



Polish President Lech Kaczyński

LECH KACZYŃSKI, PhD. – A POLISH PRESIDENT, LAWYER AND ACTIVIST (1949-2010)

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Lech Aleksander Kaczyński served as the President of Poland from 2005 until 2010 and as Mayor of Warsaw from 2002 to December 2005. He was a member of the Law and Justice party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość – PiS). On April 10, 2010, he died in the crash of a Polish Air Force Tu-154 while attempting to land at Smolensk airport in Russia, on his way to attend a ceremony marking the 70th anniversary of the Katyn massacre.

Kaczyński was born in Warsaw on June 18, 1949, the son of Rajmund (an engineer who served as a soldier of the Armia Krajowa in World War II and a veteran of the Warsaw Uprising), and Jadwiga (a philologist at the Polish Academy of Sciences).

As a child, he starred in a 1962 Polish movie, *The Two Who Stole the Moon* (Polish title *O dwóch takich, co ukradli księżyc*) with his twin brother Jarosław Kaczyński, the former Prime Minister of Poland and current Chairman of the Law and Justice party.

Lech Kaczyński was a graduate of law and administration of Warsaw University. In 1980 he was awarded his PhD. by Gdańsk University. In 1990 he completed his habilitation in labor and employment law. He later assumed professorial positions at Gdańsk University and Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw.



Lech and Jarosław with their parents, 1954

In the 1970s Kaczyński was an activist in the pro-democratic anti-Communist movement in Poland, the Workers' Defense Committee, as well as the Independent Trade Union movement. In August 1980, he became an adviser to the Inter-Enterprise Strike Committee in the Gdańsk Shipyard and the Solidarity movement. After the communists imposed martial law in December 1981, he was interned as an anti-socialist element. After his release, he returned to Trade Union activities, becoming a member of the underground Solidarity.

When Solidarity was legalized again in the late 1980s, Kaczyński was an active adviser to Lech Wałęsa and his Komitet Obywatelski Solidarność in 1988. From February to April 1989, he participated in the Round Table talks.

Kaczyński was elected senator in the elections of June 1989, and became the vice-chairman of the Solidarity Trade Union. In the 1991 parliamentary election, he was elected to the parliament as a non-party member.

He was, however, supported by the electoral committee Center Civic Alliance, closely related but not identical to the political party Centre Agreement (Porozumienie Centrum) led by his brother. He was also the main adviser and supporter of Lech Wałęsa when he was elected President of Poland in December 1990.

Wałęsa nominated Kaczyński to be the Security Minister in the Presidential Chancellery but fired him in 1992 during to a conflict concerning Jan Olszewski's government.



Lech and Jarosław in "The Two Who Stole the Moon" (Polish title "O dwóch takich, co ukradli księżyc")

Kaczyński was the President of the Supreme Chamber of Control (Najwyższa Izba Kontroli, NIK) from February 1992 to May 1995 and later Minister of Justice and Attorney General in Jerzy Buzek's government from June 2000 until his dismissal in July 2001. During this time he was very popular because of his strong stance against corruption.

In 2001 he founded the political party Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość – PiS), usually labeled 'conservative' by media, with his brother Jarosław. Lech Kaczyński was the president of the party between 2001 and 2003. His brother Jaroslaw is its current chairman.

In 2002, Kaczyński was elected mayor of Warsaw in a landslide victory. He started his term in office by declaring a war on corruption. He strongly supported the construction of the Museum of the Warsaw Uprising and in 2004 appointed a historical panel to estimate material losses that were inflicted upon the city by the Germans in the Second World War (an estimated 85% of the city was destroyed in the Warsaw Uprising) as a direct response to heightened claims coming from German expellees from Poland. The panel estimated the losses to be at least 45.3 billion euros (\$54 billion) in current value. He also promoted construction of the museum of Polish Jews in Warsaw by donating city land to the project.

