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Three Important Excavations

The results of the Polish excavations in the province of Poznan during the past five years are of so general interest that we devote most of this issue to these extraordinary uncoverings of early history.

Chance discoveries at Biskupin in 1933 led Professor Joseph Kostrzewski to push the matter of serious excavations and these were undertaken in 1934 by the Poznan University Archaeological Expedition. The results of these exciting discoveries led to excavations at Gniezno in 1937 and Poznan in 1938. We wish to tell just what these excavations revealed, taking them in the order of the antiquity of the history they uncover. Biskupin last as disclosing a whole Slavic town of 2500 years ago.

POZNAN. These excavations are in the very heart of the oldest part of the city, in the open square just in front of the Cathedral. Going down about 35 feet the ruins of the timber wall of a small fortified area were excavated. Within this wall was the residence settlement of Mieczyslaw I, the Polish ruler who became a Christian in 966 and whose son was Poland's first king, Boleslaw the Brave, 992-1025. The type of structure is Old-Polish. The objects dug up are those of a settled and peaceful agricultural population. Few arms were found, and many remains of a fairly high agricultural civilization. To the student of Slavic history these findings are of great significance.

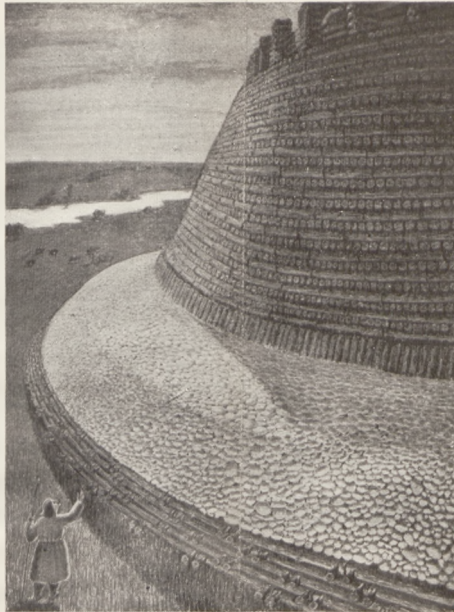
GNIEZNO. Even more significant are the Gniezno discoveries made near the famous cathedral of that city, which carry us back to the 8th century A.D. The facts of great importance to historians are these: These people were Slavs of a rather high agricultural civilization, having domestic cattle, grain fields, orchards, pottery, leather shoes of a simple design, sheath-knives, buttons, money-bags, wheels, textiles, and no few iron instruments. The absence of evidence of Viking influence is of great importance, upsetting the old German theory that the Polish state arose under the pressure of leaders from Scandinavian lands. Gniezno, we should add, was the historic capital of Poland during the first couple of centuries of recorded history.

BISKUPIN. The Polish state arose in the 10th century. For an era of several hundred years before that time one must use the term Old-Polish. But, due to the Biskupin excavations, we now know that these lands were occupied by the Slavic ancestors of the Poles as far back as 700 B.C. The Poles and their ancestors have been at home here for at least 2500 years. That is a colossally important fact in European history.

This village of Biskupin was a six acre peninsula then and now jutting out into a lake. Onto this damp land the people of the region were forced by invaders, probably from the north-east. The place was not too hard to fortify, and when fortified, difficult to attack. The village of about 100 huts, 1500 people, existed from about 700 B.C. to 400 B.C., when the rising level of the lake inundated it; a tragedy for the inhabitants but a blessing for archaeology, as the mud and silt deposited by the lake preserved the town walls and cabins in a good state to a height of about 3 feet, as our photographs show. The architecture and implements found are Slav, specifically speaking, Lusatian, the method of house construction being still in use in Poland, and even today found in one old peasant cabin near Biskupin.

There is no scarcity of illustrated literature on these excavations; in Polish a large book and numerous pamphlets; in English an illustrated pamphlet. Address Dr. Joseph Kostrzewski, University of Poznan, Poland. You will not find Biskupin on a small map. It is six miles south of Znin, between Poznan and Bydgoszcz.

The Biskupin excavations, and restorations based upon them. Note the minutely correct archaeological details in the reconstructions.



Reconstruction of 10th century settlement wall, Poznan

About You And Us

With this issue we welcome many new British names to our list of readers. This fact, and numerous requests for our bulletin, now in its seventh year and having a worldwide circulation, leads us to make the following statement of policy: "News From Poland" is issued for the purpose of giving glimpses of Polish life to people in all countries where English is read. Its one aim is to extend the area of international goodwill, to build friendship through knowledge. It is non-political, and has to do largely with news of general cultural interest. The paper is financed by those who believe in it, a circle anyone may join. There is no subscription price and you receive it without incurring obligation. "News From Poland" is meant for the bulletin boards of the YMCA, schools, churches, libraries, clubs, and other institutions; for selected private individuals of worldwide interests; and for editors, the latter being free to copy its news items without credit.

