



# News of Polonia

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## Wiadomości Polonijne

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### American Paderewski Piano Competition

By: *Andreas Eckstein*

Los Angeles has reaffirmed its place in the international musical community with the creation of an American Paderewski International Piano Competition. The competition premiered from May 26-29, 2010 at the Colburn School in Los Angeles, California, commemorating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of its namesake, Polish pianist and composer Ignacy Jan Paderewski. The Competition attracted 44 young keyboard artists from across the globe. Countries represented in the semifinals included Uzbekistan, Italy, China, Canada, Poland, Russia, Korea, Macedonia, and the USA.

Twenty four gifted pianists were invited into the semifinals, where each musician was required to perform a 25-30 minute program, including a compulsory piece by Paderewski. Six winners emerged and went on to perform a 50-55 minute recital in the Final Round before the Competition Jury of five adjudicators. The esteemed Competition Jury was comprised of internationally acclaimed pianists and piano educators who brought a wide range of educational and performing experience to the competition. Dr. Wojciech Kocyan, a former First Prize Winner of the Paderewski Piano Competition in Bydgoszcz Poland, is currently a Clinical Professor of Piano at Loyola-Marymount University in Los Angeles. Evelyne Brancart is a professor and Chair of the Piano Department at the Jacobs School of Music, Indiana University in Bloomington. Jon Kimura Parker is a professor at the Shepherd School of Music

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### Father Jerzy Popieluszko joins the ranks of blessed



### Pro-Solidarity priest beatified in Warsaw

By: *Robert Strybel*,

Our Warsaw Correspondent

WARSAW— Some 150,000 pilgrims from all over Poland and beyond filled Warsaw's vast Piłsudski Square for the beatification of Father Jerzy Popieluszko, a pro-Solidarity priest murdered by communist Poland's secret police in 1984. The beatification mass, concelebrated by 120 bishops and some 2,500 priests was presided over by papal delegate Archbishop Angelo Amato who heads the Vatican's canonization office.

**"By the Apostolic authority invested in me I hereby permit the venerable Servant of God Jerzy Popieluszko, priest and martyr, an enduring and undaunted witness to Christ, who overcame evil with good to the point of shedding his blood, to be entitled to be called blessed and have his feast day celebrated on October 19,"** said Pope Benedict XVI in the papal declaration read out in Latin and Polish. Large lettering across the front of the altar roof proclaimed Father Jerzy's trademark motto: "ZŁO DOBREM ZWYCIĘŻAJ!" (Overcome evil with good).

The motto could also be seen on banners held up by members of the congregation alongside the priest's likeness, Solidarity banners and Polish flags. There were worshippers in colorful Polish folk costumes and miners in black parade uniforms and plumed-topped hats. Attending the beatification were priests and nuns, nurses, soldiers, Boy Scouts, Girl Guides and thousands of ordinary Poles.

Father Popieluszko was abducted, tortured and murdered by three communist secret-police agents who hurled his bound and battered body over a dam into the River Vistula. Father Jerzy, as he was affectionately known to his numerous admirers, was considered a martyr for the faith already at the time of his death, and his countryman, the late Pope John Paul II, had made frequent references to that effect.

*Blessed Fr. Popieluszko to page 4*

### Polonia overwhelmingly backs Kaczyński

*Komorowski wins round one, run-off on July 4th*

By *Robert Strybel*,

Our Warsaw Correspondent

WARSAW—Bronisław Komorowski, the candidate of the pro-business Civic Platform (PO) grouping, won 41 percent of the vote in the first round of Poland's presidential election. His main rival Jarosław Kaczyński, representing the conservative Law and Justice (PiS) party, came second with the backing of 37 percent of the voters. Under Poland's election law, a candidate must win more than 50 percent of the vote to become president. As a result the top two contenders will face each other in a run-off set for July 4th.

The vote followed an unusually short, less than seven-week election campaign conducted in the shadow of disaster. President Lech Kaczyński, Jarosław's twin brother, First Lady Maria Kaczyńska and 94 other people, mainly prominent political, military and religious figures as well as war veterans died in a plane crash in Smolensk, Russia while en route to a commemoration of the Katyń Forest Massacre.

