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August/September 2021

Września Children Strikes

Fighting for the Right to Speak Polish

IRENA FRĄCZEK

After centuries of quiet obscurity, a little town of Września in west-central Poland, suddenly started making headlines across the world. The year was 1901, a *cause célèbre* was a group of brave Polish children rebelling against the ban on using Polish language in Prussian schools – ultimately throwing an unforgiving spotlight on the abhorrent and ruthless nature of germanization policies in the Prussian partition of Poland.

Września is located in Greater Poland (Wielkopolska), about 30 miles south-east of Poznań, and 15 miles south of Gniezno, two historically Polish cities vying for the title of the first capital of Poland. The Gniezno and Poznań region fell under the Prussian rule in 1793, in the course of second partition of Poland (ending also the short life of May 3 Constitution enacted in 1791).

From Prussian perspective, Polish inhabitants of the annexed area stood in the way of German eastward expansion (*Drang nach Osten*).



The Września Children Monument in Września, Poland

fot. Wikimedia Commons

*ten), a medieval idea embraced in the 19th century Prussian Kingdom. The main strategies for doing away with the obstacle included eradication of Polish land ownership and unrelenting suppression of Polish culture (*Kultatkampf*).*

Step by step, Poles and Polish language were being removed from administration, courts, cultural institutions and academia. In schools, restrictions on teaching in Polish applied to the increasing groups of subjects. Similar restrictions were taking place in schools and by 1873, only religion could be taught in Polish. Then in March 1901, a mandatory switch to German was ordered.

In Września's Catholic People's School (Katolicka Szkoła Ludowa), implementation of the new rule began with the arrival of re-printed catechisms on April 1. Yet children declined to accept the books and refused to speak German in religion classes. Children were disciplined by spending time in isolation rooms but facing an implacable defiance, unscrupulous German teachers turned to caning. On May 15, a town meeting with prominent politicians was held and a solemn note of disapproval was sent to the authorities. Then the situation escalated to the explosive level just five days later.

On May 20, the school staff subjected 14 students to prolonged beating. Hearing the screams of children flogged inside, desperate

parents and other concerned citizens tried to enter the school to stop the brutality. The school called police to disperse the crowd and 26 adults were put on trial for public disturbance, rebellion, interference with public duties and other criminal offences. The so-called "Gniezno trial" ended on November 19, 1901 with sentences of imprisonment ranging from 2 months to 2.5 years. The harshest penalty went to the impoverished woman taking care of her 7 children and elderly mother.

Despite the inconceivable hardship for some of the defendant's families, the Leipzig tribunal upheld the ruling on April 12, 1902. The defiant children were forced to stay in school for one year longer than required by law. The authorities also went after the committees organizing aid to the affected families. New court cases were filed against a school physician who certified the seriousness of children injuries and other witnesses testifying earlier for the defense. Even the local photographer was sentenced to 40 days in jail for taking just three pictures of people involved in the dra-

ma. Two other people were slapped with lesser sentences for helping to store and distribute the photos (see the insert to the right).

Despite the trials, continuing use of corporal punishment and other repressions, children strikes spread to larger areas. Yet they started waning after amnesty was declared in 1903, yet the last holdouts held tight until the summer of 1904. A new wave of strikes in 1905 engulfed about 800 schools in Poznań and Bydgoszcz regions. The last surge of strikes took place in years 1906-1907 with participation reaching 75,000 students. But it was the spark of Września, where 159 children rebelled at the peak of activities, that left the deepest trace in the history of those events.

The Września children strikes quickly gained widespread attention in partitioned Poland and across Europe. Support for the children, parents and their defenders as conveyed in press was overwhelming. This was true even for the heavily censored newspapers in Russian partition, itself subject to unrelenting russification.

As it could be expected, German newspapers followed two different paths. In general, Social Democrats opposing the germanization policies on Polish lands, while nationalists defended them staunchly. The latter sentiment

continued on p. 4



UPCOMING EVENTS

Polish Independence Day



On Sunday November 7 the Wisconsin PAC will host its annual Polish Independence Day/Veterans Day Luncheon at the beautiful Polish Center of Wisconsin in Franklin.

This year Ms. Irena Frączek of Madison and Mr. Frank Czarnecki of Green Bay will be honored recipients of the Congressman Clement J. Zablocki Civic Achievement Award for their valued contributions to our community.

