

# PCC Polish Journey

Newsletter of the Polish Cultural Council • Vol. 23 • Winter/Spring 2025

## A Letter from the President

The month of January 2025 has flown by. But we are excited for the remainder of the year, looking forward to celebrating a special occasion for our organization.

In May 1930, 95 years ago, the Central Council of Polish Organizations was incorporated as an umbrella organization with representatives from every Polish organization in the Pittsburgh area. Its purpose was to unite all Polish organizations in sharing their cultures and heritage of Poland, bringing the communities together. The first Polish day at Kennywood was established that year and although we don't have attendance numbers, it is certain that the community turnout was in the tens of thousands. The park was packed to the brim.

The CCOPO continued to exist until 2003 when it was incorporated as a

new 501c3 organization doing business as the Polish Cultural Council. CCOPO, now recognized as the PCC, last celebrated a milestone anniversary in 2005. The 75th anniversary along with the debutante ball was the largest ball turnout in our history with over 650 attendees and 30 debutantes presented at the Hilton Hotel in downtown Pittsburgh. It was an event worth remembering.

The board made the decision that to wait another 25 years would simply be too long. We had preliminary plans for a 90th celebration in the year 2020, but those plans fell by the wayside with the COVID pandemic.

The year 2025 is celebrating 95 years and the Board is proud to announce an anniversary celebration this fall. It will take place on Saturday, September 27 and will feature Pittsburgh's favorite

high-energy party band, The Bachelor Boys Band. In addition to fabulous entertainment, we promise the best in Polish cuisine and a spectacular evening all around with an Ostlatki flair.

Everyone's favorite Ostlatki party is on hold this year due to our anniversary celebration. We will be back in 2026 with the popular Mardi Gras party. For 2025, however, mark your calendars and plan to attend our 95th festivity with your family and friends. You won't be disappointed.

Thank you to all of you for your continued support of the PCC. Our fall Film Festival and December Christmas Celebration were a huge success. Without you, we would not be able to bring you these cultural and celebratory events that we all love.

Warmly,  
Chester



# Visiting Holiday Kraków with Malgorzata Morajka

CNN named the Kraków Christmas market one of the best in 2024. The Kraków Christmas Tree made it onto Time Out's list of the 2024 most iconic. Kraków's medieval square, the *rynek główny* is the largest square in Europe. Framed by handsome tenement houses, towered over by the iconic **St. Mary's Basilica** (*Kościół Mariacki*), and adorned by the renaissance arches of the **Cloth Hall** (*Sukiennice*), the square does make for a picturesque Christmas market setting. The Christmas tree was indeed breathtaking this year—it seemed to vibrate with heavenly lightness. Only two colors were used to adorn the spruce—light gold and blue—keeping the look elegant; decorations of varied sizes and dynamic lighting added warmth and playfulness to the ensemble. And so, throngs of winter visitors flocked to the Kraków Christmas market to experience the local culture, food, and to buy local products. But did they? Not quite. Take it from a Kraków native who loves her city, but recognizes that Kraków Christmas market offerings have been rather generic - not quite representative of Kraków culture, and comparatively highly priced. As befits a Cracovian, this author is a *centuś*—meaning she looks for good local deals, which are not to be found in the main square stalls. After taking a stroll around the breathtaking market square, it is worth venturing out



Kraków Christmas Market with its iconic Christmas tree

a bit in order to affordably experience Kraków's authentic holiday culture, food scene, and shopping.

To get to know a unique element of Kraków's holiday culture, it is worthwhile to see the Kraków *crèches* called *szopki*. Szopki are on the **UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List**. These constructions, big and small, feature elaborate scenes and architectural details from Kraków. **The City of Kraków Museum, Krzysztofory**, in the Main Square (Rynek Główny

35) houses an exhibition of beautiful szopki. Also, from mid-December to the beginning of February, visitors can see szopki by famous makers displayed in various public spaces around town. The city prepared an online szopka walking guide (*Spacerownik*) that can be found on the [kbk.krakow.pl](http://kbk.krakow.pl) website so that visitors can combine exploring the city with seeing the most beautiful examples of szopki craftsmanship.

It is a local tradition in Kraków to walk from church to church and admire



Traditional Gingerbread Cookies

Polish Journey is a publication of the Polish Cultural Council, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Please address your correspondence to: Polish Cultural Council, P.O. Box 81054, Pittsburgh, PA 15217-0554, tel: 412.716.2348

"The opinion expressed by authors does not always reflect the views of the PCC."