Tough and conservative

Kaczyński twice banned the Warsaw gay pride parade in 2004 and again in 2005, locally known as the Parada Równości (the Equality Parade), stating that the application of the parade organizers had not been properly filed, and also that he did not respect homosexuals' right to demonstrate, "I respect your right to demonstrate as citizens but not as homosexuals.

"Additionally, he feared the parade would promote a "homosexual lifestyle" and complained that police did not use enough force in breaking it up by stating "Why was force not used to break up an illegal demonstration?" Kaczynski referred to the organizers of the gay pride parades as "perverts". In 2004 his opponents called his actions unconstitutional and he was repeatedly criticized by the Mazowieckie Voivodeship administration, which officially supervises the Mayor of Warsaw. In 2005, he allowed a counter-



Twin brothers, 2009

demonstration, the "Parade of Normality", organized by the All-Polish Youth, a Catholic nationalist organization opposed to "liberalism, tolerance, and relativism."

In 2007, Poland, represented by Kaczyński, was found guilty by the European Court of Human Rights of violating the principle of freedom of assembly under Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

On March 19, 2005, he formally declared his intention to run for president in the October 2005 election.

In the first round of the elections, he polled only 33% of the vote, taking second place behind Donald Tusk. By the second round, however, he had gained the support of Radio Maryja, as well as of two other political parties: Self-Defense of the Republic of Poland, and Polish People's Party.

Elected President of the Republic of Poland in defeating the runner up Donald Tusk, by polling 8,257,468 votes, constituting 54.04 percent of the vote, Kaczyński assumed office on 23 December 2005 by taking an oath before the National Assembly.

A Patriot

In his first public speech as president-elect, Kaczyński said that his presidency would pursue the task of ameliorating the Republic, a process which he said would consist of "purging various pathologies from our life, most prominently crime (...), particularly criminal corruption – that entire, great rush to obtain unjust enrichment, a rush that is poisoning society, and preventing the state from ensuring elementary social



security, health security, basic conditions for the development of the family and the security of commerce and the basic conditions for economic development.

During his inauguration he stated several goals he would pursue during his presidency. Among those concerning internal affairs were: increasing social solidarity in Poland, bringing justice to those who were responsible for, or were affected by communist crimes in the People's Republic of Poland, fighting corruption, providing security in economy, and safety for development of family. Kaczyński also stated that he would seek to abolish economic inequalities between various regions of Poland. In his speech he also emphasized combining modernization with tradition and remembering the teachings of Pope John Paul II.

On December 21, 2008, Kaczyński became the first Polish head of state to visit a Polish synagogue and to attend religious services held there. His attendance coincided with the first night of Hanukkah.

Kaczyński memorialized many of Poland's national heroes known as cursed soldiers who perished at the hands of the Polish secret police, the Soviet NKVD, the SMERSH, and other repressive organs of communist rule. Such national heroes as Witold Pilecki, August Fieldorf, and many others, were posthumously rehabilitated and bestowed with Poland's highest decorations for valor.

In foreign affairs, Kaczyński noted that many of Poland's problems were related to the lack of energy security and this issue would have to be resolved to protect Polish interests. Strengthening ties with the

United States while continuing to develop relations within the European Union are two main goals of Polish foreign affairs, as well as improving relations with France and Germany despite several problems in relations with the latter. Aside from those issues, his immediate goals were to develop tangible strategic partnership



President Lech Kaczyński and First Lady Maria Kaczyńska

with Ukraine and greater co-operation with the Baltic states, Azerbaijan and Georgia. He was greatly admired in Israel, because he promoted educating Polish youth about the Holocaust. There was widespread grief in Israel over his death.

Defense Minister Radosław Sikorski compared the planned Russia to Germany gas pipeline to the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact and Foreign Minister Anna Fotyga stated that the pipeline was a threat to Poland's energy security.

