

Arch. Emigracji  
Biblioteka

Główna  
UMK Toruń

1378304

TWENTY YEARS OF  
POLISH INDEPENDENCE

*by*

*Zbigniew Grabowski*



POLISH LIBRARY  
GLASGOW

1944

# WYDAWNICTWA "KSIĄZNICZY POLSKIEJ"

250 Hope Street, Glasgow, C.2.

DOUGLAS 7738.

## (A) W JEZYKU POLSKIM

Antologia poezji współczesnej (przedruk wydania podziemnej Warszawy) .. .. .	2/-
Bill Tadeusz—Szkoda mrugac panie strzelce (wesole feljetony)	3/6
Dynowska Marja—Polska w zwyczaju i obyczaju .. ..	5/6
Godowski Jan—Konstytucja Trzeciego Maja .. .. .	2/-
Hurd Archibald (tłom. J. Grodzicki)—Walka o morza ..	8/6
Kisielewski Jozef—Ziemia gromadzi prochy .. .. .	17/-
Kossak-Szczucka—Skarb Slaski .. .. .	3/-
Kowalski Adam—Kierunek Wisla (poezje i piesni) .. ..	4/6
Lisiewicz Mieczyslaw—Kroniki Naroczanskie .. .. .	7/6
Dr. Mekarski—Lwow Karta z dziejow Polski .. .. .	w druku
Patkaniowska-Corbridge—Nauka jezyka polskiego .. ..	w druku
Pawlikowska Marja—Golab ofiarny (poezje) .. .. .	2/6
Pietrkiewicz Jerzy—Umarli nie sa bezbronni (opowiadania z Pomorza pod okupacja niemiecka) .. .. .	3/-
Reymont Wladyslaw—Chlopi (w 4-ch tomach) .. .. .	25/-
Rydel Lucjan—Betlejem polskie .. .. .	3/-
S. F.—Miedzy Marna i Loara .. .. .	3/6
Thugutt Stanislaw—Wybor pism i autobiografja .. .. .	7/6
Wart Andrzej—Golebie Brata Alberta (rozwarzania dramatyczne) .. .. .	w druku
Wspolczesna Wielka Brytanja—Zbiorowa praca PenKlubu Polskiego .. .. .	12/-
Zaleska Zofja—Wieczna warta .. .. .	2/6
Z pierwszej linji frontu, Warszawa, 1943 .. .. .	7/-
Zeromski Stefan—Wiatr od morza .. .. .	4/-

(Continued on inside back cover)

579m 24

# TWENTY YEARS OF POLISH INDEPENDENCE

*by*

*Zbigniew Grabowski*

**ZE ZBIORÓW  
WANDY I TADEUSZA  
LESISZÓW  
CHEADLE**



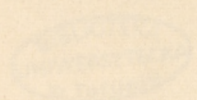
**POLISH LIBRARY  
GLASGOW**

1944



On November 11th, 1914, I received from London a letter from  
George Young of the London Chamber of Commerce, in which he  
informed me that the British Government had decided to  
suspend the operation of the 1907 Convention in the  
event of a general suspension of the gold standard.  
I have since then been in communication with the  
London Chamber of Commerce and the Bank of England  
regarding the proposed suspension of the Convention.  
I have also been in communication with the  
Government regarding the proposed suspension of the  
Convention. I have also been in communication with  
the Bank of England regarding the proposed suspension  
of the Convention. I have also been in communication  
with the London Chamber of Commerce regarding the  
proposed suspension of the Convention. I have also  
been in communication with the Government regarding  
the proposed suspension of the Convention. I have  
also been in communication with the Bank of England  
regarding the proposed suspension of the Convention.  
I have also been in communication with the London  
Chamber of Commerce regarding the proposed  
suspension of the Convention. I have also been  
in communication with the Government regarding  
the proposed suspension of the Convention. I have  
also been in communication with the Bank of England  
regarding the proposed suspension of the Convention.

London, December 15th, 1914



THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES  
LONDON

## TWENTY YEARS OF POLISH INDEPENDENCE

*Twenty-five years ago, on November 11th, 1918, when Germany signed the armistice in the West, the population of the city of Warsaw, acting spontaneously and without knowing of the German capitulation to the Western Powers, started to disarm the German troops. Pilsudski, released by the Germans from the citadel of Magdeburg where he had been imprisoned after his refusal to collaborate with them, arrived in Warsaw and assumed the powers of Chief of State. The Polish State came into existence after 123 years under foreign rule. A great wave of enthusiasm and expectation swept over Poland. A similar wave flooded other countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. It was another "Spring of the Nations"; but while the first "Spring of the Nations" in 1848 embraced the countries of Western and Southern Europe, the second swept the Eastern and South-Eastern marches of the Continent.*

These were memorable days for the countries of Eastern Europe. Two great expanses, the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and the Ottoman Empire, were falling to pieces, and new countries were emerging from the receding tides of war. The German and Austrian fronts were collapsing under the blows dealt by the military machine of the Western Allies and under the pressure of the nationalistic feelings of the subjugated peoples of Europe. New energies flowed through Europe, and the slogans proclaimed in President Wilson's famous fourteen points proved a load of dynamite. While old structures were rocking, and in the East the red fire of the Russian revolution was glowing ominously on the horizon, Poland started the reconstruction of her State by piecing together the three provinces which had lived for so long under three different political, economic and administrative systems.

Before I proceed with the story of Polish achievements during the twenty years of her independent existence, I would like briefly to give you the background without which it is impossible to understand the lights and the shadows of the Polish national character as well



as our progress during those twenty years. For this I ask your kind permission and forgiveness. I fully realise that you may be a little tired of various Polish claims and complaints. In this respect we do slightly resemble the Irish, although it should be remembered that we are ready to hand over to the British all our naval bases on the Baltic and to extend hospitality to British garrisons on Polish soil for an indefinite period.

