

Dariusz Ratajczak †

The body of a former Polish history professor, Dariusz Ratajczak has been found dead in a shopping center parking lot in the western Polish city of Opole.

"The body, which was severely decomposed, has been identified by Ratajczak's family, so additional DNA tests will not have to be carried out," says Lidia Sieradzka from the Prosecutor's Office in Opole.

Judging by the state of the body and recent high temperatures, the man has been dead for up to two weeks, say police. However, security guards at the Karolinka shopping centre claim that the historian's Renault was left at the car park on June 11, the same day that it was discovered.

*In 2000, Dariusz Ratajczak was fired from the University of Opole, where he worked for eleven years, and banned from teaching at other universities for three years after the publication of his book *Tematy niebezpieczne* (Dangerous Themes), in which he claimed that it was not scientifically possible to kill millions of people in alleged Auschwitz death camp gas chambers.*

Earlier in 1999, a Polish court found Ratajczak guilty of "public denial" of German war crimes – which is against the law in Poland. "Holocaust denial" is a crime in Poland, Germany, Hungary, France, Switzerland and Austria. †

An interview of Prof. Dariusz Ratajczak by Zbyszek Koreywo

Translation to English by Mark Matyszewski

(This three part interview was printed in the August, September, and October, 2003 issue of the News of Polonia.)

Part II of III

ZK: Where, when, and in what circumstances did your troubles first start? Was it in an educational institution, or did it take place outside university walls? Who put the initial pressure on you?

DR: To answer your question requires bringing up numerous details, including the names of my "worthy harassers." I would not mind if servility, lying, and - I do not hesitate to use this expression - common boorishness, so typical of our political elites and many scientific

workers, saw the light of the day. In 1988, I started working in an Opole learning institution then called the Silesian Insurrectionists School of Pedagogy; in 1995, it became Opole University, but without the Silesian Insurrectionists, which was a graceful gesture toward the so-called German minority, growing in strength in Opole Silesia. I found a situation there which I would define as a "transformation." It meant that professors, assistant professors, and so on, were shedding off their PZPR (23) robes, hiding away in the drawers some more disgracing fruits of their up-to-then creativity (all those books commemorating the Soviet October Revolution, and the like), in order to turn into "genuine" democrats. They were authentically frightened that some gigantic inspection was going to take place at any moment and deprive them of their high positions. It was only Prime Minister Mazowiecki and his "thick line" that soothed them. Perhaps because of this, later, many of them took a liking to the Freedom Union? (24) From red to pink in only one step. At that period I buried myself completely in the didactic work. At several departments (including evening classes), I was in charge of courses on the most recent history of Poland and Europe, and, besides, I set in motion a historic circle, which once a week grouped students who tried to "remove white stains in history." Katyn, the USSR and the Warsaw Rising, (25) Operation "Tempest" in the Eastern Borderlands, (26) the National Armed Forces, (27) the pro-independence underground after 1944, were among the topics of our interest. Although all this was taking place before the finale of the Round Table, (28) that is, with censorship still in force, the academic top brass, as I have said already, were not so dumb as not to sense "the wind of change", so, in effect, we were left alone. In the first half of the 1990s I had already an established position in the university. I won't be bragging when I say that during my classes the classroom was always full. It was nice to hear from the students that I was considered a reliable historian and excellent speaker (this wasn't particularly my own achievement, but that of genes inherited from my father, a lawyer), who was not afraid to take up topics that were

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Summer picks

Justyna Ball

<http://justyna-polishdelight.blogspot.com>

You cannot accuse my daughter of not being inventive, after all, she is Polish! When she was in her early teens she had a weakness for soda drinks which were not allowed in the house because we were promoting healthy food and drink habits. She invented a 2x 2 liters carrying messenger bag... which I discovered when I picked up her bag from the floor one day and noticed how heavy it was. Inside, besides books I found two bottles of soda, one in each corner, both filled HALF-WAY with drink. The idea was to drink from both bottles evenly for the balance, I guess, to camouflage her "addiction."

A group of Polish women in Poland just finished needle pointing Jan Matejko's famous "Battle of Grunwald" painting with a scale of 1 X 1. What better way to commemorate the 600 year anniversary of such a historical event? You think I'm kidding? It started as a joke when a son of one of the ladies commented on his mom's hobby by saying "Ma, you stitch so much you should have the entire Battle of Grunwald stitched by now!" She thought... "...And why not?" The year was 2008. So she picked up the phone and got others, like her, involved in this enormous project. First her son got in touch with a man in Bialystok who designed a computer program called Haftix which transforms any graphic into cross stitch form, then with permission, they got an official picture of the painting from the National Museum. The image of the painting was transferred to the pattern, and printed on canvas, they got busy and voila! The Battle of Grunwald!

All women and men worked for free, "for the next generations", they say. Preparation included a free eye exam for everyone, and desk lamps, collection of all the materials, and each person received a book with a computer print of the design.

