



# POLAND TODAY

Internationally engaged

Politics and business go hand in hand. Where is the economy headed under PiS? **page 22**

Are businesses in Poland ready to take advantage of the Internet of Things? **page 48**

The day Muhammed Ali beat a Pole to gold at the 1960 Rome Olympics **page 72**

H2 2016  
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## Polska goes global

With a new emphasis on trade abroad and strong interest from China, Poland's international clout is set to rise

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Poland is in state of flux

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Poland has lofty ambitions of becoming a force to be reckoned with both in terms of foreign trade and attractiveness to investors from overseas.

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Time for Polska

The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Polish companies frequently get it wrong when it comes to expansion abroad as they don't realize the importance of adapting the product or service, and their business approach, to the different foreign markets. Now is the time for them to adapt to succeed. Plus, we profile a select group of dynamic Polish companies launching themselves on the world.

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Warsaw is closely watching the rise of Beijing on the international stage, and tries to find its place in the global puzzle.

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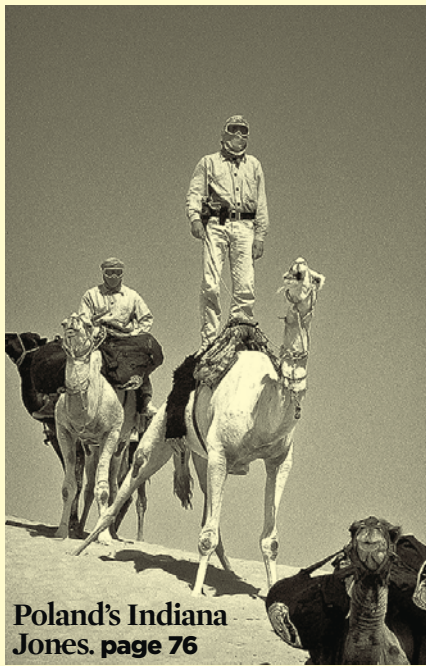
Confident, independent and tough

Making a successful sale to Poland's Mittelstand means, above all else, understanding them.

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International university enrolment on the rise

Monica Zielinski speaks to foreign students and lecturers in Warsaw, understanding what attracted them to Poland in the first place.



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'Dynamic' is an oft-used word, but it does appear to apply perfectly to much of the Polish real estate market today.

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Cassius Clay (later Muhammed Ali) rose to fame after beating a Polish boxer at the 1960 Rome Olympics. Zbigniew Pietrzykowski's widow speaks about her husband.

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Żwirko and Wigura were two intrepid pilots in the golden age of flying. Tragically, a crash killed them at the peak of their fame.



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Poland's Indiana Jones

He has walked across the Sahara, ridden a sled through ice and snow to the coldest place on Earth, and discovered the source of the Amazon. Jacek Palkiewicz spoke to *Poland Today* about what drives him to do these things.

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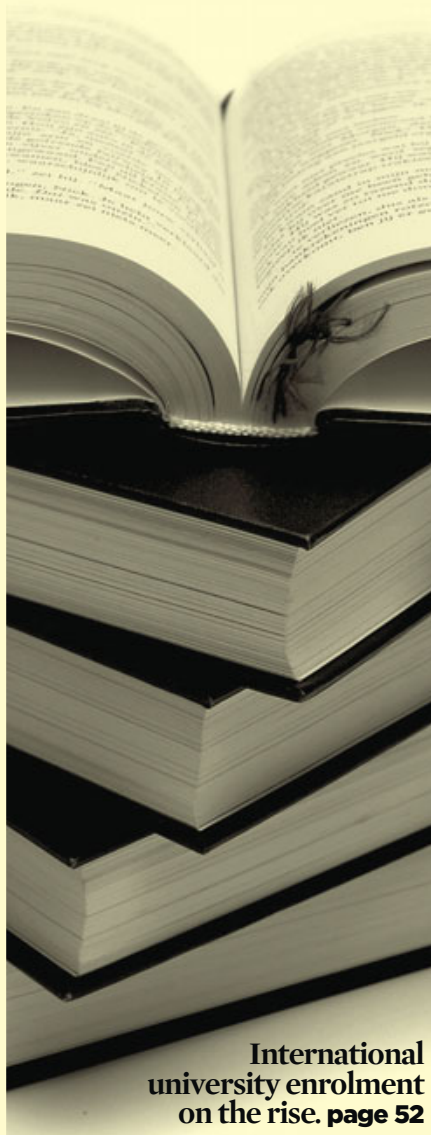
A round up of conferences either organised or supported by Poland Today