*In approaching the problem of Poland* one has to bear in mind the fact that our geographical position is precarious. We are, as it were, sentenced to a life-long imprisonment between the Devil and the Deep Sea—I mean, the German devil and the deep sea of Russia. At the same time Poland is situated on the great cross-roads of East and West, a territory where the winds of West and East meet and battle. An English commentator, speaking about Poland's problems, said that "Poland's destiny is to lead a life of drama and adventure." This may sound very interesting for the onlookers, but, believe me, it is rather trying for the actors.

One cannot grasp the meaning of Polish national life and the Polish tragedy without realising the fact that until the end of the eighteenth century Poland was one of the most powerful States in Europe with vast expanses of land stretching down to the Black Sea, that historic greatness was deeply imbued in the consciousness of the Poles who took pride in the fact that the Kingdom of Poland created a workable and durable union of three nations which survived several centuries and which, in some respects, was not dissimilar from the British Commonwealth of Nations. Prostrate Poland could not forget her historical past, and it seems that this consciousness helped to carry her through all partitions and disasters. At the same time the feeling of historic greatness and of the integrity of Poland made possible the speedy integration of the Polish lands formerly under the three different rules.

To-day, when people are discussing the role and the future of the so-called small nations, it should be recalled that most of these small European nations have been powerful States which had tasted the pleasures of conquest. Modern Sweden, Spain, Portugal, Hungary, Denmark, Holland, Poland—all these are a result of a tragic shrinkage of territory and influence. But all these States can, with difficulty, forget their great historic past; although they have settled down more or less peacefully to a new existence within more limited frontiers and boundaries of influence, while they no longer cherish ambitions

of conquest, they are at the same time rather proud of their past and rather vulnerable when their pride is concerned.

*The tragedy of Poland is almost unparalleled among the nations of the world.* Poland was partitioned between three Powers and cut off from the world. A country which was wide open to all the influences coming from the West and from the South, a country well aware of the fact that she was considered the last bastion of Western and Latin culture, was compelled to live for over 120 years in seclusion. The story reminds of the title of that famous English novel, *Pride and Prejudice*: while Poles continued to take pride in their history, the occupying Powers were busy spreading prejudice about Poland.

*The whole problem of Poland is overgrown with prejudice.* Propaganda is by no means a modern invention: it has always existed, assuming only different manners and forms. In the case of Poland the three partitioning Powers took great pains to convince the world that Poland did not deserve to exist. They made frantic efforts to prove that Poland had been a feudal remnant which made any advance and progress in Eastern Europe impossible, that independent Poland was a loose combine of various races, and that the Poles were a romantic and revolutionary set of eternally dissatisfied people.

By all these manoeuvres the partitioning Powers attempted to throw the blame on Poland and at the same time to camouflage from the eyes of the world the obvious fact that some of them were much more feudal than Poland before the partitions, that they themselves were even much greater combines of various races, and that foreign rule did not bring any sort of advance or progress, economic or political or cultural, to the subjugated nation. The effects of such propaganda are to be felt even to-day. Let us try to sum up these effects:

*First*: Poland was more and more regarded as a political possibility and a historic relic than as a necessary component in the structure of Europe. Poland deteriorated to the position of a country which can, and might, exist, but there was no finality, no *must* about it. The propaganda of the occupying Powers created an atmosphere of uncertainty about the whole case of Poland which lingered even after the reconstitution of the Polish State in 1918. The partitioning Powers hammered into the heads of other peoples in Europe that the Poles are deprived of any gifts for self-government and that the Polish State must be always a sort of transitory phenomenon. One of the major misfortunes in Europe is the habit of thinking about certain countries that they are not necessary; while such States as Norway, Sweden,



Holland, Denmark and Switzerland are regarded as factors which cannot be changed and over-ruled, countries in the Eastern marches of Europe are treated as a sort of "depressed area." It is obvious that such a trend of thought is not only detrimental to any balance and stability in Europe, it is also encouraging the process of a constant retreat of European culture.

*Second* : Poland was represented as the most backward country in Europe, ruled by barons and landlords. The myth of Polish feudalism was created by Germany and Russia, while the actual fact was that the resistance to the invaders and national insurrections were mainly led by members of the Polish gentry who were more and more impoverished by confiscation of their estates. To a great extent the foreign rule in Poland ruined the landowners and the propertied classes, and so the new Poland which emerged in 1918 did not resemble in her social structure and in the distribution of material wealth the Poland of before the partitions. The partitioning Powers which levelled out the social classes in Poland did not encourage the growth of a middle class whose lack, undoubtedly, contributed to the uneasy balance of the Kingdom of Poland in the past decades of its existence. The same can be said of the masses of peasants and farmers as well as workers who were left neglected under Czarist Russia, while in Austria the lot of the peasants was bettered only in the last decades.

*Third* : In the domain of history, geography and science, Poland was interpreted chiefly and mainly by Germany. Polish names disappeared from the maps and German names were introduced. Polish history ceased to exist. To the outside world the products of Polish culture became "smuggled goods." The Polish voice broke only seldom through the silence, speaking from the free soil of France, England or Switzerland. Poles protested or accused, an attitude which is never too popular. Equally unpopular was their attitude in complaining of their persecution and martyrdom. To the prosperous nations of the world, busy enriching themselves in the nineteenth century, the sight of Poland had been a rather unpleasant one : as of some poor and shabbily-dressed relative in a community of well-dressed and well-fed people.

Small wonder that Poland became an international nuisance, a nightmare haunting the chancelleries of many States. The Poles, in turn, became obsessed with a sort of persecution mania, with the idea that they were forgotten by God and the world.

