

## Will 2011 be Poland's Moment?

By: *John Czop*

As this decade comes to an end let us review the state of Poland's relations with the United States. This exercise will help us to identify what Polish Americans might do to help our kin country Poland.

On the Polish side, our kin country has done three things for Americans and the United States. The Polish Government enacted for United States citizens visa free travel to Poland with the hope of reciprocity for Polish citizens travelling to America. Second, Poland supported with her soldiers the American military expeditions against Afghanistan and Iraq. Third, Poland defied the Kremlin's opposition to the Bush II administration's poorly planned project to build a missile shield which involved the deployment of American missiles on Polish soil.

On the American side, the United States Government has neither allowed Poland to accede to the State Department's Visa Waiver Program, nor propelled NATO to draft contingency plans to defend Poland from a military attack. Moreover, in 2005, and again in 2008, The House of Representatives passed resolutions calling on the Polish Government promptly to enact legislation on the compensation /restitution of private property on conquered Polish territory that was first despoiled by Nazi Germany and then nationalized by the Communists during the World War II era (1939-1948). The cost of this legislation to Polish taxpayers could amount to \$250 billion; in 2008 Poland's GDP was \$550 billion.

In his speech to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, during his confirmation hearings as the next United States Ambassador to Poland in the summer of 2009, Mr. Lee A. Feinstein also called on Poland to enact expensive legislation to pay for crimes committed against private property on conquered Polish soil by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union during the World War II era. Poland does not have the money to pay for a state-of -the art military defense of her eastern borders, but this does not deter Ambassador Feinstein, the State Department's Office of the Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues, and the House of Representatives from bullying Poland into enacting restitution/compensation legislation which amounts to charging Poland, a victorious United Nations ally, with unwarranted reparations for World War II.

In fact, Poland's relations with the United States do not demonstrate reciprocity. Nevertheless, American policy-makers refer to Poland as a loyal ally which shares America's longstanding commitment to freedom and democratic values. We need to pay more attention to what our politicians do rather than to what they may say. How long will the freedom and democracy which American policy-makers observe in today's Poland endure without firm collective security guarantees for Poland from the United States which is the leader of NATO?

Poland's stalwart stand for the now defunct American missile shield led to the October 2009 war games played by the Kremlin to intimidate Poland. These games included trotting out tactical nuclear weapons to support the hypothetical Russian invasion of Lithuania and Poland. The Kremlin's scenario was an offensive/defensive action similar to the one that Russia's leaders used to justify the actual invasion of Georgia in August 2008. In October 2009, the Kremlin claimed to be defending itself against two threats: a hypothetical Lithuanian attack against Kaliningrad, and a Polish invasion of Belarus to protect democrats, including Belarus's Polish minority, from a crackdown by Minsk's armed forces supported by Moscow.

Soon after last year's lurid Russian war games, President Barack Hussein Obama participated in a NATO ministerial conference and asked: What contingency plans does NATO have to defend the Baltic States and Poland if these countries are attacked? None: was the terse answer to President Obama's question. President Obama, a neophyte in foreign affairs, did not know that American and British policy-makers regretted the decision to enlarge NATO soon after they made it in 1997. These American and British leaders of NATO concluded that it would be worse publicly to renege, than less publicly to hollow-out, their NATO commitments to Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic by not enforcing them with contingency plans. To his great credit, at last October's NATO ministerial, President Obama ordered NATO to draft contingency plans for the defense of Poland and the Baltic States. President Obama honestly wanted to put NATO power behind the NATO principle that an attack on one NATO country is an attack on all.

*John Czop to page 15*

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## Christmas Wish

*Justyna Ball*

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

This year I skipped the entire White Christmas extravaganza, because I baked and I baked...As we all know, for us, Poles, it's not the presents that make Christmas, but the family, friends, and ... food. Traditional Polish cuisine that is... There were carolers on the common and outside the door. There was an annual concert, crafts, cocoa, and cider, but in my kitchen, amongst the clutter and Polish cooking memorabilia was my oven (with the stove's only two burners working), honey and milk, walnuts and raisins, ginger and nutmeg, orange peel and me.

Old fashioned Polish gingerbread after gingerbread...a factory of gingerbreads... (I actually ran out of gift ideas for my friends, that's why!).

All to the tune of "(You were) Always on My Mind" somewhere in the background. And it wasn't Santa or Elvis in my living room serenading me Las Vegas style - it was my own Jacek and his Washburn guitar. And I know it was not a Christmas song, but it surely put me in baking mode.

As I always look for ways to present my friends (and at the same time give an example to my overspending family in Poland) with something other than material goods...You cannot totally stop them from purchasing "stuff" - the temptation is too great, the stores lure you with such attractive merchandise, there are must haves, and newer gadgets every year. But let's put more effort into creating that special holiday atmosphere rather than shopping rush-rush, to gather stuff that originally came with a price tag that next year you may even not remember what it was. First challenge yourself and then take your time enjoying the Season...

