

Poland Forever from 6

fine portrayal. My husband, Carl, and I have been greatly involved with the building of the Pope John Paul II Cultural Center in Washington, D.C., for the past eight years. It is next to the Great Basilica. Please come visit. And Viva Polish Culture and John Paul II, The Great...our next Saint!"

Andrew Kołodziej wrote: "Poland Forever", the improvisational show which was created and narrated by journalist Andrzej Poznański and skillfully acted out by distinguished members of POLONIA, was not only a very successful reminder about Polish "GREATS" but a possible forerunner to the creation of a small Polish-American theatre in So. California.

Irene Blore, who describes herself as the daughter of a native son of Poland, said her father was Stanisław Sieczkarski, a Polish patriot and member of both the Polish and US Armies during WW I and the aftermath. "This was a great Polish experience! It brought me to tears, and stirred my heart. The idea was a work of genius, and shows the inner reverence Andrew Ettinger has for his heritage. The cast was wonderful, and for an hour or so really became those Polish heroes of the past. We must do this again!"

All in all, it was a most interesting program. The interaction of the characters was very real, and quite informative. Most questions and commentaries were about the roles of Poland in history, the relevance of the Polish experience, how Poles view the world today, the special Polish characteristics that mark our attitudes and ideas ... and why we must work to promote and protect our heritage. These are things that the Polish-American community needs to recognize in this very fragmented and distractable culture of today. Think globally, act locally ... but remember the legacy you have inherited. It is more than nationality, or ethnicity, or religious preference. It is the enduring power of the Polish spirit. Many have fought and died to honor that. Poland is Forever! Leaders and boundaries may change. But Poland is Forever. That is the message we learned the other night. Bravo to all concerned for reminding us of that!

(Editor's note: The evening was officially opened by the traditional reading of the Preamble of the great Polish Constitution of May 3, 1791 rosuingly voiced by Kasztelan Ed Sentowski in his authentic Polish uniform of that period. As the Kasztelan he made all of the announcements and introductions for the program.

Members of the Polish Consulate in Los Angeles who were in attendance, were Justyna Warecka [who played the role of Helena Modrzejewska], Culture/Science/Education/Public Affairs Consul Jakub Zaborowski and Economic and Trade Division Vice Consul Michał Urbankowski. Consul General Paulina Kapuścińska was in Poland and unable to attend.

After the Poland Forever presentation guests enjoyed a delicious Polish dinner prepared by Turek Catering and dancing to the music of the Dave Miron Orchestra.

Theresa Dudzick also deserves special appreciation for her beautiful floral decorations and production assistance.

Grace Małolepsza created and printed the program book and organized the registration of guests with the help of Betsy Cepielik.

As Irene Blore said, "We must do it again!") □

Santa Rosa

The Polish weekly "Kultura" published on Oct. 14th 2007 an interesting article by Roman Samsel about a little known camp for displaced Poles in Mexico during World War II. He writes as follows:

"Large numbers (approximately a few thousand) of Poles arrived in Mexico twice in history. In both cases that emigration was not intentional or planned. Konrad Niklewicz, a Polish lieutenant serving in the Maximilian Ferdinand army, published his memoirs "Mexico during the Maximilian I rule" in which he writes about Poles in the Archduke's Austrian Legion. They were taken from Galicia, right after the fall of the January Uprising, to protect the emperor's throne from the republican army of Benito Juarez. Lieutenant Niklewicz is probably the first one to note the facts of fratricidal battles on the land of the Aztecs. Poles participated in the battles of Orizaba, Ahnacatlan, Cholula, Tlaxcala, Queretaro, Durango, Aguascalientes, and Chihuahua. There are graves of many Poles in Mexico.

The second wave of Polish newcomers arrived in Mexico at the beginning of 1943. The present Mexican Polonia has a very unique period in her collective biography which can be considered important in the contemporary history of the Polish Diaspora on the western hemisphere.

