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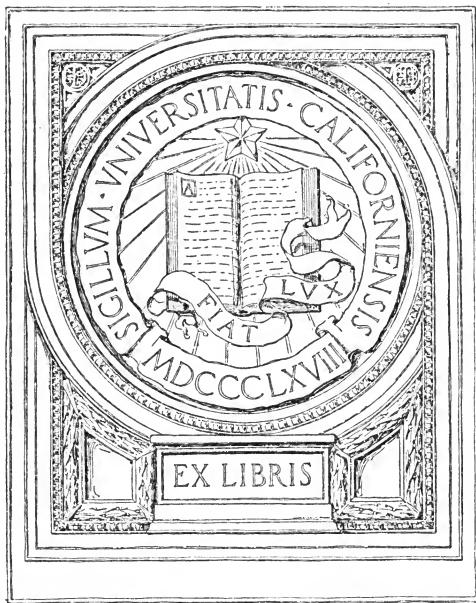


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GIFT OF

National Polish Committee



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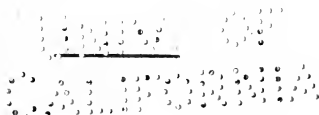
Address of
Herbert Hoover

before the Polish Convention in Buffalo, N. Y.
 on November 12th 1919

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“Poland after ten months, was a democracy with a government for the people and by the people”.—(Herbert Hoover).

“The need of Poland for help and assistance from the United States is not yet over... The coming winter will be a hard winter in Poland”.—(Herbert Hoover).



giving
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TO WHOM
IT MAY COME

Address of
Mr. Herbert Hoover

Before the Polish Convention in Buffalo, N. Y.
on November 12th, 1919.

I have been asked to speak to you on the progress which has been made with the establishment of free government of the Polish people; of the service that you can do in the maintenance of this inspiring Republic; of the service that you must maintain at the same time to the country of your adoption.

I have had the fortune to be associated since 1914 with many of the men who are now comprised in the government of Poland. More particularly, since last January I have been in intimate association with the problems and perplexities of the Polish people. It is truly an inspiring thing to witness thirty millions of people of one race and one language emerge from 150 years of foreign military dictatorship into a free country. It is doubly inspiring to an American to see a new nation founded on the inspirations and ideals that we of the

United States hold as the very basis of liberty.

The sympathies of the American and Polish peoples are not an over-night creation. There is not a school child of the United States who does not know of the great service to our own war for freedom of those great military leaders, Kościuszko and Pulaski. There is not a Pole who does not know the service these same men gave to free Poland, for which they gave their lives. Further, during this 150 yrs. there has been a constant migration of Poles to the United States in an endeavor to find freedom. There has been a constant return of these Poles to Poland and an interpretation of American hopes and ideals amongst the Polish people. The American sympathy for the struggle of Poland to secure her independence has been constant from the days of our own freedom. It was President Wilson who first enunciated the absolute stipulation that the complete independence of the whole of the Polish people was a fundamental condition of this peace.

You, the Polish citizens of the United States, have out of sympathy for your mother country been constant in contribu-

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Committee of America* 2

tion and moral support to those leaders for Polish independence who entered Warsaw in triumph in January this year. You have contributed not only your resources, but your sons to this great thing. America has still another great link of sympathy with Poland. One of those two great Poles who now lead the Polish people, lived many years in the United States and his inspiration and vision of government arise from our institutions. Thus it comes that one of the two great men who have been the builders of the freedom of Poland is an American citizen. **These two great men, Paderewski and Pilsudzki, are today two of the greatest figures that have emerged from this war.** They have the abilities, the courage and resolution of constructive statesmanship.

It requires but a short review of the situation that existed ten months ago within the present boundaries of Poland in contrast to its position today to appreciate the gigantic strides that have been made in the making of the great edifice of the independence of Poland. Poland has been for 150 years under subjugation of foreign military government. The Polish people were given no opportunity for the development of po-

litical experience. Their only training as statesmen lay in political sabotage and in opposition. This same opposition has maintained alive the spirit of Poland for over 150 years and, ripening at times into bloody revolution, finally secured the Polish people their independence. Yet political opposition is a poor school for constructive government. The world feared that the Poles would fail in this emergency—but they have not.

During the war Poland had been ravaged by four separate invasions — parts of it by even seven invasions. The destruction of property and civilian life was greater than all the destruction of property and life on the Western front. Between three and four millions of Poles have died of starvation or disease during the war. The Russians had ruthlessly destroyed thousands of square miles and driven the entire population from home in an endeavor to create a desert that might retard the advance of the German armies. This shocking barbarity, the literally hundreds of thousands who died as refugees at the roadsides, is itself perhaps one of the curses that fell on the military oligarchy of Russia. The Germans also systematically abstracted at

the point of the bayonet every resource of Poland, scraping away such minor surpluses of food as existed in the more prolific sections of Poland and leaving other regions to starve. This, together with the destruction of her farms and the looting of every bit of agricultural machinery, left millions of Poles at the armistice threatened with starvation. There is a greater exhaustion of work animals in Poland than in any other part of Europe.

