

AIR CRASH OF THE PLANE IL-62 PLL LOT „NICOLAUS COPERNICUS” - SELECTED ISSUES FROM CASE STUDY

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Abstract. *On March 14, 1980, on the territory of the 6th Fortress of Warsaw, in the area of the Warsaw-Okęcie International Airport, a long-range jet crashed IL-62 designated as SP-LAA, “Nicolaus Copernicus”.*

The incident resulted in the deaths of all those on board, including singer Anna Jantar, who was at the height of her fame at the time, American ethnomusicologist Dr. Alan P. Meriam, a delegation of Polish students, and an amateur boxing team along medical staff and trainers. Due to censorship and the secret services, the real causes of the disaster were kept secret for many years.

To date, no one in Poland or abroad has undertaken to edit a scholarly work related to the event, so there is no officially authorized material that could be successfully used as a compendium of knowledge and a reliable source of information.

The article presents the most relevant information from an independent scientific monograph of more than 300 pages, where the legal, historical, forensic as well as those related to the safety of air travel are discussed in detail. Conducting reliable research has made it possible to correct facts that have been fixed in public opinion, but are not reflected in the file material, and relevant threads and hitherto concealed issues of a strategic nature have been raised in an effort to clarify the real cause-and-effect sequence as a result of which the crash occurred.

The author has analyzed the collected material in particular historical, legal and forensic aspects. Issues and aspects surrounding the event that have not been discussed so far have also been elaborated. The not inconsiderable role of propaganda, censorship, disinformation carried out by the organs functioning in the previous regime has also been taken into account. In addition to the case files in the archives' resources, I have analyzed more than a thousand copies of the Polish press, about two hundred foreign newspapers /American press/ I have also made use of literature imported from abroad, among others from Russia, Germany and the USA, published during the existence of the USSR, so as to confront the file information with official documents issued by the aircraft manufacturer, which the Soviet side refused to make available to Polish scientists in 1980. The author reveals information hidden from the public and tries to explain the actual algorithm of the crash taking into account the interdisciplinary dimension of the methods he adopted.

Keywords: *plane crash, investigation*

Introduction

The tragic plane crash, an IL-62 aircraft belonging to the LOT Polish Airlines fleet performing flight no. 007 on the New York-Warsaw route, occurred on March 14, 1980 on the grounds of a military fort, near Okęcie International Airport. (now EPWA). As a result of the collision with the ground resulting in the disintegration of the machine into small pieces, the death of all persons on board occurred.

In order to reliably explore the issues surrounding the disaster in question, the author undertook a review of the case files archived in the archives of the National Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), analyzed the documentary materials produced to date related to disasters and aviation during the communist era. In addition, the statements of scientists who were members of expert teams investigating the causes of the plane crash, employees of the aviation infrastructure and representatives of the authorities operating at the scene were confronted.

Due to the fact that the events discussed in this case study took place in a completely different reality and, to be more precise, they fell on the period of operation of the People's Republic of Poland, Poland was not a member of the European Union it should be remembered that the operation of the civil aviation sector during the Cold War had a completely different dimension than the model of conduct in modern times, especially taking into account the safety of travel and stringent requirements for technical operation of aircraft. Due to the limitations related to the length of this article, the author decided to present the most important threads of his scientific research of any left documentation on the catastrophe, which were carried out over a period of more than two years.

The IL-62 aircraft was developed by the S. Ilyushin design bureau in the early 1960s, and the first test flight took place in 1963.

The fact that adjacent engines were grouped together posed a real risk of damaging another engine if one of them failed. However, the Soviet manufacturer explained this as a deliberate measure to bring significant benefits to the operation of the machine, among other things, to improve the aerodynamics of flight, facilitate eventual launching and landing without released landing gear. The IL-62 was able to fly from Moscow to New York without a stopover for 7700 km.

On March 29, 1971, a contract was signed between the Polish headquarters of Polmot and the Soviet Avioeksport for the delivery of three IL-62 aircraft.

The first IL-62 to be imported from the Ilyushin factory in Kazan to Poland was a model with the factory number 11004, its production was completed on February 1, 1972 the machine was named after Nicolaus Copernicus. On July 19, 1972, an air service agreement was concluded between the People's Republic of Poland and the United States.

The inaugural flight across the Atlantic Ocean took place on May 5, 1972 and was a ceremonial event. It was held on the Warsaw-Chicago route. The introduction of this type of machine to the airline contributed to the opening of a network of new routes, increased the prestige of the carrier, and above all was the driving force behind the propaganda element, which played a considerable role at the time. In addition to flights to New York and Chicago at the turn of 1972/1973, Polish travel agencies chartered LOT IL-62 for flights to Boston, Cleveland and Detroit in the US, as well as Montreal and Toronto in Canada. Even during the inauguration of the new routes, it happened that the aircraft in question succumbed to malfunctions that made the flight impossible. The operation of the IL-62 aircraft was so problematic in terms of the frequency of failures that as early as 1978 a much more modern, economical version, of the IL-62M type, was ordered from the Soviet Union and incorporated into the company's fleet in 1979.

