

For the past couple of months I have worked with News of Polonia columnist Prof. Przystawa to get a visa for him to come to the United States. After Prof. Przystawa received the visa, I sent an e-mail to many people notifying them of his coming visit and asking for volunteers to help arrange speaking arrangements in Polonia and American Universities. In the e-mail I also attached several articles that Prof. Przystawa had written in the News of Polonia.

I received the following e-mail from Political Science Professor, Dr. Don Pienkos regarding Prof. Przystawa's passion of correcting the defects of the political process in Poland, particularly the electoral process.

Professor Pienkos's letter will be followed by Prof. Przystawa's reply.

A Response to Prof. Przystawa's statement on Poland's need to change its electoral process

By: **Donald Pienkos**

I have the following comments on Prof. Przystawa's views about the need for Poland to change its electoral process.

1. First of all, it is important to stress that there is no absolutely "best" system for determining the will of the electorate in a democracy. The "single member district" system followed in the United States and in the United Kingdom of course has its plusses, but this system is by no means without its flaws. For example, in the U.S. we have many Congressional districts where "gerrymandering" occurs. Gerrymandering is the practice by which the borders of electoral districts are so drawn as to guarantee that one party's candidates will always win election and the minority will always remain in the minority. In Britain, too, it has been noted with respect to the upcoming parliamentary election that the Labour Party enjoys a built-in advantage in the seats that will be filled in the election. Only if the Conservatives win by a substantial overall margin are they likely to be able to gain an absolute majority in the House of Commons. If the vote is fairly close, Labour wins.

Moreover, in single member district election systems, only the two major parties usually "count" in what is often described as a "winner take all" system. Third or fourth parties have virtually no chance to win or even become factors in elections, due to the often-made argument that people are "throwing away" their votes by supporting such parties in single member district contests. Only the candidate who comes in first, even by the narrowest margin, wins.

The proportional representation system used in many countries to determine the will of the voters has its flaws too. While every party that surpasses the minimal threshold to be taken seriously will win seats in the parliament, the result can be a situation where no party has an absolute majority to put through its program. Bargaining for power becomes the rule after the election, and the results of such bargaining may well be very different from what the voters imagined. Moreover, in proportional representation systems, people vote for the party and its program, not the candidate who can best represent the interests of the population in a particular constituency of the country.

2. Let's turn specifically to Poland. There, the decision after 1989 was to go with a very generous PR system of electing legislators. This action had the effect of saving the former communist party from extinction. This was because the Communists, or post-Communists, or SLD or SDRP, or whatever they called themselves, had they operated in a "single member district plurality wins" system would nowhere have won more than 10 or 15 percent of the total vote in any district. As a result, the party would have been relegated to the "ash heap" of politics in Poland.

The original (and radical) proportional representation system adopted in Poland after 1989 also stimulated an extraordinary fragmentation of the Solidarity movement into many small parties. These groups engaged in a great deal of infighting, even though in point of fact they had more in common than they admitted.

Proportional representation as practiced in Poland led to the amazing election of 1993, where the SLD and the PSL gained power with almost 2/3 of the seats in the parliament, despite winning only 35 percent of the total popular vote! In that election, nearly all of the post-Solidarity parties failed to meet the very low threshold of 5 percent in order to gain

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2245 E. Colorado Blvd. #104/177
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NEWS OF POLONIA

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION

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: Zbyslaw (Bish) Petryka (323) 766-0026

Contributing writers

Justyna Ball Iwo Cyprian Pogonowski
Dariusz Zakrzewski -

Columnists:

Lila Ciecok - Orange Co. Fr. Lucjan Kamieński, SDB
Joanna Moran - Investments Prof. Jerzy Przystawa - Poland Politics
Edmund Lewandowski - Northern Cal. Richard P. Król - Taxes
Marek Żebrowski and Krysta Close - Polish Music Center @USC

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Justyna Ball

**Some of us
come from
stupid people,
the rest of us
should be fine**

<http://justyna-polishdelight.blogspot.com>

The word is out... Prince Charles of Wales is seeking new digs in Poland's Lower Silesia. Although the British Embassy did not confirm it, it refused to make any comments other than "the Prince would like to help with the reconstruction in order to save this architectural gem" ...or something along those lines. The palace of Bozków, originally built in 1787, is the actual object of interest of his royal highness. Grand enough to host let's say, fox hunt parties... So there you go... Not that they ran out of castles in Wales or Scotland. Maybe he is just bored with them all... Or maybe he read the latest issue of the Economist...

Perhaps Charles is browsing some new "old" boundaries. Centuries ago, the Kingdom of Poland offered the best hunting grounds in all of Europe. Today, they still have the forests, the hunting tradition, and kings will soon follow....

Oh, Charles was also interested in preserving old country cottages, but I do not believe that the heir to the British throne and his wife, Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, would consider a plain country cottage impressive. You won't see it in the next episode of "Cribs..."