Overheard stories led me to the footsteps of the Polish colony in Mexico, which was established on July 1, 1943. Poles were greeted warmly, with bands playing at the train stations and employees of the Pullman Mejcowa Company breaking the strike in order to help the Poles to get from the Mexican border to Leon. They inspired long forgotten emotions. Probably, the Mexican population didn't know who they were but it didn't matter. They were simply people in need of shelter whose motherland was experiencing adversity and, as such, they were welcome.

Here are the facts: In about the middle of December 1942, the newspapers announced that General Sikorski was invited to Mexico. He arrived on December 27 at 16:00 p.m. at the military airport in Balbuena by a Douglas aircraft offered for his disposition by President Roosevelt. He was greeted by a twenty-one gun salute and a military Mexican battalion of honor.

President Manuel Avila Camacho welcomed Gen. Sikorski in the National Palace in Zocalo with the following words: "Brave Polish armies, which fought the biggest military might, accomplished actions worth remembering that could be compared, like during battle of Warsaw, to epic achievement."

Gen. Sikorski also heard, "Germans couldn't establish a puppet government in Poland because they couldn't find Quislings, because Poland is the nest of eagles not a cave of traitors. This city in Mexico is opening its arms to greet the spirit of Poland, that you represent, the sprit that nothing and nobody can conquer". These words were spoken by, young at that time, Mexican politician Carlo Madrazo. Sikorski was declared an honorary guest of Mexico.

General Lazaro Cardenas, the former president of Mexico, presented Sikorski with a gold incusted sword of a Mexican officer. Gen. Sikorski signed an agreement with the government of Avila Camacho about accepting several thousand Polish refugees in Mexico. He would provide transport and care of the refugees.

It was a strange camp, located about 400 kilometers north of Mexico City in the state of Guanajuato, which consisted of about fifteen hundred refugees. Rarely one can find so many foreign documents about Polish refugees than those about the Santa Rosa Colony: mainly information and press commentaries. They report that the refugees, based on the agreement between Sikorski and the Mexican government, couldn't mix with the local people, couldn't work outside the camp which was enclosed by a wire fence. The Camp administration used their own funds to pay Mexican guards for making sure that nobody comes in or goes out without permission. At a certain time the camp had its own Polish police. The mail was controlled and refugees were complaining about it in their letters to the

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The Threat of liquidation of the Polish Museum in Rapperswil (Switzerland)

Appeal to the Administrative Authorities of Switzerland;
Canton of Sankt Gallen; Local Administration of a Commune Rapperswil;
City of Rapperswil - Jona and to the People of Good Will!

A hostile action of the three citizens of Rapperswil threatens the very existence of the Polish Museum – proud of 138 years activity, as well as the legendary Swiss tolerance and peaceful existence of different cultures
"Magna Res Libertas"

The above words were engraved in 1868 on the "Bar" column welcoming visitors in front of the castle in Rapperswil, where The Museum is located.

Organized in 1870 by Graf Władysław Plater, thanks to the active participation and the continuous support of Dr Theodore Curti a long term member of the Swiss Parliament and as well as the President of Rapperswil City. The Polish Museum is the testimony of lasting years Polish and Swiss friendship and the vibrant sample of the cooperation in spreading both nations' cultural achievements.

Thanks to the two important political and social Figures the Center was created, which radiated with the cultural activities and even more covered with the national and international fame the City of Rapperswil and its Citizens. Graf W. Plater not only graciously accepted the famous Swiss hospitality, but added to it a Polish cultural accent - adorning Rapperswil with glory as well as citizens.

The Museum is located in the castle that was renovated and protected from natural dilapidation thanks to Poles financing the renovation, expanding existing structures during the last 82 years absorbing the financial burden of operating and administering it.

The Government support practically did not exist. All expenses were covered by generous donations of Poles from the entire World.

The Museum is still Poland's "visit card" in Switzerland; it is the symbol of a vital and vibrant creativity of Poles forced to accept the emigration and being smuggled onto the Helvetian hospitable land.