Copernicus' last flight

On March 13, 1980, flight 006 on an airplane from Warsaw with (a stopover in Gander) landed in New York in the midday hours by Captain Tomasz Smolicz. This was the last successful landing of this aircraft.

The crew reported no technical malfunctions, the aircraft was handed over to the ground crew, while the staff went to quarters, where they met the crew of Captain Pawel Lipowczan, who was to make a return trip to Warsaw on this aircraft. The weather deteriorated significantly - there was a heavy snowstorm over the New York airport, hampering airport operations.

A total of 77 tickets were purchased for Flight 007 from New York to Warsaw on March 13, 1980. Among the passengers on the Copernicus were the singer Anna Jantar-Kukulska, who was at the height of her fame at the time, who at the time had awards in the form of two gold

longplay records and in 1979 was awarded the badge of "Meritorious Cultural Activist" returning from a three-month tour, Dr. Alan Perkhaust Meriam, a lecturer at Indiana University, an American entomusicologist and researcher in the anthropology of music traveling to Warsaw at the invitation of the Institute of Musicology at Warsaw University, who was to deliver several lectures there.

Six students representing Warsaw universities at the conference of the International Association of Students of Economics and Business Sciences taking place in New York, and 14 amateur boxing fighters from the U.S. amateur team, along with the other eight members of the delegation representing doctors, trainers and massage therapists....

The trip to Poland and the boxing competitions in Krakow and Katowice were intended as a form of reward for the young athletes for their achievements to date. For several of them, these were their first sparring sessions outside the US.

According to the flight schedule, the plane was scheduled to land in Warsaw at around 9:40 am, but due to a delay of more than two hours, it was scheduled to land at 11:15 am.

At 11:13 a.m., a final descent for landing was undertaken. At that time, the aircraft was at a distance of about 8 kilometres from the airport, being at an altitude of 300 meters above the ground. The commander of the aircraft reported the lack of proper signalling of the release of the landing gear nacelle, in view of which, in accordance with procedures, the fact of the release of the landing gear could be confirmed by personnel from the air traffic control tower, in the alternative option the aircraft was directed to circle over the airport and attempt an emergency ground release. The second way was generally a better decision-making option for two reasons because it then allowed immediate verification of whether only a bulb had burned out or whether the landing gear nacelles had in fact not been properly released.

Captain Lipowczan therefore chose, in accordance with the established procedure, the safer option to solve the technical problem. The engine revolutions during the landing approach were reduced and operated at a power limited to the safe amount prescribed for this procedure. The pilot reported the fact of the emergency to flight control and was instructed to increase the altitude to a ceiling of 650 meters.

In order to be able to carry out the standard procedure of going to the second circle, it was necessary to raise the machine to 650 meters, for this purpose it was immediately necessary to increase the power of all engines. A few seconds after moving the engine speed control manoeuvres to the position for maximum takeoff power, the shaft was twisted and the turbine of engine number 2 exploded. The aircraft was then about 3.5 km. from the airport. plating of the engine casing, and succumbed to gravitational forces without doing any other damage and fell to the ground, the second fragment hit the nacelle of engine No. 1 damaging it which disrupted the propulsion system, and resulted in a reduction in the efficiency of this engine. The third turbine disk fragment caused the most havoc. Piercing the fuselage of the aircraft, it encountered the elevator pushrods, rudder pushrods, and electrical wiring harnesses in its path, finally hitting the nacelle of engine No. 3 still, also disrupting its operation. The extent of the damage done by the final fragment was critical to the continued flight. The breakage of the aforementioned pushrods, caused the rudder of the altitude to drop under the influence of lack of tension with further elements leading to the cockpit and the activity of gravitational forces. This put the machine into a flight aimed at an inevitable collision with the earth's surface. The only possible device to change the trajectory slightly remained the ailerons located on the aircraft's wings, whose actuators connecting the cockpit to the wings did not reach the rear of the fuselage, so they could not be damaged. They worked without interference until the right wing detached as a result of hitting a tree, and a few seconds later the plane collided with the surface of the frozen moat of Fort Okęcie. The thickness of the ice reached up to about 35 Cm,

while the depth of the moat was a length of 3.5 meters, the height of the earth embankment measured from the surface of the ice sheet was 5.9 meters.

Had it not been for the life-saving measures taken by the pilot to save the lives of those on the ground, i.e. deflecting the ailerons to allow the plane to deviate from its original course, the plane would have hit the juvenile correctional facility located on Development Street, now named after Captain Lipowczan. At the time, its building housed many juvenile males along with their guardians and teachers. In addition, it is necessary to point out other circumstances that may indicate an attempt to control the machine and change the flight path to one that was aimed at saving lives. Despite the crew's surprise at the extent of the damage and the time pressure that accompanied them from the moment of the explosion to the moment of impact with the ground, i.e. only 26 seconds, it is documented that they attempted to change the flight path by adjusting the engines. Engine No. 2 and No.3 were set to idle, engine No. 4, as the only operable engine, was set to full takeoff power, while the power regulating manoeuvre of engine No. 1 was pushed violently to increase power, twelve seconds before Ilyushin crashed.

