Ludwik A. Teclaff (1918 – 2003) A Tribute

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Abstract

On May 29, 2003, Professor Ludwik A. Teclaff died in his 85th year at his retirement home in St. Petersburg, Florida. Ludwik Teclaff, was a scholar, a patriot, a warrior and a man of faith. He was born in Czestochowa, Poland on November 14, 1918, just before Poland emerged as a newly independent Nation. In 1959 Dr. Teclaff joined the Fordham University School of Law Library, becoming Librarian of the Law School in 1962. During his twenty-four years as Librarian, Dr. Teclaff made the changes in technology and administration that would put Fordham’s law library in the front rank of university law libraries. In 1963, Dr. Teclaff was appointed to the Faculty of Law as Assistant Professor of Law, Associate Professor in 1966, and Professor of Law in 1968. During his twenty-six years as a member of the law faculty, Professor Teclaff taught Public International Law, Environmental Law, The Law of the Sea, and Jurisprudence.
LUDWIK A. TECLAFF
(1918 – 2003)
A TRIBUTE*

Joseph C. Sweeney**

On May 29, 2003, Professor Ludwik A. Teclaff died in his 85th year at his retirement home in St. Petersburg, Florida. This summer he was buried in a free and independent Poland, the homeland from which he had to flee in a time of Nazi and later Communist oppression. But Poland is now a free Nation, and a newly joined member of the European Union (May 1, 2004). A free and independent Poland was something for which Ludwik Teclaff yearned and prayed during the forty-five years of Communist oppression. The absurdities of life under communism spurred him to undertake an historical analysis of repressive regimes.¹

Our colleague, Ludwik Teclaff, was a scholar, a patriot, a warrior and a man of faith. He was born in Czestochowa, Poland on November 14, 1918, just before Poland emerged as a newly independent Nation. The rebirth of Poland was the result of the First World War: Germany’s defeat and the collapse of Tsarist Russia. Czestochowa had long been a place of pilgrimage for Catholic faithful because of a 1500-year old image of the Mother of God known as the Black Madonna, venerated as a symbol of Polish nationality. Polish Nationality, Catholic faith, American freedom, and a love of the law were crucial elements in his long life.

In 1936 Ludwik Teclaff graduated from the Henryk Sienkiewicz Gymnasium, a preparatory school named after the author of Quo Vadis, in Czestochowa. He then entered the Law School of the University of Warsaw.

In September 1939, while Ludwik Teclaff was studying in the Law School, Hitler invaded Poland and began the Second World War. Poland was unable to resist the combined attacks by

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the Nazis and Soviets, and the Polish Army collapsed after four weeks of blitzkrieg. As a result, the Polish government fled to France. Many Polish citizens were imprisoned and murdered by their captors, but Teclaff and some colleagues were able to escape through Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Italy to France where they joined a regrouped Polish army. This would not be the end of their wartime odyssey as the Polish government and its army had to flee ahead of the Nazi invasion of France in June, 1940. Leaving France through Bordeaux, the Polish Government-in-Exile established itself in London with the aid of its British ally. Teclaff went to Scotland with his regiment where he learned to drive a tank.

After three years military service the Polish Government-in-Exile sent Teclaff to Oxford to complete his legal education, awaiting the liberation of Poland. Teclaff received his law degree (Magister Juris) in 1944 and he entered the diplomatic service of the Polish Government-in-Exile, serving as an attaché in the Embassy in London in 1945. The future of that government became uncertain as the Soviet army brought a Communist government to Poland in its wake, administering those parts of Poland freed from Nazi control. This resulted in a division of Poles between the Soviet-backed regime in Poland and the Polish Government-in-Exile in London. The United Kingdom and the United States supported the London government but eventually withdrew that support when it became obvious that the Soviets would not withdraw. Teclaff's work for the London government earned him the Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta in 1952, but prevented his return to his Polish homeland for another twenty years.

The Republic of Ireland continued to recognize the London Polish Government-in-Exile, and Teclaff served that government as Vice Consul and then Consul in Dublin, from 1946 to 1952 — during which time he met and married his wife, Eileen, a marriage of love and devotion that lasted more than fifty years. During those years they often collaborated in his legal writings.

Eight years in the diplomatic corps served as a thorough preparation for his subsequent research and teaching in international law, his primary intellectual focus for more than the next forty-five years. At the age of eighty, he published an Article en-

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book reviews\textsuperscript{5}, and thirteen chapters in as many treatises.\textsuperscript{6} All of


these were in English, but he also published works in Polish.

His course in Environmental Law was one of the first in the Nation, greatly enhanced by his attendance as a United Nations expert at the famous 1972 Stockholm Conference on Protection of the Worldwide Environment. Students in his Environmental Law course started the Environmental Law Newsletter, the predecessor of our present Fordham Environmental Law Journal.

Dr. Teclaff also served as an advisor to the Fordham International Law Journal. When he became Professor Emeritus in 1989, that achievement was recognized at the Annual Dinner of the Fordham International Law Journal when a hundred voices greeted him with, "JESZCZE POLSKA NIE ZGINELA" ["Poland is not yet lost!"]], the cry of nineteenth century Polish patriots.

Those are the facts about Dr. Teclaff's life, but they hardly describe the scholar, patriot, warrior or man of faith described in the introduction.


He was a careful scholar who encouraged his students in countless ways. As Librarian he was a great lover of books and a faithful comrade to his faculty colleagues; always able to find some place in the budget for that new, expensive treatise demanded by a faculty member. In his own way he continued to be the faithful warrior of Free Poland long after that cause was lost. The traditional values of religion, family, home, law, and justice were part of his being in an age that ridicules them.

It is fitting to end our thought with John Bunyan's seventeenth century farewell to the Pilgrim Warrior in *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

> My sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my pilgrimage, and my courage and skill to him who earns them. My marks and scars I carry with me to be a witness for me that I have fought His battles who now will be my Rewarder. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith . . . . Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through Our Lord Jesus Christ.

> So [the warrior] . . . passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side.7

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