

Report June 09

**ANNUAL REPORT OF PIASA'S PRESIDENT AND EXEC. DIRECTOR**  
**Dr. Thaddeus V. Gromada**  
**June 2008- June 2009**

**INTRODUCTION**

As everyone knows this has not been a very good year for our country and for that matter for most of the countries in the world , because of the serious financial crisis. It has adversely affected almost everyone, including colleges, universities, foundations and not for profit academic organizations . Our Institute's modest portfolio has declined substantially as our treasurer will report and it will become even more of a challenge to raise funds, recruit new members, initiate new projects and even to get members to pay their dues. Up to December 2008 membership dues for 2009 were coming in quite well because of an incentive program we introduced , but as of mid 2009 we still have hundreds of members who are delinquent in their payment of dues. No one knows how long will it take for the economy to recover , so I propose that in the meantime we become even "leaner and meaner" and move ahead with confidence but with care and due deliberation. In the budget/calendar year of 2008 our expenses were sharply cut to \$138,000. which was \$30,000. below budget and the support/revenue collected amounted to \$183,000. which however, included a restricted \$50,000. "Prof. Piotr S. Wandycz Fund" I have said this many times before and I repeat it again today, that the future of PIASA depends on its ability to overcome two problems ; (1) the problem of a shrinking and aging membership and (2) the problem of inadequate financial resources. Most of what we have been able to accomplish in the past years was made largely possible by our pro bono labor which subsidizes our Institute.. PIASA will still need the services of such individuals like my Deputy, Janina Kedron, in the future, but it will also urgently need more financial resources just to keep up with the increased overhead and other unavoidable expenses of maintaining a center of learning and culture in Manhattan. As I indicated last year, I accepted the Presidency and Directorship for only one more term which expires in June 2011, to help arrange for a smooth and responsible transition to a new leadership . I am determined to work with our Board to make this happen to assure the Institute's future with a new leadership at its helm.

**Raising Funds.**

During this past academic year we have made a special effort to secure financial support from Polonia and from Poland. We had some success with the former by asking for funds for specific projects like financing an issue of "The Polish Review" or providing funds for our awards. The Polish Army Veterans Association of America, District 2, led by Commander Antoni Chroscielewski gave a grant of \$10,000. to subsidize the publication of the "The Polish Review" Vol. LIII 2008 No.4 while the Polish Slavic Federal Credit Union contributed \$2000 toward our awards program. Thanks to the intervention of Dr. Brzezinski, the Smith Richardson Foundation offered a \$10,000. grant. While the Kosciuszko Foundation's Sendzimir Fund provided \$4037.27 this year. After almost two years of legal delay PIASA received a bequest from "The Edmund M.

Wojtasik Estate” of Sarasota, Florida which amounted to less than \$5000. Originally the bequest was valued at nearly \$10,000 but the market collapse during this period caused the reduction. A number of our members and friends make sizeable donations when paying their dues which of course, is very much appreciated. In the long run, it will be the generosity of individuals, members and friends, who can make the difference and assure PIASA’s future.

There was a serious effort made to get funding from Poland with the cooperation of Prof. Andrzej Bialas, President of Polska Akademia Umiejetnosci (PAU). Prof. Bialas publicly expressed his desire to come to the aid of PIASA and petitioned the Minister of Science and Higher Education, Dr. Barbara Kudrycka, to provide funds for the support of projects like e.g. the joint publication of the Polish Review. Initially there seemed to be some possibility of getting funds from the Ministry in the fall of 2008 but by March 2009 those hopes were dashed most likely because of the financial world crisis that also affected Poland. Our efforts to get funding for the computerization of our library from the Polish Ministry of Culture with the help of the Biblioteka Narodowa, also ended in failure for the same reason. There is still one hope of getting funds for our library through the Semper Polonia Foundation in Warsaw. My application for \$17,000. grant was received positively by Marek Hauszyld, President of the Foundation when I visited Warsaw in late March 2009. The Fundacja Na Rzecz Nauki Polskiej (FNP) is also a possible source of funding for a special project like a “Biographical Dictionary” of scholars, scientists, artists of Polish origin living in the USA. But my view is that we cannot count very heavily on support from Poland; we need to concentrate on sources of funding in this country among our natural constituency, the Polish American community.

