

Russia 'simulates' nuclear attack on Poland

Russia has provoked outrage in Poland by simulating an air and sea attack on the country during military exercises.

Russian tanks in Georgia

A November 1 article by Matthew Day in *The Telegraph, UK* states... The armed forces are said to have carried out "war games" in which nuclear missiles were fired and troops practised an amphibious landing on the country's coast.

Documents obtained by *Wprost*, one of Poland's leading news magazines, said the exercise was carried out in conjunction with soldiers from Belarus.

The manoeuvres are thought to have been held in September and involved about 13,000 Russian and Belarusian troops.

Poland, which has strained relations with both countries, was cast as the "potential aggressor".

The documents state the exercises, code-named "West", were officially classified as "defensive" but many of the operations appeared to have an offensive nature.

The Russian air force practised using weapons from its nuclear arsenal, while in the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad, which neighbours Poland, Red Army forces stormed a "Polish" beach and attacked a gas pipeline.

The operation also involved the simulated suppression of an uprising by a national minority in Belarus – the country has a significant Polish population which has a strained relationship with authoritarian government of Belarus.

Karol Karski, an MP from Poland's Law and Justice, is to table parliamentary questions on Russia's war games and has protested to the European Commission.

His colleague, Marek Opiola MP, said: "It's an attempt to put us in our place. Don't forget all this happened on the 70th anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Poland."

Ordinary Poles were outraged by news of the exercise and demanded a firm response from the government.

One man, identified only as Ted, told *Polskie Radio*: "Russia has laid bare its real intentions with respect to Poland. Every Pole most now get off the fence and be counted as a patriot or a traitor."

Donald Tusk, Poland's prime minister, has tried to build a pragmatic relationship with the Kremlin despite widespread and vocal calls in Poland for him to cool ties with Moscow.

After spending 40 years under Soviet domination few in Poland trust Russia, and many Poles have become increasingly wary of a country they consider as possessing a neo-imperialistic agenda.

Bogdan Klich, Poland's defence minister, said: "It is a demonstration of strength. We are monitoring the exercises to see what has been planned."

Władysław Stasiak, chief of President Lech Kaczyński's office, and a former head of Poland's National Security Council, added: "We didn't like the appearance of the exercises and the name harked back to the days of the Warsaw Pact."

The Russian troop exercises will come as an unwelcome sight to the states nestling on Russia's western border who have deep-rooted anxieties over any Russian show of strength.

With a resurgent Moscow now more willing to flex its muscles, Central and Eastern Europeans have warned of Russia adopting a neo-imperialistic attitude to an area of the world it still regards as its sphere of influence.

In July, the region's most famed and influential political figures, including Lech Wałęsa and Vaclav Havel, wrote an open letter Barack Obama warning him

Russia Simulates War to page 15

Polish News Bytes

Compiled by *Robert Strybel*,
Our Warsaw Correspondent

A **gambling scandal** has rocked the pro-business government of Donald Tusk. Two high-ranking members of his administration have lost their jobs in connection with a favor-peddling scam involving illegal lobbying to lower the taxes of one-armed-bandit operators. More than 50,000 such low-win gambling machines are found in bars, gas stations and free-standing booths across Poland. Other cabinet members may also be dismissed. The scandal may hurt the presidential chances of Prime Minister Tusk who according to surveys is the front-runner ahead of next year's election.

The death toll of a recent mine disaster has risen to 20 and may claim additional lives from amongst another 20 still hospitalized miners. Twelve were killed instantly when a methane-gas blast swept through the Wujek-Śląsk Colliery in the Silesian town of Ruda Śląska. It was the highest mine-death toll since 2006, when 23 miners were killed at a nearby mine. Just weeks after the Wujek-Śląsk explosion, another miner lost his life in a separate colliery mishap.

