



**ICONOGRAPHY OF NATIONAL MOURNING
IN POLISH PRESS**

Magdalena Mateja, Ph. D.
Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń, Poland

ABSTRACT

National mourning is announced by the highest-ranking state officials after the death of eminent personalities. The concept of mourning should be understood as way of showing grief in public spaces. In turn, the concept of iconography means a collection of illustrations, paintings, prints, drawings relating to a person, place or topic. The paper is about how the different segments of Polish press has responded to a plane crash on 10 April 2010 and its aftermath. On the day Polish president, his wife and other 94 people died in the Smolensk plane crash. Analyse of press images based on methods such as discourse analysis and interpretation of composition. Conclusions are to answer the following questions:

- How cultural background does determine the mourning representation?
- Which genres were adequate, to illustrate the mourning?
- Do the press segments differ in how they visualize mourning?
- Has Polish press changed the way of national mourning visualization since 1924?

KEY WORDS: national mourning, journalistic photography, photographic genres, Smolensk plane crash, Lech Kaczynski

INTRODUCTION

National mourning is announced by the highest-ranking state officials after the death of eminent personalities (most often associated with the country of its publication), or because of the great catastrophe. The concept of national mourning should be understood as way of showing grief in public space. It may be announced as a result of the tragic events in the country in which it ordered, but also as a tribute to the victims of similar events (attack, natural disaster or other) outside the country. In the period from 1924 to March 2012 it happened 24 times in Poland. The first national mourning was announced after Woodrow Wilson's death, to honor the memory of a former U.S. President who had an impact on international politics after the World War I. As well as mourning throughout the country was proclaimed after the death of the following political and religious leaders:

- Jozef Pilsudski, the Polish prominent statesman, co-creator of the country of Poland after World War I (1935),
- Joseph Stalin, leader of the Soviet Union (1953),
- Polish primate, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński (1981)
- Pope John Paul II (2005).

In addition, the National mourning honored the victims of terrorist attacks on WTC and Pentagon in 2001, and the subway bombings in London and Madrid a few years later. The train crash (16 deaths), which happened in March 2012 was the most recent case of public mourning in Poland. For comparison, in the neighboring Czech Republic national mourning honored the victims of attacks on the WTC, and the next mourning was announced more than 10 years later, after the death of Vaclav Havel who was outstanding and respected throughout the world leader. Comparing the Poles and other Slavic peoples, we see that they are temporally oriented to the past and pay tribute to tragic and painful episodes of their own and others' history [Mikulowski-Pomorski 2007: 345].

In turn, the concept of iconography means a collection of illustrations, paintings, prints, drawings relating to a person, place or topic. The long-term goal is to study how Polish press visualizes every event that gave reason to announce national mourning, however this particular paper is about how the Polish press has responded to a plane crash on 10 April 2010 and its aftermath. On the day Polish President Lech Kaczynski and his wife, Vice-Speakers of Parliament, a group of parliamentarians, commanders of the Polish army, President Office staff members, ministers, highest-ranking representatives of the state institutions, veterans' organizations, accompanying persons and the crew, that is 96 people lost their lives in the Smolensk plane crash. The aim of the expedition was to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Katyn war crime. The name is adequate for the occurrence of World War II, during which the Polish army officers, who had been in Soviet captivity, were insidiously shot. The fact of the shooting of prisoners was concealed from world public opinion until the Soviet Union decomposition. Today, for the Poles, Katyn is a symbol of political struggle for sovereignty and independence. Due to celebrate anniversary, many people from different political parties participated in the delegation, as the Katyn topic is relevant element of political discourse in Poland and it is used in a power struggle. In particular, the right-wing political groups, such as the national-Catholic, use symbols of the Katyn war crime as argument in political communications.



III. 1. *Our Lady of Katyn*. Bas-relief, depicting the Mother of God who holds the naked corpse of a soldier killed shot in the back of the head. Reproduction of the work has been used by right-wing daily newspaper to criticize the prime minister and president, that none of them will



visit Katyn to commemorate the second anniversary of TU-154 M crash. Illustration comes from the top issue of the right-wing, conservative newspaper of 19th March 2012 "Gazeta Polska Codziennie".

