

# No. 10 News From Poland 1938

Series VI

(For Bulletin Boards and Private Persons)

Issued 11 times a year by The National Council of the Polish YMCA. Paul Super, General Director, Konopnickiej 6, Warsaw. Poland



Church of the Visitation, Lublin

## Lublin, City of The Historic Union of 1569

After Poland's six large cities, Warsaw, Lodz, Lwow, Poznan, Krakow, and Wilno, comes a series of smaller but very interesting ones, among which the most noteworthy, from the historic and tourist point of view, are Lublin, Zamosc, and Torun. Czestochowa is interesting only because of its famous shrine and monastery. There are other cities as large as the three above, all having worthy sights to see, but none in this class. And there are smaller ones well worth a visit, such as Chelmno, Sandomierz, Plock, and Luck, pronounced Wootsk. But Lublin, Zamosc, and Torun constitute the front rank.

Looking for a place for our annual December conference of YMCA general secretaries, two of us went down to Lublin, three hours south-east of Warsaw, and gave this city of 125,000 the "once-over". We were delighted. First, of course, because we found two thoroughly satisfactory hotels. Not New York type, to be sure, but quite pleasant; and two good restaurants. But beyond these basic needs there was a lot to please the eye. Two cities, the old and the new. Through the latter runs a pleasant broad avenue with good buildings and parks. The former we enter through the impressive Krakow Gate, and wander about its old 15th and 16th century streets and buildings. Then over to the right to the Cathedral and Dominican Church, then via The Street Under the Wall (which means by it) down to the castle. This is now a state prison, but its chapel, much as it was in 1500, may be visited daily at 11.30. There are other old churches, more attractive without than within, which add to the pleasure of a walk about the city.

In the middle ages this was the first city of Poland after Krakow, with 50,000 inhabitants, a large city in those centuries. It was a favorite place with the Jagiello kings. Its great historic significance comes from the fact that here was worked out and signed the Union of Lublin, completely merging the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland into one land and nation, the desire of each party to the union. In 1386 Poland and Lithuania, through marriage, accepted a common dynasty with a great Lithuanian, Wladyslaw Jagiello, as king, and a Polish woman, Jadwiga, as queen. But for this joining of forces Lithuania would have utterly disappeared before the advancing Germans, and later, Muscovites. The experiment worked, and in 1413 was strengthened. In 1569 the merger was made total and complete and so remained until the Russians took Lithuania and much of Poland in the infamous partitions of 1772, 1793, and 1795.

The Poles consider Lublin, set on two hills, as having of all the Polish cities, the most striking and beautiful silhouette against the sky. With the extensive restoration of the "old town" now going on Lublin will doubtless and justly become a tourist center. And today's paper, as I write, announces the establishing of a General Motors assembly plant there.



The Lublin Castle

## Mis-Reporting

Last spring a tall pleasant young fellow came to Poland to photograph it and write it up for the popular magazine "Life". He got some good photographs, as is seen in a late August issue, but as an interpretation of Poland, if such the article was intended to be, it was a flop. This nice but inexperienced young man mistook tea-room opposition gossip for international politics and was neatly taken in by those who amused themselves by pulling a cub reporter's leg about Polish personalities. "Paderewski an exile"! "Witos the leader of 20,000,000 peasants"! "Perennial famine"! "6,000,000 Russians"! Such reporting is sheer nonsense. And didn't you learn, sonny, that the "absurd" Polish Army stopped the Bolshevik invasion of 1920? Anyhow, I am afraid you are a bit too inexperienced to appraise an army. My dear boy, you were either let down by some of your sources of information, utterly misunderstood them, or you made your badly twisted notes after you had forgotten the facts.

The reporter's errors as to facts can be laid to human weakness; even more experienced men have made mistakes. But how could he fail to catch the real spirit of this people in their heroic struggle these past 20 years, yes, over 100 years; of their splendid progress made with very limited resources; and of their not unsuccessful efforts to lift the vast burden of poverty and ignorance left upon the peasants by the 150 years of the Russian occupation of the central and eastern part of their country? It is in that section that he took his village photograph which is such carefully chosen misrepresentation. If he had wished he could have taken rural photographs of great charm and beauty.

