



Polish Profiles

Góralu czy ci nie żal

By: **Kaya Mirecka Ploss**, Ph.D., Executive Director
Jan Karski Institute, Baltimore, MD

There isn't a Pole, or a Polish American who has not heard or maybe even sang himself that beautiful and nostalgic song, "Góralu czy ci nie żal". We sing it at parties, picnics, and family gatherings. Most probably none of us remember that those haunting words were written by Maria Konopnicka. She wrote it for the GÓRALE (mountaineers), who were immigrating in masses to the United States well over one hundred years ago. Many of them settled around Chicago and in the city itself. That song became like an anthem for them.

Maria Konopnicka called the Polish immigration to the United States and Brazil "Męczeńska Droga Ludu" (The People's Martyrdom Road). She made her debut with a well known poem, "Zimowy Poranek" (A Winter Morning). However, her real career started with a cycle of poems called "In the Mountains". Many of the stories and poems were about those who for financial and survival reasons left Poland. Besides the United States, many Poles immigrated to Brazil. For them, Konopnicka dedicated an epic poem in six parts, "Pan Balcer w Brazylii". For the mountaineers she wrote that unforgettable poem "Góralu Czy Ci Nie Żal".

Except perhaps for Eliza Orzeszkowa who wrote about people's fate and injustice, Konopnicka wrote about things that pained her, that mattered to her; like the people who left Poland to seek a better tomorrow in foreign lands, or people behind bars. However, children's education was most important to her.

Konopnicka's books for children revealed how much she cared for them. When they were published, they became a sensation. Three of them, some written as prose and some as poems, are still very popular in Poland. The best known is a fairy tale "O Krasnolutkach i Sierotce Marysi" (The Little Orphan and the Seven Dwarfs). Another one is a charming story about a boy called "Johnny, the Wanderer", in Polish "Janek Wędrownik". The third one is an amusing little story about "Berry Picking" (Na Jagody).

Who was that prim and modest woman who so passionately wrote her well known "Obrazki Więzienne" (Notes from Prison)? Who was that woman who participated in numerous conspiratorial activities and who fought for human rights and treatment, not only for political prisoners, but also for imprisoned criminals?

She was born Maria Wasilowska on May 23 in 1842. She spent her childhood in Kalisz and was home schooled. Later on she was sent just for a few years to a Warsaw boarding school run by nuns. In Warsaw Maria met her future husband, and at the age of 20 she married Jarosław Konopnicki. The couple settled on her husband's estate - Bronów, not far from Łęczycza. In spite of her numerous household duties and six children that she bore in a span of ten years, Maria worked intensively on her self-education. After sixteen years of marriage and six children, one day she packed her own and her children's belongings and left her unhappy and unfulfilling marriage.

Maria Konopnicka was what we would call today, a "społeczniczka". Her living conditions were very difficult. She worked as a teacher and wrote for newspapers to make a living for herself and her six children. Yet at the same time Konopnicka established and worked at a "Women's Reading Room", teaching other women how to read and write. She was also Editor of a women's magazine "ŚWIT", and worked for a committee that helped the population in Upper Silesia. Konopnicka also established a long lasting organization aimed at the Polish immigrants called "MACIERZ POLSKA".

She did all this in addition to her writing. She was known to work 18 hours daily. In 1902 in Kraków and Lwów there took place a celebration for Maria Konopnicka on the 25th anniversary of her first publication. In the following year she received as a National Gift a manor house in Żarnowiec which improved her financial situation.

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Pit Bull with Lipstick

By: **Justyna Ball**

My cousins in Poland have asked me if I went to go see "Mamma Mia" yet. No, I haven't, and I don't intend to. It's not the music, which I actually love - I even named my dog ABBA. It's the image of Pierce Brosnan singing "S.O.S." that turns me off. And the whole script idea with the girl who plays Meryl Streep's daughter being on a mission chasing down three men. All three had entered her mother's life at some point. One lingered around a little longer and gave her a little more than just a second look, he gave her a daughter. And now that daughter wants to know who her dad is ... dah!

I don't know about you, but I spent the last week watching the Democratic Convention and this week, the GOP's.

I was very pleased with remarks by both Sen. Obama and his wife Michelle, "Uncle Teddy's" as well as Joe Biden's. I was pleasantly surprised by both Clintons' speeches. Since the beginning of the election process, I was never a Clinton fan, and to tell you the truth I expected something rather dry and nothing beyond the standard talk by an ex-president - just something for the sake of keeping the Democratic Party together.

I was moved. The Clintons pulled off quite impressive (No Way, No How, No McCain) speeches and pledged 100% support for Sen. Obama. Obama's long emancipated presentation (for 84,000 at the stadium and 38 million at home) did not disappoint either. Our being fed up with Bush's politics was clearly spelled out... ENOUGH! And along with the other speakers, as the convention's agenda obliged, the plan for the next several years was put out, a connection between Exxon John and Bush established, Michelle re-introduced and the party stayed united. A job well done.

And then came the GOP convention, which took over all the attention and the Republican Party introduced the unknown (even to McCain!) governor, a mother of five, their Alaskan "pit bull," Sarah Palin with her lipstick freshly applied. She entered the stage, the hockey mom, and began "checking" from the start.