As the position of the "Polish problem" deteriorated, the voice



of the foreign interpreters grew louder and louder. Only her achievements in arts and literature, the activities of the Polish emissaries abroad, the unbroken revolutionary spirit which manifested itself in the armed revolts against Russia in 1831, 1863 and 1905, and in 1846 against the Prussians in Poznan, the Polish legions fighting under Napoleon, and the creation of Polish armed units during the First World War reminded Europe that Poland was not finished. The biological strength of the nation and its very fanaticism saved them from being absorbed by the Russians and Germans.

This "*tour de force*" of a nation was achieved at tremendous expense. Let us not forget that Poland disappeared from the European stage at a time when the great ideas of nationality, the idea of modern State, social progress, industrialisation and the slogans of prosperity were beginning to take shape. Poland was excluded for over 120 years from the great current of events sweeping the civilised world. She was robbed of a normal development and crippled in many cruel ways. While other nations prospered and expanded, built up their riches and their Colonial Empires, while the great liberal trend of thought swept the world, while the idea of free trade fought its way across Europe, Poland was left to her domestic sorrows and troubles. All her energies were absorbed and concentrated on the problem of national survival. She could not breathe freely and enjoy life as other nations did. The nation sought new outlets to its energies; literature became a substitute for policy, a rostrum where all the most essential problems of a nation and of the State were discussed. A mystical atmosphere surrounded the problem of Poland; religious feeling was closely linked with the national feeling and as ardent and passionate as the latter.

In their fight against the surge of the foreign propaganda which wanted to degrade everything Polish and to deride the achievements of Polish history, the Poles replied by idealising their past. They clung to the historic greatness of their country; the word freedom acquired for them a meaning and a sense which was practically unknown in Western Europe. It seems that only to-day, under the German yoke, countries like Norway and Holland and Denmark, where material motives were in high esteem, have begun to realise what freedom means. There is a new idealism alive in these countries which had until now enjoyed the blessings of prosperity. For 120 years Poland lived in the state of psychological elation and tension, rendered so masterly by John Steinbeck in his novel, *The Moon is*

*Down*, which describes the spirit of the Norwegian resistance to-day. Small wonder that she developed some "manias," and that a careful psycho-analysis of the character of the Polish nation will expose many repressions and cruel distortions.

And so the Poles are often accused of an intense nationalism. True, a Pole or a Lithuanian of the sixteenth century was a much more liberal and broad-minded being than a Pole at the end of the nineteenth century. But for this intensification of national feelings, for this narrowing of vision, the occupying Powers are to be blamed. Every pressure breeds repression; the lack of free space and of free breathing breeds a passionate will to break out. Poles are accused of being too intolerant. Well, in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries they were known the world over for their toleration; their suspiciousness towards other races and their impatience to listen to other peoples' arguments are often the result of the fact that they were themselves oppressed, that they were haunted by that nightmare of oppression; Poles had not the chance to develop that splendid sense of ease and breadth of vision which characterise the free nations. In the more fortunate countries of the West all these things are taken for granted; but for the less fortunate countries of the Eastern marches of Europe all these ways and manners are to be acquired anew as they have simply lost their normal reactions during long imprisonment. Those countries are accused, too, of being quarrelsome: I am sure that had they remained free and had they been granted freedom of development and of self-expression in all the domains, Eastern Europe would have been to-day an integrated region and the cultural and moral resources of Europe would have profited considerably.

*Twenty-five years ago Poland came into being.* The circumstances of this birth were by no means favourable. Germany was seized by revolutionary fever, while the Russian revolution provoked grave fears and apprehension among the Western countries of Europe. Disturbances started in some defeated countries like Hungary. Hunger, pestilence, under-nourishment and poverty were among the many legacies left by the war. The Eastern front, which moved to and fro across Poland for nearly four years, left devastation: roads and bridges were ruined, railways disrupted, villages burnt out, towns robbed. The German Army in the East was streaming through the Baltic countries towards East Prussia. In Eastern Galicia Ukrainian troops armed by the Austrians started an upheaval. In the Pomerania and Poznan districts the German Army was more or less in being,



although they were undermined by Communist ideas, and so-called *Soldätsenrate* or Soldiers' Councils were set up.

Human memory is short and deficient, and people to-day do not realise in what sort of turmoil and unrest the Eastern Europe and Germany were plunged after the German collapse. They are now ready to belittle the dangers which threatened Europe. They are ready to dismiss the fact that in 1918 the danger of a Communistic revolt in Europe was taken seriously by the Western Powers. These dreaded an unrest in Germany and intervened in Russia. It is only natural that the bourgeois and capitalistic communities of the West—which they were in 1918, but no more in 1943—feared that a conflagration would spread across Europe. The French Revolution provoked actions and attempts at suppression, and so did the Russian revolution. It is only too clear that to the eyes of the West the Russian revolution was a somewhat terrifying sight. The foundations of the right of property were threatened ; the old ruling classes were liquidated. To-day, when all of us are inoculated against this by years of State socialism, when social differences are rapidly disappearing, when the process of levelling of social classes is quickened by war, we are ready to forget the fears of the Western world at that time. But they existed, and Poland was ringed by the flames of revolution in a much more dangerous way than any other country in Europe. In spite of that Poland did not succumb to the temptations of the revolution. To-day we are innoculated against its dangers just as we are no longer as sensitive to the 'flu as we were in 1918. But let us remember the years when the Spanish 'flu was regarded as a nasty illness.

I do not want to enter deeper into this problem, but I would like only to point out that often in to-day's arguments and discussions the fact is being neglected that revolutionary movement originated in Russia, and Germany wanted to join hands. And so Sir Bernard Pares, who cannot be suspected of any anti-Russian feelings, in his *History of Russia*, wrote that "Militant International Bolshevism urgently required contact with revolutionary Germany, and this could only be won over the body of Poland." Lenin himself, speaking on October 8th, 1920, in Moscow, said that "by attacking Poland we are attacking also the Allies ; by destroying the Polish Army we are destroying the Versailles Peace, upon which rests the whole system of present international relations. Had Poland become sovietised . . . the Versailles Treaty would have been destroyed likewise." In that monumental work written by the present Prime Minister, Mr. Winston

Churchill, *The World Crisis*, we find passages which explain the position of Poland at that time, stressing the point that "the difficulties of Poland in dealing with a Government like the Soviet Government should not be under-rated. The same difficulties have been experienced by every other country which is in direct contact with Bolshevik Russia. In no case has anything like a satisfactory peace been arranged with Bolshevik Russia."

