

## The Brit-Polonian Connection

By: **Robert Strybel**,

Polish/Polonian Affairs Writer

The number of Polish job-seekers arriving in the British Isles is declining, but it would be premature to speak of a mass exodus. According to varying accounts, up to 1.5 million Poles have traveled there in search of employment since Poland joined the European Union in 2004. The actual number at any given time is difficult to determine, since the migrants are free to come and go as they please, and many work without registering with the labor authorities. Some have decided to make the British Isles their permanent home, while others say they intend to return to Poland at some point, and still others are looking around for better-paying opportunities in France and other Western EU countries opening their job markets to Central Europeans.

The Polish government is planning a massive advertising campaign in a bid to lure back some of the estimated one million Poles who have left for the UK since Poland joined the European Union in 2004. The exodus has caused a serious manpower shortage in many sectors of Poland's economy including construction workers, hospitality-industry employees and care-givers. The campaign would include full-page "come home" ads in British newspapers and a "Handbook for Re-emigrants" with practical information such as current house prices, going into business and getting loans in Poland. The handbook is to be handed out with Polish language papers, in churches, embassies and other popular Polish haunts abroad.

Migrant workers continue to be welcomed to the United Kingdom which is suffering a recognized skill shortage. Employers are keen to recruit skilled staff, especially doctors, nurses, chefs and laborers, according to a new report. A survey by recruitment firm Manpower said one in five firms were hiring foreign labor to meet talent shortages, with staff being recruited mainly from Poland, India, Latvia, Australia and Lithuania. At the same time, more than half of UK workers would consider moving abroad for work, with Europe, Australia, the United States, Norway and Canada topping the destination wish-list.

Poles flock to a special "open day" in the English sport of Southampton recently, an event designed to familiarize newcomers with the facilities and services available to them. Hundreds attended the event at Southampton Solent University and recruitment agencies, lawyers and mortgage advisors were on hand to give advice. Organizer Tomasz Dyl said: "There are around 27,000 Polish people living in the city and many are not aware of the services they can access."

Two Polish air-conditioning specialists have turned over to police the £200,000 (around \$400,000) they had discovered while working in a Birmingham high-rise, the "Sunday Mercury" (weekly) reported recently. The unnamed Poles came across the cache in the ventilation shaft of a condo on the 26th floor of downtown Beetham Tower, Birmingham's tallest building. Police are investigating and trying to track down the money's owner.

Poles in Scotland are among the minority groups pressing for their own unique tartans, Brian Wilton, a Scottish tartan designer reported recently. Other groups include Indian-rooted Sikhs, Chinese and Scottish Jews who are ordering skullcaps (yarmulke) in custom-designed plaids. There are about 7,000 different tartans registered in Scotland which serve individual clans as a badge of identity. The non-Scots usually use the tartans on jackets, hats and turbans rather than the kilts (skirts) worn by ethnic Scots.

Britain's popular tabloid "The Sun" produced several Polish-language issues

*Brit - Polonia to page 14*

## Greetings from Warsaw!

For the past eighteen months, readers of my monthly newsletter have been following the progress of discussions between the United States and Poland about basing components of missile defense in Poland.

I'm pleased to report that on August 20, we marked the historic occasion in Warsaw of a missile defense agreement between the United States and Poland.

The agreement is the result of negotiations that were lengthy yet congenial – and that have led to an agreement that will contribute to the collective security of Poland, our allies in NATO and the United States, but that will also serve as the foundation of even deeper security cooperation between the United States and Poland.

As U.S. Ambassador to Poland I was on hand to observe the historic signing of the Ballistic Missile Defense Agreement between the U.S. and Poland. It was a remarkable event: the Polish government was represented at all levels, from President Lech Kaczyński and Prime Minister Donald Tusk, to Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski, who actually signed the document with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. The atmosphere was congenial, triumphant, and from my perspective as an American observer, one of the most uplifting, as I sensed the ties of the U.S.-Poland bilateral relationship grow closer and more confident.

