

# COMMENTS

ON

# POLISH AFFAIRS

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Editor:

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No. 2

JULY 22, 1944

SEPTEMBER 1, 1939: POLAND SAID "NO"

September 1st marks the fifth anniversary of the invasion of Poland, the day when Germany encountered the first opposition on its road to world domination. In towns and cities all over this country, Americans of all ancestries will unite on that day to pay homage to a people who had the courage to resist what they knew to be an overwhelming enemy, for the sake of those same principles of liberty which we Americans have always cherished. We know now, if we did not then, that the invaders of Poland are our enemies, too, and for this gallant resistance we are in debt to the Polish people.

One would like to hope that before this anniversary the Allies will have won the victory in Europe, and Poland, and the other occupied countries, will be free of the Hitler yoke. In that case, September 1st will indeed be a day for rejoicing. If we are still fighting in Europe, Americans, in honoring their Polish allies, will be strengthened in their purpose to fight and will gain renewed courage from the story of a people who, though they were overcome, did not submit, but gallantly continued to resist through five long years, and whose contribution toward our coming victory has been invaluable.

Among the women's clubs this anniversary can very fittingly be recognized by a program devoted to Poland -- a study of Polish achievement and character, and an appraisal of Polish possibilities for the future as affecting our attitude as a nation toward Poland.

Since the National War Fund drive will begin in September, a club program might also feature Polish War Relief --

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September 1st marks the fifth anniversary of the invasion of Poland, the day when Germany announced the first occupation on its road to world domination. In towns and cities all over this country, Americans of all stripes will share on that day a day home to a people who had the courage to resist what they knew to be an overwhelming enemy. For the sake of these same principles of liberty which we Americans have always cherished, we know now, if we did not then, that the invasion of Poland and the resistance we are in debt to the Polish people...

We would like to hope that before this anniversary the Allies will have won the victory in Europe, and Poland and the other occupied countries will be free of the Hitler yoke. In that case, September 1st will indeed be a day for rejoicing. If we are still fighting in Europe, Americans, in particular, their Polish allies, will be distinguished in their purpose to fight and will gain renewed courage from the story of a people who, though they were weakened by four years, and whose numbers continued to dwindle through the last years, yet whose national pride toward our common enemy has been invincible...

Among the women's signs this anniversary can very fittingly be recognized by a program devoted to Poland -- a study of Polish achievement and character, and an appraisal of Polish contributions for the future -- whether in the field of science, art, literature, or in other fields.

Since the National War Bond drive will begin in September, a club program might also feature Polish War Relief...

stories of Polish refugees, prisoners of war, and orphans -- and thus tie in with the local War Fund Campaign.

If you would like informative and artistic material, posters, leaflets, for programs and exhibits, we shall be glad to supply you. Please write us your needs.

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### WHERE CHILDREN STARVE

Systematic planned starvation is one of the methods used by the Germans to reduce the Polish population. "It is efficient, and is much less trouble than mass executions," one German official stated.

In this brutal warfare, it is the children, of course, who suffer most. Those pitiful Polish youngsters who survive the starvation - and everyday that the war continues makes their number less - will constitute a serious and immediate problem as soon as the invaders are driven out of Poland and relief can be supplied. A comprehensive and well-planned health and feeding program will have to be put into operation if this entire generation of Polish children is to be saved for useful adulthood.

The daily food allowance for children in Nazi-dominated Warsaw is 707 calories (when they can get it), as against 1040 calories which is considered a minimum requirement for subsistence. The distress is heightened by the fact that the diet is entirely out of balance, providing almost no fats whatever. Polish children of 3 to 10 years of age receive 1/4 as many calories as German children in Poland, but only 1/20th of the amount of fat that is issued to the Germans.

The inevitable result of the lessening of physical resistance brought about by starvation is a susceptibility to infectious diseases and a rising death rate. Medical examinations in a welfare center in 1943 showed that in a group of 964 school children:

- 29.8% had temperatures about 100°
- 47.3% had temperatures between normal and 100°
- 22.9% had normal temperatures but showed marked signs of physical exhaustion.

Tuberculosis increased about 300% in 1941; in southern Poland it is estimated that 80% of the children suffer from anemia.

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In this brutal warfare, it is the children, of course, who suffer most. Those pitiful Polish youngsters who survive the starvation - and everywhere that the war continues makes their number less - will consequently be a serious and immediate problem as soon as the invaders are driven out of Poland and relief can be supplied. A comprehensive and well-planned health and feeding program will have to be put into operation at this critical moment if Polish children are to be saved for useful adulthood.

