

Exclusive

Polish Tribute to Iranians

By Farzaneh Shokri & Atefeh Rezvan-Nia

Iran is the land of virtues and perfections, said a Polish filmmaker who has travelled to Iran to make a documentary.

Marek Jezienicki, who is in Iran to make a documentary about Polish refugees living in Iran since World War II, told Iran Daily that Iranians warmly welcomed 120,000 Polish refugees who arrived in this country.

"During WWII, many war Polish refugees came to Iran," he said, adding that he and his team are in Iran to produce a documentary about their lives.

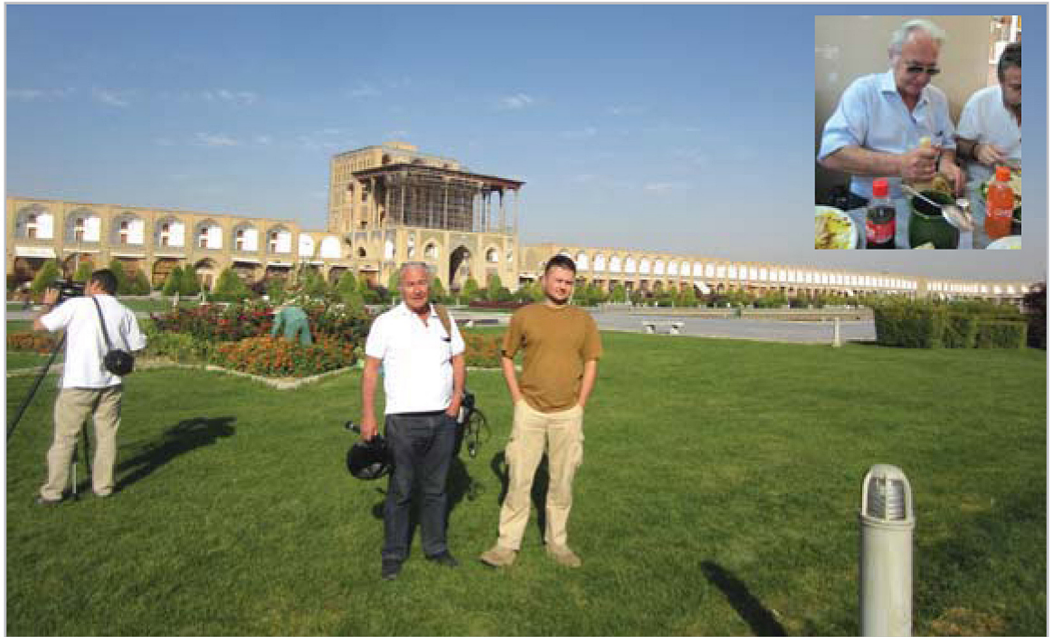
Jezienicki said that in 1942, 120,000 Polish refugees, including children, women and the elderly, landed in Iran following an arduous journey.

"They had spent terrible days during their trip and many of them were ill upon their arrival in Iran," he said, adding that Polish refugees did not have enough food and most of them were suffering from starvation.

He emphasized that Polish refugees were warmly welcomed in different parts of Iran such that most of them describe their life in Iran as satisfactory.

"I have talked with many Polish refugees who are living in different cities of Iran, especially Isfahan, Arak and Tehran," he said, adding that most of them have very nice memories about their presence in Iran.

The following are recollections of an 80-year-old Polish woman's mem-



Marek Jezienicki (2nd R) and his team in Naqsh-e Jahan Square, Isfahan.

ories quoted by Jezienicki:

"This woman said that she arrived in Iran in the middle of the first Iranian month Farvardin (mostly starting on March 21) in 1942 along with the first group of Polish refugees.

"She and 2900 refugee soldiers arrived in Iran's Anzali Port in northern Gilan province from Russia by four ships.

"Women and children were transported by wagons used for transporting animals.

"The Polish refugees did not have time to take their essential items. It took the Polish refugees 5-6 weeks to reach Iran and they had to pass

through Siberia to reach Iran.

"The woman said, 'Our trip began in winter, which is very cold in Siberia. The severe cold weather caused many problems for us. Sometimes we had to cut our hair to be able to get up in the morning, because our hair was stuck to the walls and the floor of the ship due to icy weather.'

The Polish filmmaker said evidence shows most Polish refugees above 40 years lost their lives before arriving in Iran.

"Many Polish children lost their parents and came to Iran with their siblings," he said.

Jezienicki noted that when Polish

refugees arrived here, Iran was occupied by Russia and Britain, adding that Iranians settled Polish war refugees in campsites in Arak, Isfahan and Tehran.

"Although Iranians were having a very difficult time due to the war, they welcomed the refugees and helped them start a new life in Iran," he said.

Jezienicki said he hopes he can compensate the kindness of Iranians by making this documentary.

"We have compiled the documents from 1942-44 so far," he said, adding that the film is a tribute to Iranians for their kind behavior toward his compatriots.