Briefly, the legally-binding agreement calls for the establishment and operation of a U.S. ballistic missile defense (BMD) interceptor facility in Poland. It is an important step in our efforts to protect the U.S. and Poland, as well as our NATO Allies, from the growing threat posed by the proliferation of ballistic missiles from the Middle East. Besides strengthening the bilateral ties between our two countries, this agreement will make a substantial contribution to NATO's collective security and be an integral part of future NATO-wide missile defense architecture. The agreement now moves to the Polish Parliament for ratification. You can read more about the missile defense agreement at this Fact Sheet posted on our website [click here]. For further details about the technical aspects of the missile defense system, I invite readers to visit the MD page on our website at [click here].

After signing the ballistic missile defense agreement, our two countries issued a Declaration on Strategic Cooperation, calling for our countries to elevate the already close U.S.-Poland security and defense cooperation relationship to a new and higher level. It affirms the commitment of the United States to the security of Poland and of any U.S. facilities located on the territory of Poland. The Declaration notes that the United States and Poland intend to enhance their security through political-military cooperation, information sharing, and defense industrial and research and technology cooperation. A Strategic Cooperation Consultative Group will

*Greetings to page 14*

### Jan Gruen – Gruszewski

(Native of Wieszchowo – Dom Dziecka)

**Concrete Contractor**  
**Residential or Commercial**

Concrete Driveways, Patios  
Stamp Concrete  
Brick, Stone, Flagstone,  
Sidewalks, Curbs  
Retaining walls, Block walls  
Remodel swimming pools  
Waterfalls, Pool decks

**No job too small**

Contractor License # 501466  
**(818) 896-5087 or 378-6121 (c)**

## Polish Olympic Medalist makes Tibet protest in Beijing

On Sunday, August 17th, before competing and winning a silver medal in the 94kg class, Polish weightlifter Szymon Kolecki shaved his head in a gesture of solidarity with Tibetan monks.

After the medal ceremony, Kolecki told online Polish sports magazine Sportfan, "This haircut is from this morning. I can't directly say why I did it. It's connected with certain things that the Olympic Charter forbids. But I will say that it's symbolic."(1)

On March 20th this year, a week after the Chinese government brutally suppressed peaceful protests in Lhasa and sparked a country-wide uprising, Kolecki told Polish news portal Interia, "Unless the Chinese regime becomes more moderate, I'll compete with my head shaved in a gesture of solidarity with the Tibetan monks."(2)

Since the Athens 2004 Olympics, Tibetans and Tibet support groups have been appealing to Olympic athletes to stand up for Tibet at the Beijing Games. In June 2008, an international network of more than 150 Tibet organizations launched AthleteWanted.org, a website with suggestions as to how athletes could demonstrate support for Tibet during the Games. Students for a Free Tibet, with support from US Tibet Committee, also placed a full-page ad in the front section of the New York Times a week before the start of the Games.(3)

Head-shaving to display solidarity with Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns who have borne the brunt of the Chinese government's crackdown on freedom protests was one of the suggestions of the campaign. In Poland, the campaign was carried out by the Inna Przestrzen Foundation's Tibetan Programme, as part of which Polish athletes were contacted directly as well as via the Internet.

Following this year's dramatic events in Tibet, Kolecki also said: "I am outraged by what's going on in Tibet. When I read about it, I can hardly believe I'll compete in a country that bloodily suppresses street protests and persecutes people who don't agree with the party. I can't believe the Chinese have launched an immense operation to block Lhasa." He continued, "This month in Beijing is a chance for the world's biggest audience to see how China persecutes the Tibetan people."

Kolecki was born on October 12, 1981 in Olawa, a town in southwestern Poland and was a silver medalist at the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney. After injuries sidelined him for a period, he recuperated and returned to weightlifting in 2005. He is a five-time European Champion.