Buses with stretchers and equipment, the fire department and ambulances were dispatched from the airport. Several minutes after the crash, LOT management and the Minister of Communications and the commander of the Warsaw Militia arrived on the scene.

Immediately, 250 representatives of the fire department, more than 550 militia officers, the investigative bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, as well as the forensic department and other services were directed to undertake rescue operations and secure the scene. As a result of the reconnaissance carried out, it was determined that the death toll was all those traveling on the plane.

A large group of family members waited for the plane's arrival; it usually takes a long time to stay overseas, returning to Poland is a celebration and event for the whole family, people arrive by cab from various places in the country.

People waiting for the arrival of travellers from New York were not immediately informed of the disaster. An announcement was given about the delay of the plane then around 12 o'clock they were asked to a separate room where they were informed about the tragic disaster, they proceeded to compile a list of victims of the catastrophe. The list was verified until the evening. Teletypewriters from the LOT representative office in New York, Pan American, were arriving. After it was read in the evening, the list of passengers of Flight 007 appeared in the press the next day.

After securing the crash site, photographic and video documentation and visual inspections were carried out. This was followed by the completion of bodies and human remains, and a search of the scene for identity documents and other valuables.

In order to powerfully clear the military area in its entirety and extract fragments of passengers' bodies, engines, luggage and cargo it was necessary to bring in specialized water pumps from the "Bogdanka" mine to remove water from the 3.5-meter moat.

Documents, property, luggage, and cargo found with the corpses were transported to Militia Headquarters, where they were subjected to visual inspection and preliminary selection. At a later stage of the operation, they were shown to persons representing the rights of the tragically deceased. During the cleanup work, the remains of the plane were transported to one of the hangars in Okecie airport, where experts were able to conduct further research.

Picturing the final moments before the crash from the perspective of the events taking place inside the jet and, therefore, from the point of view of the crew and passengers, it should be presumed that the violent explosion, the roar of the uneven operation of the engines and the sudden tilt of the aircraft to the right and then the momentum towards the ground were a significant surprise to them and, at the same time, a cause of severe stress. Despite this, the

crew, mastered their emotions and tried until the last moments to find a solution to the critical situation. The sudden change of course and the abrupt departure from the runway could have been noticed by passengers occupying seats directly by the window and especially those who often travelled using the Warsaw airport. About the full awareness of the danger of the situation in which the travellers found themselves, can be deduced from the position that some of them took immediately before the crash. One of the officers conducting the identification activities of the victims stated: *“you could see how these people were fighting for their lives, because the positions in which their bodies were in were contracted, in some places their hands were clenched on parts of the seats and they had long muscles, these boxers had detached, this showed that they were clasping with all their strength, trying as if to hold on to the seats”*.

The injuries resulting in the deaths of those on board were compounded by factors such as the speed of the aircraft, the angle of the machine relative to the plane of the earth, the obstacles the machine hit immediately before crashing, the shape of the moat surface and the fort, and the displacement of the interior of the passenger cabins. More specifically, they died as a result of sustaining multiple organ injuries, dismemberment by sharp elements and crushing by the jet's equipment. Corpses and human remains were thrown a considerable distance, with a range of several hundred square meters, none of the bodies were found whole. Fragments of corpses were revealed on the grounds of the fort and the adjacent military unit, in niches near the fort's wall, in the moat after water had been pumped out of it, and between damaged parts of the aircraft as they were disassembled. The bodies and fragments of human organs that were revealed were numbered and photographed, and then transported to the Forensic Medicine Institute in Warsaw on Oczki Street, which were successively subjected, with the participation of prosecutors, officers of the Capital Police Headquarters and doctors specializing in forensic medicine, to activities aimed at identifying the identity of the victims and other medical and forensic examinations. Before the autopsy began, the corpses were again photographed, secured and any deposits such as documents or valuables were described. The bodies were then fingerprinted and autopsied. Once completed, the corpses were wrapped in white sheets, placed in a plastic bag and transferred to coffins for transport to the cemetery's cold room.

All of the laboratory tests conducted for the presence of alcohol in the blood of the Copernicus crew had negative results, and the health of the pilots was also not in question. In the course of conducting an examination of the corpses and remains of the victims, special attention was paid to, elements of clothing, physical characteristics, the type and distribution of injuries sustained, and blood was drawn. The type of clothing some of the victims were wearing at the time of death made it possible to identify the pilots and, in part, the boxing team players.

In an article by American scientists on the activities that were carried out by a delegation of experts from the United States in March 1980, information can be obtained on methods of identifying corpses. The team consisted of two dentists, an endodontist, an expert in aviation medicine and toxicology. Pathomorphologists examined a total of 44 victims and the odontology team examined 34 bodies.