In November 2006 in Helsinki, at a European Union—Russia meeting, Poland vetoed the launch of EU-Russia partnership talks due to a Russian ban on Polish meat and plant products imports.

As a reaction to claims by a German exile group Preussische Treuhand, which represents post-1945 German expellees from Eastern Europe, the Polish Foreign Minister Fotyga mistakenly threatened to reopen a 1990 Treaty fixing the Oder and Neisse rivers as the border between the two countries instead of the Neighborhood Treaty signed in the same year.

Following the military conflict between Russia and Georgia in 2008, Kaczyński provided the website of the President of Poland for dissemination of information for blocked by the Russian Federation Georgian internet portals.

During a state visit to Serbia in 2009, Kaczyński said that the Polish government, on the basis of its constitutional competences, decided to recognize Kosovo and emphasized that he, as the President of the state, did not agree with that.

Kaczyński married economist Maria Kaczyńska in 1978. They had one daughter, Marta Kaczyńska-Dubieniecka, and two granddaughters named Ewa and Martyna.

Tragic April 10, 2010

On 10 April 2010, a Tupolev Tu-154M plane was carrying Lech Kaczyński, his wife Maria Kaczyńska, and other members of a Polish delegation (top public and military figures of Polish state) from Warsaw to commemorate the Katyn massacre. The plane crashed while approaching Smolensk Air Base in Russia. The governor of Smolensk Oblast confirmed to Russia 24 news channel that there were no survivors of the crash. 96 people were killed in the crash, including many of Poland's highest military and civilian leaders.



Alphabetical list of Smolensk crash victims

1. Kaczyński Lech, President of the Republic of Poland
2. Kaczyńska Maria, First Lady
3. Kaczorowski Ryszard, Last President of the Polish Government-in-Exile

The remaining passengers are listed in alphabetical order with the surname given first. The names of the flight crew are listed at the end.

4. Agacka-Indecka Joanna, Chair of the Polish Bar Council
5. Bakowska Ewa, granddaughter of Brigadier General Mieczysław Smorawiński
6. Błasiak Andrzej, Commander in Chief of the Air Force
7. Bochenek Krystyna, Deputy Speaker of the Sejm
8. Borowska Anna Maria, representative of Katyn Families Association and other organizations
9. Borowski Bartosz, representative of Katyn Families Association and other organizations
10. Buk Tadeusz, Commander in Chief of the Polish Army
11. Chodakowski Miron, Russian Orthodox Chaplain of the Polish Army
12. Cywiński Czesław, Chairman of the World AK Veterans Association
13. Deptuła Leszek, MP (PSL)
14. Dębski Zbigniew
15. Dolniak Grzegorz, MP (PO)
16. Doraczyńska Katarzyna
17. Duchnowski Edward, Secretary General Siberian Association
18. Fedorowicz Aleksander, Russian translator
19. Fetlińska Janina, Senator
20. Florczak Jarosław, BOR
21. Francuz Artur, BOR
22. Gągor Franciszek, Chief of Staff of the Polish Armed Services
23. Gęsicka Grażyna, MP (PIS)
24. Gilarski Kazimierz, Commander of the Warsaw Garrison
25. Gosiewski Przemysław, MP (PiS)
26. Gostomski Bronisław, Canon of St Andrew Bobola Church, London
27. Handzlik Mariusz, Undersecretary of State Office of the President
28. Indrzejczyk Roman, Chaplain to the President
29. Janeczek Paweł, BOR
30. Jankowski Dariusz, Office of the President
31. Jaruga-Nowacka Izabela, MP (SLD)
32. Joniec Józef, Chairman Parafiada Association
33. Karpiniuk Sebastian, MP (PO)
34. Karweta Andrzej, Commander in Chief of the Polish Navy
35. Kazana Mariusz, Director of Protocol, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
36. Kochanowski Janusz, Civil Rights Commissioner
37. Komornicki Stanisław, Member of the Virtuti Militari award panel
38. Komorowski Stanisław Jerzy, Undersecretary of State Ministry of Defense
39. Krajewski Paweł, BOR
40. Kremer Andrzej, Undersecretary of State Ministry of Foreign Affairs
41. Król Zdzisław, Chaplain (1987-2007) Warsaw Katyn Families Association
42. Krupski Janusz, Head of the Office for Veterans and Victims Affairs
43. Kurtyka Janusz, Chairman National Remembrance Institute
44. Kwaśnik Andrzej, Chaplain Federation Katyn Families Associations
45. Kwiatkowski Bronisław, Operational Commander Polish Armed Services
46. Lubiński Wojciech, President's Doctor