The daily food allowance for children in Nazi-dominated Warsaw is 707 calories (when they can get it), as against 1040 calories which is considered a minimum requirement for subsistence. The distress is heightened by the fact that the diet is entirely out of balance, providing almost no fats what ever. Polish children of 7 to 10 years of age receive 1/4 as many calories as German children in Poland, but only 1/20th of the amount of fat that is issued to the Germans.

The inevitable result of the lessening of physical resistance brought about by starvation is a susceptibility to infectious diseases and a rising death rate. Medical examinations in a welfare center in 1945 showed that in a group of 500 school children:

- 29.8% had temperatures about 100°
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- 22.9% had normal temperatures but showed marked signs of physical exhaustion.

Tuberculosis increased about 700% in 1941; in southern Poland it is estimated that 80% of the children suffer from anemia.

The suffering and death caused by lack of food are rendered even worse by an extreme shortage of clothing and fuel and by lack of decent living quarters, caused by the bombings of Polish towns and by the wholesale evacuation of large populations in the West to make room for German settlers. Often several families must huddle in a single, cold, unlighted room.

Even in the few families where, for some exceptional reason, the children are not in such dire distress, their futures are not secure. Quite frequently especially healthy children disappear suddenly and nothing is heard of them. Inquiries are in vain - but it is a proved fact that healthy Polish children are being used in German field hospitals for forced blood transfusions.

The German terror, which has ruled in Poland for nearly five years now, will doubtless soon be driven out. When that time comes, America must be ready to supply food and clothing so desperately needed, if half a million to a million children are to live.

For a complete report on the conditions of Polish children, send for "Polish Facts & Figures #3."

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### "GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY FOR WRITERS"

"This is the golden age of opportunity for writers -- if they have something to say," stated a well-known novelist at a Writers Workshop in Hollywood recently. Whether you write in the field of fiction or of fact, Poland and Polish affairs will provide you "something to say" which is especially timely, now that the Polish Army has again distinguished itself so startlingly at Cassino, the Russian Army is driving back the Germans from Poland itself, and the great Allied army of Liberation is really on the way to Berlin.

The writer with a "nose for news" may find even in these short newsletters suggestions for short stories and human interest items, as well as for more serious articles. COMMENTS ON POLISH AFFAIRS will be glad to cooperate in every possible way by furnishing further material. We will send this newsletter to anyone interested and also our weekly publication, the POLISH REVIEW, a magazine with both current and historical material, dealing with the artistic, literary, scientific and political life of the Polish people. For writers interested in research and study, the Center has a RESEARCH LIBRARY of valuable source material which is at your service.

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If you are following on the map the advance of the Russian armies as they drive the Germans across Poland, you have noticed that they are by-passing a section designated as "Pripet Marshes". The map defines only the worst part of the marshes, but in reality the entire Pripet Basin, an area of about 10 million acres generally known as Polesie, was in 1920 largely swamp or very poor forest land. The subsoil is clay with no natural drainage, the land so flat that the rivers seem almost to stand still. Consequently, much of the territory was water-logged.

As early as the 18th Century canals had been dug here and in the latter part of the 19th Century further attempts to drain this land were begun but abandoned. The old canals, though still marked on some maps, were virtually useless when by the Treaty of Riga in 1920, this land became part of restored Poland.

One of the early projects instituted by the Polish Government was the draining of this land. Such work is, by its very nature, a slow process and was rendered more so by the fact that Poland, as a newly established country, lacked funds and had not sufficient credits abroad to secure loans. American businessmen, hesitating to risk their money in Poland, chose rather to invest it in "secure" Germany. In spite of difficulties, Poland had at the time of the war succeeded in reclaiming for agricultural use some 700,000 acres. Some of this was given to Polish soldiers, part sold to the peasants of the region who hitherto had been, on account of the poor soil and the inaccessibility of the region, the most backward class of people in the country. The Government covered the expenses of drainage till the crops could pay for it, and granted 15-year loans for buildings and equipment. The services of Government agricultural experts were available in helping the farmers plan to work the land most efficiently.

At the same time, the Polish Government set up at Sarny an experimental station to determine how best to use the land after draining. As a result of tests made here it was found that the drained marshes made good pasture and hay land; that root vegetables would grow well; and that the soil was particularly suited to the cultivation of potatoes, which are increasingly important for alcohol production, for starches and other industrial uses. Flax and hemp were also found to do well here. The peat deposits, too, were available as a source of fuel and as raw material for the chemical industry. Furthermore, drainage would open up water-ways of value in transporting commodities and would thus make communication with the rest of the country easy.