Fortunately enough, such a peace was arranged in Riga in 1921, and after that Polish-Soviet relations developed peacefully. In 1923 the Eastern frontiers of Poland were recognised by the Conference of the Ambassadors and later by the United States. Poland settled down to the work of reconstruction.

*I fully admit that for the British people the problem of frontiers seems to be rather remote, and with good reason too. Your frontier is the changing mirror of the sea, and being a sea-minded nation you cannot understand fully the plight and the feelings of land-locked countries. For the British mentality a loss or acquisition of territory overseas does not affect the core of the nation—but I am sure that you would feel strongly about the curtailment or infringement of the frontiers of your Isles. The problems of nationalities and ethnographic frontiers are not so easily understood in your country, as your frontiers developed on totally different lines: you think in lines of outposts of security like Gibraltar or Suez Canal, Malta or Aden, and you do not enter into ethnographic considerations.*

But for the land-locked countries, like Poland, frontiers are an essential matter. For us frontiers are something tangible and very close to our hearts; and we do insist on certain frontiers not only because they were fixed by negotiations and by a sense of compromise, but also because they have created a certain stability for our State. We are of the opinion that frontiers cannot be shifted because States are bound to lose their stability; frontiers established after the Treaty of Riga brought stability to our sorely-trying country, a fair equilibrium upon which the future of the country could have been built. We relinquished our claims to the majority of the lands comprised by the Kingdom of Poland, but we felt that we could not recede too far, because otherwise we should give up all our heritage in the Eastern marches of Europe and cause the retreat of European culture. For good or for bad Poland chose the part of a member of the European community and remained loyal to that duty, although it meant great sacrifices, perhaps well over Poland's strength and abilities. But still Poland



felt that the frontier which runs east of our boundaries is a frontier of two civilisations ; and this cannot be explained away by any amount of political or economic reasoning. One cannot artificially unite regions which have developed different outlook on life, different ways of living, different ideas. The British people, who are so well acquainted with the vastness of the East, are better than any other people equipped to grasp that fundamental fact. There are things much more essential than any political factors, and these are customs, tradition, adhesion to certain ideas and ways of life.

The influence of Communist ideas on Poland was rather slight. The main reason for this was the strong national feeling and the deeply rooted conservatism of the Polish peasant—I should say a radical conservatism which, while claiming the right of the peasant to acquire more land, was imbued with a strong feeling of property and devotion to his own plot of land. To that should be added the individualistic trend in the Polish character, which reacts by instinct to any excess of authority. This trend, handed down in Polish history, was mainly responsible for the fact that attempts to rule Poland by authoritarian methods failed, and that the Polish nation rebelled against any excesses by the executive. While recognising the values of this individualism in fighting totalitarian attempts, I do not conceal the dangers of such an attitude. It should be remembered that this individualistic trend of mind made it rather difficult to some Governments in Poland to achieve authority over the citizens. People accustomed to look upon any authority as representing the oppressors, were sometimes inclined to look also upon their own authorities as something rather suspect. This attitude disappeared after the first years of acquired independence. This does not mean that the relations and the problem of the interdependence between Government and nation were solved successfully. It seems that successive Governments did not make proper use of the energies of the nation, which showed many times that it was ready to sacrifice everything when the security of the country was threatened. The response of the Polish people in 1920 and in 1939, when the independence of their country was threatened, furnishes the best reply. Independent Poland was, to a great extent, experimenting with forms of government. This tug-of-war between authority and the nation was by no means finished, although in 1939 it was obvious that the will of the nation made itself felt more and more strongly and that Poland has been passing towards a better stability in her internal affairs. In studying this problem one has to bear in mind the para-

mount fact that democracy means education, and that education takes years. The tug-of-war between the popular forces and the Government in Poland was a necessary phase ; I do not pretend to conceal from you the fact that the methods applied by some Polish Governments were not the most exemplary and the best suited in that education for democracy which is so much needed by many European countries. But I just wanted to point out that the conditions under which this fight for democracy was conducted were by no means favourable. First of all, Poland missed the great era of industrialism and liberalism which produced modern democracies. Poland did not possess that high standard of living which is essential for the establishment of democracy. Independence of thought and action can be only fully expressed when there is material independence. Where too many people are dependent on their Government, as officials and bureaucrats, the independence of thought and action is bound to disappear. Bureaucracy, that scourge of the twentieth century, was the illness of the reborn Poland. Many other countries of Europe did not escape this disease. When people nowadays speak about " Fascist " tendencies in some countries in Europe, they should remember that actually those " Fascist " tendencies were confined to some bureaucratic group and to some officials, and that in countries like Poland or Yugoslavia bureaucracy was the main factor crippling the free development of democratic institutions. On the other hand, it should be remembered that the " Fascist " bacillus was by no means restricted to the Eastern European countries. Fascist organisations and political groups existed even in such rich and firmly-established countries as Holland, France, Denmark. The Fascist wind blew over the whole of Europe, and we should be reminded that the Fascist ideas are by no means finished by the mere fact that Fascism in Italy has been destroyed and Nazism in Germany is going to be eradicated. The whole trend of modern planning is, undoubtedly, in the direction of so-called totalitarian ideas ; we have adopted many ideas from the totalitarian Powers. The principle of power hailed by some politicians and writers of the Allied camp as an epoch-making discovery, comes from the totalitarian arsenal.

