

Poland Marks 3rd Anniversary of President's Death

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Polish soldiers and a priest taking part in a remembrance ceremony at the site of the 2010 crash near Smolensk. **Vasily Fedosenko**

WARSAW — Poland is marking three years since the plane crash in Russia that killed President Lech Kaczynski with separate ceremonies indicating how divided and embittered the nation has grown in the wake of the catastrophe.

Prime Minister Donald Tusk led state observances for Kaczynski and the 95 other victims at a military cemetery in Warsaw on Wednesday, saying he believed that "the day would come when this sad, tragic anniversary of the Smolensk tragedy would not divide Poles."

The plane crashed in Smolensk, Russia, carrying dozens of prominent political, military and church figures.

A Polish investigation has put most of the blame for the catastrophe on the Polish pilots who

tried to land the plane in heavy fog at a rudimentary airport. But some Poles are convinced that Russia planted an explosive device in the plane to bring it down and silence Kaczynski, a strong opponent of Moscow.

At the head of the opposing ceremonial events was Jaroslaw Kaczynski, the twin brother of the late president. He has encouraged theories that the Russians assassinated his brother and also put some of the blame on Tusk's government.

On Tuesday, about 200 Poles chanted accusations against Vladimir Putin in front of the Russian Embassy in Warsaw, accusing the Russian leader of murdering Lech Kaczynski in the crash.

Protesters chanted "Putin, murderer!" and "Punishment for murderers!" as they faced a barricaded embassy, a grand structure with neoclassical columns in the city's government quarter. All the embassy's windows were dark and the only other sign of life were Polish police officers in riot gear who faced the protesters with blank looks.

The protest was organized by a right-wing newspaper, Gazeta Polska.

The belief in Russian guilt despite the Polish state investigation that found no sign of foul play underlines a deep distrust toward Moscow that persists in Poland even 23 years after this former Soviet satellite nation threw off Moscow-backed communist rule. Poles also remember a harsh occupation by Russia over a part of Poland during the 19th century.

Protesters said they saw Russia today as an authoritarian state that uses murder to keep its opponents in line. They also argued that Putin had reason to despise Kaczynski, who had strongly criticized Russia during its war with Georgia in 2008.

"They murdered our president, they murdered the Polish elite," said Jerzy Szarwark, a 56-year-old selling pins, including one that showed a picture of the plane's wreckage and the words "Putin knows — but we don't."

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