All are invited to attend!

The Wisconsin PAC inaugurated this annual event on November 11, 1998 – the then 80th Anniversary of Poland's proclamation of independence in Warsaw – the very same day World War I ended on the Western Front in France. This day is a national holiday in Poland and is commemorated as Veterans Day in the United States. Over the years more than 70 dedicated men individuals have been honored at this event for their contributions to our Polish American community, our State and out Country.

The Polish American Congress was founded in Buffalo, New York in May 1944 – just days before the World War II Normandy invasion at a massive gathering attended by 2,500 delegates from all over the country. The aim of the PAC was to support the cause of a free and independent postwar Poland, to reaffirm the commitment by millions of Americans of Polish origin to our country's values, and to educate our fellow Americans about our rich history and culture. The PAC has been true to its founding mission ever since.

In August 1980 the PAC was the first American organization to support the cause of the Solidarity union born in Gdańsk. The PAC worked hard for Poland's freedom – achieved in 1989, and was a key force in the decision by the U.S. government to admit Poland into NATO in 1999. Wisconsin PAC members played important roles in that great effort.

Today the people of Poland are not just friends of the American people – something they have always been. Today's Poland is one of our closest allies.

In Wisconsin, our PAC was a decisive factor in creating the Polish Studies Committee and the many programs it has sponsored since 1979 at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Our state division has enthusiastically supported the beautiful Polish Center in Franklin, Wisconsin, and the annual Polish Festival on Milwaukee's Lakefront. Our members have helped in the fund raising efforts to preserve the monumental St Josaphat Basilica in Milwaukee and the restoration of the Kosciuszko monument. And we proudly support the work of all the organizations of Polish Americans in Wisconsin.

To learn more about us please look at our website or contact our President, David Rydzewski (david.rydzewski@att.net)

Don Pienkos

Volunteers Needed—Art Street 2021

As many of you know, PHS participates in several fund-raising activities throughout the year as a means to grow and preserve our Polish Heritage. Art Street is one of those events that has served us well in the past, so we will host a booth again this year in Green Bay on Aug 28-29. For more details regarding this event, visit the Art Street website at: www.mosaicartsinc.org/artstreet

This event was very well attended last year, and we experienced strong traffic through our booth. We are in need of volunteers to not only help set up/tear down, but more importantly, to spend some time in the booth visiting with people of Polish decent and sharing our Polish heritage. Again this year, we will have Polish related items for sale during the event.

This is a good way for our readers and membership to get involved and help strengthen our local Polish Heritage. If you're able to spend a few hours of your time during the event, please contact me directly at 920-366-2921 or via email at jlaka57@gmail.com.

I look forward to hearing from each of you.

John Laka

PHS Vice President

Polish firsts and innovations

COMPILED BY ROBERT STRYBEL

Although the Polish nation can boast an impressive list of pioneering individuals and outstanding firsts, many of them remain unknown to the general public. The following are among those worthy of note:

POLAND'S FIRST KING: Boleslaus the Brave (992-1025), was known as a builder of military forts, bridges, churches and monasteries who introduced Poland's first currency, the grzywna. He consolidated the country's regions, and his successful campaigns expanded its territory to include Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia, Lusatia and Meissen. Poland acquired its own independent Church structure following a visit to Gniezno by German emperor Otto III in the year 1000.

MONK INVENTS BULLET-PROOF VEST: Incongruous as it may seem, it was a Polish Resurrectionist monk, Father Kazimierz Zegleń, who invented the bullet-proof vest in the late 19th century. He later teamed up with Polish entrepreneur Jan Szczepanik to mass-produce the woven-silk vests. They gained popularity when their protective material saved the life of Spain's King Alfonso XIII who survived an assassination attempt on his wedding day in 1901.

NIHIL NOVI: A 1505 act whose full name in Latin translated as "Nothing New without Common Consent." It was way ahead of its time in limiting the power of the king who thenceforth could not impose any new laws without the consent of parliament. Thereby, the Pol-

ish-Lithuanian Commonwealth effectively became Europe's first parliamentary democracy centuries before that polity became the norm.