It is only too clear that Poland was by no means free from the virus of Fascist ideas, but it should be acknowledged that this was not restricted to Poland and that these ideas were *en vogue* in many countries. But it is really astonishing that Poland, a country only 35 million strong, deprived of material riches and of a proper standard of living which



constitute the very foundations of democracy, a nation sandwiched between two powerful States professing sharply defined political creeds, did not succumb either to the Nazi or to the Communist doctrine. Without indulging in national pride I would like to stress this point as demonstrating a moral integrity and the consciousness that Poland was never in a danger of becoming a totalitarian State. Her instincts were democratic; social progress was noticeable in every respect, and the classes which in the old Kingdom of Poland played a preponderant part (as they did in nearly all European countries and continued to do long after they ceased to do so in Poland), were more and more "democratised"—this process being speeded up by the material situation, as in your country the privileged class is undergoing a severe test because of heavy taxation. The democratic instincts of Poland saved her from becoming a Fascist State; but at the same time it should be stated in all fairness that these instincts were not always directed into proper channels and that they were left neglected by some Governments. To cut a long story short, they were not properly organised.

*This discussion about democracy in Poland, its requirements and its future, is incomplete, but it is essential to understand certain basic facts about it. It is most important to grasp the fundamental fact that certain pre-conditions must be fulfilled in order to build up a full-grown democracy in Poland. First of all—a longer span of peace is needed, as in the case of Holland, Sweden, Denmark and Great Britain, to lay the foundations of democracy in Poland. Then, economic and political security should be granted to countries east of Germany. Thirdly, an impartial study of conditions should be made in order to find out what sort of system is best suited to those countries. Let me mention the fact that some students of Eastern European affairs are to-day expressing the viewpoint that the trend to establish democratic institutions based on Western models in Eastern Europe after the last war was altogether at fault. They point out that after the First World War the French system was advocated all over Europe (Germany included) and that other patterns, like the American or the British, were set aside. They argue that the adoption of the French republican system with its great number of parties, with a weak Government and a figure-head of a President, is by no means the most happy for the other countries of Europe. They point out that the French democracy after the last war was compromised in many respects, that the influence of the Parliament in France was not the most beneficial, and*

that the selfishness of the deputies and the narrow-mindedness of the party-men contributed greatly to that disintegration of France of which we were tragic witnesses over three years ago. To many observers of French life long before the war, the French system showed itself more and more vulnerable and exposed to abuse of democratic privileges. For that reason students of Eastern European affairs are often of the opinion that after the last war a mistake was made when the French system was imposed upon the countries which emerged after the war, and that a compromise between the democratic institutions and the powers of the administration should be arrived at. Those students express the view that it is wrong to regard the democratic institutions of some Western countries as a sort of panacea for all evils, that it is wrong to adopt them as a sort of fetish in some parts of Europe, and that other European countries should try to evolve their own systems based on their national character and needs, safeguarding the rights and freedom of their citizens, but keeping the central authority strong.

This problem was not yet solved in Poland, but we hope that it is going to be solved after the war. In approaching the study of the independent Poland, you should always keep an eye on this fundamental question. You should treat it in the light of impartiality and make allowance for the many grievous distortions and shortcomings produced in Polish national life by the fact that Poland could not develop freely her capacities for 120 years, and that even in the Kingdom of Poland the problem of strong central authority was a very important item.

*The difficulties which beset our road* when we started our work of reconstruction were numerous. New cadres of administration were created in order to cope with the various tasks: the shortage of these cadres was great, as only the Austrian province of Poland could provide people to run the administration (the dual Austrian monarchy and the Polish population enjoyed by far the greatest amount of freedom in developing their institutions). The lack of foreign capital and investment was responsible for the somewhat slow pace of reconstruction. Foreign investments went chiefly to Germany; the countries east of Germany were not regarded as a safe investment. Struggling with economic difficulties, with the signs of economic depression all over the world, with inflation assuming monstrous proportions in such countries as Germany, Poland succeeded to stabilise her currency. She adhered for many years to the gold standard, showing preference for the Western ways, although many people advocated adopting the



German system of an unlimited borrowing and of increasing production according to methods invented by that country's magician, Dr. Schacht.

One of the worst heritages left by the occupying Powers was the plague of illiteracy which affected large areas of the country. Compulsory elementary and grammar schools were introduced, and the number of the secondary schools was greatly increased. The number of the higher schools was doubled, and new universities were created in Warsaw, Poznan, Vilna and Lublin. Associations for the promotion of science were founded, scientific institutes like that of Radiology in Warsaw were opened, and huge laboratories such as that of Chemistry in Poznan were created. In many centres model schools were opened, based on the most advanced schemes worked out in Switzerland, Norway or Sweden. A certain trend towards perfection can be even detected in those attempts: it seems that the Poles, proud of their newly achieved independence, wanted to adopt the most advanced models. Sometimes this trend towards perfection proved either too expensive or too premature, but faults and errors in that domain should be attributed to this overpowering feeling of pride, which explains some examples of, should I say, showing off (as our more conservative and stolid British friends, progressing at a slower but surer pace, would say).

Opportunities for education were made much easier during the days of Poland's servitude, and masses of youth from all official classes streamed to our schools. The basis of all those schools was as democratic as in Switzerland, Norway or Denmark. Surely, much more could have been done if the problem of the raising of the standard of living could have been solved more quickly.

Independent Poland's investments increased in number with every year passing. The first question was to strike a balance between industry and agriculture. The occupying Powers wanted to keep Poland as an agricultural reservoir; for the vast Empires of Austria or Russia, Polish provinces were economic suburbia. Industry was vastly neglected in the Russian province of Poland, and in the Austrian part of Poland it was undeveloped. New factories sprang into existence, new industrial centres were created. The great enterprise of founding the so-called "triangle of security" where armaments plants were built, remained an unfinished symphony. But still in all the provinces of Poland, especially in the Eastern marshes, new factory sites emerged, new roads were constructed, new activities were called into being. On the small strip of the Baltic coast, neglected by the Germans, new

life burst forth spontaneously. The port of Gdynia, which grew up quickly and became a sort of Polish Klondyke, was one of the best performances of this newly awakened Polish energy. It proved that the Poles could tackle difficult problems, that they could grapple with difficulties, and that access to the sea had stirred in them dormant energies which had been for years yearning to express themselves in that land-locked country.

