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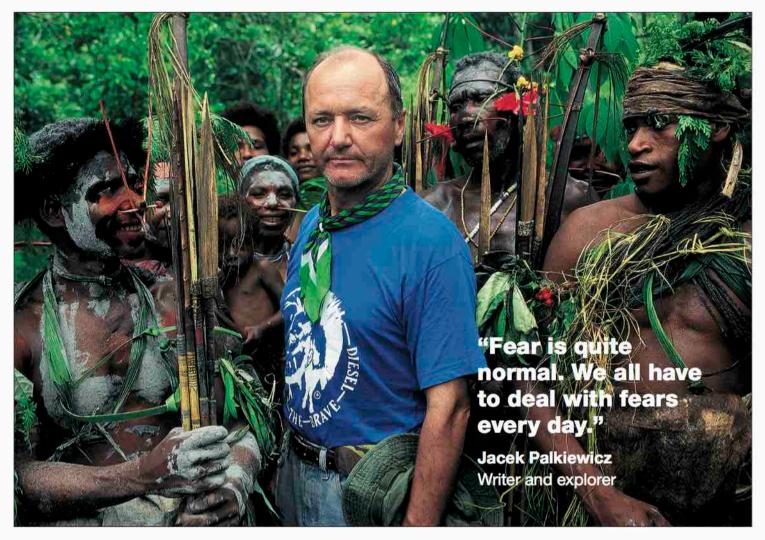


Price 2 Yuan Vol.016 No.5134









Polish writer and explorer Jacek Palkiewicz in West Papua, Indonesia, with local tribes people.

EXPLORER LIVES LIFE TO THE LIMIT

With over 50 expeditions to his credit, Jacek Palkiewicz knows how to push his boundaries.

Zhou Yubin

here has long been a dispute whether the Amazon or the Nile is the world's longest river. It all depends on pinpointing the source and how calculations are done.

In 1996, a research expedition led by Polish writer and explorer Jacek Palkiewicz determined that a small spring on Mt Quehisha in Peru, 5,150 meters above sea level, was the probable source of the Amazon. The discovery was confirmed by satellite images 15 years later.

Though that finding seemed to give the Amazon an edge in the debate, what is undisputable is that Palkiewicz's esteem as a global explorer was firmly cemented by the expedition.

He was born in 1942 in a German labor camp in Lower Saxony, where his Polish mother was forcibly sent during World War II. He grew up a small town in northern Poland and emigrated to Italy in 1970. Palkiewicz is a fellow of the prestigious Royal Geographical Society in London.

He has led more than 50 expeditions in his long career to some of the most improbable places on earth. He traveled by reindeer sledge 1,300 kilometers across Siberia to reach the coldest inhabited spot on earth, where the temperature can fall to minus 72 degrees Celsius.

He traveled the jungle of Vietnam by elephant and crossed Bhutan on a yak. He traveled down the Yangtze River in a sampan and crossed the forbidding Taklamakan Desert in northwestern China. He had a gun held at his head in war-ravaged Niger.

In fact, scrolling through Palkiewicz's long list of adventures is like reading

fantastic fiction.

When asked how he survived it all, he simply answers, "The most important part in an extreme situation is to overcome it psychologically."

The importance of inner strength was the main theme of a series of lectures he gave in Shanghai last month. Organized by the Polish consulate, the six lectures attracted an audience of around 550 people.

Palkiewicz started his life of adventure in 1975, when he crossed the Atlantic from Dakar, Senegal, to Georgetown, Guyana, in 44 days, alone in a lifeboat without a radio or sextant. He said he "wanted to prove that a sea disaster survivor could make it as long as he didn't succumb." During his trip, he lived on rainwater and fish he managed to catch.

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Seven days a week

Published by Shanghai United Media Group

Shanghai Daily Address: 38F, 755 Weihai Road, Shanghai 200041, China 地址: 上海市威海路755号 38楼

国内统一刊号 CN31-0004 邮发代号3-96 广告经营许可证 3100020050006 Price 2 Yuan

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Polish adventurer goes to extremes

FROM P1

"All my life, I have never come as close to giving up as I did on that trip," Palkiewicz recalled. "After three days of uninterrupted storms, with the waves tossing me how and where they liked, I had reached the limits of my endurance. I yelled out, 'That's it, I surrender!' to the sea and decided that I would fire my distress signal as soon as I saw a ship. All I wanted to do was to put myself out of my misery."

But when a ship finally appeared on the horizon and approached him for rescue, Palkiewicz decided he should carry on with his journey. He said the same "voice in my heart" always appeared just at the darkest moments.