The Americans arrived with medical records that had been created while the victims were still alive and had been maintained by general practitioners, sports medicine doctors and dentists. In the case of four of the bodies, the medical team waived the odontological identification procedure given the successful outcome of an earlier analysis of fingerprint prints by FBI agents. X-rays were taken of each of the victims with special attention to the mouth and dental fragments. The researchers found no burn marks on the corpses that were examined. Identity recognition by an organoleptic method (visually) was also carried out by members of the amateur boxing association who flew in from the US, who knew the deceased boxers personally. On the basis of visual assessment, only four of the deceased were identified, using

only fingerprint methods, the identity of seven victims was established, using only dental records, a match was found with the personal information of eight people. In other cases, combined methods were used, given the injuries of the victims of Flight 007. A total of 30/31 American passengers were identified.

An attempt by the Soviet side to blame the SP-LAA crew for the disaster that occurred Polish investigators presumed that the catastrophe was the result of design shortcomings that were revealed during the operation of the IL-62 aircraft and engine defects, while representatives of the USSR, who participated in the commission's meetings, categorically rejected such conclusions.

As the cause of the crash, the Soviet side considered pilot errors of the machine, or more precisely, pilot error. Following the line of thinking of Soviet experts, Captain Lipowczan, for unknown reasons in the final phase of the flight, would have had to intentionally steer the machine towards the ground to cause the intended disaster. This primitive attempt to blame the crew making the last flight of the SP-LAA is contradicted by numerous circumstances indicating a completely different course of events. Parts of the engine and other components were thrown outside the engine nacelles and the fuselage of the aircraft - they were found on the ground in the area over which the aircraft directly flew. The parts of the machine ended up outside the fuselage of the aircraft as a result of the action of the violent displacement of the turbine disk components, which broke into three virtually evenly spaced pieces.

Individual parts of the IL-62 constituted valuable research and evidence material that made it possible to reconstruct the history of material changes that occurred as a result of the engine's operation. This was significant enough, for the sake of further actions of the Soviet side, consisting in not accepting the findings and conclusions of Polish specialists leaning on the crash. When the team of domestic experts unequivocally refuted the claims of the crew's piloting errors, representatives of the USSR claimed that the damage to the N-K-8 engine was caused by a collision with the ground. In simple terms, this meant that, according to Soviet experts, the plane's engines were not damaged when the plane was over Warsaw in the airport area 26 seconds before the crash and were damaged when the machine crashed into the fort area.

This was, of course, another attempt to avoid responsibility on the part of the USSR and Ilyushin's design bureau, since admitting design errors would have opened up the possibility of claiming damages and would have forced the redesign, to some extent, of the technological solutions in the manufactured model (IL-62 continued to be manufactured until 1995 after modernizations. The device recording flight parameters did not record all due information on the status of the onboard instruments, but only the course of the engines. Data on navigation, communication with the ground, crew conversations were missing. This meant that the black box was partially inoperative, nevertheless the aircraft was allowed to operate passenger flights. The device was tested and installed in a twin aircraft - thus proving that at the time of the crash it was not working correctly.

Among the main factors that had a direct impact on the occurrence of the disaster were the aspects listed below

1. It happened that the scheduled overhaul did not take place due to staff shortages in the positions of licensed mechanics. Documents on the essential maintenance of the IL-62 showed that the technical controller allowed one flight, while in reality the aircraft still made several flights, despite the defects reported by the crews. Information coming directly from an operational contact who was one of the members of the crew flying on the IL-62 confirmed the facts of sending inoperative aircraft on foreign routes, as well as the lack of efficiency of the

apparatuses intended to diagnose and detect possible damage to the engine turbines, during technical tests before the aircraft was cleared and handed over to the crew.

2. Intermediate stops were made at the Canadian-owned airport in Gander, Newfoundland. In the case of the IL-62 aircraft, they were necessary in order to refuel the route from Warsaw to New York. The reasons for the forced stopovers in Gander starting in 1973 were the insufficient length of the runway in Warsaw, which prevented the machine from being fully refuelled.

In addition, it should be added that each stopover caused earlier fatigue and shortened the manufacturer-imposed limit of landings after which a general overhaul of the jet was necessary.

3. PLL LOT's imposed economic policy of seeking savings on aviation fuel. Domestic fuel was much cheaper than that available at airports in capitalist countries, and for this reason LOT's management put pressure on pilots to refuel planes economically and with sufficient foreign regulations to make a return flight. It was not uncommon for these planes to arrive at the New York airport with the sound and light signals sounding to alert them to critical fuel levels, as discussed above.

4. In the first half of March 1980, i.e., the last days preceding the crash, IL-62, with SP-LAA markings, did not meet the basic safety requirements required for air travel. In addition, the electrical installation responsible for recording parameters, was damaged and did not adequately record the relevant data that was originally supposed to be recorded with its use. The aircraft made regular flights while being technically inoperative, i.e. having defects that precluded the possibility of operating the aircraft if they occurred.