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Christmas decorations inside, especially nativity scenes. Why not follow the locals? Some old Kraków churches traditionally put up breathtaking Christmas adornments. For example, the **Church of St. Bernardino of Sienna**, at the foot of **Wawel Hill**, is famous for its large nativity scene with moving elements.

After a winter walk, it may be a good idea to warm up inside and listen to some holiday tunes. **Jazz Club u Muniaka** on **Floriańska Street** offers enjoyable informal concerts on most evenings. A mix of American jazz classics and modern interpretations of Polish carols, listened to over a nice drink, are likely to warm up anyone's body and spirit. The **Kraków Philharmonic** just outside of the ring of the **Planty park**, often presents Christmas and New Year's concerts for very affordable prices (for example, in 2024, the Philharmonic put up the Lesser Poland Caroling concert). Also, many Kraków churches organize Christmas concerts. Churches with beautiful baroque interiors generally provide great acoustics. A Google search for *Kraków church classical music offering* for a desired visit time is likely to render many appealing results.

For quality (but certainly not budget) shopping, it may be worth checking out **DESA** stores. But even there, one can find a beautiful, small piece of art that may be affordable and worth an investment. For entirely budget shopping, **Hala Targowa (market hall)**, located about a 10-minute walk from the main square, is the place. Shopping at this flea market on Sunday morning is an experience. There is some junk, but there are also things of hidden value. This is a great place for treasure hunters and for those looking to experience the local flavor. For more *middle of the road* shopping, **Joseph Street** in **Kazimierz**, with its artisan stores, is an interesting choice.

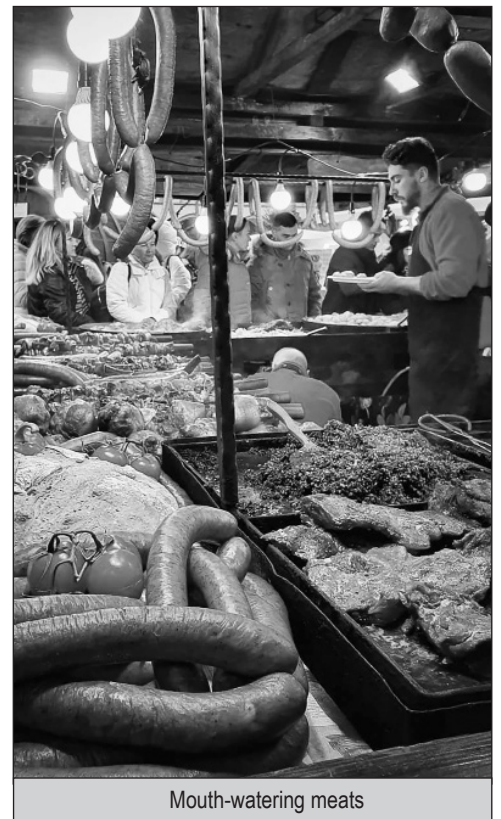
And finally, it is time to write about pierogi, spiced wine.... well, local



A huge assortment of locally-made cheeses

food. If you like pierogi, it is best to go to one of the local *pierogarnias*. There are plenty of them downtown. Really good, spiced wine is served in an informal setting in **Kleparz market**, just about a 5 minute walk from the square. And a good old *bar mleczny (milk bar)* is always a solid choice for the local cuisine. Milk bars' simple, sometimes unappealing interior décor is not indicative of the food quality. Food there is generally good and authentic. For delicious but more elaborate and adventurous cuisine that does not break the bank, it is worth venturing out to the **Kazimierz** district.

Hope to see you in Kraków. Maybe at one of the milk bars, in **Kazimierz**, or in a café over *herbata zimowa (winter tea)*, which is hot tea flavored with various spices and honey. If you have not tried it yet, the author highly recommends it.



Mouth-watering meats



## Ingredients:

- 500 g all-purpose flour
- 25 g fresh yeast (or 7 g dry yeast)
- 250 ml warm milk
- 100 g sugar
- 100 g melted butter
- 5 egg yolks
- 1 whole egg
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- A pinch of salt
- Jam or fruit preserves (rose, plum, or raspberry)
- Powdered sugar for dusting
- Vegetable oil for frying

## Instructions:

1. **Prepare the yeast mixture:** In a small bowl, dissolve the yeast in warm milk with a pinch of sugar. Let it sit for 10 minutes until frothy.
2. **Make the dough:** In a large bowl, mix flour, sugar, salt, egg yolks, and the whole egg. Add the yeast mixture, melted butter, and vanilla. Knead for about 10 minutes until smooth.
3. **Let it rise:** Cover the dough and let it rise in a warm place for 1-1.5 hours, until doubled in size.
4. **Shape the pączki:** Roll the dough on a floured surface and cut into circles. Place a spoonful of jam in the center and fold the dough over to seal.
5. **Fry the pączki:** Heat oil to 175°C (350°F) and fry the pączki for 2-3 minutes on each side, until golden brown. Drain on paper towels and dust with powdered sugar.

