

Poles Fume at Russia on Crash Anniversary

April 10, 2012



Polish women airing grievances outside the Russian Embassy in Warsaw. **Czarek Sokolowski**

WARSAW, Poland — Polish politicians held dueling observances Tuesday for President Lech Kaczynski and 95 others killed two years ago in a plane crash in Russia, as conspiracy theories about the crash still smoldered.

Protesters set fire to an effigy of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, claiming that the 2010 plane crash in Russia in which Polish President Lech Kaczynski and 95 others died was an assassination.

Supporters of Jaroslaw Kaczynski, the dead president's twin brother, rallied in front of the Russian Embassy in Warsaw on Monday, the eve of the anniversary of the April 10, 2010, crash.

They said they do not believe that the crash was an accident, as probes by Russian aviation authorities and Poland's government commission have concluded.

Kaczynski, the leader of the opposition nationalist Law and Justice party, has been fueling assassination theories.

Much of the evidence, including the plane's wreckage, is still in Russia.

Talking about the crash, Kaczynski recently told Onet.pl news that "everything indicates that it ended in an assassination."

His backers also protested in front of Prime Minister Donald Tusk's and President Bronislaw Komorowski's offices.

The April 2010 crash was Poland's worst disaster in decades and claimed the lives of the first lady and dozens of top Polish civilian and military leaders.

Wreaths and lights were placed at sites in Warsaw and in Smolensk, where the plane crashed.

In Smolensk, Polish Culture Minister Bogdan Zdrojewski, Russian Parliament Speaker Sergei Naryshkin and families of the victims laid wreaths at the site of the crash, which Russia's Foreign Ministry called a "deeply sad page in Polish-Russian relations."

Lech Kaczynski was skeptical of Russia, a historic foe that invaded Poland's eastern half at the start of World War II and controlled the country during the Cold War, so it is little surprise that many of his and his brother's followers would voice distrust in Russia after the crash.

Polish and Russian investigations have concluded that the 2010 crash was an accident due to bad weather conditions and inadequate crew training. Polish experts also blamed poor guidance from Russian air traffic controllers.

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