



Polish Profiles

A Son of Poland

By: **Kaya Mirecka Ploss**, Ph.D., Executive Director
Jan Karski Institute, Baltimore, MD

Twenty years ago Barbara Wachowicz, a Polish writer, wrote a book under the title "Trzy Marie" (Three Marys). The book described in detail the three women that were Henryk Sienkiewicz's wives and each one's name was Maria.

Henryk Sienkiewicz's three marriages were rather unhappy. He met his first wife when he was 37 years old. Her name was Maria Szatkiewicz. Two years later in 1881 they married. The marriage was cut short after only four years when his constantly ailing wife died of tuberculosis. The only children that Sienkiewicz had were from that marriage. A son, Henryk Józef and a daughter Jadwiga Maria.

Five years later he met his second wife. She was the adopted daughter of a wealthy merchant from Odessa, Maria Romanowski. Sienkiewicz was then 47 years old and his new bride was not even twenty. The marriage took place in 1893 and a year later Sienkiewicz asked for an annulment of the marriage after his young bride packed her belongings and left.

Ten years later in 1904 Sienkiewicz married for the third time. The bride's name was Maria Babska and was a relative of his.

Henryk Sienkiewicz's marriages were not happy ones but he made up for them by being surrounded by the adoring Polish public. Dark and handsome with a swarthy complexion, privately and as a writer he enchanted the public and his readers.

He was born into a well to do family in Wola Okrzejska, a town in Russian ruled Poland. A difficult economic situation forced his family to sell their estate and move to Warsaw. There Henryk studied law and medicine and later history and literature.

His first book was called "Ofiara" (The Sacrifice). Unfortunately no manuscript survived. Sienkiewicz was often penniless and he left the University without receiving a degree.

Sienkiewicz traveled in the United States for two years with the famous Polish actress Helena Modrzejewska (Modjeska), and a host of friends. That broadened his world view and inspired several of his short stories. He regularly wrote articles in the form of letters from America for a leading newspaper in Warsaw.

Inspired greatly by Sir Walter Scott and Alexander Dumas, famous for their historical novels, Sienkiewicz in 1882 started to work on his own trilogy of Historical novels. The first one was "Ogniem i Mieczem" (With Fire and Sword). It was published in 1884. Two years later it was followed with the novel "Potop" (The Deluge). Each of those books took Sienkiewicz two years to write and predictably in another two years his new book "Pan Wołodyjowski" was published in 1888.

All these works were carefully researched and written in an exciting, fast paced style. The characters were skillfully created which not only fascinated Polish people but readers of other countries where the books have been published. In the colorful narrative Sienkiewicz dotted his novels with patriotic messages, spectacular duels and the Polish Nation's past glories.

The public was enthralled. An anonymous admirer sent to Sienkiewicz 15 thousand rubles and signed it mysteriously Pan Wołodyjowski. The Polish people were just as generous when they showed Sienkiewicz their love and admiration when in 1900 they donated to him an Estate at Oblegórek near Kielce, which Henryk Sienkiewicz donated for the use of a school and a children's home.

Sienkiewicz loved to travel and did it widely. Each one of his journeys produced outstanding literary work. From his journey to America besides his letters describing his travels that many newspapers in Poland carried it also inspired Sienkiewicz to write five beautiful novels. The two best known are "Za Chlebem" and "Latarnik".

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Jesus Action Figure

By: **Justyna Ball**

"Speak when you are angry, and you will make the best speech you will ever regret."

(Ambrose Bierce, satirist)

There were times when Toruń was known exclusively as the hometown of heavenly delicious gingerbread. Here in New England, at Heifer International where I represent Poland at the annual Global Village, I proudly share this delicacy with many visitors as I mention Toruń's most popular native son - you know the one "Who stopped the Sun and moved the Earth."

But besides being Mikołaj Kopernik's birthplace, the town also has the privilege of being placed amongst the finest on the UNESCO World Heritage list, and locally, within Polish borders, is also known as one of country's Seven Wonders (in the company of Wieliczka, Malbork castle and such...).

You may not know that Philadelphia is Toruń's sister city, and that the street along the Vistula River is named Philadelphia Boulevard.

Definitely something for the Torunians to brag about...

But such a pretty view now seems obstructed by this character, the Catholic priest who claims to be John Paul's devoted son, but what I believe more and more is causing Poland grief and not the necessary pride and glory.

His "family" at Radio Maryja calls him "Father," the media pinned him as a "father director", but I have a hard time believing that priesthood is his actual calling...

Since 1991, under the umbrella of the Catholic Church, "Father" Tadeusz Rydzyk gained popularity through radio broadcasted masses. Over the next decade, he became a media mogul partly because of donations from Polonia and a few devoted elders in Poland who seem to

find all the answers to their misfortune in Rydzyk's speeches.