Somehow all the arguments previously used against Sen. Obama, now attributed to Gov. Palin are actually her ... assets. How's that for hypocrisy?

Her being inexperienced? Are you kidding? The official statement is that she is a fresh face and a reformer. (Well, Mrs. Palin was educated in journalism and Barack Obama in ... constitutional law which means he knows the US constitution quite well.)

The Super Mom is hard not to notice as her Alaskan brood follows her around everywhere. Of course, she can handle it all. She can juggle her VP career, five kids (one with special needs), her BlackBerry and even throw a baby shower for her pregnant teenage daughter... all at the same time. But I can't get this out of my mind: Why, why would McCain do this to her?

My impression on Day 1 was that he put her out there without thinking about the responsibilities that the VP position demands. I believe that Sen. McCain should ask his running mates and work on a stronger case for one of them rather than put such a burden on this poor woman who has a lot to handle now. Maybe Track, Bristol, Willow and Piper need no constant supervision... but wait at least until Trig goes to kindergarten.

I saw a woman who jumped at the opportunity (who wouldn't in her position?) but did not think through it.

For some reason, to many Republicans, she appears as someone well prepared or (second option) someone who can learn ... along the way.

Let's just pray that the learning process ends before McCain (if elected, he would be the oldest president in first term) passes, as she would be next in line to run the country! Oh well, she can always send her husband Todd - the snow machine racer, dog sled pusher, and caribou hunter after Ahmadinjad. Todd can also play the role of the First House-Husband in the White House flipping moose burgers for the visitors on the big lawn while "Miss Congeniality" holds some executive meetings.

Since when does being a mother of a pregnant teenage daughter prepare you to run the country? Oh I get it, Bush has twins so he deserved a second term.

The attention given by the media to that fact of teenage pregnancy was upsetting

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

Tel: (626) 577-9797 Fax: (626) 449-3331

E-MAIL - polishnews@att.net

Editor in Chief: Betsy Cepielik

Polish Section, Editor-in-Chief: Zbysław (Bish) Petryka (323) 766-0026

Contributing writers

Justyna Ball Jadwiga Inglis
Fr. Lucjan Kamieński, SDB Iwo Cyprian Pogonowski

Columnists:

Kaya Mirecka Ploss - Profiles Lila Ciecek - Orange Co.
Joanna Brost - Investments Prof. Jerzy Przystawa - Poland Politics
Chris Kerosky, Esq. - Legal matters Richard P. Król - Taxes
Edmund Lewandowski - Northern Cal. Jan Szczepański - Poland - Student
Marek Żebrowski and Krysta Close - Polish Music Center @USC

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Calendar of Events

To January 21, 2009, Santa Ana - All The World's a Stage, Modjeska's Arden at Old Courthouse Museum, 211 W. Santa Ana Blvd., Information at: www.ocparks.com/oldcourthouse and (714) 973 6605.

Sept 20 - 21, Sat. and Sun. - Dożynki at the Pope John Paul II Polish Center, 3999 Rose Dr., Yorba Linda. Info: 714-996-8161.

20, Sat, 6:00 p.m. Polonia United Ball, at Hyatt Hotel in La Jolla, CA, orchestra Zbyszek Gałazka, Info: 619-496-0093

24, Wed, 11:00 am. Board of Directors meetings at Clubhouse Six, The Polish Club of Laguna Woods, Free lunch. Information: 949-206-9122.

27 - 28, Sat and Sun, Bazaar of Our Lady of Bright Mount Parish, 3424 W. Adams Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90018

Oct. 1, Wed, Celebration of 400th Anniversary of Arrival of First Poles to Jamestown (Virginia)

11 12, Sat and Sun, Polish Festival at Fr. Maximilian Maria Kolbe Polish Mission in San Diego.

12, Sun Los Angeles - 1:30 pm. Polish American Congress Meeting Our Lady of the Bright Mount Rectory - Lower level - 3424 W. Adams Blvd.

12, Sun, 2:30 pm. Life and Music of Jan Ignacy Paderewski, Auditorium Concert, Clubhouse Three, organized by The Polish Club of Laguna Woods, Information: 949-206-9122.

19, Sun, 10:30 a.m., Commemoration of 30th Anniversary of pope John Paul II election and 24th Anniversary of Fr. Jerzy Popiełuszko, Chaplain and Patron of Solidarity Martyrdom. Ośrodek Polonijny im Jana Pawła II, 3999 Rose Dr., Yorba Linda, CA 92886; Info: Mietek 714-608-0511.

19, Sun, Banquet after the noon Mass organized by the Friends of John Paul II Foundation at the Parrish Hall of Our Lady of the Bright Mount Church at 3424 W. Adams Blvd., Los Angeles, CA, Information: (626)281-0516. Guest from Rome will attend - prałat Wyleżek.

Nov 8, Sat, 5:00 pm. Polka Night organized by The Polish Club of Laguna Woods in Clubhouse Two, Information: (949)206-9122.

Dec 7, Sun, 1:30 pm. Oplatek - luncheon and Awards Banquet, sponsored by the Polish American Congress - Our Lady of the Bright Mount church hall in L. A.

13, Sat, Christmas Celebration, Clubhouse 7, Polish Club of Laguna Woods, Information: (949)206-9122.

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