5. Warsaw Okęcie Airport did not have adequate technical facilities, i.e. an engine dynamometer and a workshop with a laboratory to be able to carry out any reliable scientific research that would make it possible to determine the legitimacy of extending the service life of the NK-8-4 propulsion unit. Therefore, it was not possible to carry out expert opinions that would serve as an argument in favor of extending the service life, or to measure the fatigue life of the engines, whose components were known to be damaged even before the warranty period expired. The nearest research and development unit with the equipment required for such activities was located in Rybinsk in the USSR. The original service life envisaged in the jet's technical specifications of 5,000 hours was extended initially to 6,000 and then up to 8,000.

6. Another of the glaring deficiencies was the lack of a working ILS system during the Copernicus' approach to landing. This system was damaged on January 23, 1980, when an emergency landing of a Tu-134 SP-LGB aircraft took place. The machine damaged the aforementioned equipment, lost a wing, fell off the runway and burst into flames. A total of 51 days elapsed between this incident and the SP-LAA crash, the country's largest airport with international airport status was operating without a system that should have been repaired immediately.

7. According to the secured documentation, the aircraft's resource on the day of the crash was: 5537h 45 min for engine No. 1, 5459h 41 min for engine No. 2, 8001 h 21 min for engine No. 3, 3178 h 40 min for engine No. 4. In fact, the technical assumptions predicted the maximum service life of the NK-8-4 engine at 3000-5000 hours. Propaganda by Polish airline representatives presented in the press gave falsified technical data on the maximum operating time of engines installed on this type of jet. Jacek Kujawa, who was employed by PLL LOT, assured that the engine that initiated the plane's failure had the smallest runtime and was scheduled to work 18,000 hours.

An attempt by the Soviet side to blame the SP-LAA crew for the disaster that occurred

In the opinion of Polish scientists, the catastrophe is the result of design shortcomings that were revealed in the course of operation of the IL-62 aircraft and engine defects, while representatives of the USSR, who participated in the commission's meetings, categorically rejected such conclusions. The Soviet side considered the cause of the crash to be piloting errors of the machine, or more precisely, pilot error. Following the line of thinking of Soviet experts, Captain Lipovchan, for unknown reasons in the final phase of the flight, would have had to intentionally steer the machine towards the ground to cause the intended disaster. This primitive attempt to blame the crew making the last SP-LAA flight is contradicted by numerous circumstances indicating a completely different course of events. Allegations initiated by the Soviet Union are contradicted in particular by the following facts:

1. Parts of the engine and other components were ejected outside the engine nacelles and fuselage of the aircraft - they were found on the ground in the area over which the plane directly flew. These subassemblies were discovered by the ZOMO as a result of a search of the area over which the plane flew, as well as by bystanders reporting in person to the police station and voluntarily handing over the found fragments for a handover protocol. It does not require more extensive proof that the damage caused by the sudden physical forces that occurred in the airspace in the power unit moments after the crew increased the engine speed is different from that caused by the machine hitting the ground at about 350km/h. Thermal traces, friction and damage to the directional rudder pushers clearly indicated that the sequence of damage occurred in less than a few seconds while the machine was still in flight, and immediately after the decision was made to go to the second circle. For this reason, the assumption strenuously pushed by the USSR is all the more preposterous, since, as proven by numerous mechanoscopic studies, expert opinions and simulations carried out by investigative bodies and research and scientific units in Poland.

2. When the team of domestic experts unequivocally refuted the claims of the crew's piloting errors, representatives of the USSR claimed that the damage to the engine of the N-K-8 was caused by a collision with the ground. In simple terms, this meant that, according to Soviet experts, the plane's engines were not damaged when the plane was over Warsaw in the airport area 26 seconds before the crash and were damaged when the machine crashed into the fort area. This was, of course, another attempt by the USSR and Ilyushin's design bureau to avoid responsibility, since admitting design errors would have opened up the possibility of claiming damages and would have forced some redesign of the technological solutions in the model being produced. IL-62 continued to be produced until 1995 after modernizations.

3. Deliberate introduction of Polish scientists by representatives of the Soviet scientific committee. Prof. Jerzy Maryniak an expert in the field of mechanics and aviation, a professor at the Warsaw University of Technology, explained the background of this incident in 2008 in the program Aviation Stories with the words: , "The Russians claimed that the plane could still sustain itself in level flight on a single engine. Then, from the flight dynamics side, I demanded that they provide engine characteristics since they claimed that it could still hold on one, on one engine... nothing was provided [by the representative of the Soviet side] completely nothing. Also, all this had to be recalculated on its own... " Given the Soviet engineers' unwillingness to cooperate honestly, the professor had to use the intrigue of informally obtaining this data from the original source, the Soviet Union, to conduct his own research and calculations. Prof. Maryniak asked the then chief of pilots Capt. Dr. Tomasz Smolicz to copy sensitive data on the specifications of the NK-8 engine when propelling the IL-62 aircraft in terms of generating enough power to investigate whether the aircraft would be able to continue flying on a single

engine. Dr. Smolicz honored the professor's request while on a delegation to the USSR and redrew the relevant parameters that had been concealed from Polish scientists. The Soviet side claimed that it was as possible, while according to the professor's calculations and later control calculations made by a team of Polish scientists, it turned out that the engine generated insufficient power. With only a working engine, this type of aircraft could only perform a descent flight, depending on the load, and therefore could not maintain a horizontal direction of flight.

