

# News From Poland

Special edition, prepared at the request of the Cleveland YMCA

## The Basis of American Interest in the YMCA in Poland

### The Universal Situation

In common with all advanced and advancing countries Poland is passing from an agricultural into an industrial civilization, from a rural to an urban way of life. There are now 12 cities of over 100,000 population, the largest, Warsaw, having 1,200,000 inhabitants. The second city, Lodz, a great industrial center of over 600,000 inhabitants was 100 years ago but a village. I have before me a road map of 1799 on which it does not even appear! Such is the changing Poland of today. This is the American tempo.

Just as in the progressive lands of the west this reorganization of life is breaking down and removing the old established moral supports of youth. In times past younger men were sustained and protected by the close ties and simple cooperative life of the family and of the community group. That day is gone. Today life in all modern lands is urban, industrial, impersonal, and competitive, and the old moral supports of youth have been shaken, almost removed.

There arises, therefore, the need of new institutions and agencies to supply the place of these sustaining influences of former days and meet the needs of the new day. This is the sociological basis of the YMCA in America, and also in Poland.

### The Special Situation

Now this profound appeal of the YMCA for support in America is reinforced in the case of Poland by dramatic events and circumstances.

Six—sevenths of Poland was a battle-field during the Great War. The vast armies of Germany, Russia, and Austria surged back and forth leaving destruction and devastation behind them.

Poland was reborn in 1918 as an independent republic with no money, no rich people, devastated territories, 26,000,000 population, and appalling needs.

The Bolshevik invasion of 1920 and the typhus epidemic of 1921—1922 added new horrors to a sufficiently baffling situation.

Great American relief agencies, of which the American YMCA was happily one, came to Poland's help. In these years the names of Wilson, House, Hoover, Mott, and Vaucrain were written permanently into Poland's history. Among more recent benefactors the most conspicuous name is Fenn.

France helped Poland turn back the Bolshevik invasion; America helped turn back hunger, despair, disorganization. One of the permanent glories of the American YMCA is its part in this.

Out of this help in those early years came a request from Polish ministers of cabinet, generals, professors, business men, and people in quite simple walks of life, that the American YMCA help Poland develop a Polish YMCA, which would fit Poland's predominantly Catholic society in the same way the American YMCA fits America's predominantly Protestant society.

The American YMCA accepted, and this evidence of religious liberalism and toleration, cooperation in developing a Polish YMCA largely Catholic in its membership, is another demonstration of the finer qualities in the American YMCA.

The nature of Polish life under the oppression of pre-war Russia, Germany, and Austria prevented the development of agencies of social welfare. After obtaining liberty the demand of the Poles was for modern methods of doing social work. The American YMCA was one of the agencies upon which they called for demonstration and instruction in this matter.

A plan was developed which in all probability will give the Poles a strong self supporting YMCA by 1940, with 3 buildings worth a total of \$ 1,000,000, and probably others. More of this a little farther on. This plan was accepted by both the Polish and the North American YMCAs, and is well on its way.

### Other Reasons

But there are some very particular reasons why this work here in Poland should make a strong appeal to Americans.

Poles regard America as one of their best friends among the nations.

Two great Poles, General Kościuszko and General Pulaski, helped America gain its independence in 1776.

There are 4,000,000 Americans of Polish blood in the States today, useful citizens.

America's cultural ties with Poland are numerous and strong, quite too numerous for elaboration here.

The Polish Government backs the Polish YMCA with strong moral and financial support. It accepts the Polish YMCA as a recognized and permanent avenue of service.

Poland, now 32,000,000 in population, is European civilization's eastern bulwark against Bolshevism.

Poland has a solid, orderly, progressive government.

It has maintained its economic life on the gold standard.

The Polish YMCA includes all classes, from deserted boys and newsboys up to cabinet ministers, professors, business and professional men.

Its composition by religious confessions is 90.4% Catholic, 8.8% Protestant, and a few eastern Orthodox.

The Poles themselves, as I know from 11 years of experience, are an attractive and congenial people among whom to work and with whom to cooperate.

Poland's position among the nations is based upon the justice of its boundaries, its pacific policies, the order and industry of the population, its deep traditional loyalty to the Christian faith, and its quiet steady progress during the years since the war in rebuilding its interior life.



Where We Are

### Some YMCA Facts

The Polish YMCA is an independent YMCA movement, not as yet a member of the World's Alliance of YMCAs, but in cooperative relations with it and a contributor to its budget.

It has a 1933 total current expense budget of roughly \$ 70,000 of which 93.5% will come from Polish sources.

The proposed North American contribution toward the work of the Polish YMCA for 1933 is \$ 4,531.10 in cash, chiefly for the expenses of the National Council of the Polish YMCA, and the salary budgets of three American secretaries. This is the situation after repeated cuts in appropriations and salaries.

### Units

There are the following units in the Polish YMCA:

1. *The National Council Headquarters* in Warsaw, the capital. The Council and staff have general responsibility for the guidance and expansion and development of the Polish YMCA and for completing the million dollar building program and the Permanent Establishment Project. Of the National Council's budget, 60% comes from Polish sources.

Paul Super, an American, is the national general secretary and there are two Polish secretaries.

2. *The Warsaw YMCA*. A city of 1,200,000. Its \$ 500,000 building is up and 25% of the interior is now completed and in use, serving over 1000 regular users. The \$ 120,000 needed to complete the building is being slowly raised in Warsaw. In addition to this central plant, there is a working boys' and newsboys' branch serving 276 boys, and a boat house on the Vistula serving over 200 members during the summer. At the request of the government, part of the unfinished section of the building is being used as a social center and dining room to care for from up to 1000 unemployed older boys.

E. R. Cummings is the American general secretary and there are 7 Polish secretaries.

3. *The Krakow YMCA*. Its \$ 200,000 modern YMCA building has been in successful use for 5 years with today over 4000 regularly enrolled users. It is a busy, satisfying piece of work, now in charge of a Polish general secretary, Kazimierz Zielinski, who has 10 Polish assistants. There is a branch in the City Gas Works, and a branch for 40 "deserted" boys. This association is entirely self supporting.

4. *The Lodz YMCA*. A good piece of work in a great cotton-mill town of 600,000 population. Rented quarters, serving 800 members. No gym. Also conducting two "feeding actions", one for 500 unemployed clerical workers and one for 300 children, at government expense. Has \$ 200,000 from American friends toward a \$ 300,000 building which it hopes to begin this spring. This association has a truly model boys' division of 358 members.

H. J. Rounds is the American general secretary and there are 4 Polish secretaries.

5. *The Poznan YMCA*. A new group of 160 members. A fine city of 248,000 population. No employed secretary as yet.

6. *The National Boys' Summer Camp* at Mszana Dolna. Capacity 120 boys. One of the best camps in Europe.

7. *The Lodz Boys' Summer Camp* near Lodz. Conducted for industrial boys. Capacity 100.

8. *Two new associations* are in process of organization at Gdynia and Częstochowa.

### Policies

When the three big buildings in Warsaw, and Lodz, and Krakow have all been completed the Polish YMCA, including the National Council, will have become entirely self supporting. At the present time we cannot increase the self-support of the National Council of the Polish YMCA beyond about 60% without seriously interfering with the development of our permanent roots, the local associations. By 1940 these roots of self-support should yield us the fruits of self-support.

Our financial resources are therefore four: Membership fees of various kinds, private contributions, governmental subventions, and subventions from the American YMCA. The object of this news-letter is to interest you in contributing to this latter item, not directly, but through your local YMCA and the International Committee of the YMCA of the United States and Canada.