### **Membership Recruitment.**

For the past several years I have been pointing out in my annual reports that PIASA’s membership has been declining as a result of natural attrition and that an energetic effort has to be made to recruit new members. So, I continue to put a high priority on membership recruitment. During this past year few of our Board members have responded to this matter by identifying potential members. This is followed up by sending a formal invitation which often results in the election of new members. Among the new members selected this year was the internationally famous Witold Rybczynski, of the University of Pennsylvania. Many natural scientists and medical doctors have been recently recruited with the help of our new Board member, Dr. Anne Hermanowski Vosatka. In the past most of our members came from academia in the field of Slavic and East European studies. These studies are no longer a growth industry, so we have to look in other places. It is my view that we will have to seek out Americans of Polish ancestry who have succeeded in the mainstream society, who have high positions in the professions, arts, government, business, etc. It will be our task to research and document the achievements of these persons whose contributions to American society are unknown or underestimated. These achievers and creators of culture are most likely to be interested in becoming PIASA Members. Naturally, we are also very much interested in persons of non-Polish ancestry who are interested in Polish history and culture. That is the reason why I have reached out to the **Polish Studies Association**, an

affiliate of the AAASS (American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies) which has about 100 members most of whom are young academics specializing in Polish studies at various colleges and universities. I made a special point of meeting Dr. Padraic Kenney , President of PSA , and Dr. Robert Blobaum , PSA Board member, during the National Convention of the AAASS in Philadelphia in November 2008. This was followed by Dr. Padraic Kenney's visit to the Polish Institute on March 26, 2009. Since I was in Warsaw at the time he was welcomed by Deputy Executive Director Janina Kedron and Vice President of PIASA, Dr. M.B. Biskupski Another meeting with the PSA officers was scheduled during the forthcoming AAASS Convention in Boston in mid November 2009. There are still some stereotypical attitudes toward PIASA by some PSA leaders which I am hopeful we can overcome, so that we can bring about a mutually beneficial cooperation and perhaps draw some PSA members to PIASA. In the final analysis what is needed is a concerted organized effort by the Board, Council and the entire membership to identify potential members and then work to recruit them.

## **MAJOR PIASA EVENTS**

### ***Presentation of the Casimir Funk Natural Science Award to PIASA Fellow and Nobel Laureate, Dr. Frank Wilczek, on December 9, 2008 at the Polish Consulate General***

This was a major event that certainly helped to increase PIASA's image and prestige. Our member Dr. Frank Wilczek, Nobel prize winner (Physics 2004) received PIASA's Award which was presented to him by another Nobel laureate, our member, Dr. Roald Hoffmann (Chemistry 1981). It was a program that required a great deal of time and energy to organize but it was worth it. The honorary committee of the program was composed of distinguished scholars like Prof. Emilio Bizzi, President of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences, Prof. Andrzej Bialas, President of the Polska Akademia Umiejetnosci, Dr. Ellis Rubinstein, President of the New York Academy of Sciences, representatives of major Polonia organizations and media. A performance by a young Korean pianist Yoonjun Han followed by a reception enriched the event. Dr. Frank Wilczek who recently was elected member of PAU received a diploma from that organization from the hands of Consul General Krzysztof Kasprzyk during the program. He also received an "Ignacy Jan Paderewski" medallion from Commander Antoni Chroscielewski of SWAP District 2. I have made a special effort to involve many different organizations in this event whose representatives served on the honorary committee.

### ***67<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting June 13-14, 2009, Hyatt Regency Jersey City***

The Board made a decision to hold the 2009 Annual Meeting in the New York metropolitan area last June. In spite all of my efforts I found it impossible to arrange the 67<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting in a university/college setting in New York. The following institutions were contacted : Fordham University, NYU, New School University, Columbia University and Stevens Tech without success. In the end we settled for the Hyatt Regency Jersey City/On the Hudson Hotel even though we realized that there were risks involved in being able to cover the expenses in order the needed services and

facilities. To assure the success of the conference it was clear that we could not rely exclusively on the support of members . Therefore, we encouraged the participation of other organizations which included the Polish Cultural Foundation of N.J., Polonia Technica, Polish American Historical Association , Polish University Club of N.J., and Orchard Lake Schools . Many other organizations helped advertise our meeting on their websites like for example the Pilsudski Institute of America , Polish Cultural Institute and the Polish American media were also very cooperative. E mail advertising also proved to be very helpful. The final evaluation of the 2009 Annual Meeting will have to be made later. A tremendous amount of time and energy is expended during the year in organizing our Annual Meetings ; some thought must be given to the option of arranging meetings on a biannual basis. This would permit more time to devote to other projects.

