



Polish American Congress Council of National Directors Re-elects Frank Spula as President



L. - President - F. Spula, 1st VP—V. Sikora, VP - Cultural Affairs - D. Majka, VP American Affairs - A. Bajdek, VP Polish Affairs - B. Kamińska, Treasurer - R. Maycan, Secretary - W. Zieliński

The PAC Council of National Directors met on October 2 and 3 in Williamsburg, Virginia. The meeting was held at the prestigious Marriott Hotel. Out of the 131 delegates, 63 were in attendance. (PAC - S. Cal. was represented by Frank Kosowicz, Andrzej Prokopczuk, and Marty Cepielik.)

The CND meeting was opened by President Frank Spula. A moment of silence was observed for Les Kuczyński, a very vital member and officer of the PAC, who recently passed away.

Debbie Majka, VP for Cultural Affairs, who was next introduced by Spula, thanked all who attended and helped with the 400th Anniversary Year celebration of the arrival of the first Poles in the Jamestown Colony, which had occurred the previous day. The two years' worth of planning and preparation for the event that had been chaired by Majka was evident in the fact of a dignified, well-organized, and enjoyable outdoor ceremony at the beautiful site of the Polish Falcons of America-sponsored plaque dedicated to the 350th anniversary celebration. Included in the day's venue had been preliminary tours of the magnificent Jamestown Colony Museum and the re-created facilities of the original Colony itself. Some 150 attended the day's tour and commemoration program, including a substantial delegation from the Polish Embassy that was led by Ambassador Robert Kupiecki. Among the several non-PAC speakers, two – one representing the Embassy and the other representing the NY-based paper, Nowy Dziennik, bemoaned the fact that Poland had yet to be admitted to the Visa Waiver Program of the United States Department of State and criticized the United States for its prolonged insulting treatment of Poland.

Though President Frank Spula had sent a personal invitation to President George W. Bush inviting him to participate as a speaker for the first Poles in Jamestown commemoration, only silence was received from the White House. The same silent treatment was true of Senator John McCain who had also been invited to speak. In response to the invitation sent to Senator Obama, only a surrogate offered to speak on his behalf. Her offer was accepted, only to have her cancel at the last minute on October 3. Virginia Governor Tim Kaine was invited to speak as well. (Please note that there is no Division of the PAC in Virginia.) The invitation read in part, "according to the 2000 US Census, some 124,647 Americans of Polish descent are citizens of Virginia. Your appearance will certainly be appreciated by all those from Virginia and elsewhere who come to the celebration on October 1", but only engendered a call from the Governor's secretary expressing his regrets.

The next report was from Anthony Bajdek, VP for American Affairs. He continued his ongoing dual campaign stressing that the Polish American Congress must be more aggressive as it relates to local political activism with their state legislatures in matters of interest to Polish Americans and Poland, on one hand, and to expanding new Divisions to more states, beyond the current 17 states (AZ, CA, CT, DE, FL, IL, IN, MA, MD, MI, NJ, NY, OH, PA, RI, TX, WI), on the other. Council members have come to learn that Bajdek speaks with authority because of his successful efforts in Massachusetts, wherein its legislature was the first-in-the-nation to pass a Visa Waiver for Poland Joint Resolution in May 2004, the first-in-the-nation to create a Polish Legislative Caucus in the legislature in February 2007, and the first-in-the-nation to pass a Polish American Congress Day Joint Resolution in April 2008. He has organized in Massachusetts successful Polish American Congress Days at the State House by which PAC members wearing name tags spend time meeting and talking to legislators about matters of concern to Americans of Polish descent.

The key point of the his structure of the annual Polish American Congress Day is that it isn't held, for example, in a church hall or veterans' post or in front of a monument, but rather in room in the State House adjacent to the Massachusetts legislature's chambers itself. Bajdek also stresses that some 60% of the members of the United States Congress originate in state legislative and executive branches of government. This is an opportunity that the PAC must exploit. That is precisely why PAC Divisions shouldn't be timid or shy about, another of his themes, about approaching their legislators right in the halls of state government rather than simply inviting them to banquets and Polonia celebrations. Currently, Bajdek is working on starting a new Division in Maine and one in Nebraska as well, both states having passed Visa Waiver for Poland Resolutions because of his efforts. With President Spula's approval, he has charged all PAC Divisions to organize and conduct Polish American Congress Day activity in their respective State Houses in 2009, and as well is organizing a Polish American Congress Day on Capitol Hill in 2009 that will involve the Executive Committee and all Division Presidents. PAC members and others are urged to go to their state capital, wear name tags, and spend a day talking to legislators about the Polish American Congress and what it stands for.