It is the center of Polish cultural promotion, many international conferences, seminars and musical concerts. This Institution imprinted glorious moments in the history of Both Countries, being also a sample of a continuously successful dialog of different cultures and peaceful coexistence.

Here in the Rapperswil Castle, after the soldier's wandering - finds peace in the heart of Polish and American war hero General Thaddeus Kościuszko; consequently starting a chain of visits and pilgrimages paying homage to the Great Man symbol of "for our and your freedom"!

It is sad, that after a one sided cancellation of a "perpetual leasing contract", which raised many legal questions in the fifties sealed entrance to the tower, where in 1895-1927 rested the Kościuszko's Heart – the hero of two nations Poland and America. Here rested in peace Graff Władysław Plater and his wife, as well as cofounder of the Museum, antiquarian from Stockholm – insurgent from 1863, Henryk Bukowski.

Actually in the Museum there is a valuable collection of paintings, sculptures, graphics, cartography, old prints, books; the subjects of scientific research.

The closing of such well deserved monument to the history and culture of both nations' institutions; annihilates the many generations devoted to the cause of Poland and Switzerland – long years of achievement. It will be a sign of contempt to the hard work and sacrifices of hundreds volunteers as well as employees of the Museum; an expression of the ignorance and the disregard for higher cultural values, accepting almighty profit and commercialism.

Rapperswil to page 15 are appealing for

Rafal Blechacz:

Icon of the New Poland

By: **Joanne Winetzki**

Recently I had the opportunity to hear the San Francisco debut recital of pianist Rafal Blechacz, 2005 winner of the International Chopin Competition in Warsaw. Singer Tony Bennet may have "left his heart in San Francisco," but members of the audience wholeheartedly gave their hearts along with an exuberant standing ovation to the young Pole. San Francisco Chronicle music critic Joshua Kosman followed up with a brilliant and perceptive review, citing the Op. 28 Chopin Preludes as the high point of the recital. Kosman's critique and the enthusiasm of the audience can best speak for the performer's musical talent. I would like to explore the connection between Kosman's comment regarding Blechacz's "distinctive point of view" and the introductory remarks of Honorary Consul of the Republic of Poland Christopher Kerosky.

Kerosky proudly proclaimed, "The torch has been passed to this new generation of Poles," growing up after the demise of the soviet occupation. He went on to describe Blechacz as young, talented and keenly aware of his heritage. In the program notes of his Deutsche Grammophon debut recording the internationally acclaimed pianist stated, "Yes, I feel at home playing Chopin. Somewhere in my intuition, subconsciously, I feel that this is the way it should sound." Vigorously applauding her new superstar, my niece affirmed, "He certainly doesn't play dead music." Kerosky believes in Poland's young people. Like Blechacz many of them have not lost touch with Poland's past, yet they are bringing their own "distinctive point of view" to Poland's future.

Several days after the Blechacz recital I attended an interview by journalist Sydnie Kohara, news anchor at CBS 5 in the Bay Area, with the former two term President of Latvia, Dr. Vaira Vike-Freiberga. Still euphoric from the sublime rendition of the Chopin Preludes, I settled in my seat to peruse the handouts prepared for the Extraordinary Voices, Extraordinary Change Speaker Series presented by the International Museum of Women. An excerpt from Vike-Freiberga's 1999 inaugural address took my breath away, much like a piece of music played with profound insight. "We are heirs to our history, but we are not slaves to it, doomed to live in servitude to the shadows of the past. We are the shapers of our own future, and we have been given an opportunity to shape it according to our own will and conviction," she said. Vike-Freiberga called upon the citizens of her country to, "remember the enormous creative potential that is inside every human being, the potential that can always be awakened." I believe that youths, especially, have the ability to not only tap into that source but to bring forth exciting, innovative, and constructive ideas from it.

Young Poles of my acquaintance go about

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