Cold? What cold? Look around you, the Christmas lights, street after street decorated, the music (some radio stations start playing Christmas songs the day after Thanksgiving!), the sight of Christmas trees, and goofy reindeer hats all make me feel merry!

Some of my friends were done gift wrapping days ago. When I asked one when she started shopping, she said in January. Her family had not even sharpened their pencils to write a Christmas list when she was already done!

No, we don't have a tree yet. Traditionally, we'll get the last one there

is. We are not participating in any contest. The "ugliest" tree is always the winner in our home, the one that nobody wants, and it will be here until February 2nd.

When asked about this date by someone at the bank, everyone wants to know if our Christmas customs are the same as theirs, I answered that this is officially the end of Christmas, comes from an ancient Jewish tradition. "Yeah, but you are not Jewish," she said. "No, but Jesus and his mother were," I replied.

The bandstand in my predominantly Christian town has a nativity display. Regular size, nothing extravagant.

And you thought the monument of Jesus in the small town of Swiebodzin was large? Check out the size of those cranes that lift our senators to light Hanukkah candles! I'm looking at the picture of senator Scott Brown (R) in Newton, Massachusetts dangling over a giant menorah.

Our local Common Committee agreed to have all the houses around the common decorated in only white and yellow lights. Everyone agrees - everyone but Lindsey S. that is. His statement each year is the same - the brightest and loudest colors possible - no committee will dictate to me what color my lights will be!

The woman at the Polish market looked surprised when I wanted to order poppy-seed strudel two weeks before Christmas. People buy fresh, she said. Yeah, but people live close, in town, and I have to drive an hour each way. Once I made a mistake of waiting until the last moment and ended up without strudel! I couldn't postpone Christmas as we are not one of those families that do Christmas in July.

The fish has to be fresh as well as the apple and leeks salad (I found it in some Polish cookbook amongst holiday recipes and needed something green to spruce up the table) but the rest...freeze it!

We make awesome bigos (hunter's stew.) On a cold and crispy Christmas Day, there is nothing better than that! That's how you warm up after midnight mass. It takes me three days to make it, and I need another three to get the smell out!

Yankee candles (our famous native product) can do the trick if you stopped baking cakes by now, but I'll make a Polish cheesecake which in Poland is called "sernik wiedeński" to create a nice aroma and to ...save on candles. Am I frugal or what?

Red barszcz with mushroom uszka, raw herring, our favorite smoked mackerel, fried cod, cabbage pierogi, and sour cherry compote... Barszcz may be

*Justyna Ball to page 16*

## Calendar of Events

**Dec. 31, Fri Orange County - New Years Eve Party - SYLWESTER - from 7:00 PM till morning. Pope John Paul II Polish Center - 3999 Rose Drive - Yorba Linda. Music by „PAX”. Tickets: \$60.00 per person includes a Bottle of Champagne per table, tasty Dinner, Appetizers and Desserts served to your table - food prepared by Teresa Turek Catering Information & Tickets: Danuta Dobrowolska 949 495-6622, Teresa Turek 949 235-3256, Maria Romańska 714 998-7597.**

**Jan 2, 2011, Sun, - Polish American Congress Oplatek Luncheon and Awards Banquet. Montbello Country Club's Quiet Canon Restaurant. Award recipients are Stan Czarnota, Frank DeBalogh, and a Posthumous Award to Michal and Danuta Zawadzki.**

**January 15, Sat, 6:30 p.m., Krakusy Polish Folk Dance Ensemble's Traditional Carnival Ball at The Castaway 1250 East Harvard Road - Burbank. Dancing to the music of Michael Postian Orchestra Tickets \$95.00 Per Person - Evening Attire requested. For information and tickets reservations please call: Anna 818-841-8198 Zofia 626-282-5298 Urszula 714 964-9165 Elżbieta 626-827-7338**

**January 16, Sun, 1:30 p.m. - Polish American Congress meeting - Lower level Our Lady of Bright Mount Rectory 3424 W. Adams Blvd. - Los Angeles**

**Jan 28-30, - Second Annual Ski Trip to Mammoth Mountain sponsored by the Polish Center of Los Angeles. Cost of \$200 per person includes luxury coach transportation with movies and a Friday night meal on the bus, 2 nights lodging at Mammoth Estates condominium, Saturday eve dinner, 2 breakfasts and unlimited fun skiing the greatest mountain in California with your Polish friends. Limited to 48 participants! Trip was a sell-out last year. For details please see PolishCenterLA.org or call John Temler at 310 251-7738. Let it snow!**

**Jan 29, Sat, 6:30 Friends of Polish Scouting and Polish Scouting in Los Angeles invites you to their Annual Carnival Ball at the Our Lady of the Bright Mount Parish Hall 3424 W. Adams Blvd. - Los Angeles. Dinner and Dance to the music of Zbigniew Gałazka Trio. Tickets: \$75.00 per adult. \$50.00 students and adults under 25. Tickets purchased by December 31 will receive 7 bonus raffle tickets. RSVP by January 15, 2011. For reservations: Anna (818) 841-8198, Tomasz (626) 854-0356, Ryszard (310) 641-1817.**

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