

PAC meeting from 10**Evening Meeting**

It was a long day, but there was more to come. After dinner, President Spula introduced the guests at the head table. They were: Dr. Lydia Filus of Northeastern University, Dr. Fredericks of Loyola University, Poland's Consul General in Chicago Zygmunt Matynia, and Vice Consul Pawel Pietrasieński.

In his brief remarks, Consul Matynia reminisced about the years of his presence in Chicago and his continually good relations with the PAC. He also reminded the group about many anniversaries that take place this year, to include the 90th anniversary of US-Poland diplomatic relations; 70th Anniversary of the Beginning of WW II; and the 20th Anniversary of the first free election in Poland (on June 6, 1989) and a consecutive fall of Communism. He also invited everybody to a concert that is going to take place on May 29 in Millennium Park in Chicago commemorating those important events in Poland 20 years ago.

Another speaker, a faculty member of the Northeastern Illinois University announced that during the same time a building on the University campus will be dedicated to Lech Wałęsa.

Two final speakers included Ms. Magdalena Chuchra and Carmen Velez from the regional U.S. Census Bureau that serves Illinois and a few bordering states. The speakers emphasized the importance of having each person in the US properly counted. Unfortunately, on the 2010 Census form, the question regarding ancestry was removed, and the only one that remained is a question about the race. They recommended writing in Polish as race, and then request from the regional bureaus to have those responses counted and reported. At the same time, the question about ancestry is a part of the American Community Survey – a different type of data collection instrument that is being continuously used by the U.S. Census Office to collect detailed information about the various communities domiciled in the United States. Hopefully, by 2020 a solution will be found and the question about ancestry will be again included in the nationwide Census. On this note, the evening ended and delegates retired for the next full day session.

May 15

The day began with a delicious sit-down breakfast. The delegates then convened to the meeting room to begin the day's session.

Out of 126 National Directors, 57 were registered and present.

President Spula started the session by thanking delegates for their volunteer work. He then expressed his appreciation of the work for the staff of the two PAC offices and announced that in addition to the established Internship Program in the Washington DC Office, now also his office offers the program to Polish American students and introduced the Chicago intern, Michael Wasileski.

As in previous years, the meeting revolved around issues most important to the Organization, such its financial condition and fundraising plans as well as activities of the PAC Holocaust Documentation Committee.

Don Versen and Marian Skawski of the Polish American Leadership Initiative (PALI), a Chicago based 501(c)(3) organization, was founded in 2000 and funded by the Chicago Community Trust and the Archdiocese of Chicago. The purpose was to develop leadership skills among young Polish Americans. Now the group wishes to transfer all its potential and established assets to the Polish American Congress. One of those assets is a Web site (www.polorg.com) with registered more than 1700 organizations. If the merger takes place, for the PAC it would mean access to many Polish American groups in states where PAC does not have its divisions. The Web site provides space for each organization to post information about its mission, activities, and contacts, but each group is individually responsible for maintaining the information up to date. The delegates voted in favor of merging PALI into the PAC.

Anti-Bigotry Report

Frank Milewski (New York) has been the head of the Anti-Bigotry Committee since its inception 25 years ago. It was started for the purpose of preventing and averting Polish jokes. Milewski feels that the jokes have subsided, but there are other matters being brought to the attention of the committee. Most of the anti-Polish remarks come from the Jewish community, making it a problem of Jewish anti-Polonism. The Polish American – Jewish American Council was formed in the 1970's to address this problem. The meetings concluded in June 2008, with the feeling that the goals had been accomplished and they will continue to keep excellent relations.

Recently Senator Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania made a very insulting Polish remark. He was immediately contacted by the Executive Committee of the PAC. CNN has finally stopped referring to "Polish death camps." There have been articles in Catholic and Protestant newspapers stating that Poland and Germany tried to destroy the Jews. By responding to these false statements, the truth about Poland can be told and printed.

When it was under communism the Polish government did not care about anti-Polish statements. Now the Ambassador is working with the PAC in curtailing these incidents. In April a statue of Jan Karski was dedicated at 37th and Madison – by the Polish Consulate – along with a sign saying Jan Karski Corner. Hopefully, the public will realize how the Poles helped the Jews. The statue was favorably received by the Jewish people. (Jan Karski went inside a concentration camp, escaped, and told officials in London and Washington what was happening to the Jewish people. Unfortunately, neither government paid attention to him.)

The diocesan newspapers and television asked for input from the Polish community. Catholic survivors, such as Michael Preisler were interviewed and told about the "Forgotten Holocaust." There are still many survivors, who can tell of little known events, such as the Zoška Scout Troop who liberated 350 Jews. What will happen when these survivors are no longer alive? In 1971 the (Jewish) Children of Holocaust Survivors was formed. Recently a Polish Christian (not only Catholic) counterpart was formed in New York. In Chicago several survivors' children have come forth and there is now an Illinois division. One was present at the meeting – Kathy Diipla. She has become a good friend of the Milewskis. An inquiry was received from Nevada. It was suggested that these survivors join the PAC.