47. Lutoborski Tadeusz, representative of Katyn Families Association and other organizations
48. Mamińska Barbara, Director Office of the President
49. Mamontowicz-Łojek Zenona, representative of Katyn Families Association and other organizations
50. Melak Stefan, Chairman of the Katyn Committee
51. Merta Tomasz, Under-secretary of State Ministry of Culture and National Heritage
52. Mikke Stanisław, Vice-chairman ROPWiM
53. Natalli-Świat Aleksandra, MP (PiS)
54. Natusiewicz-Mirer Janina
55. Nosek Piotr, BOR
56. Nurowski Piotr, Head PKOL
57. Orawiec-Löffler Bronisława, representative of Katyn Families Association and other organizations
58. Osiński Jan, Field Chaplain Polish Army
59. Pilch Adam, Field Chaplain Evangelical Church
60. Piskorska Katarzyna, representative of Katyn Families Association and other organizations
61. Płażyński Maciej, Chairman Polish Community Association
62. Płoski Tadeusz, Field Chaplain Polish Army
63. Potasiński Włodzimierz, Commander in Chief of the Polish Special Services
64. Przewoźnik Andrzej, Secretary ROPWiM
65. Putra Krzysztof, Deputy Speaker Sejmu
66. Rumianek Ryszard, Rector Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University
67. Rybicki Arkadiusz, MP
68. Sariusz-Skąpski Andrzej, Chairman Federation of Katyn Family Associations
69. Seweryn Wojciech, representative of Katyn Families Association and other organizations
70. Skrzypek Sławomir, Governor of the National Bank of Poland
71. Solski Leszek, representative of Katyn Families Association and other organizations
72. Stasiak Władysław, Head – Office of the President
73. Surówka Jacek, BOR
74. Szczygło Aleksander, Head National Security Office
75. Szmajdziński Jerzy, Deputy Speaker MP
76. Szymanek-Deresz Jolanta, MP
77. Tomaszewska Izabela
78. Uleryk Marek, BOR
79. Walentynowicz Anna, Independent Trade Union activist
80. Walewska-Przyjałkowska Teresa, “Golgota Wschodu” Foundation
81. Wasserman Zbigniew, MP
82. Woda Wiesław, MP
83. Wojtas Edward, MP
84. Wypych Paweł, Sekretarz Stanu w Kancelarii Prezydenta RP
85. Zając Stanisław, Senator
86. Zakrzeński Janusz, actor
87. Zych Gabriela, przedstawiciel Rodzin Katyńskich i innych organizacji
88. Michałowski Dariusz, MP
89. Pogródka-Więclawek, BOR

Flight crew:

90. Protasiuk Arkadiusz, Captain
91. Grzywna Robert
92. Michalak Andrzej
93. Ziętek Artur

- 94. Maciejczyk Barbara, stewardess
- 95. Januszko Natalia stewardess
- 96. Moniuszko Justyna stewardess

Polish President had been on his way to attend a ceremony marking the 70th anniversary of the Katyn massacre, in which Soviet secret police slaughtered some 20,000 military officers that had been captured when the USSR invaded eastern Poland at the start of World War II. The Soviet Union denied and covered up the atrocity for half a century and, in a bitter irony, this ceremony had been intended as a moment of reconciliation, in which Russians and Poles could mourn the dead together.