FATHER OF THE OIL INDUSTRY: Ignacy Łukasiewicz (1822-1882), a pharmacist and engineer from Lwów (then under Austrian occupation), could rightly be called the "Father of the Oil Industry." He was the first to distill kerosene from oil into kerosene, invent the kerosene lamp and introduce Europe's first kerosene street lamp. He also built the world's first oil well and modern oil refinery. A patriotic philanthropist, Łukasiewicz supported the 1863 anti-Russian insurrection, assisted Polish refugees, founded a church, chapel and spa resort.

EQUALITY BEFORE THE LAW: Now taken for granted, this was a revolutionary concept when proclaimed by Polish Renaissance theologian and political writer Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski (1503-1572). He advocated equal penalties for murder whether the victim was a noble or peasant and advocated giving all social classes the right to own land. His crowning treatise *De Republica emendanda* (On improving the Republic) was translated into different languages and was widely read across Renaissance Europe. His pro-Protestant leanings put him in jeopardy of being declared a heretic, but he was protected by Polish King Zygmunt August.

WĄSAL BROTHERS: One of the world's biggest and most successful media companies was originally known as Warner

Brothers Pictures. Its founders, Aaron, Szmul and Hirsch, were Polish immigrants of Jewish descent from the village of Krasnoscie in Poland's Mazowsze voivodeship (province). They Americanized their first names to Albert, Sam and Harry and adopted the more WASP-sounding surname Warner. It had originally been Wąsal, the Polish word for a mustachioed male.

FIRST MOVIE CAMERA: In 1894, Polish inventor Kazimierz Prószyński (1875-1945) invented the Pleograph, the world's first motion-picture filming and projecting device – a year earlier than France's much vaunted Lumière Brothers. "He was the first in cinematography, and I was the second," Louis Lumière remarked. Prószyński later invented the world's first handheld movie camera, and used it to film the 1911 coronation of Britain's King George V.

TEN-YEAR-OLD GIRL KING: Ten-year-old Jadwiga (Hedwig), the daughter of King Louis of Hungary, was crowned King of Poland in 1384 to end a two-year interregnum. She continued using her royal title even after marrying Lithuanian Duke Jagiełło who in 1386 was crowned King of Poland. Jadwiga was known for her deep religious devotion as well as her patronage of the arts and learning and personally led the Polish army to prevent the takeover of Ukraine by Hungary. She was canonized by Pope John Paul II in 1997.

POLAR EXPLORER OF MANY TALENTS: Henryk Arctowski (1871-1958) studied and worked in Belgium, France and the US and was one of the first researchers to explore the South Pole in winter. Of distant German ancestry, he was born in Warsaw as Henryk Artzt but later changed it to Arctowski to emphasize his Polish heritage. Arctowski's scientific career encompassed geodesics, geophysics, meteorology, climate change, oceanography and glaciology. He also prepared a report on Poland for the post-World War I Paris Peace Conference. Poland's South Pole research outpost is known as the Arctowski Polish Antarctic Station.

BENEDICT OF POLAND (c.1200-c.1280): Contrary to widespread belief, Italy's Marco Polo was not the first European to travel to the Far East. Those who had preceded him included a Polish Franciscan Friar as Benedictus Polonus (Benedict of Poland), personally chosen by Pope Innocent IV as the papal delegate to accompany the expedition of Giovanni da Pian del Carpino. Benedict met the Great Khan Güyük of the Mongolian Empire and presented him with a letter from the pope. The Polish friar's account of the trip included a copy of the Khan's reply.

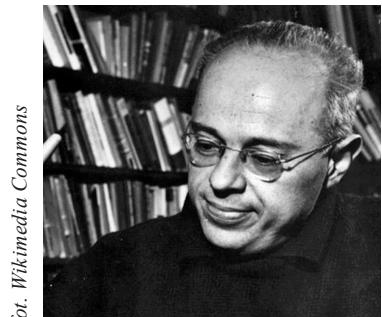
COMPUTER PIONEER: By the time 20-year-old student Bill Gates first read about minicomputers in a 1975 issue of Popular Electronics, in 1960 Polish IT pioneer Jacek Karpiński had received a UNESCO award for his research into artificial intelligence. Already in 1971 he had constructed his K-202, one of the first mini-computers. But it was never mass-produced because computer science in Poland was controlled by Moscow. Karpiński, who had belonged to the Home Army (AK) during the war, became a livestock farmer, and after the communist regime imposed martial law in 1981, he emigrated to Switzerland.

