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POLISH AFFAIRS



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INTRODUCING OURSELVES

The long awaited day of invasion has come and, for the moment, American thought is concentrated on the progress of our American forces toward Berlin. In our excitement and enthusiasm over their success, and our sadness at the personal losses we suffer, we Americans may be inclined to think that we are not interested just now in Polish affairs.

Nevertheless, it is clear that every day of successful military progress brings us one day nearer that time when American statesmen, backed by American public opinion, must make decisions about the future organization and status of the nations of the world. Every thinking citizen will recognize his need, as part of this American public opinion, for a better understanding of other nations. If we fail in our post-war plan, we are betraying those American men whose exploits in Europe we cheer today, for only on the basis of just and intelligent decisions can we build a lasting peace, without which their sacrifices will have been in vain.

Poland occupies a strategic position in Europe geographically and politically. Unless we know the accomplishments of the Polish people in the short 20 years of their freedom, their great sufferings and the indomitable spirit with which they have borne them, and their remarkable contribution to the winning of the war, both through their armed forces abroad and their underground fight in Poland, we have not the basis for judging their needs or their deserts.

As a service to those who seek information about Poland but have no time for lengthy reading or research, this newsletter is issued. The editor is an American who will interpret Polish affairs in the light of American interest and experience, in an effort to help Americans evaluate Poland's potential worth in the commonwealth of nations.

INTELLIGENCE COURTESY

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Nevertheless, it is clear that every day of successful military progress brings us one day nearer that time when American statement, backed by American public opinion, must take decisions about the future of Poland and status of the nations of the world. Every thinking nation will recognize this need, as part of this American public opinion, for a better understanding of other nations. If we fail in our post-war plan, we are betraying those American men whose ex- ploit in Europe we cheer today, for only on the basis of just and intelligent decisions can we build a lasting peace without which their sacrifices will have been in vain.

Poland occupies a strategic position in Europe geographi- cally and politically. Unless we know the economic resources of the Polish people in the short 20 years of their freedom, their great suffering and the industrial spirit with which they have borne them, and their remarkable contribution to the winning of the war, both through their armed forces abroad and their underground fight in Poland, we have not the basis for judging their needs or their desires.

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The visit in Washington, at President Roosevelt's invitation, of Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, Premier of Poland, brings to American attention a man whose career the New York Times, in an editorial on June 11, characterized as "what we have almost come to believe peculiarly American." Son of a coal-miner, he attended an agricultural college, worked in a sugar refinery at the age of 16, and two years later was fighting the Germans in World War I.

After the restoration of Poland, Mr. Mikolajczyk became leader in the Peasant Party and Member of Parliament. Since the invasion of Poland in 1939, and the transfer of the government to London, he has held successively the positions of Vice Chairman of the Polish National Council under Paderewski's leadership, Chairman of that body after Paderewski's death, Minister of Interior and Deputy Prime Minister in Sikorski's coalition cabinet, and now Premier.

"Since there has long been more or less harsh talk about the Polish 'oligarchs', it may be instructive," continues the Times editorial, "to look at Mr. Mikolajczyk's cabinet. Two members are small farmers, two labor men, three newspapermen. There is one lawyer, one soldier, one diplomat. The lawyer used to be counsel for labor unions. Of the three newspaper members, one is a Catholic priest, who has been a worker for the underground, one is son of an unskilled laborer, one son of a small store-keeper. These biographies compare well with those of Congressmen in the Congressional Directory. Without any question of politics or policies, Americans can see in the visiting Prime Minister a practicing democrat."

PROGRESS OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN POLAND

Because of the inadequate educational opportunities afforded Polish youth during the Partitions, one of the most urgent problems that faced reborn Poland was the building of a nation-wide school system to stamp out illiteracy and to bring knowledge to the masses. In January, 1918, the new Ministry of Education was granted 15% of the total budget of the country. One of the first bills introduced by the Polish government in 1920 provided for compulsory education.

In 1921, 33.1% of the population of Poland were illiterate. At outbreak of present war it did not exceed 18%.

In 1921, only 68% of children of school age attended school.

In 1939 school attendance reached 90.6%. America's percentage is not higher.

Education for adults and older youth was also organized. More than 60 regular evening schools offered 358 courses, attended by 6,711 people, in 1937. Each school became a community center, especially in the country districts. Many schools opened lending libraries, children's clubs, health centers, clinics, etc. Teachers took active part as organizers of boy scouts and civic organizations. Schools arranged summer camps and short tours of Poland for pupils.