Serve your homemade pączki warm and enjoy this delicious Polish tradition with family and friends. Enjoy! Smacznego!

## Why Do We Eat Pączki on Fat Thursday? A Polish Tradition

by Marta Nutini

For anyone familiar with Polish culture, *Thusty Czwartek* (Fat Thursday) and pączki are inseparable. This special day, marked by indulgence and joy, celebrates the last moments of Carnival before the solemnity of Lent begins. But why do we eat pączki on this day, and where did this delicious tradition come from?

In Poland, *karnawal* (Carnival) starts right after Christmas and lasts until Ash Wednesday, marking the beginning of Lent. Fat Thursday is the grand finale of this period of celebration. Historically, the tradition goes back to the Middle Ages, when people would use up fats, sugar, and other rich ingredients before the fasting period of Lent. To do this, they fried doughnuts—pączki—using up their lard and butter, and the treat quickly became associated with this day of indulgence. The days leading up to Fat Thursday are called *Ostatki*, meaning the *final days* of Carnival. While many countries end their Carnival celebrations on Fat Tuesday, Poles choose to begin their festivities on Thursday. This gives them a few extra days to celebrate before Ash Wednesday arrives.

In Poland, Fat Thursday is much more than just a day to eat doughnuts—it's a deeply ingrained cultural tradition. Bakeries across the country are filled with eager customers, and families gather to enjoy pączki together. It's a way to celebrate before Lent, a moment to indulge in the sweetness of life, and a chance to connect with loved ones. The act of preparing and sharing pączki brings people together, bridging generations with its delicious history.

For many, it's a way to honor their heritage, continuing a tradition that's been passed down through the centuries. Even in the modern world, pączki remain a symbol of Polish resilience and joy, a reminder of the importance of family, community, and celebrating life.

Making pączki at home is easier than you might think! Here's a simple recipe to help you enjoy this Polish tradition right in your own kitchen:



# RESZEL worth visiting.... by Magda Rybka

I visited Reszel, in northeastern Poland, when I was really young and, somehow, I felt sentimental about it. I always wanted to go back there and finally, this August, I had time to do it. As usual, it was a short one-day trip. Certainly, as memory plays tricks on us, it didn't prove to be the town that I had imprinted in my mind. No, I wasn't disappointed, just a little bit confused. I remembered it as a town of artisan workshops, incomparable atmosphere and good cakes. Well, the reality for me was a little different. I did not find any cakes for me. I didn't find any interesting workshops either.

Though Reszel is not as romantic, tasty and artistic as in my dreams, it is still a jewel-like little town submerged by deep forests and crossed by a river flowing in a deep canyon. It has a gorgeous old town with just a few narrow streets and a market place full of beautiful townhouses and magnificent tourist sites surprising for such a small and seemingly isolated town. Still the historical role played by Reszel is stunning. It was originally a settlement built by the Prussian tribe of Barts. It was conquered by the Teutonic Knights in 1241. The native Prussians later took over the settlement, but were eventually defeated by the German monks. By 1337 Reszel was under Chelmino Law.

In 1440, the town joined the anti-Teutonic Prussian Confederation, and was incorporated with Poland in 1454 by the Polish King Casimir IV Jagiellon. It was an event that provoked the Thirteen Years' War. In 1455, the Teutonic Knights captured the town and in 1462 ceded their power to the Warmian bishop, who once more, in 1464, recognized the Polish King as the rightful ruler of Warmia and Reszel. This rich history makes the town even more interesting.

The castle museum that we were eager to visit was full of tourists. It was a relatively cold and rainy day, so people were seeking refuge under the castle roof. Here comes some of my bitterness. This obviously important historic town is now dominated by one theme, which is witchcraft and witches. In front of the castle there is a statue of a broom. Women are keen on having photos taken on this devilish device. The castle restaurant offers such entries as



Photo by Wikipedia

Świątynia Lipka Sanctuary

witch's venom, shrew's leg, witch's tears and so on.

