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Polishness as a Superior Value in the Social Activism of Erazm Józef Jerzmanowski

ABSTRACT

The “Polish Nobel,” “Polish baron,” and “the one that illuminated America,” are just some of the nicknames given to Erazm Jerzmanowski (1844-1909), participant of the January Uprising, a Polish migrant, inventor, businessman and philanthropist. Jerzmanowski obtained a high position in the world of American business of the 1880s and 1890s. He was the only Pole on the list of the top American millionaires of the time. He realized positivist ideals of grassroots work and devoted himself to a wide array of social and philanthropic activities addressed both to the American Polonia and the Poles under occupation. His crowning achievement was the establishment of the awards which were compared to the Alfred Nobel Foundation (the laureates included Henryk Sienkiewicz and Ignacy Jan Paderewski). The overriding value in his activities was his work for the economic, cultural and scientific improvement of the Polish society which was intended to lead to the restoration of Poland’s independence.

KEY WORDS: Erazm Jerzmanowski, Polonia, businessman, philanthropist, United States

STRESZCZENIE

Polskość jako wartość nadrzędna w działalności społecznej Erazma Józefa Jerzmanowskiego

„Polski Nobel”, „polski baron”, „ten, który oświecił Amerykę”, to tylko niektóre z przydomków nadawanych Erazmowi Jerzmanowskiemu (1844-1909) – uczestnikowi powstania styczniowego, polskiemu emigrantowi, wynalazcy, biznesmenowi i filantropowi. Jerzmanowski, uzyskując wysoką pozycję w świecie amerykańskiego biznesu lat 80. i 90. XIX stulecia (jedyne Polak na ówczesnej liście największych milionerów amerykańskich), realizował ideały pozytywistycznej pracy u podstaw i poświęcił się szerokiej działalności filantropijnej oraz społecznej skierowanej zarówno do amerykańskiej Polonii, jak i pozostających pod zaborami rodaków. Jej ukoronowaniem stała się fundacja nagrody porównywanej z fundacją Alfreda Nobla (laureatami byli m.in. Henryk Sienkiewicz, Ignacy Jan Paderewski). Wartością nadrzędna w prowadzonych przez niego działaniach była praca na rzecz podniesienia poziomu ekonomicznego, kulturalnego i naukowego polskiego społeczeństwa, a poprzez to doprowadzenie w przyszłości do odzyskania przez Polskę niepodległości.

SŁOWA KLUCZE: Erazm Jerzmanowski, Polonia, biznesmen, filantrop, Stany Zjednoczone

The January Uprising affected the lives of many thousands of Poles. It formed their characters and world views, and began the period of repressions that affected the Polish society of the 1860s. It contributed to the emergence of the positivist approach to the so-called Polish problem. An example of a person not only proclaiming such an approach, but also implementing it in his daily activities was Erazm Jerzmanowski.

Born in 1844, Jerzmanowski came from impoverished gentry. His family leased landed estates. Little is known about his childhood. In 1862 he graduated from the Provincial Gymnasium in Warsaw and began studying at the Faculty of Civil Engineering of the Polytechnic Institute of Agriculture and Forestry in Nowa Aleksandria (Puławy). However, his studies were interrupted by the outbreak of the January Uprising at the beginning of 1863. Jerzmanowski enlisted in the insurgent army and, in the spring, he found himself in Marian Langiewicz's units stationed in the Świętokrzyskie Mountains, and after his defeat, he made his way to

