

Presidential Couple from 1

place at Wawel Cathedral, the crowd applauded and chanted "Lech Ka-czyń-ski dzie-ku-je-my" (We thank you Lech Kaczyński), waved Polish and Solidarity flags and held up placards. One read: "We want to serve Poland like you did!"

A day earlier, more than 100,000 people had filled Warsaw's vast Piłsudski square for a memorial mass honoring all the crash victims, whose large portraits flanked a tall white cross on the altar platform. "We tremble as we read each of the 96 names and gaze upon their photographs," Acting President Bronisław Komorowski told the mourners. And in an emotional bid sure to move most Poles he added: "We remember the words of Pope John Paul II, who prayed here for the Spirit to descend and renew the face of the earth and of our Polish land." A year after the Polish-born Pontiff had uttered those words in 1979, the Solidarity movement was born, ultimately leading to the collapse of communist rule in Poland and across Europe.

The weekend memorials followed a period of intensive national mourning during which funereal and historical themes dominated the press and airwaves. For the better part of the week coffins kept arriving from Russia – that of President Kaczyński, then the First Lady's, followed by those of 30 other victims and dozens more over the next few days. But by the time of the Kaczyńskis' funeral, the identity of about 20 bodies was still uncertain. The remains of some, obliterated beyond recognition in the crash, may never be identified.

All week long, thousands of Poles waited around-the-clock in the rain and cold of night to pay their respects to Poland's First Couple lying in state in closed, flag-draped coffins at the Presidential Palace. They filed past, genuflecting, blessing themselves and saying a short prayer before moving on. Outside the Palace thousands converged around a veritable sea of tens of thousands of flickering votive lamps which made the air is thick with burning-wax fumes.

The flower, flag and votive-lamp vendors, who had set up makeshift stands along the route, did a thriving business, as did those selling tea and coffee. But non-profit-minded boy scouts and girl guides passed out free bottled water and chocolate bars to the weary and gave first aid to those who felt faint. One senior scout informed line-standers over a loudspeaker that pregnant women could go to the head of the line.

In general, the tragedy had rekindled a spirit of solidarity and togetherness in this often divisively bickering nation. Despite the fatigue and discomfort of waiting in line for up to 18 hours, people were kind and helpful, exchanged addresses and made new friends. The country's political circles, even those who had violently thrashed the president, were also on their best behavior and acted with dignity and restraint. Only the leftist-liberal daily "Gazeta Wyborcza" violated the solemnity of national mourning by protesting against the Kaczyńskis' burial at Wawel Cathedral, saying that the hallowed venue was reserved for kings and national heroes.

A dominant theme of most eulogies, speeches and public statements since the tragedy has been the need for reconciliation. We can differ, because that is our right in a democratic system, but we should do so in a reasonable and civilized manner – was the general gist of that appeal. But with snap elections set for June 20th, many Poles wonder how such a lofty ideal could be adhered to in practice.

In many pronouncements, the spirit of goodwill also extended to neighboring Russia, with which Poland's relations have been chronically strained. In his funeral homily at St Mary's Basilica, Cardinal Stanisław Dziwisz said: "The sympathy and assistance we have

experienced these days from our brother Russians have rekindled hope for rapprochement and reconciliation between our two Slavic nations. These words I am addressing to the President of Russia."

Seated in a VIP pew, Medvedev voiced his acknowledgement. Before boarding his plane back to Moscow, he told a Polish TV reporter: "I believe we can make serious efforts to draw our nations closer together, develop economic relations and find solutions to the most difficult problems, including Katyń." The Russian head of state has repeatedly stated that Stalin and his comrades bore the blame for that crime and that Russia has gone a long way to clear up the doubts and memorialize the victims. But whether the Kremlin agrees to give Poles access to all the still classified Katyń records remains to be seen. □

Taxes from 3

category includes interest on debt secured by your main home and/or a second home. Mortgage interest is an itemized deduction and includes prepayment penalties, late payment charges, and prepaid interest.

5. Personal interest. Personal interest generally offers no tax benefit. An exception: interest paid on student loans, which can be deducted even if you don't itemize. For 2009, the maximum student loan interest deduction was \$2,500.

If you have additional questions about the ideas mentioned here and/or the many other strategies available to you, they may be directed to me at 800-CPA-KROL (272-5765), or you may write to:

News of Polonia

Your tax and Financial Matters
2245 E. Colorado Blvd. 104/177
Pasadena, CA 91107

e-mail: polishnews@att.net □

Storożyński - Poland's grief from 3

somehow lead to the full truth about Katyn and reconciliation between Poland and Russia.

For decades, Katyn has been the symbol of the worst in Polish-Russian relations. That is why several months ago, the Kościuszko Foundation began working on a conference about the Katyn Massacre to be held at the Library of Congress on May 5. The goal is to provide a forum for political leaders, scholars, authors and human rights advocates from Poland, Russia and the United States to discuss new details on the massacre, and the possibility of finding a path toward reconciliation between Poland and Russia.

There will also be a display of rare Katyn photographs and documents on loan from The Council to Protect the Memory of Struggle and Martyrdom. Andrzej Przewoźnik, secretary-general of the Council, was to be one of the speakers. He died in Saturday's crash. Now, this conference and exhibit will be a tribute to him, as well as to the other Polish leaders killed in Katyn during the 1940s, and in 2010.