The castle museum is, however, very interesting, as it has an exceptional collection of instruments of torture. It was really impressive, because I never imagined that all those men in power had such vivid imaginations and powers of invention. The exhibits are nicely named and their function is thoroughly described. It is suggested that the victims were mainly witches, which obviously is an exaggeration since there must have been lots of genuine criminals and rebels kept in the castle prison and martyred there. The focus on witches has a rather shameful reason. In 1811 Barbara Zdunk was sentenced by the Prussian court to death for witchcraft and setting the castle alight in 1807. The trial is sometimes described as the last burning of witches in Europe. The case was controversial and the guilt never proved, but apparently, a convenient culprit had to be found. Anyway, there is nothing to be proud of and creating a theme park around this atrocity is shocking. This Warmia town witnessed many interesting events and has a complicated and colorful history that could be highlighted but alas, all this is nothing comparing to a burning stake.

Still I would really like to recommend a visit in Reszel, where you can see breathtaking views from the castle tower, visit the gothic St. Peter's church, and admire the city walls built in the 16th

century on the initiative of bishop Watzenrode, the uncle of Nicolaus Copernicus. The 18th century Orthodox church and brick, Gothic bridges over the Sajna river present very special attractions and charm. There are probably many other nice places to visit but we were soaked wet with rain and decided to go back home. On the way we drove near the sanctuary of the holy Linden (Świątynia Lipka), which is a tourist must see because of its spectacular architecture and mysterious aura. We also managed to stop by a Teutonic Knights' watchtower in Beżławki. In this castle, in 1403 Władysław Jagiello's brother, Swidrigiello was kept hostage. The building in the oncoming centuries served as a Protestant church and was surrounded by an Evangelical cemetery which, as our guide reported, was vandalized and pillaged by local people after the WWII. In the surrounding area there were also discovered an early Prussian settlement and graveyard.

Altogether, despite my doubts concerning mass tourism, which tends to focus on slightly thoughtless entertainment instead of on an encounter with the other, on embracing the new and different, this trip was really lovely and I can in good conscience recommend it to all of you.

I have to warn you though, that the narrow forest roads leading to Reszel can be quite adventurous, especially in bad weather; but if I were you I would not skip an opportunity for a walk in the woods.

# SIMONA: THE STORY OF SIMONA KOSSAK'S EXTRAORDINARY LIFE

by Kristine Danowski

**Simona Kossak** was one of the most interesting figures in contemporary Polish science, a legendary defender of the flora and fauna in the Białowieża Forest, and champion of nature.

Jokingly calling herself the “daughter, granddaughter, and great-granddaughter”, Simona Gabriela Kossak was born in Kraków on May 30, 1943, into a famous family of artists. They expected her to continue the family’s artistic tradition, but it was not to be. Instead, Simona became a biologist, ecologist, and a professor of forest sciences. Far ahead of her time, she pioneered environmental advocacy and forest sustainability and conservation.

At **Jagiellonian University in Kraków**, Kossak completed her **master’s degree in zoology** in 1970, specializing in psychology and animal ethology. She began her career with the **Polish Academy of Sciences’ Mammal Research Centre** in Białowieża, a primeval forest on the Polish-Belorussian border, in 1971. Kossak moved into an isolated forester’s cabin in the nature reserve of **Dziedzinka**, which had neither electricity nor running water. Nevertheless, she lived in Dziedzinka for over 30 years with both her life partner (photographer Lech Wilczek) and a menagerie of orphaned wild animals, including Agata the lynx, with whom she even shared her bed.

Dziedzinka quickly became Kossak’s experimental laboratory which she consequently expanded as a *zoo psychologist*, as she called herself, with a hospital and a waiting room for sick animals. Here, she healed, hugged, and observed her animals and Wilczek photographed them. Her menagerie grew every year.

Describing her work, Kossak once said that she “crossed the threshold and found myself on the side of the trees and animals. I therefore speak on their behalf. I finished my studies in biology, but it wasn’t until my years spent in the forest that I learned to understand the language of animals. And I know it so well now that I should be burnt at the stake as a witch”. She also joked that she was the “only woman within four kilometers of Dziedzinka”.

Integral to Kossak’s work was her advocacy of coexistence between humans and



Simona Kossak

wildlife. She became a prominent public figure, using her popular books and radio programs to champion conservation and sustainable forestry. In particular, she led a campaign against the barbaric methods used by zoologists to catch animals for research, and even got into a prolonged public dispute with her employer about how to best protect the lynx population of Białowieża.

