

ACPC at the National Social Studies Conference

By: **Barbara Lemecha and Jo Louise Winters**

"Crossing Borders – Building Bridges" is the 2007 theme for the National Conference for Social Studies, Nov. 30 – Dec. 2, 2007 in San Diego, CA.

Under the experienced direction of Barbara Lemecha and Henrietta Nowakowski, The American Council for Polish Culture (ACPC) is preparing to establish and operate a Polish American booth during the Conference for the ninth consecutive year. Thanks to a growing number of enthusiastic supporting organizations as well as individuals, Polonia's presence at these annual conferences continues to gather strength with ever-richer supplies of documentary and audio/video materials available for distribution to the thousands of participating educators/administrators.

Why is our Polish presence at these conferences so very important?

NCSS is the largest association in the U.S. dedicated to social studies education. This annual gathering of educators and decision makers is truly an excellent opportunity for Polish Americans to reach them and provide them with pertinent materials relating to Polish and Polish-American history and culture. Our goal is to draw attention to Poland's contributions to Western Civilization and the role Poles played in shaping American and world history. Our experience in preparing for the conference, soliciting Polonia community support, designing the exhibits at our Polish booth and dealing with the visitors in a highly professional and skillful manner has been producing clearly evident and positive results. One fine recent example of the direct impact our presence has had was a key contact made by our booth representatives, which resulted in the development of a lesson plan, *Beginning of Democracy: The Polish Experience at Jamestown*, that was incorporated in the "Jamestown- Journey of Democracy", a federally funded project of the University of Virginia Center for Politics. This year many educators around the country are gathering materials in connection with Jamestown's 400th Anniversary celebration. Our goal is to make sure they don't overlook the very important role that Poles played in the history of Jamestown and to assure that Polish history and culture are not overlooked in communication and dialogue between teachers and students. A copy of the Jamestown lesson plan is available on ACPC's website:

www.polishcultureacpc.org.

ACPC's success in organizing and managing the "Polish Perspectives" booth at the conferences is due not only to the experience gained by our enthusiastic and skillful co-chairs, Barbara Lemecha and Henrietta Nowakowski, and the support of many eager members in manning the booths, but also the very generous support of sponsoring organizations and individuals that endorse our undertaking. ACPC has been able to count on: Lady Blanka Rosenstiel and the American Institute of Polish Culture in Miami for donations of books, periodicals and documentary films; Jacek Gałazka from Hippocrene Publishing for Kuniczak's "My Name Is Million"; Bożenna Urbanowicz Gilbride for copies of

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The Visa Barrier

By: **Ambassador Janusz Reiter**
Poland's Ambassador to the United States



Congress's recent changes to American visa laws will be of little comfort to people in Central Europe who wish to travel to this country. Citizens of these countries will continue to undergo

Ambassador Reiter visa application procedures whose rules they do not understand and which they consider to be anachronistic, unjust and even humiliating.

American visa policy is driven by two concerns: fear of unwanted immigrants and concern about U.S. security. These concerns are reasonable, but it's difficult to understand why they should create a barrier against people from Central Europe.

Those who think that the first priority of every Pole is to settle in Chicago have a rather outdated view of how things are in my country today. First, the economic situation has changed radically in Poland and in other countries in the region in recent years. Second, those seeking jobs outside of Poland can find them much closer to home - in Britain, Ireland and other places in the European Union, which have opened their job markets to people from the new member states.

Poland continues to be excluded from the American visa waiver program, which allows quicker and easier entry to the United States. The main problem is an arbitrary and inflexible standard on the rejection rate for people in a particular country applying for U.S. non-immigrant visas. The requirement is meant to exclude those who might overstay their visas and seek work in the United States. But it has little relationship to the situations of Poland and the rest of Central Europe.

The waiver program is designed for visitors who want to come to the United States on business, to see their families or just to go shopping in New York. They are the kind of people who are representative of the new Poland, visitors whom the United States should be trying to attract. Instead, it keeps them away.

What about security? Central Europe is one of the safest and most stable regions on the continent. And the countries in that region have sided with the United States in the global fight against terrorism. Poland has fought in Iraq from the very beginning of the operation and is also one of the biggest contributors to the mission in Afghanistan.

Warsaw and the other Central European capitals have declared that they are ready to work with the United States to gain better control of the movement of people. Indeed, expansion of the visa waiver program would bring about more, not less, security for the United States and Europe. This is one of the reasons that the U.S. administration has supported including Central European allies in the program.

Many members of Congress from both sides of the aisle have also endorsed this change. But they failed, unfortunately, to pass a law that would enable the countries of Central Europe to join the waiver program.

While many Poles were shocked and angered by this latest failure, others saw it as not particularly important to them. According to one opinion poll, 80 percent considered the decision on visas important for the nation, but only 39 percent said it was relevant to them or their families.

This isn't good news for the United States. It shows that for Poles, traveling to America does not have the same importance it did 10, 20 or 30 years ago. More and more Poles seem to be saying: "America doesn't want us? We'll travel elsewhere. The doors of the European Union are wide open to us. The European passport allows us to travel without visas to dozens of countries around the world."