The opinions expressed in this commentary are solely those of Alex Storożyński, president and executive director of The Kościuszko Foundation and author of "The Peasant Prince: Thaddeus Kościuszko and the Age of Revolution." The foundation promotes educational and cultural exchanges between the United States and Poland and seeks to increase American understanding of Polish culture and history. □

Please send articles about your Polish Organization to the
News of Polonia

Justyna Ball from page 2

elected president in free Poland. Kaczorowski was an honor citizen of many Polish cities.

It was reported that he kept an urn with soil from Katyn on his desk.

There were tragedies within tragedies. Izabela Jaruga-Nowacka's husband just lost his brother and now became a widower.

Bronisław Komorowski told the story of a woman who worked very hard her entire life, raised her only son by herself, dedicated her life so he could become someone. He had a family of his own and now she has to bury him - this mother has every right to go insane.

The media strayed from aggressive language at least for the time of mourning. Russia, Lithuania and the Czech Republic announced a day or three days of mourning, Brazil also three. Others paid respects with a moment of silence. In Brussels, flags were at half-mast, and there was a tribute to all the victims at the European Parliament. Euro news had live reports from Poland, and some lasted an hour. NATO donated planes to transport the remains from Smolensk to Warsaw.

One Polish immigrant living in England heard the news on the radio while driving on the highway, stopped the car, since he wasn't able to move... the police came and in peace, escorted him home. At the end, they offered him their condolences.

A Swedish tourist, at the Krakowskie Przedmieście near the Presidential Palace, spoke about how all Swedish media informed the public about the catastrophe, because of the long relations with Poland. Still in shock, the businessman remembered how his country mourned their native Olaf Palme, Prime Minister, who was assassinated but, as he said, they learned to go on...

All Polish embassies and consulates around the world were flooded with flowers. But I think the most touching was the reaction of the Russian people. Probably the least expected by the majority of Poles, there is still some animosity among us toward them. So more surprising was the news that Moscow ran out of red and white flowers as the embassy was surrounded with them. The sight of an old babushka walking slowly toward the gate with the help of a cane holding a candle broke my heart...

As the Russian leaders gave a moving eulogy, the people from the street also commented on the tragedy. "If we had not killed your officers, this crash would not have happened."

There is no question that this brought two nations closer.

"We are neighbors, and despite the historical wounds, we have to learn from this tragic event."

Very moving was the ceremony at the Smolensk airport with the departure of the coffin with the president's body, with Putin present (he flew twice to watch over the investigation and the ceremony), the orchestra and all the honors reserved for a great statesman. "It is also our tragedy," Putin said.

This triggered an outpour of good will. The movie "Katyn" by Andrzej Wajda played on the popular Russian channel. From Wladystok to Smolensk, everyone saw it - a quite meaningful move since back at the premiere of the movie in Italy, some leftist newspapers boycotted it. Everyone saw the gesture when Putin embraced Donald Tusk at the first Katyn ceremony only a couple of days before the crash.

On April 12th, President Dmitrij Medwediew spoke on national TV. Our countrymen did not wait and posted a letter to the Russians, in appreciation for their help and warm words and actions. Two Slavic nations with a Slavic soul know how to empathize.

Letters like this one circulated the internet sites: "I'm Polish, living in PL.

And unfortunately I have to say, that I always (shamefully) had some prejudices about the Russian nation because of the burden of our shared history. But now I just wanted to say thank you to the Russian nation for the effort that you are making to help the families of victims, to organize the investigation and for the tears and pain shared with us."

Before his flight back, Medwediew said to acting president Komorowski, "Tragedies may create sad feelings, but also may bring people closer."

It wouldn't be very wise to refuse such positive reaction. But when the topic is "Russians" of course the conspiracy theories pop up immediately...The most ridiculous is that allegedly "Tusk killed Kaczynski." However my favorite figure, Norman Davies also remains optimistic.

For the funeral in Krakow, most leaders either drove or arrived by train (like Czech Vaclav Klaus). Angela Merkel was stuck in Lisbon to which she flew, but was getting back to Germany by bus. There was no way she could get to Poland on time.

Instead, she sent the German president with his wife, both arrived by helicopter.

The US delegation headed by President Obama cancelled the trip only six hours before scheduled time. To apologize they called Komorowski in person. The US ambassador arrived in their place.

The nation united by the sudden death of so many prominent figures, was now divided by the burial location. As Norman Davies pointed out, Lech Kaczyński as Varsovian and ex president of Warsaw should rest there. Andrzej Wajda wrote the protest letter saying that there is no reason for the president to be buried in Wawel. I personally believe that because of their rather modest character, neither Maria nor Lech would even want to be buried there. It smells like a Jaroslaw's idea....

Five years ago, Poland mourned the death of beloved JPII. Back then, the nation united in grief, eventually showed the strength and wish to keep moving in the right direction.

Here we go again...

Although this time we ask questions... Why? And how is it possible to have so many VIPs on board one plane? How is it possible that the experienced pilot risked landing when he was warned and could easily land somewhere else? People deserve answers. And at last It is hard not to think about those 22 thousand killed by Soviet hands and how, after 70 years, they finally received the deserved attention.

We often ask God to help us. I guess we weren't doing too great talking about and informing the world about Katyn, so He took matters into His own hands. In the strangest way, He did. □

Jan**Concrete Contractor
Residential or Commercial
(38 years experience)**

Concrete Driveways, Patios
Stamp Concrete
Brick, Stone, Flagstone,
Sidewalks, Curbs
Retaining walls, Block walls
Remodel swimming pools
Waterfalls, Pool decks

No job too small
Contractor License # 501466
(818) 362-4662 or 378-6121 ©

Mówimy po polsku

Your help is needed
Get involved in Polonia!
Join a
Polish Organization