Meanwhile, in 1980, the **Scientific Council of the Forest Research Institute** awarded Kossak her **doctoral degree in forest sciences**. In 1991, the Council awarded her an additional postdoctoral degree in forest sciences.

In 1997, Kossak achieved the academic title of **Professor of Forest Sciences**. She continued her work at the **Mammal Research Centre** in Białowieża and at the **Forest Research Institute at the Department of Natural Forests**. She commuted daily from Dziedzinka on a motorcycle. She was also one of the originators of the UOZ-1 repeller, a device that warns wild animals of passing trains. In 2003, Kossak was appointed chair of the Department of Natural Forests in Białowieża, where she remained until her death.

In recognition of her achievements in the field of science and popularization of nature conservation, Kossak received the **Golden Badge of Merit for Environmental Protection and Water Management** in 1997 and the **Wiktór Godlewski medal** in 2003. In 2004 she received the **Radio Personality of the Year statuette**, awarded by Radio Gdańsk, for her numerous radio programs about conservation.

Her highest honor, apart from her relationships with her animals, was the **2000 Golden Cross of Merit**, presented by the President of Poland for exemplary public service or humanitarian work that goes above and beyond the call of duty.

Simona Kossak died on March 15, 2007, in the Białystok Clinical Hospital. She was buried on March 22 in the parish cemetery in Poryte near Stawiska.

In June 2007, the Hajnówka County Council decided to establish the **Professor Simona Kossak County Scholarship Fund**, and in April 2008, the Białystok City Council named one of the streets in the Wygoda housing estate in Białystok after Simona Kossak. In 2006, an oak tree growing in branch 364 of the Białowieża Forest was named after her - *Dąb prof. Simona Kossak*.

Kossak’s scientific activity combined many active areas of today’s scientific research related to nature conservation, especially the dangers of our climate catastrophe and environmental degradation. She fought to protect Białowieża, Europe’s oldest forest, and the creatures who call it home. She believed that life ought to be simple and close to nature. Living amongst other animals, she found something that she never could with her fellow humans. She emphasized that humans depend on nature, not exist apart from it. Sadly, we have yet to learn the lessons Simona Kossak taught us beginning in 1971.



Simona Kossak

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## Important information!

**Poland's Presidential election is  
scheduled for May 18th.**

There will be specially organized polling place at the Polish Falcons of America office on May 17th, 2025. A valid Polish passport is required to be eligible to vote.

For more information please check the PCC Website and Facebook pages at the beginning of May.

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## Remembering Janusz Olejniczak

Any time an artist dies, he/she leaves a void, but fortunately, also a legacy of his work. Many renowned artists left us in 2024. One of them was Janusz Olejniczak, a Polish pianist and one of the most outstanding contemporary Chopinists. He died in October, in the month of his 72nd birthday. He is remembered for his extraordinary musical sensitivity, especially in interpretations of Fryderyk Chopin's works, which brought him international fame and recognition. He was the youngest winner of the International Chopin Piano Competition (the 8th) in 1970. In his long career he represented Poland, giving concerts on the most important stages in the world. He collaborated with outstanding conductors, orchestras and musicians. He received numerous awards and distinctions, including the highest ones, for his recordings and artistic activities, and also received state decorations, such as the Officer's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta. Olejniczak used to say that for him Chopin's music "is like a bird of paradise that keeps slipping out of your hands. Only sometimes you manage to capture its essence, get closer to it. It offers infinite possibilities of interpretation, allows you to constantly work on your own aesthetics, on shaping your tastes, gives you a chance to look at the same piece differently". His international recordings attest to it. He is no longer with us, but his music will live forever.



## Shared words – Polish, Sanskrit and Hindi

The words which Polish shares with other languages often derive from the same roots in Proto-Indo-European (PEI). PEI is commonly thought to have originated in the area north of the Black Sea (what is now Ukraine and Southern Russia) in the fourth millennium BC. Through migration it spread west to what is now Europe, and east and south to what are now Asia and Southeast Asia. It is delightful to look at some of the PEI words that traveled along, morphing into different spellings and pronunciations, but keeping their essential meanings.

Words for four family relations are obvious relatives themselves. The Polish word for *mother* is *matka*, while in Hindi it is *maan* and in Sanskrit it is *mata*. *Brother*, *brat* in Polish, is *bhrata* in Sanskrit and *bhaee* in Hindi. *Sister* in Polish is *siostra*; the PEI root is *svasar*. The Polish word for *son*, *syn* is descended from the PEI *sunus*.