Information about the crash near Smolensk quickly gained the rank of global breaking news. In Poland, the journalist who first spread the news received the award for career achievement. Both the death of TU-154 M passengers and the funeral of President Kaczynski became the subjects with which nothing could compete in April 2010. The report of the Public Opinion Research Center shows that 92% of Poles watched the television reports on the plane crash and the events associated with it. Over two thirds of those surveyed listened to date information on this topic on the radio, and 63% of respondents regularly read in the press about the crash at Smolensk, and the president funeral. At the same time almost every third respondent bought the special edition of one of the dailies or weeklies devoted only to those events. Important issue from the perspective of the analysis is that national mourning after the plane crash was the longest in history, lasting up to 9 days. Under Polish law, the president declares national mourning, but after his death in the crash the Speaker of Parliament had to do it instead of Lech Kaczynski. And the tragically deceased president was the one who often proclaimed national mourning.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Selection of study area is associated with the properties of the press as a mass medium. Given the technical standards, but also the needs of readers printed newspapers and magazines offer more and more sophisticated iconic messages. In order to obtain reliable conclusions I researched newspapers and magazines belonging to different segments of the press. Research included periodicals which are traditionally associated with the dominance of image over text (here: the tabloids, colorful women's magazines with different functions, such as advising, entertainment, etc.), but also cultural or socio-political weeklies. The criterion for selection of titles was due to the circulation and the number of readers, in the case of the women's press and tabloids. Because of influencing public opinion, the analysis took into account most of the socio-cultural and socio-political weeklies with national coverage that currently appear in Poland. The analysis included newspapers published between 10 and 19 April 2010 and weeklies published between 12 and 25 April 2010. The way of setting time limits for the observation due to several factors: a) on April 10th the plane crashed, and several hours after there were distributed newspapers' special editions, mostly free of charge; b) the Kaczynski couple funeral was on Wawel Castle on Sunday 18th April, therefore, daily newspapers published reports of events on Monday; c) due to the publishing cycle magazines published reports of the funeral after the period of national mourning, and print editions with the date of April 25th. The study included visual components of press.

Conclusions in the final part of the work are an attempt to answer the following questions:

- How cultural, mainly religious background does determine the visual representations of Poles dramatic events in the press?
- Which genres, forms (such as reporter photography, photojournalism, portrait photo, and infographics) and the ways of expression were used to illustrate the national mourning?
- What is the direction of the press evolution in the above-mentioned areas? Is it possible to observe the constant elements, not changing from almost 100 years?
- Do the press segments differ in how they visualize the national mourning?

In carrying out the analysis, I managed with a description of methods and procedures that Gillian Rose discussed in detail in methodological guide. All visualizations, including photographs, offer images of the world, but note that they are interpretations, not transparent windows to the world. Extremely important is that visual sphere is crucial to the process of cultural construction of social life in modern Western societies [Rose 2010: 20]. Moreover, national mourning is announced on the basis of Article 11th *Act of National Emblem, Ancient Colors and Anthem of the Republic of Poland* (dated 31 January 1980). National mourning covered the whole of Polish territory, and the way it handled includes cultural and historical background. This is an important regulation that allows outputting conclusions about the Polish national culture from the way of celebrating and mourning visualizing in the media. As explained by Yuri Lotman, culture is something common to a particular community – a group of people living at the same time as well as social organization. From this it follows that culture is a form of communication between people and it is only possible in such a group in which people communicate with each other [Lotman 2010: 5]. Given the above, images analyses were based on methods such as discourse analysis and interpretation of composition.

RESULTS

The London "Daily Mirror" is passed as the prototype of sensational newspapers. Advertising "Daily Mirror", editorial staff has announced that an edition of 46 pages can be read in just 6 minutes. Today, tabloid publisher in Poland have similar goals. Tabloid newspapers are defined as "a small size with a predominance of illustrations of the text, color abuse." [Pisarek 2006: 211]. The study included visual aspects of the two existing in the market tabloids: "Fakt" and "Super Express". Average one-time circulation of both newspapers was more than 800 000 copies in January 2012, total sales amounted at the same time, 563 986 copies. "Fakt" belonging to the Ringier Axel Springer group is the most popular newspaper in Poland, and taking third place "SE" is issued by the Polish company MURATOR.

During the period of national mourning color photographs dominated the pages of Polish tabloids, although it is the custom to modify the layout and publishing black and white images. Editors often made use of semi-close-ups and close-ups to express pain on the faces of victims' family members. Portrait photography as one of the press photography variations has been popular genre of tabloid visualization. Portrait created in such a way that the reader has the impression of natural human behavior. A good portrait should reflect the nature and psychology of the hero, his interests, work, etc. [Wolny-Zmorzyński 2007: 73]. Both tabloids showed images of politicians and celebrities that make a tribute to the victims in public places.