Galicia and took part in Józef Miniewski's Olkusz expedition.¹ Arrested by the Austrians, he was imprisoned in the citadel in Olomouc.² Released after a few months he left for France. He devoted the years of his French emigration to acquire an education that would give him the opportunity to earn income. In contrast to the masses of Polish emigrants he did not join the Polish School in Batignolles, but he chose a more practical way to fill the gaps in his education at the Polish School in Paris. Then, he studied engineering at the School of Engineering and Military Artillery in Metz, where he graduated in 1868.³ Working for French gas companies in 1871, he went to the United States to deploy a technology developed by chemist Cyprien Tessié du Motay for obtaining liquid gas, which was used to fuel street lamps. Working as an engineer in the New York Municipal Gas-light Company, Jerzmanowski worked hard on improving the du Motay's method, which he was ultimately successful in. He modified it so extensively, that it generally came to be called the "Jerzmanowski method." In 1882, he was one of the founders (vice-president and then president) of the Equitable Gas Light Company of New York, which quickly began to expand and operated throughout the eastern part of the United States. Not only a talented inventor, but also a manager, Jerzmanowski was called by the American press the "Polish baron."⁴ He was known for taking care of the financial profitability of the work he conducted. He patented each of his innovations, so that in the future he could derive appropriate returns from their use in the gas industry. In total, he was the author of 22 patents (including 3 as co-author), which contributed to his financial success.⁵ He belonged to the elite of the US business.⁶ In 1894, he was mentioned on the 96th position in a press list of male American millionaires (and the 117th position on a list that also included women millionaires) with a fortune estimated at 2,000,000 US dollars.⁷ In 1896, Jerzmanowski decided

1 A.S. Więch, *Rola powstania styczniowego w drodze życiowej Erazma Józefa Jerzmanowskiego*, in: *Erazm Józef Jerzmanowski (1844-1909). Życie w służbie idei*, eds. O.J. Biernat, A.S. Więch, Kraków-Prokocim 2013, pp. 41-48.

2 J. Hulewicz, *Jerzmanowski Erazm Józef Dołęga*, "Polski Słownik Biograficzny," 1964, Vol. XI, pp. 178-179.

3 Archiwum Nauki PAN i PAU w Krakowie (further: AN PAN i PAU), ref. K III-22, *Erazm Józef Jerzmanowski, Świadectwo Ukończenia Szkoły Inżynierii i Artylerii Wojskowej w Metz*.

4 "New York Daily Tribune," 30 January 1896.

5 A. Radecki-Pawlik, *Patenty inżynierskie „polskiego Nobla” Erazma Jerzmanowskiego*, in: *Erazm Józef Jerzmanowski (1844-1909). Życie w służbie idei*, op. cit., p. 66; S. Łotysz, *Wynalazczość Polska w Stanach Zjednoczonych*, Warszawa 2013, pp. 152-166.

6 Since 1877 he was a US citizen; The National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, *New York Naturalization Index is in New York 1792-1906*, M1674 roll 124.

7 "The Evening World," 10 January 1894.

on the final completion of his US enterprises. Having sold his shares in the American gas companies, he and his wife Anna decided to settle in a property they purchased in Prokocim near Krakow, where he died in 1909.

Erazm Jerzmanowski, as a member of the generation of the Polish positivists, defined his goal very precisely:

When I grabbed the pilgrim stick of a Polish wanderer, there was one thought that guided me. To earn a fortune ... I wanted a fortune, because I felt that it is such a power which we need if indeed we are going to re-build Poland in the first place.⁸

Jerzmanowski was unyielding in his views and unwilling to make concessions and compromises, which undoubtedly contributed to the lack of major successes in his efforts to gain leadership in Polish organizations (he ran in the elections as a candidate for the Censor of the Polish National Union in America in 1886),⁹ and it led to his resignation in 1894 as President of the newly established Polish League after just a few months of its operation.¹⁰ Among Jerzmanowski's speeches, it is worth noting three of them that perfectly reflect his goals and are an excellent interpretation of the ideas behind his Polish activism. These are: an appeal addressed to the participants of the convention of delegates of the Polish National Association in 1886;¹¹ a speech given during the anniversary of the January Uprising in New York City in 1887;¹² and the appeal of the Polish National Treasury Commissioner to the United States of America on 1 November 1894 in New York City.¹³

The primary objective of Jerzmanowski's work was the idea of restoring Poland's independence. However, this idea was not understood as efforts to support the armed struggle, and organizing another uprising, but carrying out activities for the development of Polish society under occupation. He certainly was not alone with this perspective. The January

8 Biblioteka Jagiellońska w Krakowie [further: BJ], ref. 384254 III RARA, *Wycinki z gazet polskich i obcych dotyczące działalności (głównie filantropijnej) E. J. Jerzmanowskiego w latach 1886-1894*.

9 "Wiarus", 15 July 1886.