NEMINEM CAPTIVABIMUS: The English are proud of their Habeas Corpus Act of 1679 which prevented imprisonment without a court injunction and is regarded as one of the most important statutes in British legal history. Poland had a similar law known by the Latin name: Neminem captivabimus nisi iure victum. That translates to "We shall imprison no-one without a court verdict." It was introduced towards the end of his 48-year-long reign by King Władysław Jagiełło as part of a packet of privileges he issued in 1430-1433.

NAGRA RECORDER: Stefan Kudelski (1931-2013), who managed to flee Poland with his family ahead of its 1939 joint German-Soviet invasion, settled in Switzerland where he developed his pioneering Nagra tape recorder. He named it Nagra which in Polish means "it will record." Kudelski's inven-

tion was a boon to the broadcasting and movie industry. He continued producing improved Nagra models on into the 1990s and won numerous awards including three Oscars.

OUTSTANDING SCI-FI WRITER: Stanisław Lem (1921-2006) was undoubtedly Poland's greatest writer specializing in sci-fi literature. His novels dealing with



fictional space expeditions and encounters with alien civilizations often contained a philosophical message applicable to issues facing people on planet Earth. Some works satirized life under communism, but Lem deftly disguised his humor to make it past the censors. His books were translated into 40 different languages and had a total print run of 30 million copies.



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Please indicate the types of activities in which you might enjoy volunteering:

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- Paczki Day Party (Feb)
- Easter Party
- Public Relations
- Board Membership
- Polish Music event
- Website Design
- Art Street (Aug)
- Input to Newsletter
- Polish Mass (Oct)
- Christmas Party
- Other talents to share:

* for PHS use only to send event reminders

Thank You New members, RENEWING MEMBERS, and Donors!

The Polish Heritage Society of Northeastern Wisconsin wishes to offer our appreciation and gratitude to **Chester Dudkiewicz, Steven Karcz, and Rachel Liss** for the very kind donations they included.

Members renewing through this issue's publishing deadline include **Adam & Eugenia Muller** of Wisconsin Dells, **Dave Wentland** of De Pere, **Dorothy Vanden Heuvel** of Seymour, **Chester Dudkiewicz** of Green Bay, **Susan Ciolek** of Green Bay, **Paul Drzewiecki** of New London, **Marie Revolinski** of Madison, **Kathy Denor** of Oconto, **Stacie Gorecki** of Green Bay, **Rachel Liss** of Riverton, Wyoming, and **Sunrise Dental** of Green Bay.

The Polish Heritage Society of Northeastern Wisconsin is pleased to welcome new members **Steven Karcz** of Pulaski, **Kim Duffrin** of Menominee, Michigan, and **Kelly Balko** of St. Charles, Minnesota as a gift of Kim Duffrin. Congratulations and witamy! It is wonderful to see this organization continue to grow and maintain. Dobrze jest mieć Was z nami!

Thank you to new members, renewing members, and donors. I appreciate the special notes you sometimes include which I may appropriately share with your Board of Directors. Thank you all for your support and interest in our Polish heritage. If you have any membership status or financial inquiries, please feel free to contact me. Also, your board officers' contact information is listed in this newspaper and on the phosnew.org website.

Paul Zwicker, Treasurer
zwickerp@aol.com
phosnew@gmail.com

Gdańsk and Kaszuby

ASIA SPICE

It has been three years since I last saw my family in Poland, and my heart yearns for all the familiar places and foods from home! Yes, I left Poland in 1998, but I still call it home. Over the years, I have tried to visit regularly in the summer – sometimes for a couple of weeks, sometimes for a little longer if I didn't teach summer classes – but my move to Wisconsin in 2019 and then the pandemic have made me unable to go.