Retail photographs were incidental, but when it appeared, it gained a symbolic significance. For example, Maria Kaczynski's ring through which it was possible to identify body president wife has been shown with a large close-up. In the same way tabloid showed a rosary and a watch – items for personal use belonging to Zbigniew Wassermann, right-wing parliamentarian. An interesting snapshot, rarely presented in the tabloid press, is a photograph of CASA military plane, which transported the coffin with the body of the President from Warsaw to Krakow. Grey colored plane was taken almost centrally in the so-called optical center [Ambrose, Harris 2012: 43], and is the only subject of photography. The plane is shown in blue against the sky, and there is so much space around the main theme (large frame). Composed in this way, the image filled the entire page. Due to "empty" image composition and the melancholic background color, the photography calls the transcendent connotations. Portrait and reporter photographs showed president daughter and members of other victims' families, but also ordinary citizens, unrelated to the victims, kneeling. This is the body position strongly rooted in the Catholic tradition. During the liturgy, this position may express praise to God, adoration, repentance, begging for forgiveness and help. Besides photographs, other visual elements were presented in the pages of tabloids. Infographic, the graphical information in the form of maps, tables and graphs should be mentioned at this point. With this kind of journalism there were shown: simulation of the flight to Smolensk, and the approach to landing; president Kaczynski's coffin section; plans for centers of Warsaw and Cracow, where the state funeral ceremonies were held; 3D plans for the interior of the cathedral on Wawel Hill. The only photomontage which was published in the pages of tabloids in the time interval deserves special note. Photomontage is a conscious deformation of the real world, having a "big propaganda and journalistic values with the ability to manipulate specific connotations in the minds of readers caused by the combination of fragmentary



images” [Wolny-Zmorzynski 2007: 100-101]. Looking at theme of the photomontage from a distance of time, it seems curious. Preparing to report on president Kaczynski funeral, “Super Express” (16th April edition) speculated on the presence of world leaders in solemn ceremony. So the funeral procession “assembled”, using images such as Angela Merkel, Nicolas Sarkozy, Jose Baroso, Barack Obama, Prince Charles, and Dmitry Medvedev. Because of Iceland’s volcanic ash from above, which in April 2010 blocked aircraft traffic in Europe, none of these leaders, except the Russian president did not take part in the ceremony.



III. 2. Examples of „double portrait”. Lech and Maria Kaczynski were perfect, accordant marriage for dozen years. After the tragic death, most newspapers presented their together, creating a sentimental narrative about love lasting to the grave, love stronger than death, etc. It is worth mentioning here that the portrait was a kind of “gratification” for signing the letter of support, the Poles gave Lech Kaczynski’s twin brother before the presidential election in 2010.

Journal title and date of publication + short description	The cover composition
<p>„Życie na gorąco” 15.04.2010</p> <p>cheap weekly, entertaining function, guidance section owner: Bauer group</p>	<p>Mosaic of different sizes images, in the center of the composition “double portrait” - photograph of Maria and Lech Kaczynski together, in black and white. Visualization of informal situation. Smaller colorful shots show: a Pole who light an ever-burning fire; Katyn war crime monument at the Powazki cemetery; “Putin’s gesture” – situation in which the Prime Minister of Russia embraced Polish Prime Minister on the Smolensk apron; a broken TU-154 M plane rear with a characteristic red and white square patchwork (photo by Sławomir Wisniewski). Back cover with no advertising, and photography appears “double portrait” (so-called casket composition) among the flowers which was placed before President House.</p>
<p>„Rewia” 14.04.2010.</p> <p>cheap weekly, entertaining function, guidance section, for middle-aged readers owner: Bauer group</p>	<p>The president’s daughter and twin brother, who stand on the Okecie apron, at the coffin with the body of Lech Kaczynski. Daughters face turned toward the photographer, expresses desolation.</p>
<p>„Na żywo” 15.04.2010.</p> <p>cheap weekly, with entertaining function containing guidance section owner: Bauer group</p>	<p>Two-part composition, the vertical axis of symmetrical division. Next to the “double portrait” appearing cheery Lech and Maria Kaczynski a photograph of the sad daughter (half close-up). Parents were portrayed against the background of the aircraft.</p>
<p>„Świat & Ludzie” 15.04.2010.</p> <p>cheap weekly, entertaining function, guidance section owner: Bauer group</p>	<p>“Double portrait” in which Maria and Lech Kaczynski hug each other fills the entire front cover.</p>

Table 1. The compositions of the magazine covers that are correlated with the date of Smolensk plane crash - the women’s press.



