

## What do you know about lustration in Polonia?

By: *Edmund Lewandowski*,  
Oct. 10, 2009

For the benefit of readers who are not familiar with the term "lustration", it is being used in the former Soviet Bloc countries for a process of revealing someone's involvement with the Communist regime. Some countries, for example Germany, have published all the names of Communist Party members, along with all those involved in the Communist secret police apparatus, and barred them from holding public office for 15 years from the fall of The Wall."

Poland did not publish any names. The Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) keeps all original files of the Interior Ministry and other security apparatus agencies for the years 1944 – 1990; whatever was left after the massive shredding when the communist system was falling. The lustration procedure covers only persons born before August 1, 1972.

A candidate for an elected public office is required to file an affidavit with the IPN stating involvement, or non-collaboration, with any of the oppressive Communist service - such as UB, SB, Communist Party, secret informant, operative contact, etc. The truthfulness of these affidavits can be verified by the staff of the IPN, acting either on their own initiative, or at the request of a concerned citizen. The vetting (lustration) declarations are public.

In a preamble to the IPN Act of October 18, 2006, the Polish legislators state that work or service in the Communist state security agencies, or assistance to those authorities by informants, is permanently linked to violations of human and civil rights by the Communist totalitarian regime against citizens who opposed the communist regime. Polish legislators have explained that lustration is necessary to Polish voters, the information they require to cast an informed vote for candidates of elective offices. Failure of candidates to be candid about their past involvement with Communist security services is unmasked by vetting, or lustration. The lustration declarations also reveal possible involvement with the Communist state security agencies of any person presently (2009) holding a public office.

There are many persons from Poland who were born before August 1, 1972, are active in Polonia and are office-seekers. If they ran for any public office in Poland they would have to file the lustration declaration. But not in America! In America a Solidarity activist loyal to Poland might unknowingly be voting for a person who was an unprincipled person working as an executive who issued orders to have him jailed, tortured, lose his job, destroying his life, and have him expelled from Poland. Inhumane unthinkable acts which were not uncommon! If properly informed about the track records of such unprincipled candidates, chances of them being elected would be lessened and hopefully, never happen.

The only exception to this indifference is the Polish American Congress. For lack of a firm decision in this matter, the PAC is moving in the right direction. In 2006, the PAC National Directors meeting adopted a resolution calling all National Directors to self-lustration. That was just a voluntary procedure; not many followed through.

In May 2008, during a meeting in Phoenix, AZ, the PAC discussed, in a very heated debate, a resolution obligating each National Director to file a lustration declaration. That resolution was tabled as being "unconstitutional." At the October 2008, PAC National Directors meeting, the PAC National Directors amended the PAC bylaws to add a provision for excluding from its ranks any person who

## Alexander Romański †



Romański, Alexander R., was taken to the House of The Lord on October 23, 2009 at the age of 86. Alexander was a devoted husband and is survived by his beloved wife of 52 years, Maria Romański. Alexander was a devoted father to three sons, Andrew, Stephan and Anthony and two daughters-in-law, Sheila and Janet Romański. Alexander also had 9 grandchildren, Joshua, Jennifer, Anthony, Jacob, Stephanie, Jason, Hannah, Matthew and Courtney; as well as 1 great-grandchild, Jayson. Olek, Tata, Dziadzio you will be truly missed. Please watch over your family from above. Our love for you will never waver and your wisdom and love will always be cherished. Rosary will be held on Wednesday, October 28, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. Funeral Services will be held on Thursday, October 29, 2009 at 10:00 a.m., Pope John Paul II Polish Center in Yorba Linda, California, 3999 Rose Drive. †

### Pope John Paul II Polish Center

3999 Rose Drive,  
Yorba Linda, CA 92886

#### Mass Schedule:

**Saturday 4:00 PM ENG**  
**Sunday 7:00 AM Tridentine**  
**9:00 AM ENG 10:30 AM POL**  
**First Friday of the month**  
**8:30 AM Eng 7:30 PM. POL**  
**First Saturday of month**  
**8:30 a.m. ENG**

Director: Rev. Henry Noga, SVD  
714-996-8161 office  
www.polishcenter.org  
office@polishcenter.org

was connected with work or service in the Communist state security agencies.

This opens the way to make mandatory a statement or proof that an officer of PAC was, or was not involved, with the Communist security apparatus.

At our last meeting (October 17), a resolution was passed... 6) The PAC President will appoint an Ethics Committee with five members to investigate any allegations made against any Board members or officers. I feel this is another step in the right direction. Just a suggestion!

My hope is that the PAC will adopt a procedure of lustration within its own ranks, and will show Polonia organizations throughout the world that this is the right thing to do. □

***Your help is needed***  
***Get involved in Polonia!***  
***Join a***  
***Polish Organization***

## Polish Americans in Politics:

By: *Don Pienkos*

Recently I attended a meeting of Polish Americans where a Polish government official took part. He asked a good question: Why is it that the Polish American community today has so few elected representatives at the national level, and by inference, why is organized Polonia such a weak voice in political affairs today?