Robbing of passengers' bodies and theft of property from luggage at the scene

Only a few minutes elapsed between the moment of the crash and the arrival of service officers on the scene, and bystanders appeared at the fort, which was then the site of a military unit. One of the first present there was Jerzy Dziewulski - then head of the Anti-Terrorist Unit. He confirmed the fact of looting of survivors' property, which was met with his firm response - he was to fire a gun shot into the air to chase potential thieves away from the site. The theft of banknotes and other valuables is confirmed by Wiktor Mikusinski lieutenant present at the scene with the words: , *"... this access to the casemates was full, scattered empty wallets, purses of purses, some of the officers lose, as if at all, understanding of what is happening and taking the opportunity does not begin to steal, to rob the corpses..."*.

It was widely known that planes making return flights from the US, very often carried items that, due to economic conditions, at the time were seen as luxury goods, unavailable to the wider public. It should be pointed out (p. 68) that a significant amount of gold jewelry, foreign currency and other valuable items were revealed, the value of which was tentatively estimated at about several million zlotys, for the realities of the time, since the incident took place before the denomination made in 1995. On March 16, the Foreign Ministry received a secret cipher from Washington. Its contents indicated that one of the passengers was a security employee of a Polish diplomatic post and was in possession, during the air travel, of cash in the amount of \$2,000, representing his savings. Also revealed was a voucher generated by the American branch of PKO 11 days before the crash entitling the passenger to take delivery of a Fiat 126p special version car, equivalent to \$1,640. The fact that a purse belonging to Anna Jantar-Kukulka was found was also pointed out. During the interrogation, on July 11, 1980, the former officer testified, about the fact that the information about the disclosure of the purse belonging to the victim of the plane crash, he had received from, "an unspecified policewoman", and in view of this, there is no chance or circumstances to identify the officer. It was also stated that in view of the enormity of the size of the crash, "the services acted showing maximum diligence." The above laconic statement contradicts the situation that took place immediately before the letter was drafted by J. Kukulski - the singer's husband. From his memoirs on the disaster we can read, among other things: , *"One of the officers of the Citizens' Militia came to our house and said that he was in the team that worked on extracting the bodies, and he saw her passport, in which there were also a few thousand dollars"* and , *"It was all lost, the money, the suitcases. Even the jewellery that Anya was wearing, they ripped it off her"*.

The fact that onlookers arrived at the scene of the tragedy was also confirmed by the press report: , *"Men, women and children forcing without restraint the precarious ice of the moat in which more than one had already drowned and scratching at the slimy turf of the forts. Immediately afterwards - I guess it wasn't five minutes after the accident? - white ambulance personnel follow in their footsteps. How many ambulances were there? A lot. Very many. Unfortunately, they were quickly turning back with nothing. Well, and the MO arrived, bringing order"*. The fact that the singer had cash in her possession, in the amount of more than \$4,000

during her air travel, was confirmed in an official letter by members of the TRAGAP band accompanying her on a recent tour of Polish clubs.

Other valuables she took with her on the return trip included a white gold ring with diamonds, a second white gold ring with five diamonds, a gold chain, a report bag and a camera (type model). The aforementioned items the singer had with her when she boarded the plane. One of the biographical books dedicated to the person of the artist reveals the significant handling of property and irregularities in the activities conducted on March 14, 1980. J. Kukulski recalled that after a heated discussion, the singer's passport, previously considered lost, was found. On May 27, 1980, one of the MIA's second lieutenants gave a written explanation that read: *“I, the undersigned, declare that I participated in the rescue operation related to the plane crash of plane IL-62 at Okecie on 14.03.80 in a group of frogmen. I also declare that I am aware of the fact of finding a woman's purse with its contents, which contained, among other things, a passport in the name of Anna Kukulska Jantar. At the same time, I mention on the basis of my own observations that the action of securing the property of the tragically deceased passengers was carried out on the day of the crash in a disorganized and chaotic manner”*.