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From Lebanon with Love

Sandra Massoud moved to Warsaw in 2004, and quickly decided to open a restaurant in the city serving the very food she craved



International university enrolment on the rise. **page 52**



When life gives you apples. **page 32**



# Poland's Indiana Jones

Legendary explorer, author and journalist Jacek Pałkiewicz talks to Poland Today about how he uses his travels and expeditions to fly the flag for Poland around the world.



**Eye on the world.** Jacek Pałkiewicz's modest beginning did not stop him from becoming one of the world's pre-eminent explorers.

## A JOB LIKE NO OTHER

**Jacek Pałkiewicz** was born in 1942 in a German labour camp in Lower Saxony, where his mother was forcibly sent during World War II. He grew up in Northern Poland and emigrated to Italy in 1970. Pałkiewicz is a Fellow of the *Royal Geographic Society* in London and has lead over 50 expeditions to some of the most remote and inaccessible corners of the world. In 1982, he founded a survival school, teaching the physical, mental and psychological skills he has honed during his many years of exploration. He has worked with the Russian *Cosmonaut Training Centre* for extreme conditioning and more recently served as ambassador for the Masurian Lake District in its attempt to become recognised as one of the 'New Seven Wonders of Nature' competition, where Masuria was ranked the most beautiful natural area in Europe. He is the author of more than 20 books and reports of his expeditions are often published in leading European magazines and newspapers. In 2010, he was awarded the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice by Pope Benedict XVI, and in 2015 he was bestowed the Order of Merit by decree of the Polish president.



In 1975 Jacek Pałkiewicz made a solo crossing of the Atlantic, travelling from Dakar in Senegal to Georgetown, Guyana, in a 5.5m-long lifeboat with no sextant, wind rudder or radio. Having navigated the Mazury Lakes as a child and sailed in the Polish merchant navy for two years, Pałkiewicz had experience on the water. The challenge, however, proved exceedingly physically and mentally testing. During one severe storm, when Pałkiewicz spent three days bailing out water from his small craft, he reached the limits of his resistance. Yelling out his surrender to the empty vastness of the sea beyond, unable to eat or sleep and covered in sores caused by the sea spray, Pałkiewicz decided to fire his distress flare the next time he saw a ship. But when a Cuban exploration vessel, the Antarctic Ocean, found Pałkiewicz two days later, his resolve had returned and he refused rescue. After 44 days of isolation and struggle, the Pole reached dry land in South America, having conquered the Atlantic Ocean.

## Humble beginnings

"When I was little and people asked me what I wanted to do when I grew up, I always said 'I will be an explorer'. I hadn't even started school, but I knew. My aunt used to read travel books to me, and I used to trace the names of the places she talked about on a globe my father had given me. The exotic names like 'Timbuktu', 'Hong Kong' and 'Buenos Aires' made a huge impression on my imagination. As I got older, the writings of Kipling, London and Stevenson felt like invitations to explore the world," Pałkiewicz said.

He felt like an outsider growing up behind the Iron Curtain. "The non-communist world was closed to me and I didn't have a passport, so I applied to the Nautical School in Gdynia to become a sailor. Unfortunately, I failed an eye test and was rejected. It felt like a tragedy at the time. However, my mother said to me, 'you know who else can travel the world – a journalist'. So I began to work for Polish newspapers, but it was still too small a world – I could only go as far as places like Bulgaria or Hungary. I dreamt of the great wide world that was shut to me, so I tried to get out illegally. I went to Yugoslavia, where it was easier to cross the border, with only ten dollars in my back pocket. I tried to get across into Italy but I was caught and held for two weeks in Belgrade before being deporting back to Poland. But by then, I had the experience and knew what to do the next time round, so I tried again and succeeded."

