

Poznan 29.4.2010

Hello!

As everyone probably knows, on the 2nd weekend of April, life in Poland turned upside down. Sad news on the death of the Polish president Lech Kaczyński suddenly started flooding in. The president and his wife, Maria Kaczyńska, perished on the 10th of April in a plane crash in Smolensk, Russia. 94 other people died in the same fatal accident, amongst them a great number of politicians, top military officers, church leaders and many, many more significant people. What makes the crash even more tragic is the fact that the whole group was on their way to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Katyn massacre of Polish people.



When I heard about what had happened, I was travelling in Moldova. After the initial shock subsided, both me and my friend who studies in Kraków felt an urgent need to get back to Poland as soon as possible. Even though one can have many opinions about Kaczyński as a politician, the death of a well known person is always a moving occasion. In Poland, the mourning was visible everywhere. Polish flags with black mourning bands flapped around in front of every building, on the balconies of blocks of flats, from the windows of buses, tied onto monuments and as pixels on screens. When I arrived to Poznań, all the people at the train station had gathered in front of a small TV screen to see the coffin of Maria Kaczyńska being brought to Warsaw. Candles were burning day and night for both those who died in the plane crash, as well as for those who were killed in Katyn. The official mourning week ended when the presidential couple were buried in the Wawel Cathedral in Kraków. The burial into Wawel was something that raised a lot of opinions and emotions in Poland. Another thing that irritated many was that the plane crash was so strongly personified by the presidential couple only, whereas the other victims were left to the background.

While watching the funeral I thought to myself that the three latest presidents of Finland all live. Even Urho Kekkonen died when I was still rocking in my cradle. Thus, I have no idea how a state funeral in my home country is like. Now almost two weeks have passed since the funeral of the Kaczyński couple. The mourning period is over, nearly all the flags have come down and the people of Poland have moved on despite the magnitude of their shock. The coming turn of the month and the long weekend will hopefully give everyone a chance to relax and calm down after everything that has been going on during the last few weeks. The spring/summer season started here a long time ago, but finally the nature is catching on as well. Everything is lovely and green, and the trees which have blossomed into a white, fragrant bunch of flowers, have the power of transforming even the gloomiest of minds into celebrating the days that grow lighter and longer. And, from the politically incorrect jokes made of the tragical events, one is bound to realize - there is a limit even to Slavic melancholy!

Until next month,

Anna