... Another of his themes concerns the future of the Polish American Congress, specifically, that only via expanding to more states can the Polish American Congress expect to influence more members of the United States Congress. Polonia needs not only to be united and non-partisan but also clearly more aggressive and creative as it relates to engaging American political life and realities. There are Americans of Polish descent in all states of the union, and the Polish American Congress must strive to put organized PAC "boots on the ground" in each state. Mr. Bajdek was commended for his work. **Don't be shy, don't be timid, don't be afraid to ask** legislators to consider an idea that focuses on a Polish American issue, the best current unresolved issue being Visa Waiver for Poland status. When state legislatures pass Visa Waiver for Poland Resolutions those resolutions are addressed specifically to the President and members of the United States Congress, and constitute compelling formal "grass-roots" evidence that state legislatures want Poland to have that status. Thus far, the state legislatures of MA (May 2004), NJ (October 2004), VT (January 2005), PA (April 2005), CT (May 2005), ME (May 2005), NE (June 2005), NY (June 2005), OH (June 2005), MI (June 2006), AZ (Apr 2007), and IL (October 2007) have passed Visa Waiver for Poland Resolutions. Bajdek continues to enlist passage of Visa Waiver for Poland Resolutions in other states, and urges our two PAC Divisions in California to join in the effort to add California to the list of states passing Visa Waiver for Poland Resolutions.

The VPs of Polish Affairs, Membership Development, and Public Relations were neither present nor had submitted reports.

The VP of Financial Development, Rich Pierchalski stated that the present model of financial structure for the PAC is not working. Since the PNA has always been underwriting the PAC, the PAC has become lazy, in his opinion. Structural changes and more knowledge of how to do conduct the PAC in a more business-like manner is needed.

Pierchalski offered two recommendations: 1) obtaining 501(c)3 status with the Internal Revenue Service, so that contributions could be tax-deductible, and 2) membership in PALI (Polish American Leadership Initiative), which is a revenue generating model with 1600 Polish organizations on their website. As well, there needs to be more cooperation on the part of the National Directors. Fundraising needs to be developed internally, as professional fundraisers charge 40 % of funds raised. There is a need to network.

In this time of financial crises, people are less willing and able to give money. In 1944 (when the PAC began), people were more patriotic. The world has changed, and the PAC must change with it.

In September and October of 2009 there are many momentous anniversaries: the 65th anniversary of the PAC, the 65th anniversary of Monte Cassino, and 10th anniversary of Poland joining NATO, for example. Other organizations and government representatives should be invited to these commemorations. Possibly, the attraction of their participation in the commemorative events could help with fundraising.

The meeting adjourned for lunch. The after lunch speaker was Kaz Kowalski, former President of Alliance College and now teaching at the University of South Carolina. He stated that leadership equates with responsibility. Polonia must get its story out, especially as it relates to the many achievements of the PAC in serving Polish American interests and Poland. The early Polish immigrants in Jamestown in 1608 faced and overcame many obstacles, largely because of their work ethic and dedication. They contributed to the survival of the community. When they were denied the right to vote, they showed their determination (by organizing the first strike in America.) History shows that Poles are strong and dedicated in the face of adversity. The Germans were stunned by the strength of their resistance in the Warsaw Uprising. Leadership determines the rise and fall of organizations and nations. In Gdańsk, the Solidarity movement began the collapse of communism in Poland and other countries. His book, *Heroes of Solidarity*, was published in Poland, and will be available in the US in 2009.

The afternoon session began with a presentation to Maciej Placziński, Treasurer of Wspólnota Polska. He thanked the PAC for all of the help they have given.

PAC Treasurer Robert Maycan reported a severe budget shortage for the year, that is expected to amount to some \$40,000 at the minimum.

Dr. Barbara Borzuchowska Andersen, Director of Research for the Washington, DC office of PAC, spoke on matters relating to her responsibilities in the Washington office.

Finally, there was a successful vote on the long-proposed amendment/resolution to purge PAC membership of members of the communist government and collaborators.