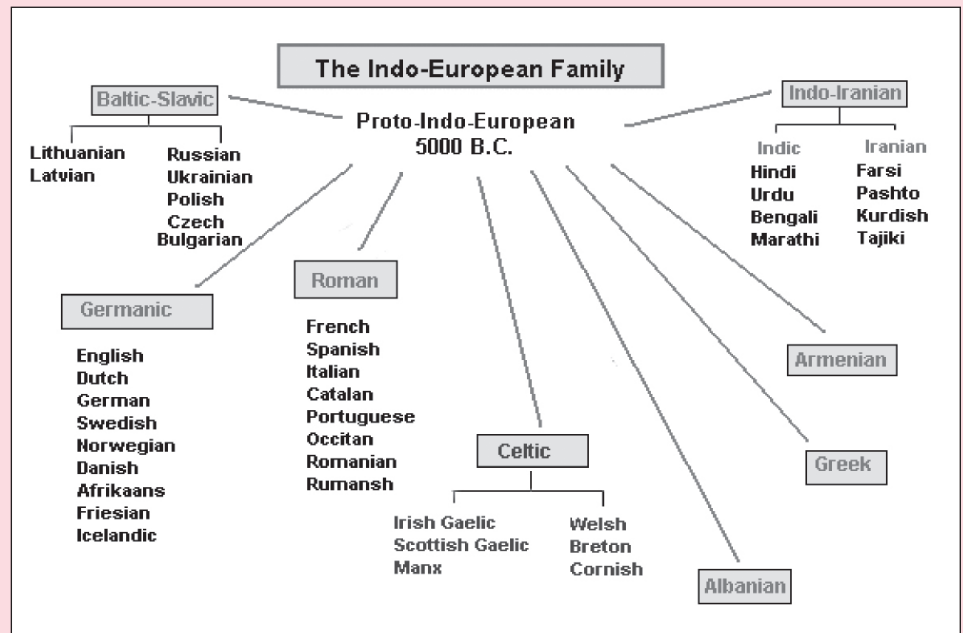
Some numbers are known to have common roots in PEI. Here are a few. *Two* is *dwa*, *do* and *duva* in Polish, Hindi and Sanskrit, respectively. Similarly, *five* is *pięć*, *chaar*, and *catvaras*; *seven* is *siedem*, *saaf* and *sapta*.

The words for *no* show their common roots in *nie*, Polish; *nahim*, Hindi, and *na*, Sanskrit.

In Polish, fire is *ogień*. The root for this word is the PEI *egni-*. It is also the root of the Hindi word for *fire*, *aag*. *Agni* is the name of the Hindu god of fire. *Egni-* is also the root of the English words *ignite* and *igneous*.

*Zima*, the Polish word for *winter*, comes from the Proto-Slavic word which means the same thing. The PEI root is *hima* or *gheim*, which means *snow*. It is the root word for *Himalaya*, the *place of snow*.

The word *bandana* is thought to have originated with the PEI word *bhendh*, a *strip of cloth*. In Sanskrit the word *badhnati*, means *to bind*. The



term traveled through Portuguese as *bandannoe*, into French as *bandage*, and to English and Polish as *bandana*. While the more common word for *bandana* in Polish is *chustka*, the influence of *bhendh* can be seen in *bawelniana chustka*, a *cotton scarf*.

While Polish borrowed *lakier*, from French the word for *lacquer*, *lacque*, a sort of *sealing wax*, the common roots in PEI can clearly be seen in the Hindi word of the same meaning, *lakh*, and in the Sanskrit word, *laksha*.

There are words in Polish, Sanskrit and Hindi which share common roots for some foodstuffs. The Polish word for *sugar*, *cukier*, was adopted from the German *zucker*; however, *zucker* traces back to the Arabic word *sukkar*, which came from the Persian word, *shaker*. The Sanskrit word is *shakara*. These words all harken back to a PEI word which means *grit* or *gravel*.

*Marjorem*, *majeranek* in Polish, is a popular culinary herb. The word may have come to Poland through German, *meigramme*, or Latin, *majorana*, or French, *marjolaine*; but it seems to share PEI roots with the Sanskrit, *maruva*.

Similarly, the word *oberżyna*, *eggplant*, was borrowed from another language, the French *aubergine*. Its PEI roots can be seen in the Arabic *al-badinjan*, the Persian *badingan*, and the Sanskrit *vatimgana*.

Polish adopted its word for the *orange*, *pomarańcza* from the Italian word *pomarančia*. In turn, the Italian came from Arabic, *narang*, via Persian, *narang*, from Sanskrit, *naranga*, and ultimately from the PEI *narangah*.