In my 16 years of residence and wide travel in Poland I have probably seen as much of it and learned as much of its life and history as any American of today. The Poland portrayed in that issue of "Life" is not the Poland I know. There are facts in it, of course, for that was an intelligent young man and he had eyes and ears and a camera; but as interpretation the article is supercilious nonsense and deep unkindness. One wonders what useful purpose is served by such mis-reporting and disparagement of a great country, joined to America by many bonds of history, blood, commerce, and sentiment.

Lublin's Central Boulevard



The 14th Century Gate, Lublin

## New Book On Poland

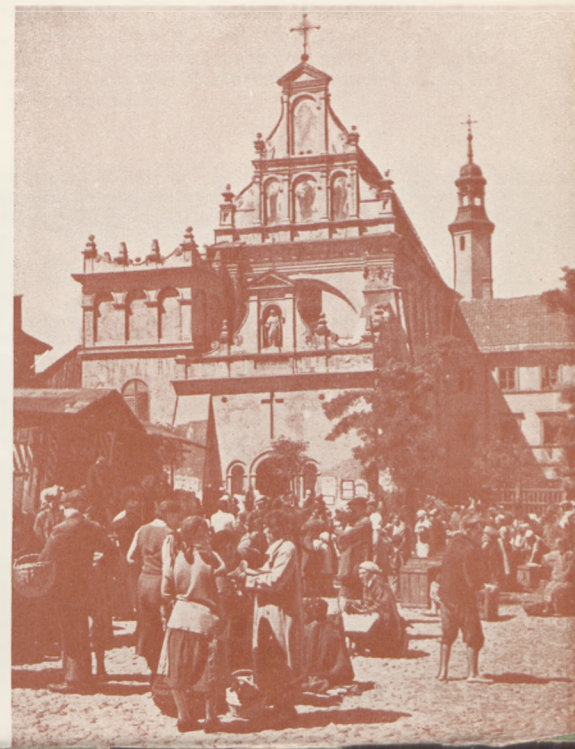
"Towns and People of Modern Poland" by Robert M. McBride, both author and publisher, is attracting the attention of reviewers. A well-made book, numerous illustrations, two maps, and a most attractive dust-cover showing the peasants of the Lowicz district in their brilliant costumes.

To gather the material for this book Mr McBride travelled widely in Poland, and with competent guides and interpreters. The result is a good general picture of Poland with interesting narrative material as to the background of history, given at relevant places, a clear interpretation of great events and movements, and the setting forth of a lot of useful and interesting information in an attractive way.

The book is friendly in its attitude, sympathetic in its understanding of Poland, its people and its problems. Most unfortunately the manuscript was not competently checked for errors, and these somewhat annoy one who knows Poland well. Its other deficiencies consist in there being no discussion of the great industrial projects being carried on in the district popularly referred to as "Polska C", no presentation of Upper Silesia, of the picturesque Huculs, of the unique industrial city of Lodz, nor of such numerous old and charming towns as Torun, Zamosc and Chelmno.

But neither the errors nor the omissions cancel the fact that here is a book about Poland well worth reading. The errors are not due to ill-will, but are just such as one not an expert in Polish matters might make in writing a book which is chiefly a narrative of travel.

Carmelite Church, and Market Square



## Decorated For Service

In connection with the approaching 15th anniversary of the launching of the Polish YMCA after the American YMCA had helped the Poles get their movement organized, a number of the leaders of this movement who have given specially long and notable service have just been decorated by the Polish Government with the much-prized Cross of Merit. Six have received the Gold Cross, five the Silver Cross, and two the Bronze Cross. Among the five receiving the Silver Cross is the young technician who as a volunteer worker organized first the Poznan YMCA and later the Gdynia YMCA, George Williams like, for the sake of young men like himself.

Some of those thus decorated are men high in business or official life, but others are younger men, grown up in the Polish YMCA, and not yet distinguished outside YMCA circles. In those latter decorations we take special satisfaction. Of the total thirteen five are employed officers, the physical director and boys' work secretary of the Warsaw Central YMCA, the financial secretary of the National Council, and two men of the technical staff. All these employees joined the Polish YMCA when it was a new and struggling movement and have helped make it the power it is.