Poland's "business model" was praised by the International Monetary Fund's European Department head Marek Belka, a former Polish deputy prime minister and finance minister. "Poland has avoided excessive dependency on foreign capital inflows, has a broad industrial base and is a fairly diverse economy with a fairly solid growth potential," he told journalists at a recent briefing. Belka however listed the Baltic States, Bulgaria, Spain and Ireland as countries which do need to rethink their "business models".

Poland is helping bail out Iceland with a \$214 million loan agreed last year as part of an international rescue package for the crisis-hit island. The Polish loan is in addition to a \$2.1 billion loan granted to Iceland by the International Monetary Fund following the collapse of that country's economy a year ago. Iceland is a huge, mostly barren, volcanic island in the North Atlantic with a population of only some 300,000.

Poland has regained control of PZU, central Europe's largest insurance company. According to the agreement, the Polish government has paid the Dutch company Eureko \$1.46 billion for 33 per cent of its PZU shares. Eureko has also agreed to drop an arbitration case which could have cost the country as much as \$12.4 billion. The deal achieved after years of grueling negotiations resolved a decade-long dispute over the ownership of PZU (Polski Zakład Ubezpieczeń = Polish Insurance Company).

The human aspect of the war will be the focus of Gdańsk's planned World War II museum, its director Paweł Machcewicz announced at an international conference recently. It will be the first museum in Europe to focus primarily on the suffering

of the civilian population, forms of resistance to occupation and individual stories of people who personally endured that ordeal. "I don't believe that it is possible to create a uniform European memory, but we should try to understand one another better through a historical dialogue," Machewicz told the gathering of historians and other scholars from Poland, Germany, Russia and Ukraine.

19th-century Warsaw bishop Zygmunt Szczęśny Feliński (1822-1895) has been raised to the altar by Pope Benedict XVI. The religious leader, who had been beatified by Pope John Paul II in 2002, was canonized in recognition of the religious fervor and dedication with which he shepherded his flock during the period of Russian occupation. Exiled for 12 years into the depths of Russia after the collapse of the 1865 January Insurrection, he was banned from returning to Warsaw. Bishop Feliński served out his life in southern Poland, where he set up the Franciscan-linked Order of the Family of Mary.

The Cegielski marine-engineering plant of Poznań has begun mass layoffs due to declining orders for ship engines and other heavy equipment. Hundreds of threatened workers have staged protests marches through the streets of this western city in defense of their jobs. Eighty percent of Cegielski's profits comes from shipyards which have come upon troubled times and face closure.

Poland has traditionally extended humanitarian aid to war refugees and victims of natural disasters in different parts of the globe although itself still a relatively poor country. This has included food, medical supplies and rescue workers. Recently Poland has provided \$50,000 of relief to earthquake victims in Indonesia and \$30,000 each to tropical storm victims in the Philippines and North Vietnam.

A Polish-Ukrainian shopping zone is thriving in an area within 30 kilometers (about 19 miles) of the border, where crossing into the other country does not require a visa. The value of purchases by Ukrainians, who come to Poland for cheaper building materials, car and farm-machinery parts, appliances and radio-TV equipment, accounts for about 17% of Poland's overall exports to Ukraine. Poles travel to Ukraine for cheaper gasoline, alcohol and cigarettes, although a two-package limit has been slapped on the latter.

Poland's minimum monthly wage last year was 1,126 zlotys, or \$395 at today's exchange rate. That was an increase from the 936 zlotys (\$328) in 2007. In the industrial sector, just over 18% percent of employees earned an average monthly salary of 4,500 zlotys (\$1,578), and this year their ranks have grown to 22%. However, the economic crisis have inclined some employers to propose temporarily lowering wages instead of firing workers and employees are generally accepting that arrangement.

Polish News Bytes to page 15

Ask our man in Warsaw

Kindly airmail all Polish related queries to:

Robert Strybel

Ul. Kaniowska 24

01-529 Warsaw, Poland

OR e-mail: strybel@yp.pl

Q: I'm interested in building my genealogical tree, and I did one from my mother's side (she was from Spain). I do not speak Polish and do not have too much information about my father. My father Anthony Edward, was born in Warsaw on December 14, 1888. His father's name was Ignacius Ziminsky and his mother's – Catherine Sienkiewicz. My Father left Poland 1914 or 1915 and went to live in Argentina where he settled and married. Is there an institution where I can find out the records? I'll appreciate any information.