My hometown is the city of Gdańsk in the north of Poland. It is a place steeped in history, dating back to 997 AD, which over the centuries was under Polish, Prussian, and German rule and also a free-city state. Because of its location at the mouth of the Vistula river, it was along the main historic trade routes from the south of Europe, and being on the Baltic Sea gave it access to Scandinavian and Western European ports. In fact, between the 13th and 17th century, Gdańsk belonged to the Hanseatic League, which brought to it commerce and science from the West. The charming merchant townhouses of Gdańsk's Old Town, each uniquely designed and decorated, resemble the architecture of the Netherlands, northern Germany, and Denmark more than of Krakow or Warszawa. Unlike most Polish cities, Gdańsk also does not have a central market square – the Royal Way consisting of Ulica Długa (Long Street) and Długi Targ (the Long Market) functions at the heart of the city. This is where the famous Neptune Fountain is, in front of the Artus' Court, with the Gothic town hall towering right over them. Just a block away is St. Mary's Church, the biggest brick building in the world, although many gothic and baroque church steeples and spires dot the area. Another landmark not to miss is the Gdańsk Crane from the 15th century on the Motlawa canal. It was once used for loading and unloading goods. Take a stroll along the nearby streets, each named after saints and the tradesmen once occupying the areas, admire amber jewelry and local art in galleries, sip coffee and enjoy delicious baked goods in small outdoor cafes.

For panoramic views of the city, climb the town hall tower or St. Mary's Church tower – from there you will see all of the Old Town, as well as the river delta, the shipyards, and some of the newer suburbs surrounding the city center. Speaking of the shipyards, it was there that the Solidarity movement was born. Solidarity started as a trade union, but became a powerful organization that opposed the communist party rule, leading to massive (and often violent) national strikes and eventually to the fall of communism in 1989. Lech Wałęsa, the head of Solidarity since 1980, was later elected president and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize.

Other famous Gdańsk citizens include: the astronomer Johannes Hevelius, physicist Daniel Fahrenheit (whose temperature scale you use every day), philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, author Günter Grass, as well as numerous more contemporary artists and politicians.

While Gdańsk has a long and vibrant history, today it is also a bustling modern city. A tree-lined boulevard connects it with its neighbors Sopot, which grew in size and popularity as a trendy German resort town in the 19th century, and Gdynia, a thriving seaport and business hub. Together, the three municipalities form the Tri-City metropolitan area, flanked by sandy beaches in the east and the forested hills of the Tri-City Landscape Park in the west.

When given a little more time in the region, here are a few of my personal favorite places to visit:

Malbork is a smaller city south-east of Gdańsk. Its claim to fame is the enormous Teutonic Knights' Castle, added to the UNESCO World Heritage List. In early 1200s, the German Teutonic Knights were invited to settle in the area of East Prussia

discovered that the Earth rotates around the Sun and not the other way around, was born in Toruń. Toruń pierniki (gingerbread) are a local specialty, and in the past they were intricately shaped and decorated. These days, you can buy hard or soft pierniki, covered in chocolate, glazed, or plain. Whichever you prefer – you must try them!

The Hel Peninsula is Poland's longest and most peculiar peninsula separating the Gulf of Gdańsk from the open Baltic Sea. The spit is as narrow as 200 yards in some places, so you can see both bodies of water within minutes! The peninsula is a popular summer destination because of its beaches; off-season it's home to quiet fishing villages. The northernmost point in Poland, the Rozewie Cape, sits at the base of the peninsula. Visit the Rozewie lighthouse for a lovely view of the Baltic coast.

West of the town of Łeba on the Baltic coast are the shifting dunes of the Słowiński National Park. You might feel that you're in a desert because some of the dunes are huge! The highest one is over 140 feet tall. The dunes are a sight to see. Because of the coastal winds, they con-



to convert pagans to Christianity, but their power extended beyond religion. In fact, it was only after the Battle of Grunwald in 1410 that the order's wealth and political and military influence began to decline. It takes at least 3 hours to tour the castle from its moats and defensive walls to towers and three residential wings. On summer evenings, you can enjoy a sound-and-light show on the walls of the castle.

Kwidzyn and Gniew are two other nearby towns with Teutonic castles, considerably smaller than Malbork, but still picturesque thanks to their location on the banks of the Wisła (Vistula) river. The Gniew castle grounds host jousting tournaments and medieval fairs complete with feast, dances, and duels in costumes.

If you still have time to push south, Toruń is a must-see! The city boasts over 300 listed historical buildings, and its whole Old Town was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List. The town hall tower offers views of the city and the mighty Wisła. Apart from historic architecture, Toruń is known for two reasons: Nicolaus Copernicus and gingerbread. Copernicus, the famous astronomer, mathematician, physician who

stably move. The beach is wide, and the cold Baltic water is crystal clear.