But what do such attitudes mean for future relations between the United States and Central Europe, which is still one of the most pro-American regions in the world? mainstream political elite will certainly

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Farewell to Consul General Krystyna Tokarska Biernacik

By: **Betsy Cepielik**



Krystyna and Janusz Biernacik

The Beverly Hills Country Club provided the elegant setting for a farewell reception for Consul General Krystyna Tokarska-Biernacik and husband Janusz Biernacik. On August 31st the couple welcomed the guests from Los Angeles Polonia as they arrived.

Strolling waiters and waitresses served hors d'oeuvres and glasses of wine from trays.

After time for conversing, Consul Krystyna Tokarska-Biernacik took the podium and addressed the assemblage. She thanked them all for their efforts to get to Beverly Hills from all over the city in the Los Angeles holiday weekend traffic. She said that the past five years in Los Angeles have been an adventure for her and her husband. She thanked everyone for their patience, and felt that her mission here was successful. She has met many very interesting and talented people. She is grateful to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for sending her here. She concluded by saying, "Without you, the mission wouldn't be so successful."

Next at the podium was Lourdes Saab, Deputy Chief of Protocol for the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors, representing Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky. There was a special bond formed between this Consul General and Supervisor Yaroslavsky. A plaque was presented in recognition of her "five years of outstanding service." Bonds were formed between Poland and Los Angeles.

The next speaker was Andrzej Niżyński, Post Commander of the Polish Veterans in Los Angeles. He commended the Consul General for her efforts in organizing the first Polish masses at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, and for including the veterans in the procession.

Honorary Consul Chris Kerosky came from San Francisco to bid farewell to his "boss" for the past five years. "She was a brilliant advocate and the consummate diplomat. She accomplished great things in California in a charming and gentle way, with her wit and charm. He then proposed a toast - 'that she will return to us.' Los Angeles will always have fierce advocates for Poland."

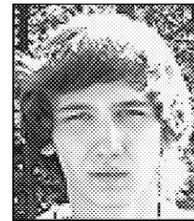
Mrs. Tokarska-Biernacik then introduced the new Cultural Consul Jakub Zaborowski and his charming wife were introduced.

The west coast Polonia will indeed all miss this very industrious Consul General. She accomplished many very ambitious projects during her term of office. Some of the most memorable were the first West Coast Polonia Convention (in Scottsdale, Arizona - September 2005), the very professional display commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising, her attendance at many of the local events, as well as her efforts in the other parts of her territory, and as mentioned before the organization (with Richard Wideryński) of the Polish masses at the Cathedral. She was also successful in bringing the First Lady of Poland to this area for the first time.

The Consul General replacement has not yet been officially named at this time.

The Biernaciks left for Warsaw on September 4. They have no immediate plans other than getting their home in order and relaxing.

Sto lat to them. They will be hard to replace! □



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An adaptation of the Polish national epos Katarzyna Szczepańska

The "Pan Tadeusz", Andrzej Wajda's new movie, is an adaptation of the Polish national epos written by Adam Mickiewicz. It will captivate you with its surprising but believable twists and absorbing, gripping plot. The Academy Award - winning director brings bard's masterpiece to life with smoothness and panache. The result is an outstanding piece of cinematography which will have you at the edge of your seat.

Firstly, the film sticks quite strictly to the book, so there were no puzzling changes. The movie itself centers on two families who live in the Russian-controlled part of Poland: the Horeszkos and the Soplicas. In 1792, the last household lord of the Horeszkos was killed by Jacek Soplica. After the horrible massacre Jacek had to escape from Soplicowo. Twenty years later, the region is rife with rumors of Napoleon's imminent invasion and Soplica comes back to Soplicowo in the monk outfit. He understood his former fault and wants to help in rescuing the motherland. From rebellious and unsubordinated young man Soplica has transformed into religious priest Robak and became a patriot.

As far as the acting is concerned, the film has a star - studded cast and Bogusław Linda, Daniel Olbrychski, Grażyna Szapałowska, Michał Żebrowski deliver nothing else than we have come to expect from these excellent actors. Linda is utterly convincing as priest Robak. There is something in his unhurried, considerate movements and convincing, long monologues that make you pay attention. Equally persuasive is Olbrychski who plays Gerwazy - keyman of the Horeszko's castle, an exceedingly animated, vivacious character who provides a stark contrast with Linda's restrained role. Telimena is played by multitalented Grażyna Szapałowska, the star of theater performances. She also is superb as the seductive and sensuous aristocrat. What is more, there are no distracting special effects in the film so you can concentrate on in lyrics dialogues and the nuances of nineteenth century polish aristocracy's life.

All in all, the casting is exceptional, the directing impeccable, the story absorbing and the music, especially Jankiel's concert, fantastic. I would recommend this classic of its kind to anybody and everybody because it is sure to be blockbuster!!!

Kasia Szczepańska is a second year student of law (Faculty of Law and Administration) at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. Here is the link <http://www.guide.amu.edu.pl/law/index.htm>. I graduated from Maria Magdalena High School in Poznań, where I attended Polish-English bilingual classes, the same as Janek did.

Janek was in the hospital for a check up and was unable to write an article for this month's issue. My brother successfully applied to law school at Adam Mickiewicz University and starts his classes in September. He looks forward to writing an article for the October issue. □

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