It appears that he needs the church for the audience (potential donors) while the church needs him for popularizing the church's teachings via radio waves.

When he first came to my attention, I thought that it would be a good idea to have some balance, and since Poland is a free country, why not add another voice to the general discussion?

But when his voice started sliding from purely the church's dogma to politics and "Father" Rydzyk started collecting money for different causes other than those church-related, I wondered if it's actually going to help the church or may have quite the opposite result.

What kind of impact may such a person and its influence have on Poland's image? What is a priest doing asking the government for taxpayers' money to support his idea of geo-thermal drilling?

And while other priests are concentrating on their vocation, this one sticks out like a sore thumb and is creating unnecessary attention.

His openly negative attitude toward the European Union that he promoted on the air did not stop him from asking the EU for financial support.

Rather odd for a priest.

Imagine the late Father Popieluszko asking the communist government for donations to conduct his Wednesday masses at St. Kostka church or Korczak-Ziółkowski asking the US government to finance the Crazy Horse Monument.

What kind of priest calls the president's wife a "witch" who should euthanize herself... no matter what her beliefs are? And is it ok for the priest to start a political party?

This new idea triggered a quick response from the Vatican. The Pope was worried that Rydzyk's radio station had "become much more involved in spreading risky politics than in spreading the Gospel."

Several times, the church's representative, irritated by Rydzyk's behavior had to distinguish itself from this murky persona.

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The Views of our columnists and letter writers do not necessarily reflect the views of the staff of the News of Polonia.

Calendar of Events

To January 21, 2009, Santa Ana - All The World's a Stage, Modjeska's Arden at Old Courthouse Museum, 211 W. Santa Ana Blvd., Information at: www.ocparks.com/oldcourthouse and (714) 973 6605.

Aug 24, Sun, - 10:30 AM - Observance of Polish Patriotic Anniversaries of the 20th Centruy. 1914 to 1918 WW I, 1920 Miracle of the Wisła - Fight against the spread of communism, 1939 to 1945 WWII, 1944 Battle of Warsaw (Uprising), 1980 Rise of Solidarity. Film - "Forgotten Odyssey" (Poles deported to the USSR) will be shown.

Sep 7, Sun, "Forgotten Odyssey" film to commemorate the 69th Anniversary of the beginning of WWII. Information: (949)206-9122.

14, Sun, 12:30 pm. Polish American Congress Meeting in Yorba Linda, 3999 Rose Dr. - Nominations for Polonia Award to be presented at Dec. 7 Op³atek Luncheon.

20 - 21, Sat and Sun Dożyńki Festival at Pope John Paul II Polish Center, 3999 Rose Dr., Yorba Linda.

24, Wed. - Polish Club of Laguna Woods - 11:00 am. Board of Directors meetings at Clubhouse Six. Free lunch. Information:949-206-9122.

27 - 28, Sat and Sun, Los Angeles - Bazaar of Our Lady of Bright Mount Parish, 3424 W. Adams Blvd.

Oct 1, Wed - Jamestown, Virginia - Celebration of 400th Anniversary of Arrival of First Poles to Jamestown.

2, 3, 4, Th, Fr., Sat, - Willmsburg, Virginia - Polish American Congress National Directors' Meeting and elections.

11 & 12, Sat. and Sun, Polish Festival at Fr. Maximilian Maria Kolbe Polish Mission 1735 Grand Ave, San Diego.

12, Sun, 10:30 a.m., Commemoration of 30th Anniversary of pope John Paul II election and 24th Anniversary of Fr. Jerzy popieluszko, Chaplain and Patron of Solidarity Martyrdom. Osrodek Polonijny im Jana Pawla II, 3999 Rose Dr., Yorba Linda, CA 92886; Info: Mietek 714-608-0511.

12, Sun, Laguna Woods Polish Club - 2:30 pm. Life and Music of Jan Ignacy Paderewski, Auditorium Concert, Clubhouse Three, Information: 949-206-9122.

12, Sun Los Angeles - 1:30 pm. Polish American Congress Meeting Our Lady of the Bright Mount.

19, Sun, 10:30 am - 30th Anniversary of John Paul II Election & 24th Anniversary of Fr. J. Popieluszko Martyrdom in Yorba Linda.

19, Sun - Banquet after the Holly Mass at noon organized by the Friends of John Paul II Foundation at the Parrish Hall of Our Lady of the Bright Mount Church at 3424 W. Adams Blvd., Los Angeles, CA, Information: (626)281-0516. Guest from Rome will attend - bishop Wyleżek.

Nov 8, Sat, Laguna Woods - 5:00 pm. Polka Night organized by The Polish Club.

Dec 7, Sun, Los Angeles, 1:30 pm. Oplatek and Awards Banquet - Polish American Congress.

Please send information for the calendar to Bish Petryka - e-mail: zbyskoopet@aol.com ★