

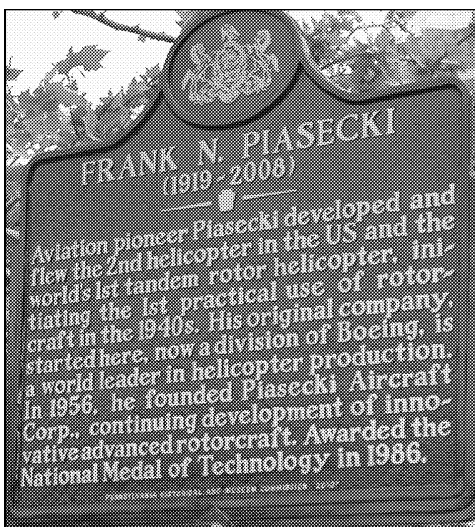
Philadelphia Honors Aviation Pioneer

Frank N. Piasecki

By: Peter Obst

As 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon approached on Saturday April 17 in Philadelphia, a crowd began to gather on a blocked-off segment of Callowhill Street (between 19th and 20th Streets) to witness the dedication and unveiling of the city's newest historical marker, placed at the site of helicopter builder and aeronautical pioneer Frank N. Piasecki's first engineering office. The ceremonies started on schedule with a presentation of colors by a Marine Corps honor guard accompanied by members of Polish Veterans Post 12. Then former Philadelphia City Councilman Joseph Zazyczny greeted the assembly of over 250 persons in the name of the Polish Heritage Society of Philadelphia, an affiliate organization of the American Council for Polish Culture (ACPC). A moment of silence was observed to remember the victims of the airplane crash in which Poland's President Kaczynski and many prominent members of the Polish government died while on their way to Katyn. He was followed by Fred Piasecki, chairman of the board of Piasecki Aircraft who stood in for his brother John, the company's president and CEO who was not able to attend, being in London while on a business trip when flights were canceled due to the volcano erupting in Iceland.

There were topical speeches by Senator Arlen Specter, a personal friend of Frank Piasecki; Lt. Gen. Michael Hough (Ret. USMC); Flora Becker from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC); and Phil Dunford, VP and General Manager of the Boeing Company. Peter J. Obst, who filed the application for the marker back in 2008 and then chaired the committee organizing the event, filled in for the absent City of Philadelphia representative. He read the proclamation issued by Mayor Michael A. Nutter which, after praising Mr. Piasecki for his activities that created a helicopter industry in the Philadelphia area, declared that this day was to be celebrated as Frank N. Piasecki Day in the city. While cameras from three TV stations (alerted by publicity chairman Walter Wojcik) took in the scene, Mrs. Vivian Piasecki, widow of the great engineer, started to unveil the sign. She pulled a cord attached to a cover held in place by Velcro fastenings; it fell away and revealed the following words in yellow-gold letters on a blue background:



The historical marker is registered under a trademark © of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and is copyright protected. Photographs accompanying this article are used with permission. On dedication the marker became the property of the Commonwealth of the PHMC, which is now responsible for its maintenance.

In conclusion there followed an eight-minute video presentation on a truck-sized electronic screen parked at the end of the street. It was an excerpt from "An Innovator's Story" a film about the life and

US astronauts bring music of space to Poland, and try to inspire Polish children



Astronaut - Commander George Zamka

A May 14 article by Vanessa Gera (CP) reported... Five of the space shuttle Endeavour's astronauts were on a different kind of mission this week — travelling to remote Polish villages in hope of inspiring young people to aim high.

Their visit culminated Friday with Commander George Zamka giving Polish officials sheet music of a composition by Polish-born composer Frederic Chopin that the astronauts took to space and a CD of his music played during the crew's last mission to the International Space Station.

Zamka quipped in a ceremony in Warsaw that Chopin's music had never been played at such speeds.

"We flew at 25,000 kilometres per hour, so even though the minute waltz can be played very quickly, I think we now have the record for the fastest playing of Chopin," Zamka said.

The astronauts were brought to Poland by the Polish-American Freedom Foundation, a group that has helped the ex-communist country develop its civil society and democracy.

Astronaut Stephen Robinson said the crew members tried to encourage the children interested in math and science and "more generally to inspire them to think about their future and to work hard, not give up, be curious, have a dream."

Many of the children were particularly taken with Zamka, whose great-grandparents were from Poland.

"Meeting any astronaut is always meaningful to a kid," said U.S. Ambassador Lee Feinstein. "But when you meet somebody who is a little bit like you, it gives you a feeling of having the ability to accomplish something."

http://www.google.com/hostednews/canadianpress/article/ALeqM5h_yyemZZmhck89I_QrDrS0kw58rg □

work of Frank Piasecki. When this concluded the crowd dispersed as the weather had turned rather cold and cloudy. Those who were to attend the post-dedication banquet boarded tourist trolleys, which whisked them over to the Stotesbury Mansion, headquarters of the Catholic Philopatrian Literary Society, on Walnut Street.

At the banquet Deborah M. Majka, president of the ACPC introduced the important guests and speakers. Teresa N. Wójcik, president of the Polish Heritage Society, welcomed the participants. Fr. Leonard Lewandowski of St. Josaphat's parish gave the invocation.