The Polish Exhibit

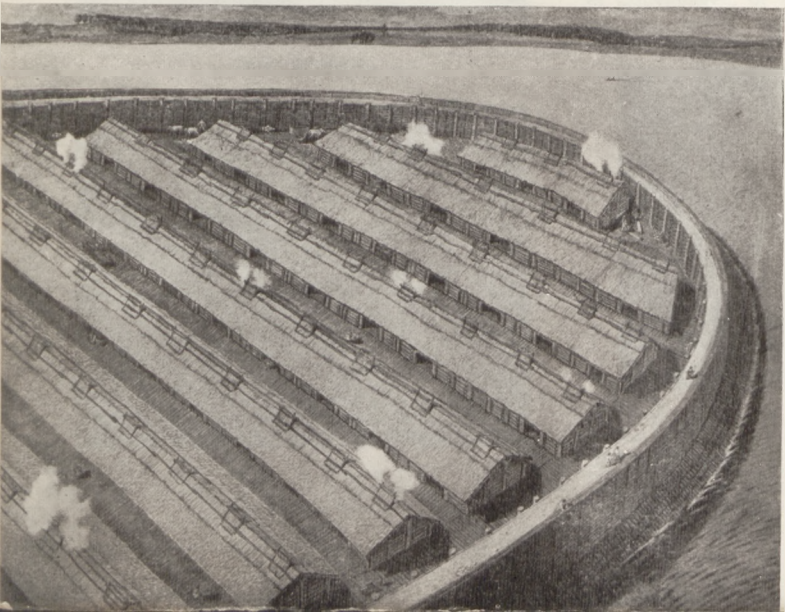
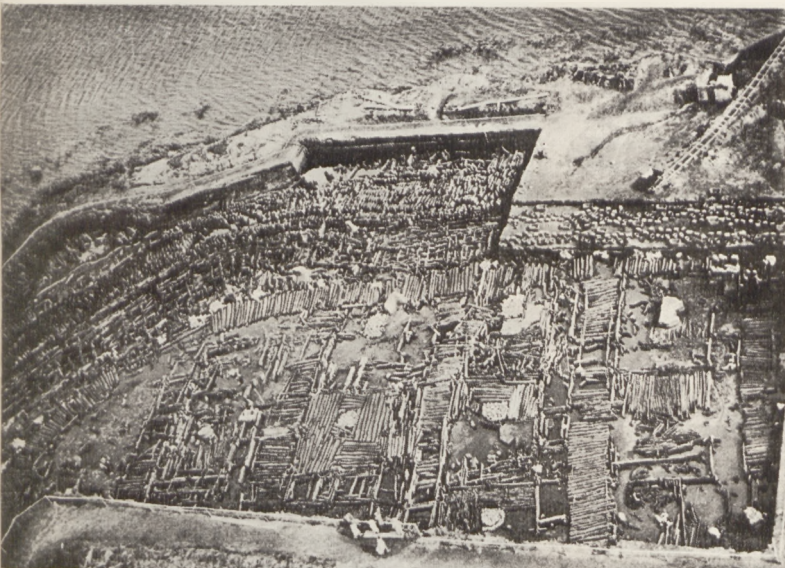
Some 4,800 persons have cooperated in preparing the 11,000 objects which will constitute the Polish exhibit at the World's Fair in New York. This is the largest Polish exhibition ever held abroad; it includes important historical objects from 16th century Poland. A novelty will be gingerbread figures, "pierniki", from the famous 17th century Torun moulds, which every American of Polish ancestry will wish to see. Torun is where the Polish astronomer Copernicus was born.

Boys! Want To Visit Poland?

A group of North American boys is being organized by the Gdynia-America Line in New York to spend 24 days in the Polish YMCA mountain camp at Mszana Dolna, seeing Gdynia, Warsaw, and Krakow enroute, a couple of days in each, with a few interesting side trips. The total price for the whole trip is surprisingly low. We'll be looking for you.

Easter Supplement

As an Easter supplement we are issuing a very Polish picture: a peasant child decorating a wayside shrine with flowers; an everyday countryside scene. This picture was painted for "News From Poland" by the young Warsaw artist Wanda Zawisza. We hope many will care to frame it.



Drukarnia
Ekonomiczna,
J. Kubiak i S-ka
Warszawa
tel. 11 48-33