At the time of the armistice, approximately one quarter of Poland was in the hands of the Austrian army, approximately one half in the hands of the German army, something over one quarter in the hands of the Bolshevik army. The armistice called for the evacuation of certain undoubted Polish territory by the German and Austrian armies. With the German withdrawal, hordes of Bolshevik invaded a large part of Poland, perpetrating indescribable crimes in every village and city. Even in the East, North and South, the armistice provisions left Poland completely surrounded with enemy territory. She had no outlet to the sea and could not send a letter or telegram except through enemy hands. **I do not know in history of so appalling and dishearten-**

ing a situation as faced that great soldier and patriot, Pilsudski, when, escaped from a German prison, he laid the first stone of the Polish government at Warsaw. Here was a country of thirty millions of people in a state of total anarchy; in the midst of a famine such that the children had ceased to play upon the streets; a country with thousands dying daily from typhus and contagious diseases; a large part of the country in the terrible grip of Bolshevik invasion; the Bolshevik army advancing behind a cloud of conspirators, and disintegrated by 150 years of separation, a population incapable of paying taxation; a people absolutely without the means for preserving order or repelling invasion; a people without even the rudimentary machinery on which to build a great administrative government. The railroads and telegraph lines had been greatly destroyed and had practically ceased to function. The rolling stock had been destroyed or removed from the country.

Yet, eight months after the arrival of Pilsudski in Warsaw, I found in Poland a vigorous government, functioning with Ministers of Foreign Affairs, of War, of Food, of Finance, of Railways, of Labor, of

Education, of Agriculture and of Public Health. An army of 500,000 well-drilled, well-equipped and spirited troops. Order established throughout the entire area. The Bolsheviki driven out of Poland. A general election had taken place under universal franchise. A congress had been set up, and from the moment that it convened the government of Poland ruled, responsible to this assembly. Local government had been established in every quarter. Land reform had been inaugurated by law. A public school system had been established. Poland, after ten months, was a democracy with a government for the people and by the people, in a country that had had no government for 150 years but the government of foreign oppression. Railways had been rebuilt. Abandoned cars and locomotives had been repaired and brought into use. Regular, though deficient, train services were being maintained over 30,000 miles of railways. Canals were opened and in operation. Coal mines were running. Fields abandoned for years were being steadily replanted. Post and telegraph services had been re-established. Typhus was being brought under control. The fundamental finance of government was being steadily extended. Po-

land had gained at the Peace conference her critically necessary boundaries and her outlet to the sea. The people had been fed, and children were again playing in the streets.

I am proud that the United States could have had, through her organized representatives in Poland, a material part in the making of this great miracle. I am proud to have been appointed by the American government to direct this service. American assistance was given to Poland in ships, in opening the route to the sea through Danzig, in railway material and skill, in fighting famine and typhus, in financial assistance to the government, in charity to the poor. Beyond this, devoted and disinterested Americans have participated in the building of her economic and political government. This service marks the final repayment of a debt of the American people of 150 years' standing.

The need of Poland for help and assistance from the United States is not yet over. That assistance must continue for yet another year. In another year Poland will have found herself not only with fully developed political institutions but her

great resources will give her an economic independence that will enable her to contribute to the welfare of others. Owing to the destruction of agriculture, it will be another year before Poland will be able to produce sufficient food to maintain her population. Fully thirty per cent. of the fertile land of Eastern Poland has yet no plows. Her railways require more reconstruction and more rolling stock. Her spinning mills must be repaired and raw material found for their operation. Six hundred thousand workmen are idle, because they have not the material on which to labor. Five years, with literally no production or imports of textiles, have left the Polish people underclad and cold. Typhus still rages on her Eastern frontiers. Her population is as yet unable to contribute in taxes the necessary expenditures of the government. Her currency was inflated and debauched by enemy armies by every device known to financial robbery, and, above all, Poland today must hold the front line of Europe against Bolshevik invasion. In the midst of her economic misery, she must maintain an army of 500,000 men, fighting on a front 1500 miles, as the outposts of Europe. Yet the people of Poland are fired by an emotion of free-

dom and sacrifice that will carry her over another year of suffering. A little help will mitigate that suffering, will expedite her recovery, will guarantee the final stability of her free institutions.