Not a foodstuff, but something that is used in the serving of food, the plate, *talerz* in Polish came from the German word *teller*, a plate. *Talerz* has a relative in the Hindi word *thali*, which also means plate. In Polish a *talerz* is just a plate, but in Indian food service, a *thali* is a complete, balanced meal; it symbolizes unity and togetherness. The *thali* is a large plate which holds small bowls of lentils, vegetables, chutneys and raita, as well as rice, bread and pickles. The next time you order a *thali* at your favorite Indian restaurant, tell your server about this interesting connection.

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Dr. Barbara Zawadzki  
Marysia Zioncheck

## Rare Celtic helmet unearthed in Poland



In a groundbreaking discovery near **Chorzele** in the **Masovian Province**, archaeologists have uncovered a Celtic helmet dating back 2,500 years. According to experts, only a handful of such artifacts exist worldwide, making this an extraordinary find. It is the first helmet of its kind found in Poland, and the oldest ancient helmet ever uncovered

in the country. The helmet was found at the **Lysa Góra archaeological site**, a defensive settlement, where there is evidence of possible conflicts between the Celts and the Vandals. Previously, Celts were thought to have been confined to the south of Poland. Other artifacts from the site include axes, spearheads, a sword, and decorative horse harnesses.

## Historic Polish mine wins Europe's top heritage award

The **Ignacy Historic Mine in Rybnik**, southern Poland, has won the **2024 European Heritage Award** in the Conservation and Adaptive category. It is the site of a former coal mine that was founded at the end of the 18th century and remained in operation for over 200 years. The mine has been transformed into a vibrant cultural and recreational center while maintaining its historical significance. The transformation was through the efforts of former miners, the city of Rybnik, and Polish and EU funds. The mine is open to tourism, where

visitors can explore the interactive exhibition, the roots of the Industrial Revolution, and the significance of inventions like the steam engine in shaping Europe's global influence. An award also went the Serfenta Crafts Revitalisation Model in Cieszyn, which has basketry at its core. Piotr Gerber, from the Department of the History of Architecture at the University of Technology in Wrocław has been named as one of the 2024 Heritage Champions. The awards are funded by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union.



## Agnieszka Walter-Drop gets new position in the European Parliament



After 13 years of working in the European Parliament, she is the new **Director-General for Structural Policies and Communities**. She will oversee the work of the parliament's committees responsible for the EU budget and agriculture. As such, she has broken the *glass ceiling*, which traditionally excluded women from high positions. She is a

graduate of the Jagiellonian University and has completed leadership programs at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, along with studies in European law and governance at the College of Europe. She speaks six foreign languages, three of them fluently.

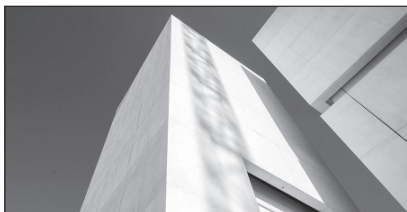
## The Polish Sejm dedicates 2025 to distinguished figures and significant historical events

**Olga Boznańska** was a leading painter at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Although Boznańska worked abroad, she remained deeply connected to Poland. Her paintings are considered key works of Polish modernism. The Sejm marked the 160th anniversary of her birth and the 85th anniversary of her death. **Franciszek Duszeńko**, a prominent sculptor was honored on the 100th anniversary of his birth. His works, including monuments in Treblinka and Westerplatte, stand as important testimonies to 20th-century history. **Antoni Słominski** was honored as a poet, writer, publicist, and co-founder of the Skamander group known for his satirical humor and efforts to protect copyright. The Sejm commemorated the 150 anniversary of the death of **Stefan**

**Żeromski**, the writer, and the 140th anniversary of the birth of **General Kazimierz Sosnkowski**, recognizing his contributions to Poland's struggle for independence. The year 2025 will also honor Polish heroes from **Katyn, Kharkiv, Miednoye, Bykivinia** and other sites who were murdered under the 1940 Kremlin order. The millennium of the coronation of **Bolesław the Brave** and **Mieszko II** was recognized as the Millennium of the Coronation of the first two kings of Poland in Gniezno.



## Museum of Modern Art opens in Warsaw



The museum took up residence on *Plac Defilad*, Parade Square, its first permanent home since its founding in 2005. It focuses on art created since 1989. Designed by Thomas Phifer and Partners, the building is a literal white cube, symbolizing

a *clean slate*, in contrast to the hulking Palace of Culture and Science which is nearby. For more information about the building and its collection, see <https://www.frieze.com/article/museum-modern-art-warsaw-reopens-new-era>.