*Poland was still striving to achieve a balance* between industry and agriculture when war swept the country. The achievement of this balance would have solved the problem of enlarging the employment market, the question of emigration from the land and of directing the peasant population into industry. The problem of agricultural reform was not solved successfully, mainly because the State had no sufficient funds to buy up land and to break up the large estates into smaller holdings. It does not mean that the big estates in Poland really constituted some 60 or 70 per cent. as some critics of the allegedly "feudal" Poland would have you believe (big estates in Poland did, in fact, amount to 14 per cent.). Big estates were actually much less prominent in Poland than in Germany, Holland and Great Britain. They were mostly liquidated by the occupying Powers; the process of the splitting up of the remaining big estates proceeded steadily in some provinces, as for example in Poznan, where new methods were applied which proved quite successful.

The problem in Poland was to put an end to the so-called "dwarf" farms on which no decent living could have been achieved. The system in use was that of splitting up the farm between all the sons of the family, and as the population of Poland increased not only rapidly but almost violently (over 400,000 surplus per annum, which means that during the twenty years of Polish independence our population increased by over five million)—the peasant problem became actually more and more acute. As the possibilities of emigration were practically closed and as the process of the integration of the small holdings was proceeding much too slowly, Poland struggled with the agricultural problem. We do not know what sort of remedy should be invented to cure that inveterate disease which the occupying Powers did not care simply to tackle. It seems that new methods should be applied which would increase the productive power of the soil and of the farmer by mechanising agriculture. It seems, too, that although the Soviet pattern of the *kolkhozs* is completely unsuitable for the Polish conditions, some solution of, if I may say so, great spaces



in agriculture must be found to satisfy the needs of modern agricultural productivity.

Housing conditions in towns and cities improved enormously ; new residential quarters were built in all principal centres of Poland, and model health resorts and spas sprang into being. Some of the residential quarters of Warsaw, Cracow, Katowice and Lwow can be compared with the best Scandinavian or German models. The Polish architecture adopted modernistic trends, mellowed by some traditional traits of Polish architecture. Plans were made for reconstructing Warsaw and for creating new vistas and streets. A great building scheme was initiated in Silesia ; the three last years before the war, when the upward trend became more marked, brought a revival of activities in every sphere.

Sports became more and more popular and accessible to the masses. Ski-ing became a sort of national sport. Fine sports stadiums were erected in many centres, and institutes for physical culture were created. National parks were created in the Polish mountains and forests, whilst hostels and refuges for tourists sprang up like mushrooms. The young generation of Poles was most enthusiastic about this development, and Tourist Leagues and Tourist Associations increased their membership rapidly. Polish climbers undertook several expeditions in Caucasus, Andes, Atlas Mountains and in the Himalayas.

The merchant fleet, although rather small, did good work, and the port of Gdynia and the many ships which entered the port were for Poland a symbol of her access to the world. For many years they had been deprived of this medium of communication with the free world, since Germany would not lower the barrier which she had erected between Poland and the West. But now Polish goods started to flow through Gdynia and the turnover of Polish exports increased. The German blockade proved ineffective : we had at last surmounted the barrier.

*In the sphere of social service* great strides were made towards the betterment of the lot of the masses. When to-day in this country the Beveridge Plan is so hotly discussed, it should be recalled that in many European countries social schemes were in existence long before the First World War. In the Scandinavian countries social insurance is by no means a new invention, and the same applies to Switzerland ; Germany introduced those measures even under Bismarck, while France struggled to introduce them under Leon Blum. In Poland the system of social insurance was largely adopted from the German

pattern. It does not mean that the system of social insurance and health insurance was ideal; it was still rather chaotic and haunted by the red tape and bureaucracy which can ruin even health insurance, including the health of the patients. But notwithstanding the somehow doctrinaire spirit and bureaucracy, it should be admitted in all fairness that social insurance in Poland was progressing slowly, and that with the increasing prosperity of the country it could have been cured of all the illnesses of the infantile period. This excess of the doctrinaire spirit visible in many enterprises in Poland could have been attributed to the fact that we were experimenting in many fields, and that we were groping our way through many dark passages and muddling through our lack of experience in many things.

Some of the aspects of the political system were also, as already explained, rather advanced. And so the voting system was much more radical than in France, as women were given the vote. The system of voting was taken from Belgium and other Western countries, while the English system, which introduces the human touch, so to speak, into the polling business, was discarded. Some critics are of the opinion that this very modern system of polling was not the best suited for Poland. Political life became stifled after the sterner measures introduced by the Government, and especially after the efforts to create a Government Party. The struggle for reducing the number of the parties remained unfinished, but still in the last four years or so of Polish independence some five main political parties kept the field.

*This picture would be incomplete* without mentioning the great effort of creating and maintaining of the Polish Army. Great sums were spent on the Army and the country did not grumble at this, being convinced that the Army was a necessary asset in defending the independence of the country. To-day, when some critics accuse Poles of a militaristic mentality, it should be pointed out that for the Polish nation the soldiers of Poland were the embodiment of the national tradition, a living testimony that Poland did not receive her freedom through tricks of diplomacy, but paid for it dearly on many battlefields. There is no doubt that the soldier's profession was regarded as somewhat romantic for the very simple reason that it was linked with all the traditions of the Polish Kingdom and its greatness, and later on with the fights for the liberation of the country and with all the armed insurrections and revolutions. There is nothing militaristic about the Polish nation, and it is a fact that before the war attempts by some military circles in Poland—attempts which should be regretted and deplored—



to wield an excessive power in some administrative domains were severely criticised, and if they were tolerated, it is only because the population felt that the Army is the shield of Poland. All people in Poland were fully aware that Poland was spending great sums on the Army, and that these sums could have been used for other purposes. This was the unfortunate state of affairs of a country situated between States armed up to their teeth; it is obvious that smaller countries cannot keep pace with the Great Powers in that ruinous and disastrous race of armaments. Here is yet another argument for introducing measures of international security, which would allow smaller countries to devote more toil and expenditure to the crafts of peace.