Poland in her twenty years of independence built up a sound and democratic school system, providing the highest possible nation-wide public education, fostering culture of various national minority groups, educating new cadres of teachers, building new schools. In the present darkest hour of the nation's history, the high standard of education in reborn Poland has proved to be one of the basic reasons why Poland, although occupied, is unconquered.

Under German occupation: The German attitude toward learning is thus expressed by Governor General Hans Frank: "The Poles do not need universities or secondary schools; Poland is to be changed into a community of manual workers or serfs, who will provide a reservoir of labor for German industry."

Except for elementary schools and certain training schools, there is no public education left in German-occupied Poland. Polish elementary schools have no text books; they have not enough teachers; they have no proper classrooms. Secretly, the Polish Underground is continuing a certain amount of education, but it is so little as to be almost negligible except as a morale measure.

Before the war Polish teachers were organized in a large progressive and democratic Union. The Teacher's Movement, as part of the Polish Underground, continues the work of the Teacher's Union. Representatives of this movement met recently in secret and laid plans for the future school program in independent Poland.

Outside Poland, Polish students are continuing their scholastic work in Polish schools at Edinburgh and Liverpool Universities, the Polish Institute of Technology in London and

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Education for adults and other youth was also organized. More than 60 regular evening schools offered 300 courses attended by 8,711 people. In 1939 each school received a community center, especially in the country districts. Many schools opened reading libraries, children's clubs, health centers, clinics, etc. Teachers took active part in organizing of boy scouts and civic organizations. Schools arranged summer camps and short tours of Poland for pupils.

Poland in her twenty years of independence built up a sound and democratic school system, providing the highest possible nation-wide public education. Following failure of Versailles national minority groups, creating new centers of teachers building new schools. In the present darkest hour of the nation's history, the high standard of education in Poland has proved to be one of the basic reasons why Poland, although occupied, is unvanquished.

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Outside Poland, Polish students are continuing their scholastic work in Polish schools at Edinburgh and Liverpool Universities, the Polish Institute of Technology in London and

commercial schools in Glasgow. In Switzerland, interned Polish soldiers are completing university work at Fribourg.

Polish youth knows the value of imponderables, things that cannot be weighed or measured but which never die, and if anyone mentions difficulties, hardships, and obstacles, the Poles shake their heads. "The impossible takes a little longer," they say.

The foregoing statements are taken from the pamphlet "Polish Facts and Figures", No.4, a copy of which may be obtained on request from the Polish Government Information Center, 745 Fifth Ave., New York 22, N. Y.

PROGRESSIVE SOCIAL LEGISLATION

"Poland was one of the few countries which adopted the social and economic measures recommended by the first I.L.O. Conference in Washington, D. C., in 1919." This statement was made by Jan Stanczyk, Polish Minister of Labor and head of the Polish Delegation to the International Labor Office Conference recently held in Philadelphia.

Mr. Stanczyk could have gone further and pointed out that, as a matter of fact, Polish social legislation often went beyond the requirements of the I.L.O., as for instance, in placing the minimum age for children employed in industry at 15 instead of the 14 of the Washington Conference. Whereas the 1919 Conference limited the hours of work in industry to 8 hours per day and the 48-hour week, Poland had before that time established a 46-hour week. A study of labor legislation in Poland reveals, in fact, that in many ways Poland was in advance of much of the world.

Poland's health insurance program, too, which was one of the most far-reaching and liberal, antedated the I.L.O. recommendations. Maternity benefits and care of working mothers were generous. Manual and non-manual laborers, outdoor workers and domestic servants, their wives and minor children, were covered by insurance, which provided doctors, medicines, and medical or surgical appliances.

This outline will suffice to show that Poland was among the most progressive countries of the world (far in advance

of America in many respects) in the matter of caring for the welfare of its working classes.

Complete coverage of this subject is to be found in a pamphlet, "Workmen's Protective Legislation in Poland" published by POLAND FIGHTS, 55 W. 42nd St., New York 18, N. Y.

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Address: Lecture Department, Polish Gov't. Information Center
745 Fifth Avenue, New York (22) N.Y.
Other services will be described in later issues.

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We should be glad to receive names and addresses of others who may be interested in receiving this bulletin. Please write to:

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Complete coverage of this subject is to be found
in the book "Women's Protective Legislation"
in Polish published by POLISH WOMEN'S
RELIEF SOCIETY, N. Y.

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Classes in Polish are held, from 10 to 30 minutes each,
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charge. Classes can be obtained at a reasonable fee.
For information, address: PIC Office, Inc., 145 Fifth Avenue,
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