The U.S. Holocaust Museum, although primarily Jewish, says they will honor any persons who were displaced, persuaded, or discriminated against due to the policies of the Nazis and their allies from 1939 – 1945, including refugees and those who were forced to go into hiding. President Ed Moskal donated \$30,000 from the PNA in honor of Żegota.

It was suggested that letters be written to CBS and the BBC for their showing of the movies "The Irena Sendler Story" and "Behind Closed Doors." Finally, the truth is being told!

After the report, there were responses from the audience. One delegate brought up the matter of those who were sent to Siberia (the Sybiraki.) There is a new organization in western New York (Buffalo) and Canada which has information about the Sybiraki.

Wspólnota Polska

After an American buffet lunch, the afternoon session began with a speaker, Mr. Grzegorz Popielarz, Treasurer of Wspólnota Polska, who reported there might be finds available to Polonia organizations, including the PAC, from the Polish government, based on revision of proposals submitted by Polonia organizations.

Later that day, the discussion returned to the topic of the census. Since there is no way to indicate ethnicity on the current form, it was suggested that each individual need to make sure to indicate his or her Polish roots during the American Community Survey. A question was also raised about the composition of American Society: "Today only 40% of the population

is white. What will it be in 2020?" – one of the directors asked.

The date of the next meeting of PAC National Directors was announced – October 14 – 16, again in Chicago. President Spula again emphasized that the Polish American community needs leaders, and as part of addressing this issue, on those dates a "Zjazd Narodu" – a large convocation of Polish American organizations – will take place. Many Polish American groups will be invited to attend this "Gathering of the Nation". Both Loyola and Northeastern Illinois Universities have offered their facilities. This would be a culmination of all of the Polish anniversaries mentioned earlier. There will be a press release within the following week.

The raffle will take place at this event. Tim Kuźma (Pittsburgh, Pa.) is the chair of the Raffle Committee. Tickets will be \$5.00 or 5 for \$20. Commissions will be offered to those who sell 50 books or 100 books. The first prize will be \$5,000. Tickets will be mailed in a mass mailing.

Dr. Barbara Andersen from the Washington PAC Office spoke about news from Capitol Hill.

The session concluded with President Spula appointing Dr. Susanne Lotarski, President of the Washington Metro Division, to the position of Vice President for Public Relations.

Resolutions

Ted Mirecki (Washington Metro), read the resolutions.

The first was from the New Jersey Division. "All PAC officers and delegates should be vetted by IPN (Institute of Remembrance) and send letters of compliance that they were never officers, agents, employees, or informants" (of the communist government.) There was a great deal of discussion. Many felt that it was not proper to do this, and the resolution was (again) defeated (13 for and 29 against.) One delegate said this should have been done five years ago, and the response was that "we have been trying for five years."

The second resolution came from the Illinois Division; "Since the original mission of the PAC has been accomplished, the American Agenda should be the top priority - to improve the political, social, and economic status of Poles in the U.S. The resolution was defeated. The Polish and American Agendas are intertwined. President Spula said that we should use

common sense. We may disagree, but should "walk away as friends."

There were three proposals that were offered for proposal to create to the Executive Committee: 1. to create a flag for the PAC; 2. to modify the PAC logo to include some element(s) indicating Polish heritage and 3. to create a PAC logo to be used on podiums during meetings, so the PAC name is displayed in photos of speakers.

Other resolutions were discarded, due to conflicts with the by-laws.

Conclusion

Tim Kuźma elaborated on the Arlen Specter matter. He first contacted Specter's Pittsburgh office, and then his Washington office. In January, with the Executive Committee, they met in the Washington office. Specter agreed to a Town Hall meeting. 80 people came to the meeting and many issues were discussed. This was done in a non-confrontational manner. Specter is now an advocate for the Poles. It was recommended that meetings with politicians be conducted in a positive manner.

President Spula thanked Barbara Andersen for her work in Washington, Pam Komorowska for her work in Chicago, Ted Mirecki for his work on the website, and all of the National Directors.

Tour of the PAC Office

Delegates were invited to attend a tour and reception at the PAC Illinois Division office. An added feature was the opening of an exhibit on Roman Puciński, former U.S. Congressman and Chicago Alderman. Puciński's daughter Aurelia and his mother were in attendance. Aurelia spoke to the assemblage. Congressman Puciński was the chief investigator in the uncovering of the Katyn Massacre and introduced a resolution to Congress about Katyn. He was also a PAC President, a soldier and a reporter. Two buildings bear his name. His daughter spoke very warmly of him, and said that he really loved people. The exhibit consisted of photos and newspaper articles – all nicely displayed.

This was a very enjoyable and informative ending to a very busy two days. Congratulations to President Spula for all of the work he is doing with the PAC and the PNA! □

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