There is a total of 8 million tiny crosses in the design. Each cross represents a different color (out of 220), 90 km of yarn (mostly made in Germany, some French). Since the project started, some claimed to quit smoking! 5 groszy per cross brings the value to 400,000 PLN. But nobody is selling, everyone's admiring. Never underestimate the mind power of a (Polish) woman...

The anniversary activities will last 4 days, with 150,000 spectators, 6 thousand participants, 2 thousand in the battle alone. And those players include Italians, Germans, Scandinavians, Czechs but also Russians, Ukrainians, Bialorussians even one Australian. To buy "original" armor, knights sometimes have to take a number. Waiting lists are quite long. Cell phones are allowed on the field. (I recently

checked the news. Huge traffic jam at Grunwald.)

Though women did not participate directly in the battle on July 10, 1410, they were close by to serve water, attending the wounded.

Six centuries later, Polish women go to the polls and prove to be the majority of voters! Thank God you don't need a sword to make history. (These days a few blood-thirsty thugs do it for profit without risking their own life.)

The Polish elections came and went. In the second round; a new president was picked with 52.6% of the votes against the opponent's 47.4%. For us the election was a chance to visit New Britain, CT where our voting commission is located, conveniently for many, next to the Polish church. That explains why the American and Italian Polonia supported Jaroslaw Kaczyński while the West Coast and "the Islands" went for Bronislaw Komorowski.

The parking lot was filled with cars. The majority belonged to church goers. As we exited the polling place, two middle aged women with well arranged coiffures, rather old fashioned but still neat, approached the building holding up a very old man who was visibly not able to walk on his own. My reaction was, are they picking up relatives out of nursing homes? This is when I knew it would be very close elections indeed. Though he seemed like he didn't know where he was, or what year it was for that matter, the chances are he may not make it to the next elections.

My own grandmother passed away and there was no urgency to disturb her peace although Jean Stevens, a 91 year old woman in Pennsylvania saw nothing wrong in having her husband's embalmed body sitting on the couch in her den, ten years later she had her dead twin sister joining them. I mean, is it legal to have a relative vote who is visibly not well? That's how desperate some members of Polonia were when they tried to get Kaczyński elected.

At least Mrs. Stevens did not bring her husband to the polls in 2008. Or did she?

This time, in Poland, there was no woman among the runners and the wives of the candidates were rather careful not to disturb their husband's image, so we get only glimpses of them in the media.

We saw pictures of "Anna Komorowska entering a gym to exercise", "Komorowska exiting the gym", "Komorowska strolling with her grandson and mother in law in tow."

She graduated from university with a degree in Romance philology. The Komorowskis have 5 grown children. She claims to run her household like a real manager. There is an entire Protocol for the First Lady, from official visits, diplomatic ties, to ceremonials and gifts.

Legend has it that, when needed she can even "gut out a war-hog." Imagine that! Komorowskis met as scouts. Just like the First Ladies before her, give her time she'll step into the role.

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2245 E. Colorado Blvd. #104/177
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NEWS OF POLONIA

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION

2245 E. Colorado Blvd. #104/177 - Pasadena, CA 91107

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Calendar of Events

Aug 1, Sun, after Mass at 10:30 am, 30th Annual Polish American Day at the Pope John Paul II Polish Center - Yorba Linda, 3999 Rose Drive. Phone: 714 998 8222 Richard Kobzi.

Aug. 6, Fri, Luminario Ballet of Los Angeles - Fantasia on Polish Airs Honoring Chopin's Birthday Celebration

Sep 18 & 19, Sat & Sun, Fall Festival, Polish Center in Yorba Linda.

Sep 25 & 26, Sat & Sun, Fall Festival at Polish Parish in Los Angeles.

Oct 15, Fri, Polish American Congress presents 4th Annual "Poland Forever" presentation - "Chopin meets Paderewski" First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood.

Oct 15 - 21, 11 1/2 Polish Film Festival in Los Angeles - Laemmle's Sunset 5 Theatre Sponsored by the Polish Film Society. Interesting selection of new films will be shown.

Oct 17, Sun, 10:30 a.m., PNA meeting, Polish Parish in Los Angeles

Oct 23, Sat, The Polish American Heritage Month at The Polish Club of Laguna Woods.

Oct 24, Sun, Friends of John Paul II Annual Banquet.

Oct 30, Sat, 8 pm, Canto Subito, canto biography of John Paul II by Piotr Rubik, Orchestra, Choir, Soloists at Barnum Theatre, 601 Pico Blvd., Santa Monica, CA, tickets 310 396 2165, email: Bogawa2000@yahoo.com

Nov, Paderewski Festival in Paso Robles

Nov 21, Sun, 1:30 p.m., Friends of John Paul II - Wazne Zebranie.

Dec 5, Sun, 10:30 a.m., PNA Meeting, Polish Parish in Los Angeles

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