West of Gdańsk there's Kaszuby (Kashubia). For modern city folk, Kashubia now typically means the Kashubian Lake District, as the retreating ice-age glaciers left behind picturesque moraine hills and hundreds of lakes. Tri-City residents have their cabins there – much like Wisconsinites "up north". But actually, Kashubia is an ethnically distinct area with its own language and culture. Kashubian embroidery is easily recognizable with its flowery motifs and a small range of colors: green, 3 shades of blue, yellow, red, and black, reflecting the local landscape.

DID YOU KNOW?

Westerplatte – a peninsula with a small Polish army base where the first shots of World War II were fired from the ship Schleswig-Holstein on September 1, 1939. The outnumbered Polish soldiers defended the area for seven days.

Gdańsk was almost completely destroyed at the end of WW II by the entering Soviet Army who wanted to annihilate "the nest of Germanization".

Oliwa Cathedral – a Cistercian basilica dating back to



fot. Pixabay

1186, famous for its magnificent wooden organ. When it is played, various decorations (angels, the sun and moon) move. The cathedral is set in an extensive park with fountains, creeks, and gardens.

Gdańsk Shakespeare Theatre, completed in 2014 on the site where a former playhouse sat, hosts the annual Shakespeare Festival. Plays are performed in the theater, but al-

so along the streets of the Old Town.

Jarmark Dominikański (Dominican Fair) is the main summer festival in Gdańsk. Thousands of stalls selling everything from handicrafts, antiques, jewelry, toys, and souvenirs line the narrow streets of the Old Town for two weeks in August. There are colorful parades, concerts, fireworks, and sport events.

Polish Genealogy and Workshops

Polish Heritage Society and the Pulaski Area Community Education (PACE) office will be presenting two informative sessions this fall. Both of the presentations will be at no cost to members of PHS and both will be at Pulaski High School at 1040 S St Augustine St in the Large Group Instruction (LGI) room. This is located just inside the front doors of the school. There will be \$15 fee for non-members.

On October 12th will be Polish Genealogy. This will first cover basic genealogy and how to get started, and what your finished product may be. What tools are on-line and off-line that are available to use. Which one's cost money and which are free. What tools are at the library? There are specific Polish web sites to help track ancestors in Poland. Many records did survive the wars, and more records are being digitized and available to us every year.

If you have been thinking of getting started on the genealogy trail, this may be a good start for you.

Everyone will receive a printed copy of the presentation which contains numerous WEB links to help in your search.

Next on November 1st will be Polish Workshop. In the workshop, Poland native Małgorzata Daugherty will help to create a deeper understanding of Poland today. She will talk about the country's history, traditions and things you should know about Poland before traveling there. Also, get a recipe for a traditional polish dish. Daugherty came to the United States at the age of 23. She graduated from the Academy of Economics in Krakow, Poland and the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. She is the President of Polish Heritage Society in Green Bay. In November of 2017 she was awarded the Zablocki Achievement Award by the Polish American Congress for promoting Polish Heritage through education, cultural and social activities.

Complete the below registration form and mail to PACE to secure a seat.

**Mike Brzezinski
& Małgorzata Daugherty**



PACE REGISTRATION FORM

Presentation to Attend:

Polish Genealogy, Tuesday Oct 12th, 7 to 8 PM

Polish Workshop, Monday Nov 1st from 6 to 8PM

Participant's Name _____

Address _____

City _____ ZIP _____

Member of Polish Heritage Society of NE Wisconsin Yes No

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

No Fee to members of the Polish Heritage Society.

\$15 Fee to non-members.

Send completed form and the \$15 check payable to Polish Heritage Society to: **PACE Office, P.O. Box 36, Pulaski, WI 54162**

Waiver Statement: The participant / Parent /Guardian assumes all responsibility in the case of injury or harm to participant. The Pulaski Community School District, their employees or agents or any volunteers or organizations associated with this activity will not be held responsible for any personal injury or loss that may occur in conjunction with this activity.

Signature _____

Września Children Strikes

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went on display in late 1901, when celebrated pianist Ignacy Jan Paderewski was booed and boycotted after declaring that proceeds from his concert in Germany will go to support the Września victims. Needless to say, Paderewski refused to perform in Germany.