10 Cf. D. Kiper, *Wzorce zachowań politycznych przywódców polonijnych na przykładzie biografii Henryka Katusowskiego i Erazma Józefa Jerzmanowskiego*, in: *Mędrzec, filozof, humanista... czyli uczony poprzez wieki*, eds. E.L. Polańska, P.M. Siewierska, T. Siewierski, Lublin 2013, pp. 82-100.

11 Distributed to the Congress participants and published in the press in partitioned Poland; "Nowa Reforma," 1886, No. 156.

12 "Nowa Reforma," 1887, Iss. 45.

13 BJ, ref. 222564 III RARA, *Zbiór druków Polonii amerykańskiej*. The contents of all three appeals has been presented as the Annex to this article.

Uprising was assessed in various ways, both by its participants and by the next generation that grew up in the veneration of its memory. The following 1903 excerpt comes from “Gazeta Narodowa” issued in Galicia’s Lviv:

There are sincere Polish patriots who condemn the January uprising. There are sincere Polish patriots who elevate it triumphantly. They are all wrong, both kinds go astray. The January Uprising is a fact that did come to pass, and that had to come to pass.¹⁴

A firm believer in the first opinion was Jerzmanowski who, at the same time, did not deny the importance of that insurgence, especially at the moral and spiritual levels. During one of the anniversaries of the Uprising, he said:

Fortunately, the year 1863, having drenched the Polish soil in our blood, was a proof that patriotism and great ideals of the past were not yet extinct in our souls. This manifestation was a victory by itself ... As long as these ideals live in us, we have the right to call out “Poland is not dead yet!”¹⁵

Jerzmanowski’s thinking about the future of Poland changed, which was characteristic for many former insurgents. It was not the armed struggle that was to decide about Poland, but the economic, cultural, scientific and, consequently, social development of the country. Being one of those who managed to achieve financial success he did not forget about the crowds of insurgent veterans, whose fate was not as gracious. He supported Brother Albert’s aid initiatives in Krakow and the Home Society of the Participants of the January Uprising 1863/1864, for which he constantly donated in-kind gifts¹⁶ and significant amounts of money.¹⁷ He was also a benefactor and member of the board¹⁸ of the Mutual Aid Society for Participants of the 1863–1864 Uprising¹⁹ and one of the founders of the January Uprising monument in Rzeszow.²⁰

Knowing the difficult fate of the emigrants, he warned his compatriots living under the partitions against leaving in search of a better fate in the

14 “Gazeta Narodowa,” Iss. 18, 22 Jan 1893.

15 BJ, Ref. 384254 RARA, *Wycinki z gazet polskich i obcych*, op. cit.

16 In 1901, he handed over 10 bushels of potatoes; “Nowa Reforma,” 1901, Iss. 205.

17 “Głos Narodu,” 1901, Iss. 245; 1902, Iss. 51, iss. 87; “Nowa Reforma,” 1894, Iss. 279; 1901, Iss. 246; 1903, Iss. 187; 1907, Iss. 297.

18 “Słowo Polskie,” 1897, Iss. 18.

19 “Gazeta Narodowa,” 1894, Iss. 142.

20 BJ, Ref. 384254 RARA, *Wycinki z gazet polskich i obcych*, op. cit.

United States. In his appeals, which were sent out to Polish newspapers, he strongly urged them to give up such ideas:

Contributing to the care of Polish emigration in America, as long as the strength of an individual may suffice, and being compassionate towards the misery of the unfortunate victims of Poland's foes, I cannot fail to present a picture of the terrible disenchantment that the migrants experience, having no national language, be it German, or Polish. This category especially includes emigrants from the provinces of Vilnius, Kaunas, Suwałki, and even Galicia. They come here to America in much greater numbers than they do from other parts of the country, having no competencies at all to settle in a country that stands infinitely higher in its culture than theirs. However, when you consider that this happens in winter, the time least suitable for an outward journey, of which a modest number has even more modest means, looking at the misery of these people is heart-breaking. It is hard to find a job in the winter, and only in coal mining and chopping ice. The strength of a single man makes me unable to remedy the evil, so I again speak to the respectable press and local authorities to try to stop this storm of Polish migration, which, by stripping the country of labor force, is flowing to America, perhaps only for its own destruction.²¹