"Fear is quite normal," Palkiewicz told his Shanghai audiences. "We all have to deal with fears every day."

The most important thing, he said, is to use fear wisely. Fear becomes the father of courage, raises adrenaline and boosts energy.

In his lectures, Palkiewicz repeatedly emphasized the big role the human mind plays in the art of survival.

"The human body knows its limits, but the mind does not," he said.

He used a pyramid to illustrate the "hierarchy of survival." The bottom elements are "unshakeable will" and "faith." On top of them pile knowledge, shelter, water, food, physical condition, action plans and equipment.

"I can out-compete you at any game whatsoever," he told his audiences. "I may not be on the winning side as far as intelligence and strength, but I will never grow as tired as you will."

In 1982, Palkiewicz shared his knowledge of survival in extreme conditions by founding a survival school in Italy. It has become a popular forum for many sessions on corporate leadership training. Palkiewicz has written more than 30 books, especially focusing on minority ethnic groups and offbeat places. Although most of them are written in Polish, some have been translated into English. His book "Art of Travel" will be translated into Chinese and published by Zhejiang Science and Technology Publishing House later this year.

Palkiewicz is also a consultant to the Russian Cosmonauts Training Center, where he teaches space explorers how to keep up their spirits and confront extremely harsh conditions.

His unassailable willpower, toughness and leadership abilities have been cited in numerous titles and awards. He was knighted in both Poland and Italy, and became friends with Polish presidents and Pope John Paul II.

His colorful career started when he was a little boy.

"My mother used to read me travelogues for bedtime stories when I was very young," Palkiewicz said. "I think that was how everything began. The more I traveled, the more I learned. I still have the desire to visit new places."

Now in his 70s, Palkiewicz remains fit, energetic and full of passion. He said his expeditionary exploits are far from over.

"I will travel to South America and study shamanism this August," Palkiewicz said. "I have always been interested in shamanism, which is something not so well-known in Europe."

Shamanism is a religious practice that involves entering altered states of consciousness to interact with the spirit world.

He also has some family travel plans with his wife Linda Vernola, who is an Italian painter. Those trips won't be on the backs of yaks.

"I may want to stay in five-star hotels," Palkiewicz said, with a smile.

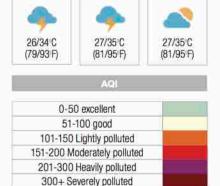


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- 1. Palkiewicz trains with Russian Cosmonauts.
- Palkiewicz takes photos during an expedition to Siberia, Russia.
- 3. Palkiewicz rests while traveling the jungle by elephant in Gia Lai Province, Vietnam.
- 4. Palkiewicz is the author of more than 30 books in several languages. — Courtesy of Jacek Palkiewicz

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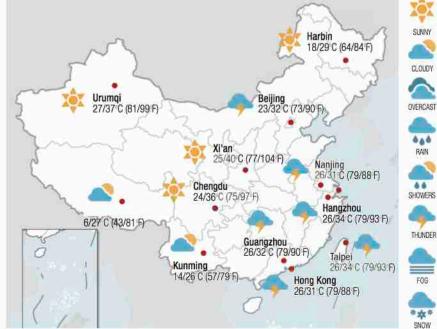
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CHINA



WORLD	min/max °C	min/max °F	
Athens	28/37	82.4/98.6	Sunny
Bangkok	26/33	78.8/91.4	Thunderstorms
Berlin	14/22	57.2/71.6	Light Rain
Chicago	23/29	73.4/84.2	Cloudy
Frankfurt	14/23	57.2/73.4	Showers
Geneva	15/28	59/82.4	Showers
Islamabad	24/28	75.2/82.4	Thunderstorms
Istanbul	23/31	73.4/87.8	Sunny
Jakarta	23/34	73.4/93.2	Sunny
London	13/21	55.4/69.8	Showers
Los Angeles	18/27	64.4/80.6	Cloudy
Madrid	22/39	71.6/102.2	Sunny
Manila	24/31	75.2/87.8	Thunderstorms
Moscow	18/28	64.4/82.4	Thunderstorms
Delhi	26/33	78.8/91.4	Thunderstorms
New York	23/30	73.4/86	Thunderstorms
Paris	16/23	60.8/73.4	Cloudy
San Francisco	15/20	59/68	Cloudy
Seoul	23/31	73.4/87.8	Cloudy
Singapore	27/33	80.6/91.4	Cloudy
Sydney	6/16	42.8/60.8	Sunny
Tokyo	25/34	77/93.2	Sunny
Toronto	19/30	66.2/86	Cloudy
Washington	23/33	73.4/91.4	Thunderstorms