## **PIASA'S LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES**

I continue to keep in touch with the Director (Dr. Slawomir Radon) and Deputy Director (Dr. Barbara Berska) of Poland's National Archives (Naczelną Dyрекcyję Archiwów Państwowych NDAP). I had two meetings with them in Warsaw on September 9, 2008 and March 26, 2009 and on November 6, 2008 in New York City in our Institute. In addition I have had two meetings with the Director of the Biblioteka Narodowa (Dr. Tomasz Makowski) and his deputy, Elzbieta Stefanczyk in Warsaw on September 9, 2008 and on March 27, 2009. These direct contacts are important to the Institute because these two institutions nominate each year one candidate for the position of "PIASA's Visiting Research Archivist" and another person for the position of "PIASA's Visiting Research Librarian". These candidates then receive scholarships funded by the Kosciuszko Foundation in accordance with a formal agreement that exists between the Foundation and the Institute since 2001. PIASA benefits a great deal by the presence of these professional Polish archivists and librarians on its premises. The Visiting Research Archivist from October 2008 to April 2009, was Anna Ciesla, from the Archives of the City of Warsaw who performed admirably during this period organizing new collections like the recently acquired "Roman Michalowski papers" ,"Piotr Yolles papers". All of the archival information from our archives are placed in the NDAP data bases of SEZAM and IZA and made available to interested scholars. They are also placed eventually on our website. Among those who work in our Archives are researches from Poland e.g. Dr. Beata Dorosz, PAN, Dr. Slawomir Lukasiewicz, KUL, Dr. Grazyna Kubica, Jagiellonian University, Tadeusz Smiarowski, TV producer. Dr. Janusz Cisek, UJ. There is a great interest in our Bobkowski, Lechon, Wierzynski collections which have been used to produce documentaries for Polish TV.

The Visiting Research Librarian from Warsaw's Biblioteka Narodowa for the period of late January 2009 to June 2009, is Beata Capik. She is very devoted to our library and is continuing the labor intensive task of electronically cataloguing the Institute's library collection. So far, almost 11,000 volumes have been catalogued which is about 40% of our collection which does not include brochures and periodicals. The volumes that are cataloged are placed automatically on the MAK the data base of Poland's National Library in Warsaw. Ultimately, the catalogue will be placed on line so interested persons can learn what is available at our library. As mentioned above I have applied for

a \$17,000. grant to the Semper Polonia Foundation in Warsaw, to help computerize our library and make it more efficient and more accessible.

I have met and interviewed candidates in late March 2009 that have been nominated for visiting archivist (Katarzyna Kowalik) and visiting librarian (Artur Kowalski) for the next academic year 2009-2010. So, far we expect Katarzyna Kowalik to be at the Institute in the fall of 2009 but there is no final word on the status of the librarian.

It was very significant that the Director of Poland's National Archives, Dr. Slawomir Radon and his Deputy Dr. Barbara Berska, made an official visit to our Institute on November 6, 2008. I was assured that the NDAP is very much interested in expanding its cooperation with PIASA and offered to deposit microfilmed collections of Polish documents in our archives, making us a repository of rare Polish archival collections. During the meeting I was presented with ten DVD discs of scanned documents from the Potocki Lancut collection which PIASA donated to NDAP last year. The entire Potocki collection which was in our archives are now in Poland. But PIASA has this collection either on microfilm or on DVD discs.

## **CONTACTS WITH POLAND**

During this past academic year I made two visits to Poland, from September 3 to September 11, 2008 and from March 22 to March 28, 2009. The first visit was made in response to an invitation from PAU (Polska Akademia Umiejetnosci) and the Krakow Branch of Wspolnota, to participate in the II Congress of Polish Learned Societies Abroad held from September 4 to 7, 2008 in Krakow. This was an invitation that could hardly be refused at a time when we were seeking support from Poland. The opening of the Congress was attended by Prime Minister Donald Tusk, the Minister of Science and Higher Education, Barbara Kudrycka, and representatives of academic organizations from several continents. I had an opportunity to deliver a lecture on "Przyszlosc Polskiego Instytutu Naukowego w Ameryce: Potrzeby i kierunki." during a plenary session and chair a session on „Wspolczesne migracje Polakow” (Recent Polish Migrations). While in Krakow I had an opportunity to have meetings with many distinguished individuals that included Prof. Andrzej Bialas, President of PAU, Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz, Rector Stanislaw Hodorowicz, , former UJ Rectors Pelczar and Ziejka. I had the opportunity to tour the campus of the Frzycz Modrzewski Private University in the Podgorze section of Krakow. While in Warsaw from September 8 to September 10, I had meetings with Dr. Barbara Kudrycka, Minister of Science and Higher Education, Dr. Slawomir Radon director of the NDAP, and with the Director and Deputy Director of the Biblioteka Narodowa, Dr. Tomasz Makowski and Dr. Elzbieta Stefanczyk. In addition I visited the Archiwum Akt Nowych where Marian Olczak is director and where former PIASA Visiting Archivist, Jan Annusewicz, is employed.

