hear that this Polish crash will always remain unsolved. It is compared to Kennedy's assassination – not fully solved – or to the death of General Władysław Sikorski, the Polish Prime Minister in exile, in Gibraltar in 1943. These comparisons are not justified. Those historical incidents took place years ago. In the case of Smolensk, there is still a chance to repair the damage and to offer the families of the victims the truth and an independent transparent investigation with the participation of world's experts.

It is difficult to imagine resolving the case without such investigation, without revealing all the evidence no matter how painful and who it impacts on, without complete openness and sincerity in collaboration with Russia. Without these prerequisites, we will be doomed to speculation and contemplation only. Looking at photos from the site of the crash, comparing these with other accidents, we will always be wondering how it is possible that the Polish government aircraft broke into thousands of tiny pieces by falling into mud from only a dozen metres.

Photos: Fundacja Niezależne Media and Gazeta Polska (The Independent Media Foundation and Gazeta Polska weekly)



"We demand the truth" - Every 10th of each month since the crash, thousands of people around the country gather and protest demanding answers and the truth.