The role of censorship and conspiracy theories about the disaster

The dissemination of any information regarding defects or irregularities in the operation of passenger aircraft belonging to a state-owned enterprise was forbidden to representatives of any media as early as August 27, 1974 by the General Office of Press and Radio Control. Only the Polish Press Agency was authorized to inform the public through the mass media, while other materials and publications had to be coordinated with its corporate management on a case-by-case basis. The investigation files also include a prohibition on informing crews and flight personnel performing flights on IL-62 about irregularities that were revealed in the course of investigative activities, both in an official manner and by operational methods. The above order also applied to journalists. Such a course of action was illogical - in most aviation companies, issues of unusual incidents or difficulties in the use of aircraft are discussed on an ongoing basis with personnel, and in case of doubts that are not regulated in the aircraft's manual, consultations are sought directly with the manufacturer. Just a few days after the crash of Ilyushin, numerous understatements, rumors and sensational information began to emerge in the public divining around the tragic event regarding the circumstances, causes and reasons why the plane did not reach its destination. These inquiries reflecting public unrest, differing from the facts that one encounters when analyzing the totality of available materials collected in the file documentation. Underlying the urban legend appearing in several narratives was the identity of the passengers aboard the Copernicus during flight 007, and was closely linked to singer Anna Jantar and foreign travellers.

Rumor had it that the crash near the Warsaw airport of a plane making transatlantic flights was orchestrated by the special services while the artist was sold to a harem in agreement with the government of the People's Republic of Poland, which for a price of gold appropriate to the singer's weight was to cover up the fact. The passengers on the plane were also supposed to be Soviet scientists who, due to their advanced knowledge of the sciences and the classified information they possessed, were "inconvenient" to the authorities. Another narrative claimed that the singer was supposed to cooperate with foreign services, and due to her popularity at home and abroad, a crime scenario characterized as an unfortunate accident was planned. Explosive charges were to be installed in the engines and contraption of the plane.

Numerous people and many reasons were mentioned for the hijacking and sale of the singer's eventual disappearance or death. Another version claimed that the singer had fled to Hungary and was living there under altered personalities. Leaving aside the wide range of conspiracy theories, the hypothesis of a possible sabotage, terrorist attack was initially considered as one of the investigators' versions. However, it was quickly rejected. Col. T. Kwiatkowski requested that the plane be subjected to tests for acids, corrosives and explosives. On March 25, 1980, the possibility of possible sabotage and the contribution of third parties to the crash was ruled out.

Discontinuance of proceedings

Despite having a full range of file documentation, knowledge from witness testimony alarming about the disastrous technical condition of the machinery and unfair practices carried out at LOT Polish Airlines exposing passengers, crews and also bystanders on the ground to tragic death, no one has been held accountable to this day for condoning such practices.

The occurrence of the catastrophe clearly and thoroughly exhausted the elements of Article 136 §1 of the 1969 Criminal Code concerning the importation of an event that endangers human life or health or property of significant size, taking the form of, a catastrophe in land, water or air traffic . There should also be no doubt about the group of people who should bear criminal responsibility. Given the political circumstances, none of the individuals have incurred responsibility, either criminal or disciplinary. They enjoyed impunity and high financial emoluments, in a situation where it was not uncommon for the families of Flight 007 victims to lose their only breadwinner. The prosecutor's investigation was discontinued on March 30, 1981. Signing the procedural decision, the then provincial sub-prosecutor Stanislaw Mikke took the following position in justification of the discontinuance in view of the failure to establish a crime: "Based on the full documentation of investigations and analyses, the Government Commission unequivocally established that the following had no influence on the occurrence and course of the catastrophe: the training and psychophysical condition of the crew, the preparation of the crew and equipment, the resource / service life / of the aircraft and individual engines, the weather, the radio-navigation cover and the work of the means of communication, and the activities of the air traffic authorities. Therefore, since the sole cause of the crash was the engine shaft rupture discussed above, the prevention of which was not within the capabilities of the user - the criminal proceedings should have been discontinued".

Despite the accumulated material in the prosecutor's file, which in many aspects indisputably indicated that the technical condition of the aircraft, the resource of the engines, the superficial manner in which the pre-flight inspection was carried out raises serious objections and constitutes negligence on the part of the human factor, the prosecutor reasoned that the above-quoted circumstances "had no influence on the occurrence and course of the catastrophe". In the case of a thorough prosecutorial investigation and therefore the treatment of the entirety of the collected premises, evidence and evidence, it would have been easy to seek the prosecution of those responsible for the decisions he made. In addition to allegations of contributing to bringing the air traffic disaster, given the actions and omissions of the decision-makers, it would have brought the state bodies into disrepute given that the Ministry of Communications would have had to discipline a group of citizens to whom, just two months before the incident, it had given substantial monetary rewards for technical progress.

Summary

The article presents the most important threads concerning the plane crash of a Polish airline plane that occurred on March 13, 1980 in Warsaw.