My second visit to Poland in March 2009 was in connection with serving on the Kosciuszko Foundation Scholarship Committee in Warsaw. This committee interviews Polish applicants for KF grants and scholarships. While in Warsaw I had the opportunity to meet the following persons and discuss with them matters pertaining to cooperation

with PIASA: Dr. Tomasz Makowski and Dr. Elzbieta Stefanczyk, Director and Deputy Director of the Biblioteka Narodowa respectively, Dr. Slawomir Radon and Dr. Anna Krochmal at Poland's National Archives, Dr. Tomasz Perkowski, Vice President of the Fundacja Na Rzecz Nauki Polskiej, Dr. Daria Nalecz, Rector of the Lazarski University of Commerce and Law, and Marek Hauszyld, President of the Semper Polonia Foundation. As indicated above I made a grant application for the computerization of PIASA's Library at a cost of \$17,000. to the Semper Polonia Foundation . This application was favorably accepted.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

An important activity of PIASA is the publication since 1956 of the academic quarterly journal "The Polish Review". The journal is now led by Dr. Charles Kraszewski who is presently the editor-in-chief. He will give his report. The series editor of PIASA BOOKS is now Dr. Kathleen Cioffi, who is associated with Princeton University Press. Her professional experience with the University Presses will certainly be helpful in furthering our publication program. She will also report on her plans for PIASA BOOKS based on several manuscripts that have been submitted.

## **CONTACTS AND COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS**

Our Institute has always been open for cooperation with organizations that have similar interests and goals which are connected with a desire to advance knowledge about Poland and Polish America. It was our pleasure to host members of the "Polish American Historical Association" (PAHA) who were attending the National Convention of the American Historical Association in New York City on January 2, 2009. More than fifty PAHA members were at the reception, all of whom had an opportunity to tour our town house and get acquainted with our library/archives and other resources. The outgoing President, Dr. Anna Kirchmann and the new president Dr. Brian McCook expressed their thanks to PAHA and promised closer cooperation, PAHA is participating in our 67<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting and scheduled its mid-year Board meeting during our June 13-14 conference in Jersey City. Polonia Technica whose official hq. are in our townhouse, is also participating in this years Annual Meeting by sponsoring a session.

Since November 2008 the Kosciuszko Foundation has a new President, a prominent New York journalist, and author of a new book "Kosciuszko: The Peasant Prince". He also happens to be a PIASA member who participated and will participate again this year in our Annual Meetings. We look forward to a continued fruitful and mutually beneficial collaboration. We extend congratulations to our member on his new appointment. PIASA is pleased to have established a closer cooperative relationship with SWAP headed by Commander Antoni Chroscielewski and will be trying to do the same with other Polonia groups who are interested in supporting cultural and scholarly projects that would have the effect of improving the Polish image in America.

PIASA continues to be associated with the *American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies (AAASS)* based at Harvard University as an "Institutional Member" in the

company of institutions of higher learning with centers on Slavic and Eastern European Studies. *NewsNet* the official AAASS Newsletter regularly publishes news items about PIASA activities . Our Institute had an informational meeting during the 40<sup>th</sup> National Convention of the AAASS on November 21, 2008 in the Philadelphia Marriott Downtown Hotel in which I participated with Dr. Paul W. Knoll and Dr. Kathleen Cioffi.. The next AAASS Convention is scheduled for November 12-15, 2009 in Boston and plans are being made to participate in it as usual. It was during the Philadelphia Convention that I had an opportunity to meet with leaders of the Polish Studies Association which is an affiliate of the AAASS. As mentioned above our Institute is reaching out to the PSA with the hope of establishing a closer and a mutually rewarding Collaboration. Dr. Robert Blobaum , of West Virginia University, a PSA and PIASA member has indicated his interest in strengthening the relationship between our two organizations.