

**News Bytes from 9**

**The sight of Russians scavenging** the site of Poland's recent air disaster in Smolensk came as a shock to the Polish victims' families and other Poles visiting the area. The scavengers were looking for the victims' valuables and other personal effects as well as pieces of the aircraft saleable as scrap metal. Following protests by the Polish authorities, the Russians have ordered a fence to be built round the crash site which will be patrolled by police round-the-clock.

**The beatification of Father Jerzy Popieluszko**, Solidarity's martyr-priest, will take place in Warsaw shortly. The 37-year-old priest was murdered by the communist secret police in 1984 in reprisal for his patriotic monthly "Homeland Mass" at Warsaw's St Stanislaus Kostka Church which lifted the spirits of his downtrodden compatriots during the dark days of martial law. He never directly criticized Poland's communist rulers by name but called for prayers for "those who persecute their own countrymen for Judas silver". The three killers and their mid-level direct superior were convicted of the crime and have served their sentences, but the higher-ups who ordered the killing have never been brought to justice.

**Archbishop Józef Kowalczyk**, the Vatican's ambassador to Poland, has been named Primate of Poland by Pope Benedict XVI. Appointed papal nuncio (ambassador) in 1989 by his countryman Pope John Paul II, he replaced reigning Primate Archbishop Henryk Muszyński who is retiring. The title of primate is now largely honorary, but Kowalczyk's post-war predecessors—Augustyn Hlond, Stefan Wyszyński and Józef Glemp—played a major role in shepherding this staunchly Catholic nation through the meanders of officially atheistic communist rule.

**At this year's EXPO 2010** in Shanghai, China, Poland's architecturally unique pavilion was the winning entry from amongst 20 candidates in the designing competition. The ultra-modern geometric pavilion, whose exterior resembles the traditional Polish "wycinanka" (paper cut-out), is meant to convey the notion of tradition and modernity. Attractions include a concert on one hundred pianos in honor of Chopin's 200th birthday, a cartoon-style film about Poland's history and various hi-tech multimedia presentations. Visitors will also be able to sample traditional Polish delicacies.

**Acting President Bronisław Komorowski** has signed into law a bill curbing the autonomy of the National Remembrance Institute (IPN) which researches and prosecutes crimes against the Polish nation. The focus of heated battles over the country's communist past, its backers have welcomed the exposure of former secret-police informers, many of them now in high places. But soft-on-communism liberals and ex-communists have accused it of conducting "witch-hunts". Lech Wałęsa is among those opposed to the IPN which claims to have found documented proof that he had played ball with the secret police in his younger days.

**"My family is generally well off"** was the overall view of 68 per cent of Poles recently surveyed about their material assets by Poland's top polling group CBOS. Ninety-one percent of Polish households have an automatic washer, and other possessions include cell phones (84%), cars (63%), Internet access (58%) and home computers (54%). On the downside, 41% said they sometimes lack money for vacations, the kids' summer camp, household appliances as well as culture and education, and 21% have been unable to afford clothing and footwear.

**The zloty should remain** Poland's currency for a few more years, the late Polish President Lech Kaczyński insisted shortly before his tragic death in a plane crash. The Polish government, headed by his political rival Donald Tusk, has

indicated 2015 as the probable date for switching to the euro (€), the European Union's common currency. Kaczyński believed Poland would need a few more years to independently run its own monetary policy, but also cast doubt on the euro's future. "Sooner or later Poland will have to adopt the euro, if the euro zone ultimately survives, and that isn't 100 percent certain. In Poland's real situation 2015 is too early."

**Russia's natural-gas monopoly** may soon be threatened by shale gas, of which Poland has rich deposits. Shale gas, an unconventional energy source, is packed into tight rock formations and now accounts for up to 20 percent of US natural gas output. Energy giants such as ExxonMobil and Royal Dutch Shell are snapping up prospecting licenses in Poland, Sweden, Germany and France to explore for shale. Major discoveries could shift the balance of power in Europe's relations with Russia which has been known to use gas and oil as a political weapon.

**There may be 2.2 million fewer Poles** by 2035 if the current declining birthrate and emigration continue. That would mean that every gainfully employed person would have to support two retirees as well as their own families. Behind the trends are economic concerns as well as Western lifestyle options of avoiding or deferring marriage and childbearing and having only one child. The government hopes to make having children more attractive by expanding daycare and introducing more flexible working hours for mothers. Currently Poland has a population of over 38 million.

**The Polish-Lithuanian spelling controversy** continues despite repeated Lithuanian pledges to resolve the dispute. Poland has defended the right of the Polish minority, whose families have lived there for centuries, to spell their surnames the original way. At present a Pole in Lithuania named Stankowicz has to use the Stankovičius spelling in his passport and other documents. In one of his last official acts, the late Polish President Lech Kaczyński met with Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė and expressed dismay over that country's refusal to allow Poles to use their real surnames. (Grybauskaitė is the Lithuanian version of Grzybowska.)

**"The Righteous Ones"** ("Sprawiedliwi" in the original) is the title of a new Polish TV series, directed by Waldemar Krzystek and devoted to Poles who risked their lives to save and aid Jews during the Holocaust. The main character is a young nurse named Basia (Barbara) who was active in Żegota, the Polish exile government's organization created for the sole purpose of rescuing Jews. Poland was Nazi-occupied Europe's only country where aiding Jews was punishable by death of the rescuer and his entire family.