## Piano virtuoso Ruth Slenczynska is 100 years old.

She is the last surviving pupil of Sergei Rachmaninov; her career has spanned nine decades. In 2022, she released an album, *My Life in Music*, her first album since the 1960s. Slenczynska was born in California in 1925, the daughter of Polish immigrants. She made her concert debut at age four, and one year later, performed a work of Beethoven on television. At the age of six, she made her European concert debut in Berlin, and now, over 90 years

later, she is still performing. She has performed for four US Presidents, including playing a Mozart duet with President Harry S. Truman, and performing at President John F. Kennedy's inauguration. *My Life in Music* explores the music of Chopin. Slenczynska is one of the most celebrated Chopin interpreters of her time. Ms. Slenczynska was one of the prominent judges for the 1975 Three Rivers National Piano Competition under the auspices of WQED Pittsburgh.



## Preservation of Warsaw's Old Powązki Cemetery

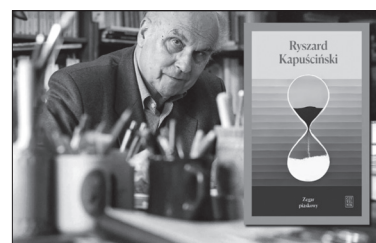


The committee to preserve the cemetery's historic heritage has marked five decades of their efforts. To date, around 1,700 tombstones and chapels have been restored. These include the gravestones along the Avenue of the Meritorious, where celebrated writers, actors, musicians

and public figures are buried. They also include 11 tombstones of Fryderyk Chopin's family members. The cemetery dates back to 1792 and is known for its remarkable tombstones, many of which are considered works of art.

## Posthumous publication of book by Kapuściński

The book, *The Hourglass, Zegar Piaskowy*, by Ryszard Kapuściński, has been published 40 years after it was written and 17 years after the author's death. Censorship in communist Poland originally blocked its publication. The book contains reflections, poems and quotes, and portrays Kapuściński as a visionary. He predicted the growing role of communication and information in shaping societies. Kapuściński was a renowned Polish journalist and writer celebrated for his insightful reports on events in Africa and Latin America. His works gained international acclaim and are considered classics in the field of literary journalism.

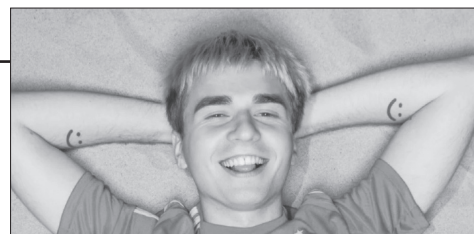


## Poczta Polska commemorates the Warsaw Uprising

In honor of the 80th anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising, the Polish Post Office has issued a stamp. It pictures insurgents at a firing position in the ruined entrance of the Church of the Holy Cross on Krakowskie Przedmieście.

## Mata is first Polish artist on EA Sports soundtrack

EA Sports is the global soccer video game series. It will feature Mata's track *Loret de Mar*. In this significant achievement, Mata will join international stars such as Billie Eilish, Coldplay and Charli XCX.





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Pittsburgh, PA 15217-0554



[www.PolishCulturalCouncil.org](http://www.PolishCulturalCouncil.org)

## A special lecture – the Sztark family in Pittsburgh

**Wednesday, March 26, 5:00 PM**

Mark your calendars, as you are invited to a special lecture on Wednesday, March 26th at 5 pm, given by Dr. Jan Musekamp. Deputy Director of the German Historical Institute in Warsaw. Dr. Musekamp will share with us an important part of the history of Pittsburgh: The Sztark Family, serving the Polish community in Pittsburgh between the 1930s and 1940s.

**Heliodor Sztark**, a diplomat, was the last Consul General of Poland in Pittsburgh from 1938 to 1945. He arrived for his position together with his wife and daughter. All three became active public figures within the sizable Polish community, and the city of Pittsburgh. After the war, Heliodor Sztark resigned from his position as the Consul General as he did not support the new Polish communist government.

The talk will focus on the Sztark family's trajectory before, during and after their stay in Pittsburgh.



Heliodor Sztark: the last Consul General of Poland in Pittsburgh

***Hope to see you on:***

***Wednesday, March 26th at 5pm  
University of Pittsburgh,  
230 S Bouquet Street  
Posvar Hall room 4130***

***The event is free.***