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev ordered a government commission to investigate the crash. Russia's Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin, was placed in charge of the investigation.

On April 11, 2010, President Kaczynski's body was returned to Poland, where he and his wife lay in state at the Presidential Palace in Warsaw. The state funeral was held in Kraków on April, 18, 2010. After a Roman Catholic mass at St. Mary's Basilica, the presidential couple were laid to rest in a sarcophagus, which was placed in the antechamber of the Crypt under the Tower of Silver Bells beneath the Wawel Cathedral.



"I, like all Russian citizens, have accepted with deep and sincere shock the news of the tragic death of the Republic of Poland's President Lech Kaczynski, his wife, and the members of the large Polish delegation near the city of Smolensk, who were on their way for commemorations in Katyn," Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said in a message to Poland's leaders.

Russian news agencies said President Kaczynski's plane made four attempts to land in thick fog at the Smolensk airbase, which is near the Katyn Forest mass grave site. To complicate matters, Smolensk, a Russian city, is covered by air traffic controllers in next door Belarus, whose officials said Saturday they had urged the pilot to divert to Minsk or Moscow due to the poor visibility.

Eyewitness reports said the plane clipped the top of trees while it was making its final approach, hit the edge of the airfield and burst into flames. Russian investigators said there were no survivors, though it remained unclear exactly how many people were aboard the aircraft. A passenger list provided by Polish authorities contains 89 names, but Russian sources said as many as 132 people may have been on board.

Russia's official RIA-Novosti news agency quoted an anonymous Smolensk security official as saying that "human error" was to blame for the crash. "A mistake by the crew during landing maneuvers has supposedly caused the crash," the official said.

President Lech Kaczynski Crash Conspiracy?

Polish-Russian relations have been deeply vexed for the past 500 years, and Kaczynski had been viewed as unfriendly by the Kremlin due to his advocacy of several policies deemed to be anti-Moscow, including his support for US plans to deploy anti-missile interceptors in Poland, his promotion of NATO membership for ex-Soviet states Ukraine and Georgia, and his outspoken backing for Georgian President Mikhael Saakashvili during the brief 2008 Russo-Georgian war.



Smolensk crash, April 10, 2010

But a warming trend had been underway, since Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin went to the Polish city of Gdansk last September, on the anniversary of World War Two's outbreak, in an attempt to ease some of the historical tensions between the two countries -- in a part of the world where people take history very seriously.



A sea of candles were laid out in front of the presidential palace in the early hours on April 11, 2010 in Warsaw following the Polish government Tupolev Tu-154 aircraft crash near Smolensk airport



People hold a Polish flag during a remembrance ceremony for the 2010 plane crash that killed former Polish President Lech Kaczynski and 95 others



In Gdansk, Mr. Putin made at least partial amends for the Soviet Union's role in dividing up Poland with Germany under the Hitler-Stalin Pact. But the commemoration of the Katyn massacre was meant to be a key "forgive and forget" moment that is likely to be forever overshadowed by the tragic death of President Kaczyński, riding in a Russian-built aircraft, to that appointment.

President Lech Kaczynski was very pro-American and a major promoter of former President George W. Bush's missile defense plan in Poland, which was opposed by Russia, former Bush administration National Security Council official Jamie Fly said.

The forest of Katyn occupies the darkest niche of Poland's psyche, a sinister spot where the soil is nourished by the bones of the country's best and brightest.

First, the flower of the Second Polish Republic is murdered in the forests around Smolensk in 1940, and 70 years later, the intellectual elite of the Third Polish Republic die in plane crash when approaching Smolensk airport on its way to attend a ceremony marking the 70th anniversary of the Katyn massacre.

There are many people who see a conspiracy. *That was not an accident, that was a murder*, they say. Some say a pilot error is suspected as a cause in the crash. Others blame the fog.

Tragic, cursed Katyn...

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