In Europe, the strongest reactions were linked to other great Poles. Soon after the Gniezno verdict, Henryk Sienkiewicz (1846-1916), the world-famous grandmaster of Polish language and 1905 Nobel prize winner, con-

teachers. Let's also not forget that memory of those events echoes in Konopnicka's *Rota*, one of the best-known songs in Poland, viewed by some as a candidate for Polish anthem.

American Polonia quickly became aware of Września events as well. Published alongside the emotionally charged appeal "to Polish mothers" penned by Henryk Sienkiewicz, the first reports in Polish-language press appeared in June 1901. The response of Polish-Americans was spectacular. Numerous organizations called their members to action. Almost imme-



fot. Wikimedia Commons

Szymon Furmanek's photo of children striking in Września. Due to high demand and orders arriving from abroad and all partitions in Poland and abroad, the photo was reproduced on postcards.

Children striking in Września sent some of the postcard to students in other schools as invitations to join the strikes.

demned its flagrant injustice in an open letter to the Prussian emperor. The letter was reprinted in British press along the articles brimming with contempt for the Prussian anti-Polish policies.

On the other hand, Maria Konopnicka (1842-1910), the greatest Polish female poet and writer of the time, and a soul acutely sen-

dately petitions started to circulate and organized protests began taking place in town halls and parishes of many major and smaller American cities. They peaked in January 1902 and according to some estimates, Chicago area demonstrations gathered around 25,000 Poles and their supporters on just one day (January 26) alone.

These actions helped the Polish cause in more ways than one. Thousands of dollars collected to aid the children and their imprisoned defenders notwithstanding, the extent of oppression that Poles suffered in the partitioned Poland was most vividly brought to the attention of general public and the media. For individual Polish Americans, it was a chance to realize the strength of their spiritual connection to the ancestral homeland and native language. And for Polonia in general, an opportunity to experience power that arises from the organizational unity and the potency of symbols that can earn sympathy and support for Polish causes, while wearing away the image of a mighty opponents.

Let's pause and reflect on the significance of those historic events on their 120 Anniversary.

Września-Wisconsin connection:
One of Września children was
Tekla Tomaszewska-Dembinski
(1988-1978), who came to the US
in 1909. She is buried in
St. Adalbert Cemetery in
Milwaukee, WI.

sitive to children suffering, worked tirelessly to publicize Września events during her prolonged stays in Italy. In response, about 120,000 Italians signed petition condemning the atrocities perpetrated on Polish children by Prussian



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DID YOU KNOW?

By FRANK CZARNECKI



(We continue our look at Kosciuszko's involvement in America's fight for independence.)

Soon after the victory at Saratoga, it was decided that the new, permanent fortification on the Hudson would be built farther south at West Point. Kosciuszko was sent there as chief engineer. He was charged with planning and building hilltop forts, redoubts, gun emplacements, breastworks, and troop barracks so strong as to eliminate any further danger of invasion from Canada. West Point became "The Gibraltar of America," and the British never tried to capture it.

During the early part of his assignment at West Point, Kosciuszko's work was pushed with emergency speed lest there be a British assault. Later, Washington established his headquarters nearby and the work proceeded at a more orderly pace. Washington himself was greatly interested in it. Kosciuszko escorted him on trips of inspection. After one of them, this notice was posted: Lost yesterday, a silver spur. Whoever shall bring it to Colonel Kosciuszko, shall have ten dollars reward.

At first, West Point was a fortress only. The Academy was not established until 1802. The first cadets were all engineers. A treatise by Kosciuszko on employment of artillery was used as a text. The first mon-

ument erected at the Academy was a tribute to Kosciuszko commissioned and paid for by the cadets themselves. The monument still stands near a corner of the parade grounds on the site of one of the forts Kosciuszko built.



During his long service at West Point, Kosciuszko found recreation in building a small flower garden in the steep cliff overlooking the Hudson. The army doctor at West Point wrote of it "abounding more in rocks than in soil" and he told how Kosciuszko had turned a little spring into a "curious water fountain with spouting jets and cascades." Kosciuszko's garden and its tiny fountain are still perched on the side of the cliff.

(to be continued)

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