Under Polish law, the death of a serving head of state forced the election, originally set for autumn, to be brought forward and made Sejm Marshal (parliamentary speaker) Komorowski the acting president. He had earlier been nominated as the PO's presidential candidate. The campaign, already billed as the strangest in Free Poland's 21-year history, was further compounded by the worst flooding since 1997. The deluge that caused the most devastation in southern Poland claimed at least two dozen lives and left thousands homeless as flood waters inundated more than 2,100 localities.

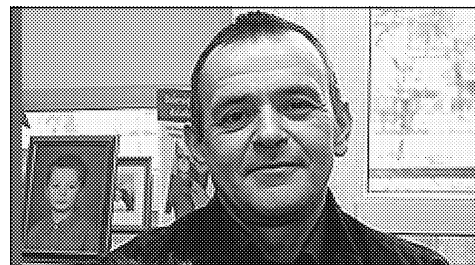
Komorowski and Kaczyński led a field of 10 presidential candidates, most of whom garnered less than three percent of the vote. A true election surprise was the showing of young post-communist Grzegorz Napieralski who received nearly 14 percent of the vote. Analysts see him as a king-maker in the second round, since his support can make or break either of the top two candidates. Behind-the-scenes bargaining with the front-runners for appointments or other concessions appeared likely.

Polish voters in the US overwhelmingly cast their ballots for Jarosław Kaczyński who received 70% of the Polonian vote. Komorowski received 25% and the post-communist candidate Napieralski – a mere 2.5%. Similar results were achieved in Canada. That stands in marked contrast to the results scored in Poland.

The Polonia-Poland contrast is quite typical, as the Diaspora (and that goes for many countries) is usually more traditional and patriotic than people in the home country. In this case, the sympathy vote (following the Smolensk tragedy) was probably far stronger in Polonia. The rejection of Napieralski by our staunchly anti-communist Polonia was not surprising. Although he advocates a market economy and a democratic form of government, his party's communist-era roots disqualify him in most Polish

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### Dariusz Ratajczak found dead in a parking lot



Opole, Poland, June 16, 2010 -- The body of a former Polish history professor, Dariusz Ratajczak, convicted by a Polish court in 2002 of claiming that mass gassings of human beings in Auschwitz-Birkenau was impossible, has been found dead in a shopping center parking lot in the western Polish city of Opole.

Prof. Ratajczak was suspended in April 1999 from his teaching post at Opole University's Historical Institute after state prosecutors opened an investigation into the publication of his book *Tematy niebezpieczne* ("Dangerous Themes").

"The body, which was severely decomposed, has been identified by Ratajczak's family, so additional DNA tests will not have to be carried out," says Lidia Sieradzka from the Prosecutor's Office in Opole.

Judging by the state of the body and recent high temperatures, the man has been dead for up to two weeks, say police. Security guards at the Karolinka shopping centre claim, however, that the historian's Renault Kangoo was left at the car park on the same day, June 11, that it was discovered. In the car police found documents which belonged to 48-year-old revisionist historian Ratajczak. Recordings from CCTV are being examined.

The cause of Ratajczak's death remains uncertain. Police think it is unlikely that he was murdered because it is alleged that no injuries were found on the body during the autopsy.

Police established that the historian, who had problems finding employment in Poland, planned to go to Holland or Belgium to work in a company to do menial labor. For that purpose he acquired a Renault Kangoo automobile, in which his body was found stuffed between the front and rear seats. It is reported that he may have been living in his car. He worked at odd jobs for food.

In 2000, Dariusz Ratajczak was fired from the University of Opole, where he worked for eleven years, and banned from teaching at other universities for three years after the publication of *Tematy niebezpieczne*, in which he claimed that it was not scientifically possible to kill millions of people in alleged Auschwitz death camp gas chambers.

Earlier in 1999, a Polish court found Ratajczak guilty of "public denial" of German war crimes – which is against the law in Poland – but because the book was self-published with a print run of only 260 copies it was not thought to be able to create a "social annoyance" and he was not punished. In his defense, Prof. Ratajczak told the court that his book was merely a survey of many dissenting views on the "Holocaust," including revisionist works by British historian David Irving and others. "Holocaust denial" is a crime

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