The Polish government has been confronted with a most difficult problem in the matters of its large Jewish population. These people have suffered from the same terrible domination as the Poles themselves. They have been driven from the proper development of participation in all branches of agricultural and industrial and intellectual life into the narrow groove of middlemen, and held there in the most terrible submersion.

The result is, more especially in times of famine when the middleman of any kind is between the upper and nether mill stones, that racial conflict has been much heightened.

Whatever the qualities of the Jewish people of Poland may be, in the minds of their critics it must be borne in mind that their present position is the doing of the Gentile and all the world has yet to pay for this accumulated century of injustice. For this, the Polish government now ten months

old is not responsible. With a government gradually developing stability with law and order, the latent animosities of populations escape to the surface. It is not my intention to traverse what may or may not have happened in Poland, but only to point out that in a period of ten months the Polish government has developed to a point that life is safe and that freedom from tyranny is accomplished. The fine, nonsectarian work done by the Jewish Joint Distribution committee in Poland and the active leadership of many important Poles and Jews in finding a solution to this accumulation of centuries of wrong, has placed the whole Jewish problem in Poland on a new footing, and one to which we have every reason to look forward with confidence.

Thus, the coming winter will be a hard winter in Poland. It will not be so hard as the winter that we have passed, and how hard it will be will depend entirely upon the service that Poland can secure from the United States. Poland requires 600,000 to 800,000 tons of wheat and rye. She requires 100,000 tons of fats. She ought to have 200,000 bales of cotton. She also requires other raw materials. Altogether, the economic life of Poland could be kept revolving

and her position steadily improved if she could find credits for \$150,000,000 in the United States. I believe it is the duty of the Poles themselves to directly organize this assistance and to prevent any fishing by intermediaries for a profit in this pool of misery. You should have a strongly developed organization that will scrutinize the appeals made to you.

Poland also requires charity for her destitute. I and my colleagues are endeavoring to provide the food supply and clothing for 1,200,000 destitute, undernourished Polish children. Committees comprising the most devoted Polish men and women have been established in every city and village in Poland. Canteens for feeding children have been in operation for many months. They were established by the American government, but their appropriations having been exhausted they must now depend upon charity. These are the two problems before the Poles in the United States, as to whether you, in the greater prosperity that you enjoy, are prepared to devote your major resources to the loaning of money to the government of Poland for the purchase of its essentials, and whether you are prepared to assist us in charity in

the support of your own brothers and sisters in Poland who are preserving the life of 1,200,000 children. The Polish government and public charity are paying all the expenses of this organization in Poland. We are depending upon you to enable us to buy in the United States the clothes, milk and other foods for these children, which cannot be bought in Poland.

There is another subject on which I wish to say a few words, and that is the question of the duties of citizenship of Poles in the United States. You and your ancestors have come to the United States to free yourselves from oppression and to participate in a country of greater prosperity and a higher standard of living. You have come, therefore, to take advantage of the institutions that have been built up here in 150 years for the well-being of the people in this country. You have been given the privilege of entrance into this community without restriction and you have benefitted by its blessing. It is right that you should have a tender heart for the country of your origin, **but your first and primary duty is to the country of your adoption.** It is a happy circumstance that the whole of the American people are equally

anxious with citizens of Polish origin for the upbuilding of the Polish republic, and that therefore there is no conflict in this service to both countries.

The people of the United States are today themselves facing great difficulties of social and industrial character. If we are to solve these difficulties, it will be by the undivided support of our institutions from which we have obtained the blessings which we now enjoy. Many foolish ideas are being circulated amongst the foreignborn population of the United States. Many of these foreign - born are interesting themselves in the destruction of our primary institutions and defiance of our laws. The American people are fast losing patience with this attitude. It may develop out of this that the "open door" towards Europe will be in a large measure closed. But, worse than this, there may develop out of it a prejudice against every speaker of a foreign language in the United States. It creates prejudice against extending aid to those countries in Europe from which our foreign-born populations spring.

If reforms are needed in the United States, they will be carried out by those whose parents have grown up amid our in-

stitutions and those who have become in sentiment and spirit a part of our people. It is fortunate that the Polish population of the United States have been but little influenced by these forms of agitation. If a Pole exists who has associated himself with the organizations that devote themselves to the destruction of our institutions, that Pole is not only disloyal to the United States but he is endeavoring to paralyze the arm that is supporting the independence of his own mother country. Those who are dissatisfied with our institutions can always choose the alternative of retiring to those from which they came.

It is therefore the duty of those of you who speak our language and who have lived under our institutions, to see to it that people of your blood do not associate themselves with movements that are antagonistic to our public sentiment and to our social and economic institutions.



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