I do not want to belittle the magnitude of the shock which the Polish nation felt when the Army, of which the whole nation was so proud, fell under the mighty blows of Germany. But in the reconstitution of the Polish Army and especially of the Air Force and of the Naval Forces, the Polish nation still sees the symbol of its survival and of that great continuity of sacrifice and service which makes a nation worthy of its destinies. In our armed forces, scattered all over the face of the earth, we see the guarantee of our independence—a word which is stressed by some nations much more often than by those who take it for granted. But there are less fortunate nations which cannot take their freedom for granted, and for that reason it becomes for them a much more precious thing—almost a miracle from heaven for which they fight and pray. They are jealous for their independence as people are jealous of everything bitterly fought for and acquired after years of toil and sacrifice. They are even touchy in that respect—but were no women touchy in the good old days of the Suffragettes about their independence and equality and all that?

*This brings us up to the last point* of my rather hasty survey—Polish foreign policy. It was accused by many of cold-blooded calculations and mysterious manoeuvres. All this is, to a great extent, a misunderstanding. Poland, a fruit of the Versailles Treaty, was linked from the very beginning with an alliance with France. We adhered to the system of security which France wanted to introduce—mind you, introduce, not impose—on Europe. Unfortunately, this French idea received no proper backing from this country. When the French system collapsed, we started to sit, not so much on the fence, but on the defence, believing—quite wrongly—that this defence is formidable. We were not the only victims of this sort of illusion, which is, of course, a rather poor solace.

As Poland's foreign policy is governed by facts of geography to a much greater extent than the foreign policy of any European country, Poland decided to make bilateral agreements with her neighbours. A pact of non-aggression was concluded with Russia, with whom Poland entertained friendly relations contrary to some accusations levelled at us to-day. We had treaties with Russia as well as commercial and cultural exchange with Russia at a time when some Western European countries were scared of Russia, when the Zinovieff Letter and Arcos affairs were quite *en vogue*; let us remember that until recently Holland had no diplomatic relations with Russia, and that that excellent democracy, Switzerland, still has no diplomatic relations with Moscow (the United States of America did recognise the Soviet Government only in 1933).

We did not pretend to be a *cordon sanitaire* thrown around Russia: that idea originated with the Western politicians, and was never accepted by Poland. We did not boast that we were a barrier against Bolshevism: that claim was raised by Hitler, although he had no common frontiers with Russia and several million Communists within the Reich's boundaries. We just wanted to exist as a normal State, like France, Holland, Denmark, which are never treated as some sort of *cordon sanitaire* around Germany.

Before concluding a pact of non-aggression with Germany in 1934 Poland consulted her ally, France. We pointed out that under Hitler Germany would assume terrific strength, and that the only way of stemming the German menace was to wage a preventive war. In 1933 Marshal Pilsudski twice offered France a chance of waging a preventive war against Germany. He was of the opinion that France, being a country bled white after the last war, could conduct only a preventive war against a Germany not fully armed. Again, in 1936, when Germany occupied the Rhineland and violated the freely negotiated Pact of Locarno, Poland told France that she was ready to attack Germany from the rear if France was ready to strike at Germany. Unfortunately this Polish offer was refused, and all the blame cannot be put on France. These Polish attempts, which prove a certain farsightedness, should be put on the record. They testify the truth that the so-called small nations saw the German menace approaching, but they found no support for their policy among the Great Powers, and that the subsequent developments in their foreign policy were the result of their scepticism as to whether the Western Powers would intervene in the affairs of Europe and oppose Germany. The Treaty of Locarno had



introduced two spheres of security in Europe: a better one for the West, an unsafe one for the East. The Munich agreement spelt actually doom for the countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.

Polish foreign policy was, to a great extent, the result of this sad state of affairs, and it was much less independent in its actions than it believed itself to be. It was the result of the increased disinterestedness of the Western Powers with the affairs of Eastern Europe and of that atmosphere of uncertainty which prevailed over the Continent in the years preceding the war. It is highly debatable whether Poland could have helped in any way by backing the so-called Eastern Pact, which was the last cry of the defeated French system of security, and was initiated by the late M. Barthou. The trouble was that this country did not sponsor this policy, and that the Western Powers were more than half-hearted in their approaches towards Moscow.

But when this country perceived the danger and when Great Britain offered a guarantee to Poland, Polish foreign policy realised that the attitude of the West was undergoing an essential change even at the eleventh hour. Polish foreign policy realised, too, that Great Britain was the pivot of the future policy, and that such a trend put new life into the Franco-Polish alliance. The intervention of this country in the affairs of Europe convinced us that England meant business and that Germany would ultimately be defeated.

Let us remember that Poland was not a country left without a choice. She could have chosen the fate of some vassal countries of Hitler and submit to his threats and cajoling combined. Hitler offered twice to Poland the chance of joining the so-called anti-Comintern Pact, and suggested quite plainly a common march against Russia, with prospects of spoil in the Ukraine. We refused this German bribe because we did not want to be shifted to the East, as States are no pieces of furniture which might be shifted here or there. For the same reason we refuse now to be shifted Westwards. By that gesture Poland demonstrated that she had no expansionist ambitions and that our quest for conquest was spent. We demonstrated, too, that we cherish no enmity towards the Soviet Union. There can be no better proof than this Polish refusal.

