

Lavrov Cautions Poland Against Speculative Reading of History

An October 27, 2008 article in the Daily News Bulletin; Moscow... Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has warned, "a biased interpretation of history could harm Russian-Polish relations. When political ambitions, or momentary interests are being mixed in, objective judgments are hardly possible," Lavrov told the Russian-Polish Commission for Disputed Issues in Moscow on Monday.

Lavrov said the two countries' joint history should be considered in all its complexity, noting that, "a selective truth is always dangerous."

"A speculative look at history creates new political myths which spoils our relations," he said.

An assessment of World War II and of the period preceding it is a task on the commission's agenda, Lavrov said. Attempts to put the then German and Soviet regimes on an equal footing are unacceptable, he added.

"We see as blasphemous attempts by some politicians to put the fascist occupation and the Soviet army's liberating mission on an equal footing, and to justify the Nazis' accomplices," the Russian foreign minister said. □

World War Two: Behind Closed Doors

BBC Books L20 pp448

Written by: *Laurence Rees*

Sunday Times Book Review

By: *Max Hastings*

This powerful new history examines the extraordinary lengths to which both Germany and the allies went to court Soviet Russia.

Were Churchill and Roosevelt as friendly as legend would have us believe? Was it necessary for the British and the Americans to surrender so much to Stalin at Yalta? Did the British behave honourably towards the wartime Poles? Was Stalin's wartime conduct in any way less morally repugnant than that of Hitler?

These are some of the questions considered by Laurence Rees in a new BBC television series, for which he has written an accompanying book. The author, who created a memorable series on Auschwitz, now seeks to address some less familiar issues of the second world war, throwing light upon its darker nooks and crannies.

Much of the book is based upon material from Soviet archives and fresh testimony from veterans. There are vivid stories about Russians who lived in Murmansk in the days when Arctic convoys docked there. British sailors who ventured ashore met implacable official hostility and startling manifestations of Soviet ruthlessness. One of them, Eddie Grenfell, describes how a drunken Russian petty officer one night appeared at the barracks doors, only to be dragged away by sentries. A commissar appeared shortly afterwards and apologised to the British visitors: "We are sorry you were disturbed like this. It was dreadful that this man should have behaved as he did. You'll be glad to know we shot him."

Most of Rees's book addresses larger and graver issues. He discusses the monumental cynicism of the Nazi-Soviet Pact in August 1939, which precipitated war. Stalin said: "If Germany finds itself in a difficult situation, then she can be sure that the Soviet people will come to Germany's aid and will not allow Germany to be oppressed. A strong Germany is in the interests of the Soviet Union." At the signing ceremony, the

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Moscow court rejects exoneration of WWII Katyn massacre victims

In an RIA Novosti article dated October 24, a Moscow court has refused to exonerate Polish prisoners of war executed in western Russia's Katyn forest in 1940, a lawyer for the families of those killed said on Friday.

Over 20,000 Polish military officers, police and civilians taken prisoner during the 1939 partitioning of Poland by the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany were massacred in the Katyn forest, as well as in prisons and other locations, by the NKVD, the forerunner of the KGB.

"We strongly object to the ruling of the Khamovniki District Court, and will appeal against the decision in a higher court, the Moscow City Court," Anna Stavitskaya said.

In 2005, the Chief Military Prosecutor's Office closed the "Katyn Case", saying those involved in the executions had since died.

However, the relatives of the executed officers appealed the decision to close the case.

The Soviet Union initially accused Germany of executing the Polish prisoners. However, in 1990 Mikhail Gorbachev officially admitted that Soviet secret police were responsible for the massacre. □

Katyn "poisons" Polish-Russian relations

Former foreign secretary Adam Rotfeld, a member of a bilateral history commission, urges Moscow to be more open about the perpetrators of the 1940 murder of 20,000 Polish officers, known as the Katyn massacre. Rotfeld was reacting to a decision taken by the Khamovniki District Court not to exonerate Polish prisoners of war who were murdered by Soviet NKVD officials during WW II. Families of the Polish officers are appealing to the higher court in Moscow to overturn the decision.

Earlier in October, the Municipal Court in Moscow rejected an appeal by the Russian historical and civil rights NGO, the Memorial Society, to disclose reasons behind a decision to discontinue the investigation into the killings.

In 2005 Moscow wound up the Russian investigation into the case saying that all those involved in the case were now dead.

Adam Rotfeld said that Katyn was poisoning relations between Russia and Poland and that more openness between Moscow and Warsaw was needed before the issue could be put to rest. He urged the Russian government to open files concerning the case so the joint Polish-Russian historical commission could do its work.

Moscow's seeming indifference to the sensitive subject of Soviet treatment of Polish prisoners has helped sour relations between Poland and Russia. In July it was reported that a new school text book will paint Stalin as an efficient leader and the killing of Polish officers in Katyn was "revenge", committed by Poland during the 1920 war between the two countries.

The Russian Academy of Qualification Improvement and Professional Retraining of Education Employees released new guidelines this term for teachers regarding the history syllabus in schools. From now on, Russian pupils will be informed that the Polish officers were indeed killed by the NKVD in Katyn in 1940, but the act was fully justified and "politically suitable", reported the pro-government daily newspaper Vremya Novostei. (pg).

(Per his business card, Mr. Rotfeld is a member of the Council for the Foundation of Aleksander Kwaśniewski Amicus Europae.)