**As the date of John Paul II's beatification** generates controversy, the media have marked the fifth anniversary of his death with reminders that he was the first pope to cross the threshold of a synagogue and mosque, organize a worldwide inter-faith gathering at Assisi and receive a Soviet leader at the Vatican. He also penned 14 encyclicals and 43 Apostolic Letters, visited 132 countries, canonized 478 saints and beatified 1,318 blessed. The Polish-born Pontiff was also the first Vicar of Christ to go mountain trekking, swim in a pool and sneak out of the Vatican to go skiing. □

**Justyna Ball from 2**

**The pilot tried something impossible to go on with the hopeless task.**

We know what they did, but why did they do it? Was there pressure from the outside? It is officially reported that the first person (not counting the stewardess) who walked into the cockpit was Mariusz Kazana, the Chief of Diplomatic Protocol responsible for the ceremonies. He just peeked in to see if they were going to be late. He was told "In those conditions, we won't make it." Either he was told to come over or came on his own, for him to be able to enter the cockpit; he had to go through the President's little private area. So did the second "guest" minutes later, Gen Andrzej Blasik, Air Force Commander, who stayed until the end.

Both should not have been there under any conditions, but this is what separates professional pilots from others: unprofessionalism and the thinking that... if we can see the ground, we'll make it... and we'll make it under any condition.

**The presence of someone undesired may add to the distraction.**

There are different ways of putting on pressure. You don't need to say a word, just knowing that someone is there expecting you to make it...

The Yak-40 that brought the journalists landed before and gave a report that the weather was rapidly changing and at this point was really bad. The Russian cargo plane that was supposed to arrive between the two turned around. These were Russian pilots who knew the airport, and yet they turned around.

What was Blasik doing in the cockpit? Who sent him there? What was he trying to do?

The Russian tower navigator reported, "400m visibility."

During foggy conditions, when visibility is at 200m the captain should pull up and turn around.

If you are at 100m and still don't see the ground, you should leave immediately. Why was the plane, at 90 m, after the command "odchodzimy" ("we are leaving") still trying to land?? None of the pilots reacted to the captain's command. The TAWS system kicked in warning several times "Terrain, terrain. Pull up! Pull up!" However, nobody was reacting, and they were still trying to land.

The Russian Air Force colonel invited to the program "Teraz My" gave a wide review of what happened, and he mainly blamed the fact that the pilots were using autopilot all the way. They broke the rules by doing so. By using manual steering, you have more of a chance to be able to pull up,

If they were using manual steering, and the two were doing their jobs, they would eventually see the lights, and the plane would eventually land. They should have pulled up as soon as they heard: "We are leaving" plus he was totally surprised with the fact that since the plane was on autopilot, both pilots did the same job, both were looking for ... land, while what they were supposed to do was, one steering and another giving him their bearings. The autopilot can only be used till 100m, then one must switch.

The navigator should be looking at one altimeter, and one pilot should be looking at the barometric altimeter (which shows the exact height) and try synchronizing them. They were both reading the height from the radio altimeter, which is against the rules. At the finish, they should have been using the barometric altimeter only because this one should have been set up to show the barometric pressure at the airport. It was set up, but for some reason they were not using it.

Maybe if Gen Blasik wasn't in the cockpit, they would have been able to concentrate, maybe... At this point of landing, at 3000m and below, no one other than the crew should have been in the cockpit. That's the law. I guess in

Poland, those laws do not apply to big army bosses.

The airport was ready - the only factor was the weather. Their flight did not have to end this way. Polish experts blame lack of coordination amongst the crew. They should have been assigned various responsibilities, but instead they were all doing the same thing. The tower cannot tell them to land. The controllers can only suggest something, and it's up to the crew and the captain as to what they're going to do with this information.

The tower controller gave the command: "Pasadka dopolnitelno, (permission to attempt to land), but it's not permission to land itself. "Pasadka razraszyna" (???) **English translation???)** is what they needed to hear.

Ok, the tower can give you **permission to attempt to land** even if it does not see the plane. Although to give **permission to land**, it must see the plane, and the tower did not see them...

The Russian procedure of landing (pasadka) goes like this - the crew reports that the wheels are out, the tower says to them: "Pasadka dopolnitelno" - it means that you don't have permission to land just yet, but be ready, because you will get the OK as soon as they see you...

The Polish crew probably did not understand it... Not everyone was strong in Russian.

We can blame Russians as much as we want to, to make us feel better. We can accuse Tusk to conspire with Putin, we can blame avionics or "Katyń curse," but if we keep thinking that way, and won't acknowledge the problems this will happen again and again...

In 2008, a Polish military plane CASA C-295 went down, with 20 passengers 16 of them were high ranking Air Force officers including a general... The investigation concluded that among the primary causes of the crash were: *"loss of spatial and situational awareness by the aircraft crew during final stages of approach.... while the flight crew apparently was trying to establish visual contact with runway and approach lights."* Secondary causes: *Improper flight crew selection for the flight, poor flight crew coordination and cooperation; - improper altimeter setting procedures, probably both pilots were looking for visual cues and nobody was observing flight instruments in the very last seconds before they crashed), \* Poor weather conditions in the vicinity of Miroslawiec; the ceiling was 300 feet, and visibility was 2 sm in the mist. Icing was excluded as a factor. \* Spatial disorientation of the flight crew. Both pilots concentrated their attention outside of the cockpit during final seconds before the crash and did not scan flight instruments.\**

They were returning from 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Aviation Safety Conference. It would be ironic if it were not so tragic. \*From the Aviation Safety Network. □

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