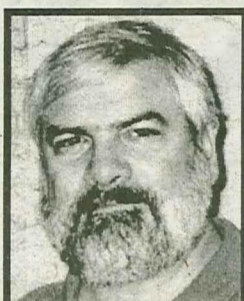


## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



MICHAEL A. SZYMANSKI

Much thanks to Dr. Thaddeus Radzilowski for his efforts in support of telling "the whole story" of the Nazi death camps (see his letters, this page, to the Detroit Free Press and Oprah Winfrey and the story on Winfrey's recent visit to Auschwitz on page 8). It is incumbent on us to tell our stories, and speak up to correct the record whenever someone doesn't get it right, intentionally or otherwise. Another story needing to be told to a broader audience is described on page 5. An article details efforts to bring the story of Fr. Jerzy Popieluszko to the big screen via a feature length film. This is just the way the story should be told. I have often said that we need to tell our stories through popular mass media. I hope the story can be brought to film audiences with accuracy and without embellishment. No embellishment is needed. Often a film opens with the words "based on a true story" or "inspired by real events." This usually means the film is remotely modeled on some true facts or person's experience, but is highly developed or exaggerated beyond what really happened. Being a lawyer myself, I understand the need for disclaimers, but I would love to see this movie open with the statement "this is what really happened to Father Jerzy Popieluszko..."

The Fr. Popieluszko movie would be a prime candidate for the cable TV show "History vs. Hollywood" (or is it the other way around?). On the show, a historical movie is shown as a feature, and during breaks in the movie, a panel of experts discusses the relationship between the film and actual historical events, ultimately judging whether the movie is "history" or "Hollywood."

Speaking of film, we have a schedule for some outstanding Polish films being shown at Madonna University thanks to Dr. Janusz Wrobel. See page 4 for details. Also note the news on page 8 that master Polish film director Andrzej Wajda will receive a lifetime achievement award at this year's Berlin Film Festival. On the same page you will find an interesting item on the fact that Poland's Tatra mountains will be used as the shooting location for a film of a story set in the mountains of Kashmir. Consistent with the article on page 7 about the economic incentives for investment in Poland, it seems filmmakers from India are finding the Polish "climate" a very attractive one.

Speaking of mass media, congratulations to Jerzy Rozalski for another successful year of broadcasting marked by this year's annual Polish Varieties Radio Ball. The coverage is on page 3, and the show airs regularly on AM 680/690.

## LETTERS TO...

John Miller  
Public Editor  
The Detroit Free Press  
600 W. Fort St.  
Detroit, MI 4822

Dear Mr. Miller:

On behalf of the National Polish American-Jewish American Council, we would like to express our grave concern over the reference to Auschwitz as a "Polish Death Camp" in Bill Laitner's article "The day freedom beat death" (January 28, 2006 Metro Section.)

Auschwitz - like Sobibor, Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek, and Treblinka - was in fact a Nazi death camp established and operated on Polish soil by the Germans occupying forces. We believe strongly that the reference to Auschwitz as a Polish camp will unfortunately lead your readers to erroneously conclude that Nazi death camps were sponsored or administered by the Polish government or people or that Poles perpetrated the Holocaust. Any such implication unwarrantedly defames all Poles, particularly those who suffered so greatly under the German occupation, including the many thousands who died during World War II.

For over twenty-five years, the Council has brought together leaders of the Jewish and Polish communities in America to discuss issues of common concern. The Council's mission has always been, and remains today, to convene the leadership of both of these significant communities on a regular basis to grapple constructively with their shared past and to shape better future relations, both in the United States and in Poland.

We trust that you share our concern for historical accuracy and we thank you for your consideration of our views. We hope you will bring this error to the attention of your readers.

Respectfully,  
Martin I Bresler,  
Thaddeus C. Radzilowski,  
Co-Chairs

Ms. Oprah Winfrey  
WLS-TV Channel 7  
190 State Street, Suite 1100  
Chicago, Illinois 60601

Dear Ms. Winfrey,

I am delighted to hear that you are to visit the State Museum and Camp at Auschwitz. As time passes, the memory of events at that infamous place - poorly understood as they are now - begins to dim even more. I have no doubt that your visit will awaken the world's consciousness of the events which transpired there and strengthen its resolve that it happen "never again".

The legacy of Auschwitz is complex. It is, of course, the symbol of Shoah, the martyrdom of the Jews and ninety-percent of those who died there from 1942 to 1944 were Jewish. It is also for Polish Christians the symbol of their own martyrdom and the site of the destruction of their leadership and intelligentsia between 1940 and 1942. The majority of the prisoners in that period were Polish Christians. For the Poles, the old camp was the site of their incarceration and murder. For the Jews, it was the new camp at Birkenau.

In addition, other such groups as Rom (gypsies) and Russian POWs suffered and died at that terrible place. The first victims of the gas chambers were three hundred Polish Christians and seven hundred Soviet POWs. Auschwitz even housed forty German homosexuals of whom twenty died of ill treatment.

As the co-chair of the National Polish American - Jewish American Council in Washington, DC I and my Christian and Jewish colleagues are deeply concerned that the full story of Auschwitz be told and remembered. My Research Institute and I stand ready to provide you and your staff with any materials you may need to develop the show on Auschwitz. We have several bibliographies and short histories of Auschwitz.

I send my thanks and best wishes.

Sincerely yours,  
Thaddeus C. Radzilowski, Ph. D.  
Piast Institute President