1) <http://www.sportfan.pl/artykul/2933/protest-srebrnego-medalisty-co-zrobi-szymon-kolecki-sprawdz>

2) <http://sport.interia.pl/news/na-olimpiade-ogoli-sie-na-lyso,1079401>

3) More on the Athlete Wanted campaign in Poland here:

[http://ratujtybet.org/Pekin\\_2008/](http://ratujtybet.org/Pekin_2008/)

4) USTC was formed in 1977 and is the oldest Tibet advocacy NGO in the United States. USTC's mission is to promote human rights, democracy, and freedom for Tibet and its people.

5) USTC is part of the International Tibet Support Network, a global coalition of Tibet related non-governmental organizations, which works to maximize the effectiveness of the worldwide Tibet movement. ITSN Member organizations hold varied positions on Tibet's future political status, but all regard Tibet as an occupied country and are dedicated to ending human rights violations in Tibet, and to working actively to restore the Tibetan people's right under international law to determine their own political, economic, social, religious, and cultural status. □

## How about a game of Palant

By: **Robert Strybel**,

Polish/Polonian Affairs Writer

The origins of palant (Polish batball) go back to the Middle Ages, and during the era of the Third of May Constitution (late 18th century), leading Polish educators recommended it for the physical training program of Polish schools. According to a theory popularized by Polish-American researcher Arthur Waldo, the game of palant had been brought to Jamestown, Virginia by Polish settlers in the early 17th century, and some say it eventually led to the All-American game of baseball.

Whatever the case, palant (pronounced: PAH-lahnt) might provide an interesting change of pace from softball, horseshoes or badminton at Pol-Am picnics, outings and youth camps. It would be a natural at Pol-Am sporting events, festivals, tournaments and even a good leg-stretcher during breaks in conferences, conventions and the like. The advantages of palant are many:

It can be played by people of all ages, even non-athletic types, and the "one vs. all" version (below) eliminates teammates who might give a poor player a hard time.

The number of players is very flexible; theoretically only two people could play, but it is best when you have four, five, six or more.

Palant requires very little special equipment making it an economical alternative to other sports.

Single-handed batting means the ball will not go that far and is less likely to cause an injury or break somebody's window.

The ball's shorter traveling distance also means it is easier to find a playing site – in many cases a double-lot backyard should suffice.

The easiest version is known as simple palant (palant prosty). It is a "one against all" competition rather than a team sport, and there are only batters and outfielders but no pitchers. The traditional equipment comprises a hardwood bat that is either completely round (like a thick broomstick) ranging in length from 80 cm to 1 m (31-39") or is tapered (a child's wooden baseball bat should do).

The regulation palant ball is leather-covered, weighs 20 grams (3/4 oz) and has a circumference of 22 cm (about 8"). (Note: A rubber ball of similar size might be preferable, especially if young children are taking part, since it may be thrown at the batter to strike him out.) Almost any outdoor or indoor area can serve as the playing court. Its only obligatory dimension is that the HEAVEN (NIEBO) line (batter's box) must be roughly 15 paces (45-50 feet) from the HELL (PIEKŁO) line (outfield) which is marked by a pennant. That distance may be decreased to make things easier for youngsters, the elderly or none-too-athletic recreational players.

Five or more players take part. The first batter (the batting order is determined by flipping a coin or some other random method) must have one foot on or behind the stands behind the Heaven line. The outfield (Hell) is marked by a small pennant on a roughly 3' pole situated 15 m (50 feet) from the heaven line (front of the batter's box). Niebo and Piekło should be marked off with parallel chalk lines. The game is played as follows:

The batter tosses the ball up and hits it with the bat single-handedly. The batter gets three tries. If he swings and misses or if the ball does not clear the hell-line, those are considered strikes; after three strikes, he goes to hell (outfield) and another player comes to bat.

The batter tries to hit the ball as far as he can beyond the hell line so his opponents are unable to catch it easily, enabling him to run to the pennant and

*Strybel - Palant to page 14*