If you are following on the map the advance of the Russian armies as they drive the Germans across Poland, you have noticed that they are by-passing a section designated as "Prater Marshes". The map defines only the west part of the marshes, but in reality the entire Prater Basin, an area of about 10 million acres generally known as Polesie, was in 1920 largely swamp or very poor forest land. The silt is clay with no natural drainage, the land so flat that the rivers seem almost to stand still. Consequently, much of the territory was water-logged.

As early as the 18th Century canals had been dug here and in the latter part of the 19th Century further attempts to drain this land were begun but abandoned. The old canals, though still worked on some parts, were virtually useless when by the Treaty of Riga in 1920, this land became part of restored Poland.

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At the same time that it was improving the physical quality of the land of Polesie, the Polish Government was not neglecting the intellectual welfare of the inhabitants. During Tsarist days this had been the most neglected part of Poland educationally, and literacy was at its lowest here. Under the Government of restored Poland, school buildings increased from 981 in 1925 to 2,480 in 1937 and in that year there were 195,500 children in elementary schools, 4,200 in high schools and 3,700 in trade and agricultural schools.

This is the record of Polish accomplishment in Polesie in 20 years of freedom.

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### POLISH Y. M. C. A.

When the Second Corps of the Polish Army, two full divisions and special units, moved from the Middle East to the Italian front, the Polish YMCA, which is to the Polish Army what the U.S.O. is to American troops, moved with it. The army arranged transportation facilities for 100 Polish YMCA workers, many of them women, and for 100 tons of Polish YMCA supplies for immediate service in its canteens and social centers.

High up into the snow-covered Apennine Mountains of the backbone of Italy they went, to help make life endurable for men living and fighting in snow waist-deep. That is poetry or something else according to whether you are in it or not, and how much you like cold wet feet. For the Polish YMCA, born in the Polish Army a quarter of a century ago, it was and is one of the proud chapters of its varied and romantic history.

The American soldiers on that Italian front move steadily farther from home. But for the Poles it is the last lap of a long five-year journey from the defeat of 1939 through thousands of miles of exile and fighting, toward the land they love. One motto has comforted them: "Wrocimy" - "We shall return."

Americans can feel pride in the work of the Polish Y.M.C.A., since it shares, via Polish War Relief, in the contributions we make to the National War Fund.

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High up into the mountains of the Polish Alps, the backbone of Italy they went, to help save the endurable for the Italian and fighting in the new world-war. They do not or anything else wanting to whether you are in it or not, and how much you like it. For the Polish YMCA, born in the Polish Army, a quarter of a century ago, it was and is one of the great chapters of the varied and romantic history.

The American soldiers on the Italian front move steadily up the mountain. But for the Polish it is the last lap of a long five-year journey from the days of 1919 through thousands of miles of exile and fighting, toward the last day of peace. The world has forgotten them: "Whoops" - "We shall return."

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## TWO THINGS POLAND WANTS WHEN PEACE HAS COME

1st: Opportunity to rebuild the homes and schools and hospitals and factories, the museums and theatres and parks - all those tangible evidences of the vision, the energy, the faith, the true democracy of the Polish people, which have been destroyed in the war.

2nd: Protection from outside aggression, which means, concretely, that Germany shall be so controlled that it can never again attack its peaceful neighbors.

Both these goals fall within the pattern of American thought, and on projects concerned with relief and rebuilding Americans are already at work. It is doubtful, however, if Americans generally are sufficiently aware of the urgency of taking effective measures in the treatment of Germany, or that we shall really understand the enemy we fight until our own sons have come home to tell us their stories. The Poles and the Russians know the German mentality and spirit. They have seen the German armies march into their countries killing their women and children and destroying their peaceful villages.

Americans need to know these things. It is valuable for us to read reports such as those that came through some observers with those Polish forces who distinguished themselves in the capture of Mount Cassino. One report reads: "All German soldiers are equipped with big knives which they use in hand to hand fights. One First Aider, crawling under fire to the wounded, was knifed by a German captain whose wound he was about to bandage."

Yet after being driven from their positions above Cassino, the retiring Germans sent a special message through the front lines to Polish headquarters asking the Polish Commander-in-Chief to take care of wounded Germans!

The Editor would welcome your questions and criticisms, and your suggestions for making the newsletter more useful. Address:

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