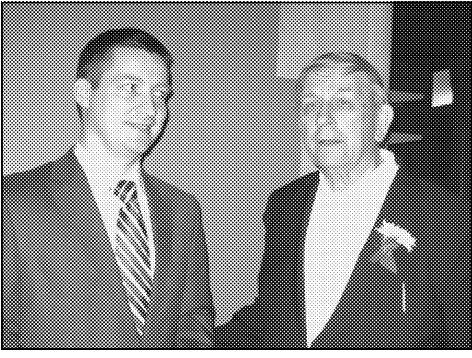


Kokoska Honored by Polish Government



Mr. Stanley Kokoska has served the Polish American Community for over 50 years. He was president of the Polish American Congress in Connecticut, President of the Pulaski Citizens Club in Willimantic, CT, etc. Stan was the first Polish American Mayor of Willimantic and helped countless Polish immigrants acclimate themselves to the American way of life.

Stan is the father of Little League Baseball in Poland and has spent most of his summers over the past 20 years teaching the fundamentals of Baseball to the children of Poland. Through the Polish National Youth Baseball Foundation, of which he is president, thousands of pounds of baseball equipment is sent free of charge, to the children each year.

On Polish Day in Hartford, CT Stan was awarded the Knights Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland. Pictured above, presenting the medal, is Consul of Poland Przemyslaw Balcerzyk and Mr. Stanley Kokoska.

Donations to the P.N.Y.B.F. can be sent to 222 Ocean Drive East, Stamford, CT 06902 to continue the work of Stan, for the benefit of the children in Poland. □

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Poland honours WWII victims in cyber space

By: *Maja Czarnecka*

WARSAW (AFP) - Seventy years after the eruption of World War II, Poland is paying homage to Polish victims of the 1939-1945 Nazi occupation by posting their names on a vast historical list in cyberspace.

The project aims to bring to light the names of victims -- both those who perished and those who were persecuted but survived -- who were never registered, as well as to gather death records dispersed across Poland, Germany, Ukraine, and Israel in one place accessible to all.

"How many forms do I have to fill out if I'm the only survivor in my family of five?" Maria Gnietycz, 82, a onetime detainee in the Auschwitz Nazi German death camp, asks personnel responsible for the website in Warsaw.

She is told to fill out five, for her late relatives and herself as an Auschwitz survivor.

Questionnaires can be filled out either online or, more traditionally, on paper.

"In the space of two weeks, more than 1,500 questionnaires were submitted over the Internet," says Ewa Tazbierska of a group called the Polish-German Reconciliation Foundation, a foundation created by both governments, now in charge of the website at: <http://www.straty.pl>.

People killed during military offensives, in combat, by execution and those who perished in death camps and ghettos can be registered with the site. Historians check each name to avoid any duplications.

"It's very meticulous work and a gigantic operation due both to its size and degree of complexity," says historian Andrzej Kunert.

Launched in 2006, the project until May was run by Karta, a Polish non-governmental organisation, and gathered 1.5 million names over three years. According to Tazbierska, this figure could double over the next three years.

"The response has been huge. In two weeks, we received more than 50,000 hits on the site and 360,000 searches for names," she said.

"It is precisely to give names to the victims. Our victims are anonymous -- we're talking about several million people, but we don't know who they were," Tazbierska said.

Establishing the true death toll of Poles during World War II is also a major objective of the project, a delicate task in a country devastated in that fighting. And in the 50 years of communism that followed, the truth about the war was often obscured by state propaganda.

"In 1946, the communist authorities fixed the number of victims at 6,028,000", says Kunert.

"This number was invented on the basis of estimates and was published in history text books for decades. This was the only official number, almost sacred, even though it raised doubts among historians," he said.

"No country in Europe was able to account for its victims with such precision after the war. The estimates were made in millions or hundreds of thousands. In Poland, the communists added 28,000 onto their total to make it seem more realistic," Kunert explains.

Historians generally accept that six million Polish citizens died during the World War II, half of them Polish Jews.

The results of the project could bring surprises, Kunert says. "The total could turn out to be lower, closer to the 4.5 million total which some historians believe to be true. Or on the contrary, it can reach seven or eight million as some demographers maintain," he said.

"Aside from its academic significance,

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Book Review

The Peasant Prince: Thaddeus Kościuszko and The Age of Revolution

By: *Alex Storożyński*

Reviewed by *Joanne Winetzki*

Pulitzer Prize – winning journalist Alex Storożyński gives Polish-Americans a special reason to celebrate the 233rd anniversary of the American Revolution. In fact, Storożyński's account of the life of our beloved General Thaddeus Kościuszko may generate an abundance of contemporary heroines and heroes. In the popular jargon of young people, this book "rocks." Adults, too, will welcome its refreshing departure from the boring biographies of saintly demigods we recall from our school days. Storożyński tells the story of a flesh and blood human being who possessed a philosophy of tolerance centuries ahead of his time and who never retreated from defending fundamental human rights. Was he a "flawed" individual? Of course! Flaws are attributes of being human. Flawless mortals transcend into the higher realm of saints and bodhisattvas. Thaddeus Kościuszko was a remarkable individual, but one with whom readers can empathize and even aspire to emulate.