The manufactured propaganda regarding the crash officially stated that the sole and exclusive cause was a hidden internal defect in the engine, impossible to predict. Based on this, the public was informed that the crash could not have been prevented. However, if the correct resurances delineated for propulsion units had been observed, the No. 2 engine initiating the unfortunate course of events should not have been assigned to propel the machine as early as 1979. It should also be emphasized that much of the documentation in the file was not made available to citizens of the People's Republic of Poland representing the rights of the deceased victims, and was classified as secret files. The report on the causes of the crash prepared for foreign aviation organizations by Donald Snyder also fails to reflect any authentic causes of the incident. Significant facts were omitted, including that decision-makers at PLL LOT and the Ministry of Communications shared responsibility for the crash. It should be added that the erroneous conclusions and observations formulated in the report of the investigator of the causes of the catastrophe were not his intentional act in bad faith, but were most likely caused by the fact that he was not allowed access to all the information and materials, as confirmed by the Information dated March 27, 1980 of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In view of the above, the documentation he received had to be selectively chosen to prevent him from revealing issues unfavorable to the Polish side. The company's authorities were keen to conceal inconvenient facts, indicating that in direct knowledge of the orders he was given, they put the desire to save money above passenger safety. Acting CEO of LOT Polish Airlines W. Wilanowski was removed from his post in 1981. There was no cooperation with other companies operating IL-62 in which accidents and disasters were reported, in terms of exchanging insights aimed at seeking safety improvements. The recommendation for cooperation was introduced only at the initiative of the commission in 1980. It should be noted that in addition to the indisputable guilt of the Soviet manufacturer in the structural defects of the aircraft and the plants performing maintenance on the internal plants of the N-K-8-4 engine, the complicit in the tragic event were also the employees of LOT Polish Airlines, in particular, the management, directors of the technical division, and ground personnel - mechanics allowing the aircraft to fly despite visible defects disqualifying the possibility of safe flight. The Government Commission appointed to investigate the causes of the crash specified guidelines addressed to both LOT Polish Airlines and the manufacturer of the IL-62 aircraft. These included, among other things:

- *the need for the engine manufacturer to take appropriate measures to eliminate material and workmanship defects that fundamentally reduced the characteristics of the low-pressure compressor shaft.

- *significant damage caused by a segment of a torn turbine flying through the fuselage leads to the suggestion of necessary consideration of design changes aimed at securing control systems and installations

- *existence of the need to take into account the conclusions of the established facts in the process of inspection and repair. The development of appropriate diagnostic methods and equipment is expected here

- *recommend that necessary preventive measures be taken immediately to eliminate the causes that led to the catastrophe of IL-62 SP-LAA and in particular

development, verification and introduction of appropriate methods and diagnostic equipment for the inspection of low-pressure rotor shafts of NK-8-4 engines in the process of operation and repair

*conducting detailed inspections of all NK-8-4 engines in use at LOT Polish Airlines and eliminating from operation those units about which suspicions arise about the existence of similar defects to those found in engine No. 2 of the IL-62 SP-LAA aircraft.*equipping all aircrafts used at LOT Polish Airlines with MSRP-64 flight recorders, or others with not worse performance parameters, starting from IL-62 aircraft, and developing, verifying and introducing in pre-flight inspections methods of MSRP-12 and MSRP-64 or others with not inferior performance parameters starting from the IL-62 aircraft, and to develop , verify and introduce in pre-flight inspections methods of MSRP-12 and MSRP-64 control allowing to assess the full range of their work.

*add to the flight manual the rules for crew operations in cases where more than two engines are eliminated from operation.

However, the above recommendations, despite the compelling legal interest as well as safety considerations, were not implemented by the Soviet aircraft manufacturer.

On May 5, 1987, a modernized version of the I-62 aircraft crashed in Warsaw during the approach to landing, the biggest disaster in the history of Polish civil aviation in terms of casualties to date. The death toll was a total of 183 people on board.

Despite the political changes in the USSR that took place between 1980 and 1987, attempts to exert pressure on countries dependent on the Soviet Union, and using aircraft manufactured in the Soviet Union, were rampant. The same manufacturer, producing a modernized version, i.e. the 62M, joining in the investigation of the crash of the SP-LBG aircraft on 5.9.1987, as in 1980, again tried to push the thesis that the cause of the damage to the engines of the IL-62M , "Tadeusz Kosciuszko" was the collision with the ground. As shown in this work, this kind of statement, in any case, could not be defended, admittedly, in fact, the engines were significantly damaged as a result of impact with the earth's surface, however, it has been proven in several ways independent of each other that in the case of both „Copernicus" and „Kosciuszko" the claims of Soviet representatives are false. The second aired information:" Most of the recommendations of the commission after the crash of the „Copernicus" were not taken into account at all by the manufacturer of the IL-62M ." testified to the misconception of the constructors about the reliability of the machine, the use of which in a rational economic system for a certain period of operation, required the implication of more modern technological solutions, especially those aimed at improving safety levels. The period of time that occurred between the original tests of the aircraft in 1962 and the formulation of recommendations by Polish researchers in April 1980 was 18 years. To this day, none of those responsible for the disaster have suffered punishment.

Keywords: plane crash, file investigations, Copernicus crash, polish airlines crash, Okęcie crash.

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