Orange County News

By: *Lila Ciecek (714) 544-2458*

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Fast approaching end of the year and the month of November, when nature around us is changing colors, trees and flowers shedding their leaves and going dormant make us reflect on the finalities of life. According to our Christian tradition November is dedicated to the memory of our loved ones who have already passed to the eternal life. At the Pope John Paul II Polish Center in Yorba Linda we started the month with the solemn celebration of Mass on All Saints Day and All Souls Day. Votive lights near the altar reminded us to pray for the souls of our family members and friends who are no longer with us. May they rest in peace!

Many members of the Polish Center went to USC in Los Angeles to attend a special celebration of the 90th Anniversary of Poland's Independence in 1918. The very popular, annual "Andrzejki" Dinner Dance, sponsored by the PNA Lodge "Piastr" will take place at the Center on Saturday, November 29. Guest will enjoy traditional surprises and dancing to the music of a group from Arizona, "Made in Poland", as well as a gourmet dinner prepared by Turek Catering.

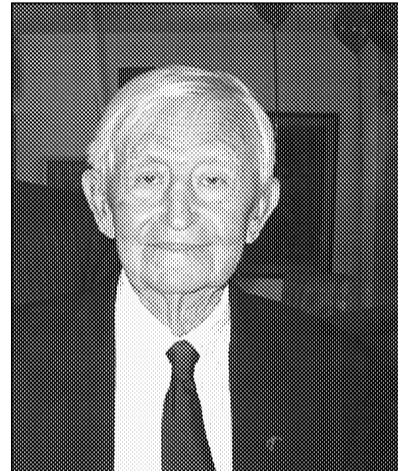
This month we also celebrate the beautiful holiday – Thanksgiving Day. A special time to acknowledge and to remember all the countless blessings we receive. A time to thank God, who so generously showers us with His love and blessings; a time to thank our families and friends for their love and to appreciate all the goodness in our lives.

Here in Orange County, we are grateful and thank God for our Polish Center - the special place where we can worship Him and cultivate our Polish culture and traditions. We are also thankful for our Director, Fr. Henryk Noga, for the Center's Community, and special love and friendships which flourish here. Happy Thanksgiving!

We are looking forward to the annual, traditional "Opłatek" sponsored by the Polish American Congress of Southern California. This event will take place on Sunday, December 7th at the Our Lady of the Bright Mount Polish Church in Los Angeles. One of the members of the Polish Center in Yorba Linda, late Zbigniew Janczur will be posthumously awarded "The Polonia Award of 2008" at the "Opłatek. The Award will be accepted by his wife Zofia.

Zbigniew Janczur biography

By: *Lila Ciecek*



Zbigniew Janczur was born on February 22, 1919 in Częstochowa, Poland. With his parents and a younger sister he soon moved to Lwów, where he received his basic education. After graduating from High School, he enrolled in The Technical University in Lwów, Poland to study Mechanical Engineering, which was of great interest to him. Unfortunately, in 1939, World War II interrupted his studies, and in 1940 Zbigniew and a group of the University Students were arrested by the communists and deported to Kijów to work as prisoners in Soviet factories producing military war material. After being released in 1942, Zbigniew joined the newly formed Polish Army under the command of General Anders in Kazakhstan, Soviet Union. Soon after, due to his valuable past experience as a glider pilot in Poland, he was shipped to England to join the Polish Air Force. Following training, he was a pilot of aircraft used in the war. In 1945 he was decorated with a British War Medal.

After the war ended, discharged from the Air Force and unable to return to Poland, Zbigniew remained in England and resumed his interrupted Engineering studies at the Mechanical and Aviation Technology Department of the Polish University College (PUC) in London. Upon his graduation he was offered a position as an Assistant Professor in drafting studies. In 1950 Zbigniew immigrated to the USA. He met and married Zofia and together they raised three sons: Andrew, Mark and Tomasz. For the next 45 years he continued his successful career in the engineering and aero-space industry, first in New York State then in California.

Zbigniew's pride of Poland always shone through him. Wherever he lived he was involved in the life and affairs of the Polish community. While attending Polish University College in London he was active in the Student Union. In New York and then in California he has supported and was an active member of many Polish organizations and clubs: Polish American Congress - serving on Audit Committee; member of the Pope John II Foundation, Helena Modjewska Foundation, Polish American Historical Association, Polish Combatants and Veterans; longstanding member of the Polish Air Force Association in Los Angeles. Many religious and charitable organizations, both in America and in Poland were supported by him and benefited from his generosity. Sensitive to the needs of others Zbigniew took under his wings many new immigrants and refugees arriving from Poland in the post Solidarity times, and helped them start a new life in the USA.

Very quiet and modest, Zbigniew did not like to hold important offices or positions, but he was always available to inspire others, encourage, support, and to work hard. Very unassuming, he preferred to be anonymous. A good example of this was the fact (not known to many), that Zbigniew, proud of his Polish heritage, in his zeal to spread knowledge about Poland, would buy a large number of books about Poland to distribute among local Public Libraries.

Zbigniew Janczur died and went to his eternal rest on March 11, 2007. He left his wife, sons, family and many friends with fond memories of a good husband and father, a noble, kind, generous, inspiring man. A faithful and proud son of Poland and a proud citizen of his adopted Country, the United States of America. □

Tłumaczenia

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