In 1989, Pałkiewicz set his sights on travelling to Oymyakon in Siberia, the coldest inhabited place on Earth where



‘My aim is to wave the Polish flag – it’s my moral responsibility.’

temperatures have been recorded as low as -71 degrees Celsius. The 1,300 km trek from Yakutsk, travelling on reindeer-hauled sleighs, proved as life-threatening as he had anticipated. While travelling along the Tompo River, the ice suddenly shattered underfoot and the reindeer and sleigh were submerged in the water. With the reindeer losing strength every minute, Pałkiewicz and his team had to act fast. The sleigh was their only mode of transport, and without it they would be trapped in the frozen Siberian wilderness with no chance of rescue. After 15 minutes of superhuman effort, Pałkiewicz and his team, thoroughly exhausted and numb from the cold, hauled the reindeer and sleigh out of the water and back onto the ice. With temperatures dropping to 50 below freezing and 40 mph winds, frostbite and hypothermia posed a serious risk. In order to stay warm, the group stopped frequently for the team to run on the spot. Finally Pałkiewicz and his friends successfully navigated the 1,300 km of Siberian wasteland and reached Oymyakon.

Jacek Pałkiewicz is a humble, soft-spoken patriot without a political trace in his blood. "My aim is to wave the Polish flag – it's my moral responsibility. When you travel abroad, people have only heard a few things about Poland. In the Unites States, people know Lech

Wałęsa, John Paul II and vodka. In Asia in the 1970s and 1980s, they knew [Polish football player Grzegorz] Lato and now they know Lewandowski. I do Poland's marketing because I don't think the country has ever known how to market itself well. Take for example the reconstruction of Warsaw following World War II. In the 20 years following the War, the city was rebuilt, and architectural experts said that no city had ever undergone such a re-birth. But since Poland didn't make a big deal of it, people don't talk about Warsaw when they talk about cities brought back from the desolation of war in the way they talk about Hiroshima or Dresden. I really don't think we've shown the world the many strengths that we have in areas like science or arts or literature."

The quest to market Poland takes the explorer to far flung corners of the world, sometimes where no man has gone before. In 1996, Pałkiewicz led a scientific expedition tasked with identifying the source of the Amazon River, in order to find the river's true length.

Eventually the team located a small spring in the Apacheta ravine on Nevado Quehuisha, in the Peruvian province of Arequipa, which stands at 5,150 m above sea level. Confirmed by satellite image 15 years later, the Peruvian Geographic Society certified the Apacheta spring as the official source of the Amazon, making it the longest river in world – beating the Nile – at a length of 7,040 km. The site discovered by Pałkiewicz and his team is now marked by a monument erected by the Peruvian government.

## Looking ahead

His next expedition is to China and is called 'New Silk Road 2017', part of the joint Sino-Polish initiative under the name 'One Belt One Road'. "The aim of our mission is to promote a positive image of Poland, to show it in the best light possible," says Pałkiewicz. "The initiative is a big political and economic priority in China and our expedition will hopefully help to raise awareness about it in Poland. We have the backing of several ministries within the Polish government and we're being sponsored by Polish and Chinese companies.

We need to raise around PLN 1.5 mln before we set off. For me, it's such a huge event and I'm not thinking beyond it. I've been everywhere that I've ever wanted to go and now my dream is to show and inform people what Poland is really like and to tackle the misconceptions that they might have about the country." Poland's greatest living explorer won't rest until he feels he's played his role in this. It will be perhaps his greatest challenge.

● **interview by Richard Stephens,**  
● **article by Liam Nolan**

### The source.

Pałkiewicz set off in 1996 to find the source of the Amazon river, and confirmed that it is the longest in the world. The Peruvian government erected a monument to commemorate the Polish explorer and his team.

### Off the beaten track.

In 1999 Pałkiewicz, then aged 57, crossed the Sahara desert on foot (and camel back), without vehicles or other mechanical aids... A real man's adventure.