After a lovely dinner of shrimp or beef, under antique French chandeliers, several speakers took the podium to pay tribute to the accomplishments and legacy of Frank

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Healing the Katyń Wound

By: Robert Strybel,

Our Warsaw Correspondent

WARSAW—Never was there more hope that an issue poisoning Polish-Russian relations since the early 1940s might finally be resolved within the foreseeable future. The Kremlin has never been so open about Stalin's 1940 Katyń Massacre of 22,000 Polish officers or so willing to share hitherto secret documents with Poland. This change of heart did not come about as a spontaneous awakening, however. It was forced on Moscow by the politically awkward and embarrassing tragic demise of Poland's top political and military elites in a Soviet-built plane on Russian soil while en route to a Katyń commemoration. The Katyń controversy which Russia had held under wraps suddenly got publicized by the world media like never before.

Russia's top leadership suddenly decided to launch what observers have described as a "charm offensive". The Smolensk tragedy unleashed in Russia both a grass-roots and official outpouring of sympathy and solidarity with the Polish people. Whereas Iceland's volcanic-ash cloud scared most world leaders away from the state funeral of President Lech Kaczyński and his wife, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev felt it his duty to attend. He also kept reiterating that it was Stalin and his comrades who bore responsibility for the Katyń crime.

More importantly, he put his money where his mouth is by ordering Katyń documents onto the Internet for the first time. "Let people see it. Let them know who made the decision to kill the Polish officers. It's all there in the documents. All signatures are there, all the faces are known," Medvedev explained. Historians from both countries have had access to these documents for many years, but their online publication marked a major departure from previous practice.

Within a short space of time millions of Russian net surfers visited the website of the Russian State Archives and could see the Katyń death warrant. This was an official note from NKVD (secret police) chief Lavrenty Beria suggesting the liquidation of the "incorrigibly reactionary and anti-Soviet" Polish officers captured by the Red Army. Stalin and his top henchmen affixed their signatures to it, giving the NKVD the official go-ahead to do the deed. Russians can now view that document at:

www.rusarchives.ru/publication/katyn/01.shtm

Although the above and six other key Katyń-linked documents had been known in Poland since 1992, when then President Boris Yeltsin handed them over to his Polish counterpart Lech Wałęsa, Medvedev also turned additional Katyń-related files over to Poland and pledged that Russia would continue the declassification process with regards to the remainder. The families of Stalin's victims are hoping they include the names of several thousand slain Polish officers still missing and unaccounted for. They are believed by many to lie buried somewhere in Belarus.

The Katyń wound has festered since 1943, when invading Nazi troops found more than 4,400 corpses of murdered Polish officers in Katyń Forest near Smolensk. Stalin blamed the Germans for the atrocity and, when the London-based Polish Government-in-Exile demanded an international investigation, broke off diplomatic relations with it. For four and a half decades after Stalin imposed a Soviet-style puppet regime on Poland, Poles were beaten, jailed, fired or otherwise persecuted for questioning the "Katyń Lie" ascribing the crime to the Nazis.

In an address due to be delivered minutes after the fatal Smolensk plane crash cut short a national 70th-anniversary pilgrimage to Katyń, President Kaczyński

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The Fog Surrounding Katyń

A look at the investigation into the Smolensk air crash

The following article appeared on the Krakow Post website... In the aftermath of the presidential plane crash at Smolensk, there have been comparisons to many disasters on the world stage. According to the Aviation Safety Network, there have only been a handful of crashes in the history of air travel involving the deaths of presidents or national leaders, but none can be comparable in scale to the 10 April catastrophe at Smolensk, in which 88 dignitaries perished. A range of hypotheses and speculation continues to circulate in the Polish media as to what really happened on that fateful Saturday morning. Many sources imply that blame should be put on the pilot, who reportedly ignored warnings from air traffic control and attempted to land in dense fog - the weather has repeatedly been described as the decisive factor in the catastrophe. Initial reports said the pilot made three or four approaches before the collision, but these statements were later found to be false. The jet crashed just short of the runway, hitting the tops of trees while descending below the glide slope on the final approach to land. The aircraft was completely destroyed and no one survived the initial impact.

The plane had a Terrain Awareness and Warning System installed that should have prevented it from striking any obstacles on the way, like mountain peaks, radio towers, trees or any other obstruction. If the safety device was indeed functioning properly, it would be the first such accident of an aircraft equipped with the system since its introduction in the 1990s. The system, however, might have been turned off since the old military airport in Smolensk is not properly equipped for it to be used, Col. Tomasz Pietrzak, a long-time commander of the presidential fleet, claims. The first analysis of the black boxes reveals that the pilot was unaware of the altitude the aircraft was flying at.

The shroud of mystery has been thickening as more and more puzzling questions emerge. Tupolev-154 aircraft have been involved in 66 crashes to date, a figure normal for the quantity, years of service and technology of the plane. Furthermore, the model is known among pilots for its robust construction and the ability to land in very extreme conditions, as it had been used by Russian airlines in Siberia for many years. Amongst all the incidents to date, only a few had crashed because of technical failure.

Nevertheless, President Kaczyński had experienced two problems onboard the Tupolev that had jeopardized his safety in the past. The aircraft's steering mechanism delayed his departure from Mongolia in 2008, forcing him to catch a charter flight to Tokyo, and a week later the plane was caught in dangerous turbulence during its journey to Seoul.

Over the last 10 years, Poland has witnessed several Air Force catastrophes, including the accident of a Mil Mi-24 helicopter carrying Prime Minister Leszek Miller, and the tragic crash of a CASA aircraft that resulted in the death of 20 top Air Force pilots two years ago. Some military and aviation experts have indicated that since that time, no measures have been taken to prevent similar occurrences in the future. They accuse the Polish authorities of negligence, lack of competence, and arrogance, which according to them is behind the Smolensk catastrophe. There had been repeated calls for political leaders to upgrade their planes, but all contracts for new planes had been cancelled. The Ministry of Defence, responsible for the safety of government officials, claims that all strict

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