III. 3. Is there a picture of true compassion and the Polish-Russian reconciliation? In many elements Polish foreign policy have been based on complexes of the larger and more powerful neighbour country.

Journal title and date of publication + short description	The cover composition
<p>„Tygodnik Powszechny” 18.04.2010. socio-cultural Catholic weekly owner: Tygodnik Powszechny private limited company</p>	<p>Bell swinging image, there is also a bell ringer silhouette in the frame. Image retouched, black and white, by definition smudgy and blurred, and managed to create a “movement” of the bell.</p>
<p>„Przekrój” 13.04.2010. socio-cultural leftist weekly owner: Grzegorz Hajdarowicz company</p>	<p>Intense black shiny cover (front and back), totally devoid of subjects and human figures. Impact – only by color.</p>
<p>„Przekrój” 20.04.2010.</p>	<p>White background exposes an illustration based on a draft of the Supreme Temple of Providence, by Jakub Kubicki. Back cover ascetic, no subject, white.</p>
<p>„Polityka” 17.04.2010. center-leftist social and political weekly owner: “Polityka” cooperative</p>	<p>Tableau composed of 25 black and white portraits of the plane crash victims, who were associated with the sphere of politics. Images of Lech and Maria Kaczynski centrally located, the two portraits outlined white-red ribbon. The back cover in black, visual “quote” was placed in the center of the composition, i.e. a picture of broken TU-154 M rear with a characteristic red and white square patchwork (photo by Slawomir Wisniewski).</p>
<p>„Polityka” 25.04.2010.</p>	<p>Okecie apron on which the coffins with the victims bodies have been set. Next to the coffin full honor guard service. The dominant image is the sky: blue color contrasts with the warm, golden color of sunlight shining from behind a heavy layer of clouds. On the back cover there is a picture of coffins with the bodies of Lech and Maria Kaczynski, which are transported from the President House to the cathedral.</p>
<p>„Najwyższy Czas” 17.04.2010. far-right social and political weekly owner: 3S Media private limited company</p>	<p>“Double portrait” in which Mr. and Mrs. Kaczynski were shown in official situation. Black and white photo.</p>
<p>„Przegląd” 18.04.2010. leftist social and political weekly owner: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze i Literackie private limited company</p>	<p>A burning candle on a black background.</p>
<p>„Wprost” 18.04.2010. center-right social and political weekly owner: Platforma Mediowa Point Group S.A.</p>	<p>Close-up of Lech Kaczynski’s head on a black background. Looking up eyes and light illuminating the left side of face are the image dominants.</p>



<p>„Wprost” 25.04.2010.</p>	<p>“Double portrait” (color) between the piles of flowers that were laid before the President House. Photo retouching - change the flowers natural color in graphite black. Black and white back cover with a picture of “Putin’s gesture”.</p>
<p>„Gazeta Polska” 14.04.2010. far-right, national-Catholic social and political weekly owner: Niezależne Wydawnictwo Polskie private limited company</p>	<p>Photomontage consists of: close-up of the president face, countless ever-burning fires in the foreground and the crowd of mourners in the distance. Black and white picture.</p>

Table 2. The compositions of the magazine covers that are correlated with the date of Smolensk plane crash – weekly reviews.



III. 4. „Wprost” weekly cover. The President looks up, as if seeking a transcendent perspective. Like many others, the visual representation is firmly rooted in the Catholic tradition, although this was not explicitly.

CONCLUSIONS

In order to visualize the national mourning in 2010, press segments mentioned in the study used different journalistic photography genres (mostly portrait photography and photojournalism, relatively rare photomontage). Mournful motives repeated on a regular basis, this note applies to both the content of images, as well as formal issues. For example, the funeral procession and transportation of coffins with the victims bodies of were always photographed from above. While the half- and full close-ups were used to visualize the president’s daughter despair. Crashed TU-154 M photographs were published in all the segments mentioned. The snapshots showing the scale of plane devastation was repeated: the image of an inverted undercarriage, a piece of the wing with the engine, but above all cut off rear with white and red square patchwork. View the icon has a symbolic and emotional significance, in Polish cultural circle awakening almost automatic association with patriotism values.