Like the modern super hero wizard Harry Potter, both Storożyński and Kościuszko were confronted with choices that tested their integrity and laid the groundwork for future success.

Potter chose good over evil by joining the group of people working for the greater good of Hogwart's. Storożyński, "Chose the memoirs of people who knew Kościuszko and witnessed him in action over those who wrote about him later." He points out that Kościuszko's rejection as a proper suitor for an aristocrat's daughter was a "pivotal moment in his life." Yet most historians underestimate the significance of that incident. The author presents numerous examples of facts about Kościuszko, often overlooked or ignored, that reveal key facets of his character and elucidate his subsequent decisions and actions. The book is liberally embellished with episodes that delineate our hero's character. One example is the punishment Kościuszko meted out to his aide whom he found throwing a party in his master's quarters. Instead of a whipping the aide merely suffered an awful hangover. On another occasion the general was visited by Little Turtle of the Miami Ohio Indian Tribe. The visitor presented him with a ceremonial peace pipe. The host responded by giving the honored guest his reading glasses, Tatar cloak and favorite set of pistols.

A journalist of the 21st century, Storożyński is ideally suited to write about an individual like Kościuszko whose beliefs, expectations and exploits were incredibly ahead of his time. The general's knowledge of engineering applied to the building of the fortifications at West Point produced, "a splendid prototype for the system of fortifications which were to be built in Europe in the next (19th) century." He was adamant in advocating education, stating in a will, "I only appeal to them (residents of the village that belonged to his estate in Siechnowice,) for their own and their country's sake to try to establish schools and spread education." He abolished all forced labor for women on the estate, regretting that, "If this were another country where the government could ensure my will, I would free them entirely..." The issue of slavery in the United States intensely troubled Kosciuszko. He could not understand how Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence, was able to justify his ownership of slaves. He abhorred the fact that his esteemed friend gave prece-

dence to politics and economics over the universal human right of an individual to be free of bondage. In the Proclamation of Polaniec during the 1794 Insurrection in his homeland, Commander Kościuszko gave the serfs equal rights "under the laws and protection of the national government." Subsequent provisions, "reduced the bureaucratic restrictions that made it impossible for serfs to acquire their own wealth, capital, and happiness." Storożyński draws attention to the fact that the word "happiness" frequently appeared in Kościuszko's correspondence and suggests, "To him happiness and freedom went hand in hand."

Compassion and selflessness are two attributes of Kościuszko that will resonate with a greater number of people today than during his lifetime. For example, during the American Revolution, the French engineers badgered Congress for promotions while Kościuszko begged for clothing for his men. He shared his meager rations with English prisoners of war. The author includes an anecdote about a Pole traveling in Australia many years after the American Revolutionary War. The man fell ill and was nursed back to health by a local shopkeeper. The Australian explained that his grandfather would have died of hunger if not for a man named Kościuszko who gave him something to eat. Before The Act of Insurrection was read aloud to the enormous crowd gathered in Krakow, Kosciuszko's words affirmed that the uprising, "would not tolerate vengeance, but rather celebrate unity."

Poles and Polish-Americans especially will admire the many examples of tolerance, honor, and incorruptibility exemplified by the behavior of our famous son of liberty. Kościuszko's awareness that the Polish Jew Haym Salomon helped to finance the American War of Independence alerted him to the fact that Jews were willing to fight for personal liberty and against Europe's outdated and oppressive systems of government. Commander Kościuszko's idea of forming peasant and Jewish militias during the 1794 Insurrection met with little enthusiasm until Berek Joselewicz asked to be allowed to form a Jewish cavalry regiment. "It would be the first wholly Jewish brigade formed since biblical times." In reply to a question regarding the political system to be installed after the uprising, Kościuszko stated, "I will not fight only for the nobility. I want freedom for the entire nation, and only for them will I risk my life." The Commander adamantly refused to serve under a government organized by the traitors of the Targowica conspiracy. Responding to the King's efforts to dissuade him from resigning from the military he bluntly said, "I told him that we earned the consideration, fighting for our country, that his royal highness should never make us go against our principles and our honor." Perhaps the most dashing display of his unequivocal egalitarianism is the incident when he carried forward the Polish military tradition of a Commander wearing the uniform of the most effective combat unit. Three hundred peasants armed with pikes and scythes overpowered the czarist soldiers, captured three huge cannons and eight more artillery pieces. Their commander threw off his officer's uniform and replaced it with a sukmana, the common peasant's robe woven of sheep's wool.

Critics of General Kościuszko take issue with his unwillingness to compromise, radical ideas and political activism. On the other hand, many progressive citizens of today would likely applaud his courage. In 1921 the Irish activist Michael Collins reached a compromise with the British government which resulted in the partition of Northern Ireland from the rest of the country. Almost a hundred years later people on both sides of the conflict are still being killed.

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