The royal couple's three day trip to Poland included breakfast with the Polish president and his wife, Maria, to which Camilla wore horse-riding boots (!), a meeting with Polish troops assigned to Afghanistan, and chatting with musicians selected for the various Chopin music performances (part of the celebrated Year of Chopin). But the part of the visit that received the most media attention was the Prince's stop at Białowieza Forest, which some 450 bison call home. Another 400 is on the Bielorussian side - furry traitors...

Informal royal visits are nothing uncommon. The Norwegian royal couple

while in Poland, traveled by train with the intent of checking on young Norwegians studying medicine in Krakow. Charles visited Poland twice before each time invited by the Shakespearean Club (Yes, they do have one... and they have even been holding an International Shakespearean Festival in Gdańsk since 1993). They are not so brainless up there, as some Poles speak Shakespearean...

President Kaczyński and his wife were not the only hosts. The Bogdanowicz family from the small town, Kruszyniany, in Eastern Poland, also had the honor. Bogdanowiczes are Polish Muslim Tatars and for this exceptional occasion served the best of their special holiday menu. Still Mrs. Bogdanowicz, the lady of the house, lamented that the house was too small to have a sit-down dinner so everyone was served standing up. During the afternoon, the Polish Mufti was also present and later Charles had a chance to visit the town's mosque. The Prince, besides being fascinated by old country architecture, is also a promoter of eco-friendly food, so he apparently enjoyed the Bogdanowiczes' all organic, alcohol free meal. The traditional Tatar dancers entertained the guests.

A little confused by the Tatar presentation? You must have at least heard of the fresh tatar dish? It consists of the best quality raw beef or even better, veal (ground), a few drops of olive oil, a whole egg, salt and pepper. It's best to mix it by hand. Make a hole in the center and place the egg yolk, decorate with a finely chopped onion and (peeled) finely chopped pickle. Years ago, when we arrived in the US, a man with a Polish last name who owned the small deli across the street knew exactly what we needed the meat for. He picked the best piece for us, the best from the known source (!) and he ground it as we waited. Too bad the store did not survive big supermarket competition. We never had tatar since then.

There are some 5,000 Polish Tatars, not counting the Polish Muslim Tatars from Brooklyn, and take into consideration the fact that in pre-war Poland "when there was a break for mass, part of the class

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Calendar of Events

Mar 31, "Life of Polonia in the camera" photographs of Polonia competition organized by Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Los Angeles, First Prize 3,000 zL., Deadline for submission of photographs - March 31, 2010. Information: 310 -442-8500 ext.109.

Apr 3, Sat. - Pope John Paul Center 3999 Rose Drive - Yorba Linda. . Blessing of Easter baskets 10:00 am to 2:00 pm.... Easter Egg Hunt at the Center. Sponsored by PNA PIAST Lodge 3259 12:00 NOON. Information Greg Chilecki tel. (714) 744-2775.

Our Lady of the Bright Mt. Church 3424 W. Adams Blvd. L.A. - Blessing of Easter Baskets 10:00 am to 4:00 pm, every half hour.... Easter Egg Hunt for children 3-15 yrs old Szarotka Retirement Home 3400 W. Adams Blvd. L.A. 1:00 Sponsored by PNA Lodge 700. Information: Elżbieta Rudzińska tel. 310 831 0708.

Happy Easter

Apr 18, Sun., 10:30 a.m., Polish National Alliance meeting at the Polish Parrish in Los Angeles

Apr 18, Sun., 1:30 pm Polish American Congress meeting in Los Angeles See page 5

APR 24, Sat., Paso Robles 7:00 p.m. - "A Toast To Paderewski" The Paderewski Festival and the Back Roads Wineries of Paso Robles invite lovers of fine wine and music to a reception showcasing the wines of the Back Roads Wineries complemented by Polish-themed appetizers provided by Cass Catering. Pianist Marek Żebrowski, a Steinway artist and director of the Polish Music Center at the University of Southern California Thornton School of Music, will be joined by the Midnight Winds to perform a special concert featuring works by Paderewski, Chopin and Mozart. Location: Pear Valley Winery, 4900 Union Road, Paso Robles. More information: call 1-805-227-2888.

or: www.paderewskifest.com

Apr 20 - May2, The 11th Annual Polish Film Festival in Los Angeles, Information at www.polishfilmla.org - See page 8 for schedules of film showings.

Apr 24, Sat. 6:00 pm, Boxing - Tomasz Adamek Vs Chris Arreola, Heavyweight World Championship at Citizens Business Bank Arena in Ontario, CA. (I-10 Freeway at Haven or Miliken Aves. at 4th Street). Information: andy@picassotravel.com

May 15, Deadline for submission of presentation for the competition on Memories of Solidarity in My Family; Information at: konkurs@wspomnieniesolidarnosci.eu

May 16, Polish American Congress meeting in Yorba Linda

May 26 - 29, Wed to Sat, Paderewski Piano Competition, at Thyer Hall, Colburn School Conservatory of Music, Los Angeles

Jun 13, Sun., 1:30 pm, Polish American Congress, General Meeting at the Polish Parrish in Los Angeles.

Jun 20, Sun., 10:30 am, Polish National Alliance meeting at the Polish Parish in Los Angeles.

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