The case of another press photo – the one on which Vladimir Putin hugged Polish prime minister Donald Tusk – proves that reflecting facts picture can be interpreted in radically different ways. For some publishers picture was an example of intimate, deeply humanitarian experience of death, but also a sign of emotions experienced collectively. When Putin image symbolized the compassion of the Russian people, a Tusk figure visualized despair Poles. The photography had usually descriptions showing the direction of mentioned above interpretation. However, some media saw in Putin’s gesture evidence of a plot that both Prime Ministers create against President Kaczynski or subordination condition of the Polish leader [Mateja 2011: 38-48].

Visualization of Smolensk crash victims in the press took into account of symbolism, ritual and Catholic customs. Colors (wreaths, flags) in the photographs clearly associated with the Polish evoked the nationwide character of tragedy. Based on analysis of mourning images in media, conclude that the sphere of religion and state (secular by definition) have become an inseparable. Maybe just a construct of the press, but arguably has an impact on attitudes and social behavior of readers.

Press segments had made self-identification by mourning visualization style. The existence of the constitutive features of the opinion-forming press, the cheap women’s press and tabloid press has confirmed. Cheap color magazines for women and also tabloids related differently to the private sphere of victims than socio-cultural and socio-political weeklies. Despite ongoing tabloidization, visual representation of mourning is a proof of the existence of editorial and technical standards in the opinion-forming press.

Newspapers and weeklies showed political actors in a positive light in a period of mourning, what evidence are portraits of a smiling, cheerful, good-looking Lech Kaczynski. Prior to April 10th, 2010 the President could not count on a similar way of visualization. The tabloids followed the various vices and blunders made by president, but the most critical was the weekly “Polityka”, calling the president as emperor in 2009. In the presentation of the plane crash victims the media assimilated the principle “of those who died, speak well or at all ...” (from Latin, *de mortuis aut bene aut nihil*). Jacek Zakowski, a prominent Polish journalist being asked why he changed attitude to President Lech Kaczynski after his death. “Respecting the principle of social life, I make my own opinions respecting the people who died” – he said. Another journalist explained in turn: “Majesty of death belongs to the Polish customs” [Rutkowska 2010]. As it turns out, the mechanisms that determined the functioning of the press in April 2010, entrenched in it dozen years ago. Tabloid “Fakt” (ed. 19.04.2010.) presented quotations from the 1935 newspapers, to show the analogy between the Lech Kaczynski and Jozef Pilsudski funerals. Parallels would be another argument for the thesis that the media – regardless of the current press doctrine – try not to break socio-cultural rules.



III. 5. „Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny” wrote on Jozef Pilsudski funeral in Krakow: “Generals carry the coffin on a cannon gun-carriage drawn by six black horses. Soldier goes ahead with a cross. The coffin is covered with a flag with the emblem. Bag with a hat and sabre of Pilsudski lied in the coffin. Archbishop of Krakow, Adam Sapieha leads the procession...” [Burnetko 2010]. One newspaper posted on the death of Jozef Pilsudski as mere information among many other messages. In response, the Board of the Polish Association of Publishers of Newspapers and Periodicals, on May 14, 1935 removed the newspaper from the list of Union members. The same day, authorities confiscated the newspaper edition.

In the ways of visualizing the victims, especially politicians, two apparently contradictory tendencies are being observed: to show the plane crash victims in a aureole of saint (sacralization) or hero (heroization), and exposing his private life (“common man”, “family man”). Media shortened the distance to the crash victims, to imitate the kind of family relations between persons of the public sphere and the readers of the mass press, showing the private, often very personal photographs of the home archive.

Polish society was in emotional shock after the crash, so while respecting the cultural foundations, media messages, including the visual, were appropriate to the needs and possibilities of public perception. Death in extraordinary circumstances (due to a devastating illness, shooting, aircraft crash), and a spectacular funeral give the press rise to create a posthumous politician image which does not fit the portrait sketched earlier. Sudden and unexpected death or preceded by suffering or the pain often sanctifies. A similar process occurred during the national mourning when president Kaczynski was almost displayed in the royal glory. Funeral procession photomontage, in which monarchs and world leaders had to take part, reminds us of this. Also, other participants tragic flight appears in the aureole of heroism, suggesting that they make a sacrifice of life for their country. Katyn themes that were mentioned in the introduction, are often a way of expressing this type of interpretation.

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