Next, the election of officers took place. Officers elected were: President - Frank Spula, First VP - Virginia Sikora, VP - American Affairs - Anthony Bajdek, VP - Polish Affairs, - Bożena Kamińska, Secretary - Wallace Zieliński, Treasurer - Robert Maycan, VP - Culture Affairs- Debbie Majka. Unfilled offices are VP - Public Relations, VP - Financial Development, and VP - Membership. They will be elected at the next meeting, but President Spula is expected to appoint interim persons rather than leave the positions vacant until the next elections in 2010. Rich Pierchalski, who offered his resignation as VP - Financial Development because of personal considerations, did agree to serve until Spula appointed an interim VP. Ava Polansky's failure to be nominated for the VP - Membership Development position leaves that vital office open as well, one which President Spula will fill with an interim appointment.

Frank Milewski reported on the Anti-Bigotry Committee, of which he is the driving force. In this computer age he is commendably able to obtain and disseminate well-documented and well-written related information through the internet, via Polonia and other newspapers. He thanked those who advise him of incidents.

One of the recent cases was a man named Wojtowicz in Detroit who was running for an office. The wife of the opposing candidate was ridiculing his surname and his age (79). Mr. Milewski contacted the Detroit papers, and received satisfactory results.

In Albany, New York Tom Keith referred to Gary Dunalowicz as Gary Dumbalowicz and a "dumb Pollack." This was reported by PAC National Director Teresa Bunk, who called the talk show and Frank Milewski. Tom Keith apologized to the PAC and Gary Dunalowicz. Incredibly, Tom Keith is running for City Judge in Albany.

Since 1979 Jewish Holocaust survivors are always in the news. In 1980 the Jews created the Children of Holocaust Survivors. Now the PAC, to its credit, has created the Children of Polish Christian Holocaust Survivors. There has been interest expressed for this venture from other parts of the country. We encourage them to join forces with PAC.

The "Back to You" TV show is still being shown in Canada. Buffalo writer and columnist for the AmPol Eagle Ed Wiater is putting pressure on the station, as the show was to be removed from the airways. He would like to instigate a lawsuit, but the cost is prohibitive. This show is no longer on the air in the US. (The show's Polish slur was when one of the cast members referred to Poles as enjoying bowling, and kielbasa because it was in their blood just as they collaborated with the Germans in the capture of Jews - wording similar to that).

It was decided that the PAC join the Jewish American Council.

Visitors to Jamestown (as recently as a month ago) were not given any information about the Poles who were there. Now there is information about the Poles - in the tours and exhibits. The beautiful bronze plaque donated by the Polish Falcons in 1958 which commemorated the 350th anniversary of the arrival of the first Poles in Jamestown in 1608 "disappeared." The Polish Falcons donated a plaque commemorating the 400th Anniversary which is prominently displayed in a landscaped area near the entrance to the auditorium. Hopefully, work by the PAC's Washington Metropolitan Area Division will be successful in having the Jamestown National Historical site management rectify the matter of Polish contributions to the early history of the Colony to be included in all of their tours.

Frank Kosowicz (PAC - S. Cal.) told about his work with the Poles in the former USSR. He has been the driving force of this since 1983 and must be commended for his dedication on behalf of *polskość* in the Belorussia and the Russian Federation. He related details of his award for the committee from TV Polonia, which he accepted in Warsaw in June. The committee has worked doggedly on behalf of the 3.5 million Poles still in the former USSR. (Frank is from Wilno, Lithuania. He is a Polish veteran of WW II and survivor of the Warsaw Uprising.)

Francis X. Gates, National Director from Brooklyn, NY informed the assemblage that a bust of Kościuszko will be dedicated in the new library at West Point on October 10. Other than the magnificent Kościuszko Monument designed by John H. B. Latrobe in 1825 and dedicated by the Corps of Cadets on July 4, 1828, visitors had to stroll on a Lovers Lane path through Kościuszko's Garden that Kościuszko personally built in 1778-1779 to find any kind of recognition of this Polish hero of the American Revolution.

In conclusion, President Spula urged all to work together.

The next meetings will be May 14 - 15 and October 22-24, 2009 in Chicago.

On October 3, there was a short Breakfast meeting, as delegates prepared to leave for their homes.

President Spula returned to Chicago for a Polish festival. Delegates from New York and Philadelphia were looking forward to their Pułaski Day Parades. Plans are being made to have a PAC Day on Capitol Hill in 2009 and in state capitals having PAC Divisions. Chicago will be commemorating the death of Helena Modjeska, Buffalo (in June), a pilgrimage to visit the graves of the Haller's Blue Army, and continuing to send financial support to Poland. □