I've written a good deal on this interesting question in the journal of the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences of America (PIASA), the Polish Review, and in the Chicago-based magazine, National Strategy Forum Review. I also have an article in a 2009 book on Ethnic Groups and Anti-Communism edited by Dr. Ieva Zake of Rowan University. My 1999 article - also in the Polish Review, "Witness to history", described my own experience and observations as a member of the Polish American Congress (PAC) in the successful effort to win U.S. approval of Poland's entry into NATO.

In my opinion, there are two basic factors that explain why so few Polish Americans are found in high elective office in the U.S. today. The first is "demographic" or "environmental." The second is "social-psychological."

Demographically, things are plain enough if we compare things as they were about fifty years ago with conditions today.

By the 1940s and 1950s, Polish Americans had become prominent in winning seats in the U.S. House of Representatives. By the late 1950s, in the Chicago area alone four Polish Americans were in Congress - Rostenkowski, Puciński, Derwiński, and Kluczyński. Metro Detroit had three congressmen - Dingell, Nedzi, and Lesiński. Wisconsin had two - Zablocki and O'Koński. And there were Congressmen of Polish heritage in Buffalo, New York, in New Jersey, in Pennsylvania, and in Connecticut.

The ten states with the largest percentages of persons of Polish birth and ancestry were: New York, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Maryland, Ohio, and Connecticut. In fact that's where nearly all of these Congresspersons came from. These mostly large states were and are important factors in the Electoral College voting for president.

Today there are only four or five U.S. Congresspersons of Polish heritage from these areas, I believe. (Barbara Mikulski, a former Congresswoman, is in the Senate today; she is, of course, a great asset on issues of Polish American concern.)

By the late 1950s, the Polish American population, while already growing more and more diverse in character, could still be readily defined like this:

- Polish Americans still resided mainly in the central cities of the Midwest and east and lived in large part in heavily "Polish" neighborhoods in those urban areas.

- "Polonia" (the organized Polish American community) was still composed largely of immigrants (most were already elderly - but they were also voters!), their largely American-born sons and daughters, and the growing number of third generation grandchildren, many if not most of them still quite young. There was also a smaller but substantial "nowa emigracja" (new immigration) made up of former displaced persons who came to America after the War. They were very important in invigorating the existing "old" Polish community with a new sense of its ethnicity.

- The overwhelming majority of Polish Americans were working class persons, even those who had come here after the War.

- Politically, they tended to vote Democratic (with some exceptions,

## Piast Institute initiates a new survey of the Polish American Community

Hamtramck, Michigan – Piast Institute, a National Institute for Polish and Polish-American Affairs, has initiated a new online survey to find out more about the attitudes of Polish Americans of all generations in regard to key public issues, their ideas for the future of our community and their feelings about the values that should motivate Polonia. The survey is one of a series the Piast Institute is doing to help our community understand itself and provide direction for those who lead Polish Organizations. It will also help them to speak with confidence that they are acting in accord with our views.

The Polish American Community draws on the rich traditions of the Polish History and culture and the experience of more than seven generations as a community in America. Both of these heritages provide us with a unique perspective that can add much to the public dialogue on national and international affairs. Our voice deserves to be heard in the public arena and in the halls of power.

We invite every Polish American from new immigrants to those of third or later generations to participate. To make your voice heard go to [piaststudy.blogspot.com](http://piaststudy.blogspot.com) and click on the link. The questionnaire is 49 questions and is completely anonymous.

For more information, contact Virginia Skrzyniarz at 313.733.4535 or by email at [skrzyniarz@piastinstitute.org](mailto:skrzyniarz@piastinstitute.org). □

mainly some of the better educated foreign born "nowa emigracja" who voted Republican because of the Yalta issue.) However, in 1952 and 1956 many traditional Democratic-oriented Polish Americans did turn to the Republican candidate, General Eisenhower, out of regard for his military leadership during World War II. (This shift was telling - back in the 1930s Depression, Poles had voted for FDR by a margin of 19-1 in many parts of the country!)

- Polish Americans were still mainly marrying other Polish Americans. This further reinforced their sense of ethnic identity, at least slightly.

- A fairly large percentage of Polish Americans belonged to Polonia organizations - like the Polish National Alliance, Polish Roman Catholic Union of America, Polish Women's Alliance, Falcons, etc. In 1960 the combined memberships of the five largest fraternal organizations was about 680,000 people

- In a total Polish American population of about 6-7 million -- 10 percent of the total. A large proportion of Polish Americans belonged to historically Polish parish churches, another reinforcement of their sense of community and ethnic identity. And the Polish language press still had a sizeable readership.

Let's jump now to 2009 - 50 years later. Today we have about 9.5 million persons of Polish heritage or birth, according to the U.S. census survey.

- Polish Americans today are far less concentrated in the central cities of the mid-west and east. Many have "moved up" to the suburbs, or have relocated to Florida, Arkansas, California, and the southwest. Moving away has come at a price to the ethnic community - few Polish Americans have set up ethnic organizations in their new surroundings.

• Polish Americans are more diverse than ever - only about 5% are foreign born. The other 95% are either (a) the descendants of the pre World War I "for bread" immigration and are now mostly assimilated, though they know who they are, and are often identified by others as Polish by their surnames, enjoy certain Polish traditions - like foods, music, etc.,

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