

Memphis, October 1989

Poland is an old country. It emerged in the ninth century as a state. In the tenth century it accepted Christianity (966 A.D.) and in the eleventh century the first king of Poland, Boleslaw I the Brave was crowned in the Gniezno Cathedral (1025 A.D.). Poland is a country that lies in the plain of European continent. It is the largest and most populous of the East Central European countries. Poland's history has been overshadowed by her powerful neighbors to the West, South, East and North. From its inception the Polish state encountered the German Drang nach Osten which ended with a total defeat of the Order of Teutonic Knights and the Treaty of Torun in 1466. The Ottoman Empire expanded north, conquering Hungary and the lands of the north shore of the Black Sea. Then they crossed the southern border of the Commonwealth of Poland leading to the Turkish Wars that lasted until the Victory at Vienna in 1683. The Kingdom of Sweden tried to conquer and subdue Poland in the seventeenth century, bringing destruction and devastation to the country, but they were defeated in their attempted expansion to the South. From the east, Poland was attacked by both Russians and Tartars. Poland was weakened by the continuous war to such a degree that it became an easy prey of its neighbors. After much struggle, Austria, Prussia and Russia partitioned Poland in three stages in 1772, 1793 and 1795 so that the country disappeared from the map of the World for more than a century.

The defeat of the three partitioning powers; Austria, Germany and Russia in World War I made it possible to re-establish the Republic of Poland in 1918. Between the years of partitions and World War I, Poles made numerous attempts to regain independence paying in blood the price of freedom. Poles serving Napoleon in the Polish Legions, the November Uprising of 1830/31, the Revolution of 1848, the 1863 Uprising, the Revolution of 1905/06 and in the Pilsudski Legions in World War I.

The location of Poland has been a major force in molding the character of contemporary Polish society. In 1939, the two powerful and well-armed neighbors of Poland attacked the country from both sides and divided the territory among themselves. In the spring of

1945, Germany was defeated and the military strength of the Soviet Union was unchallenged in Central and East Europe. Polish lands fell entirely under Soviet domination and a puppet government was installed in Warsaw. The part of the Polish territory occupied by the Soviet Union in 1939 was incorporated into the Belorussian, Lithuanian and Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republics. For the lost territory Poland was compensated with German lands in the West up to the Odra-Nysa Rivers line. Today Polish territory is about 20% smaller than it was in 1939. Millions of Poles were resettled from their centuries-old places of habitation on the newly acquired lands. De facto Poland lost World War II and became by force a Soviet satellite dominated politically, militarily and economically by its neighbor from the East.

The Soviet political, economic and social system did not bear fruit on Polish soil. This time, Polish workers took to the streets opposing the "worker's paradise" fashioned in Moscow. It started with a worker's rebellion in the city of Poznan in 1956, on the Baltic coast in 1970, in Radom Region in 1976. Strikes on the Baltic coast again in 1980 lead to the creation of SOLIDARITY, the independent labor union lead by Lech Walesa. The Martial Law imposed in 1981 did not break up the Solidarity movement. Actually, it sped up the process of change to democracy and the new government of Poland is lead by the Premier from Solidarity. Now the Polish Communist party is only one of the participating groups.

THE OUTSTANDING MEN AND WOMEN OF POLAND IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

THE NOBEL PRIZE WINNERS

1905—for literature HENRY SIENKIEWICZ (1846–1916) authored: Quo Vadis? (1896), Trilogy—With Fire and Sword (1884), The Deluge (1886), Pan Michael (1888), Without Dogma (1891), Children of the Soil (1895), On the Field of Glory (1905).

1911—for chemistry MARIA CURIE-SKLODOWSKA (1867–1934) "for her services to the advancement of chemistry by the discovery of the elements radium and polonium, by the isolation of radium and the study of the nature and compounds of this remarkable element."

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1924—for literature **WLADYSLAW REYMONT** (1868–1925) authored: The Peasants (1902–09), Pilgrimage to the Mountain of Life (1894), The Promised Land (1899).

1978—for literature **ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER** (1904–) wrote in Yiddish about the life of Jews in Poland in Literary Pages, a Yiddish literary journal, and numerous books: The Sinner (1933), Satan in Goray (1934), The Manor (1967).

1980—for literature **CZELSLAW MILOSZ** (1911–) authored: Poem of the Frozen Times (1933), Three Winters (1936), The Captive Mind (1953), The Issa Valley (1955), The Seizure of Power (1953), The History of Polish Literature (1969).

1983—for peace, **LESZEK MICHAL WALESA** (1943–), whose “contribution is more than a Polish concern; the solidarity for which he is a spokesman is an expression of precisely the concept of being at one with humanity.”

THE POLISH-AMERICAN SOCIETY OF MEMPHIS is an organization of people interested in learning, preserving and celebrating Polish traditions. Most of our members have Polish heritage, but not all.

The goals of the Society are “family unity through tradition and pride of heritage, and to promote the knowledge of Polish heritage in the community”.

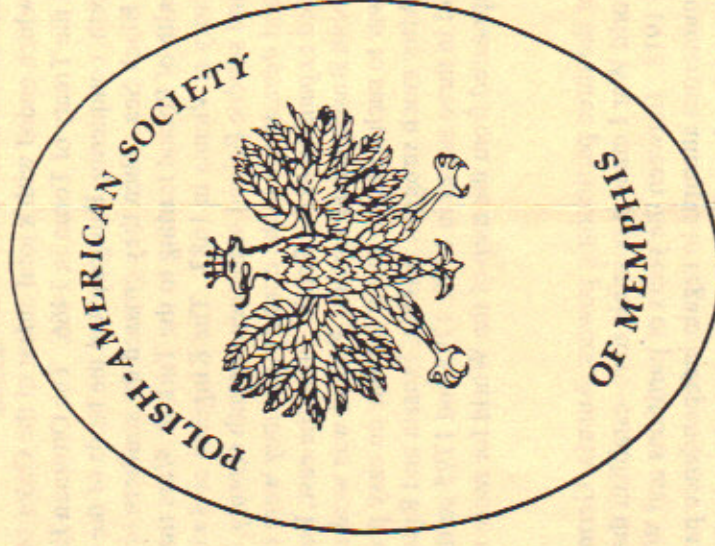
We publish a monthly newsletter to inform members of our activities, accomplishments and plans.

Our activities include two major holiday vigils—Swieconka and Wigilia, two dinner dances, picnics, trips, etc.

For further information contact officers of our society:

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THE CHRONICLE OF POLAND



**POLAND WILL NOT PERISH
AS LONG AS WE LIVE**

(Polish National Anthem)