Had we been less proud of our independence and of our historic past, we would have succumbed to Hitler. Had we been more attached to the material blessings of life, had we been more cold-blooded in our calculations, we would have submitted to the Germans. We threw in our lot wholeheartedly with the Western Powers, thus pledging our

allegiance to the Western world of ideas. The Polish nation proved in the last resort a romantic nation—which should be an asset in a world of justice and respect for moral values.

And so I come to the end of my rather chaotic remarks. I did not want to lecture you on anything: I have just tried to give you the background to the complicated problems of modern Poland. In some text-books on Poland you can find statistics and other data about the achievements of independent Poland. This was not the task set by myself. I wanted to present you with a critical analysis of Poland.

The independent Poland disappeared from the world stage before her coming of age, and this, I think, explains a lot. She had not been granted the grace of time and the respite of peace to develop more harmoniously her abilities. She remained a work in progress.

*To be a Pole is a tragedy by profession.* The life of an average Pole is a continuous act of faith, an act of hope. And so we do believe that our country, the most cruelly tested, threatened in its very biological foundations, will emerge from the flood of the war, and will take its place in the free community of Europe. We are fully aware of, to put it mildly, awkwardness of our position, and we are ready to play musical chairs with any country in Europe. Our expansionist drive has been spent long ago, and we just want to settle down and to reconstruct our ravaged country.

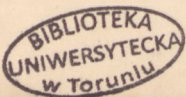
It just so happened that Poland is the country chosen by Providence to mark the transition between two cultures and civilisations. We do not intend to avoid this responsibility, but we just want to ask our friends to understand our position and to make it easier for us to face the difficult tasks of the future.

*It just so happened that Poland has been chosen by Providence to mark the frontier of Europe, and we do not know whether this is our blessing or our curse.* But as this cannot be obviously changed, we just want to tell you that as we pin the greatest hopes on the development of the British Commonwealth of Nations, we would like to see that you understand the position of Europe—not just of Poland, but of Europe—and that you will help in the restoration and unification of that shattered but still proud and splendid place which is Europe, the creation of generations and centuries—Europe that refuses to retreat.

Biblioteka Główna UMK



300050333491





### (B) W JEZYKU ANGIELSKIM

F. C. Anstruther—Poland's Part in the War .. .. .	2/6
Wielhorski—The Importance of Polish Eastern Provinces ..	1/-
Nowosielska Zofja—Polish Wartime Cookery Book .. ..	3/-
Ordon (tłom. F. C. Anstruther)—Fire over Warsaw .. ..	3/-
Poland (History, culture, civilisation) .. .. .	5/-
Przyrkowski Tadeusz—Warsaw .. .. .	4/-
Teslar Antoni—Poland remains a rock .. .. .	1/6
Voice of Poland (dwutygodnik, wydawany stale od kwietnia 1942):	
1 egzemplarz .. .. .	-/6
Rocznik 1942, oprawny w plotno .. .. .	21/-

### (C) W JEZYKU POLSKIM I ANGIELSKIM, RAZEM

Boguslawski Antoni—Tereska (zbior wierszykow dla dzieci, w angielskim przekladzie Miss Agnes Walker z ilustracjami M. Walentynowicza) .. .. .	7/6
Soja—Polish Bomber Squadron (utwor poetycki ku czci lotnikow)	1/-
Tarczynski Alf—Homage to Chopin (Hold Chopinowi) ..	3/-
Slowniczek angielsko-polski (wydanie kieszonkowe) .. ..	3/-
Polish Towns Calendar na rok 1944 .. .. .	4/6
The Clasp of Friendship (Ogniwo Przyjazni):	
rocznik 1941 oprawny w plotno .. .. .	21/-
kwartalnik I-III. 1942 .. .. .	4/6

### (D) W JEZYKU POLSKIM, ANGIELSKIM I FRANCUSKIM, RAZEM

Dobrzycki Jerzy—Stary Krakow (old Cracov, Ancienne Cracovie)	10/-
--	------

### (E) W JEZYKU POLSKIM I CZESKIM

Kaczor J.—Slovník polsko-czeski i czesko-polski .. ..	9/-
---	-----

(Continued on outside back cover)

**(F) UTWORY MUZYCZNE**

Baranski Franciszek—Jak to na wojence ładnie (172 pieśni żołnierskie i patriotyczne w układzie na fortepian do śpiewu) ..	2/6
Harasowski Adam—Kolendy (w układzie na fortepian do śpiewu z tekstem polskim i angielskim) 2 tomy po .. ..	5/-
Karłowicz Mieczysław—6 pieśni solowych (do słów Głinskiego, Konopnickiej, Słowackiego i Tetmajera w angielskim tłumaczeniu Jana Słiwskiego—1. Zasmuconej, 2. Pamiętam ciche, jasne, złote dni, 3. Skąd pierwsze gwiazdy, 4. Zawod, 5. Na śniegu, 6. Smutna jest dusza moja) 6 zeszytów po ..	1/-
Kowalski Adam—Kierunek Wisła (22 pieśni żołnierskich w układzie na chor meski A. Harasowskiego) .. ..	4/6
Moniuszko Stanisław—Halka (skrocony wyciąg fortepianowy i uwertura na orkiestrę) z tłumaczeniem angielskim ..	9/-
Paderewski Ignacy—3 pieśni solowe z angielskim tłumaczeniem :	
“ Dudziarz ” i “ Gdy ostatnia roza zwiedła ” po ..	1/6
“ Nad woda wielka ” .. .. .	2/-

**(G) INNE WYDAWNICTWA**

Historyczna mapa Polski w czterech kolorach, w formie składanej pocztówki .. .. .	-/6
36 pocztówek z widokami z Polski, postaciami historycznymi itd. a .. .. .	-/4
Matka Boska Częstochowska, obraz w otoku herbów ziem dawnej Rzeczypospolitej, wykonany 4-barwnym drukiem, wielkość 17/22 cale .. .. .	4/-