CARLOS ZIMINSKY,
tivalto1@verizon.net

A: To check for records you might try: Archiwum Akt Dawnych (Old Documents Archive) ul. Długa 7, 00-950 Warsaw, Poland; sekretariat@agad.gov.pl (they know English); www.archiwa.gov.pl; phone: 48-22 831-5491, 831-5492 or 831-5493.

Incidentally the correct Polish spelling of your ancestors' names is: Ignacy Zimiński and Katarzyna Sienkiewicz respectively.

Q: I am doing research for a book (fiction) set in the 1970's. I traveled throughout and lived in Europe in the '70s but did not visit Poland. I am looking for information about the way of life particularly in Cracow. In the "Illustrated History of Poland" I can find a lot about Poland up to around 1968 but then it skips to information from the '80s on. Can you point me to some source about that period?

CAROL LUDLOW,
carol@legaldocs4u.net

A: Historian Norman Davies' "God's Playground" deals with the period you're interested in, and in a lighter vein there is Olgierd Budrewicz's "Poland for Beginners". The 1970s were the decade of the more liberal and westernized communist leader Edward Gierek who tried to give Poles a taste of a quasi-consumer society within Soviet-imposed bounds. Googling him should provide additional insight into that period.

Q: I'm getting married in the US shortly and am trying to find a Polish song to dance to with my Tata. (Both he and my mother were born in Poland.) Any suggestions for something like a waltz? We're also doing the bread, salt & wine blessing at the reception. I found a "script" for our (American) band leader to read in English that describes what's going to happen but for fairness' sake I'd like to have one of my cousins read it in Polish too. Any help will be appreciated! Dzięk!

POLONIAN BRIDE-TO-BE (name and place withheld on request)

A: At Pol-Am weddings in Michigan the Tatusiu Waltz by Big Daddy Lackowski is usually played and sung. It starts with the words: "Nie płacz dzisiaj tatusiu..." (Don't cry today, daddy). Incidentally, the first dance is for the bride and her dad. The groom gets the second dance. There is a whole album of Pol-Am weddings songs. Visit: http://www.polarcenter.com/Polish_American_Wedding_Music_p/9160241.html

Q: In 1945 while in Berlin, I bought a copy of "Hitler in Poland" by Professor Heinrich Hoffmann, published 1939 in Berlin. The 72 pages, 7.5 inches by 10.5 inches, have 96 very graphic black & white photos of the land and air invasion, with Hitler visiting sites and with his top military command. The text is in German.

Our man in Warsaw to page 15



Whats Your Legacy

Many people talk about leaving their will to worthy causes, but don't have a will, and do not realize it requires a will to do so. The laws of most states make it clear that personal property goes automatically, by law, to your nearest relative, even if they are quite distant ones, unless you have a legal will that says otherwise. If you have no relative, it goes to the state. More than half of all adult Americans die without having made their wills. Most of them undoubtedly planned to do so, but never got around to it. Some had wills but didn't keep them current. When you have a will, you should update it every few years as conditions change. Also, always name an executor who will carry out your wishes. Besides money, non-cash possessions can also be used as contributions and various donation plans can be carried out. Be a philanthropist: leave your stocks, bonds, real estate, art, valuable collection or insurance to continue the Polish - American traditions. Your will is the most important way of giving. When you're gone, it is a legacy that is not forgotten. In your will, you can specify what you would like your donation to be used for. For help in making your will, contact a competent lawyer. **The American Center of Polish Culture, Inc. is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization that needs your help and legacy.**

The American Center of Polish Culture, Inc.
2025 "O" Street, NW • Washington, DC 20036
Tel: 202-785-2320 • Fax: 202-785-2159 • www.polishcenterdc.org