Another issue he raised was credulity, the lack of language skills and qualifications of the migrants.²² Concerns expressed by Jerzmanowski were not unfounded. The American continent, especially the United States, was flooded by crowds of completely unprepared immigrants. Between 1871 and 1880, this migration amounted to 12,970 people, to reach 51,806 in the next decade, and by the end of the 19th century it was already 96,720 people.²³ Wanting to provide at least minimal help to the incoming Poles, Erazm Jerzmanowski was successful in organizing the New York Central Committee of Charity in 1886.²⁴ The main objective of this organization was support for immigrants coming to New York, providing them with a roof over their heads and a place of employment.²⁵ Throughout the lifetime of the Committee, until the mid-1890s, Erazm Jerzmanowski financed its activities.

21 "Gazeta Lwowska," 1887, Iss. 22; "Strażnica Polska," 1887, Iss. 5; "Gwiazdka Cieszyńska," 1887, Iss. 6; "Katolik," 1887, Iss. 9.

22 *Ostrzeżenie przed emigracją do Ameryki*, "Nafta," 1894, Iss. 8-12.

23 M. Borys, *Polską emigracją do Stanów Zjednoczonych do 1914 roku*, Toruń 2011, p. 85.

24 The board consisted of: Wincenty Żołnowski (Chairman), Erazm Jerzmanowski (Vice-Chairman), Ignacy Pawłowski (Secretary) on top of board members: Karol Chłapowski and Fr. Henryk Klimecki.

25 "Gazeta Narodowa," 1886, Iss. 156.

Poland under occupation was, according to the “Polish baron,” to constitute a unifying point of reference for the whole Polish emigration, who, through their joint work, were to prepare the ground for the country’s revival. In 1886, he wrote:

Poles, though miles and miles away, always breathe one spirit for Poland and on a foreign land, from the heights at which the goddess of freedom is gazing, bringing the torch of Europe’s progress to the disempowered, a field of work is being prepared for the rebirth of our Homeland.²⁶

As a model of joint national action for the Poles, he set the American Jewish and Irish communities, who were known for their commitment and mutual support through their members and for building a capital base:

the sons of Israel went into disarray, but their national spirit was not snatched from them. They have a common weapon for their ailments, which forces the mighty of this world to reckon with them. The same weapon is wielded by Ireland today. Their power is the generosity of the nation, the money that every one of them, rich and poor, places on the altar of the Fatherland, according to his ability.²⁷

It is worth noting here that by making such a comparison, he went against the current of the Polish antipathies, directed strongly against Jews and the Irish. Irish emigrants in some respects resembled Polish emigration. Despite the use of English, as Catholics, they felt alienated in the heavily Protestant American society. There were Irish associations, and dynamic press.²⁸ Like the Poles, the Irish did not have their own, independent state, however, they managed to create business relationships based on equity and a strong network lobbying on behalf of their national interests, and therefore something the bickering Polish communities could not do. Jerzmanowski also noted the attachment of the Polish Jews to the Polish language. This was important due to the fact that watching the life of the American Polonia, he could see a rapidly progressing Americanization of it, both in terms of language and culture. In his press statements, moreover, he warned against this:

26 “Nowa Reforma,” 1886, Iss. 156.

27 “Nowa Reforma,” 1887, Iss. 45.

28 M. Borys, *Polska emigracja do Stanów Zjednoczonych*, op. cit., p. 88; H. Kubiak, *Rodowód narodu amerykańskiego*, Kraków 1975, pp. 76-77.

I do not believe in our future in America ... Those who come, may stay ... But the next generation will die out, because they be sucked into the whirl of practical life that must materialize and Americanize them.²⁹

Erazm Jerzmanowski's thinking was strongly influenced by his devotion to the Catholic Church. He repeatedly stressed the great role ancestral faith played in his life and he encouraged immigrants to the United States to persist in it: "Show that most of you were raised in the holy Catholic faith, you know how to live according to its principles, as your fathers and forefathers did."³⁰ Through his philanthropic activities, he became part of the 1880s model of a modern, active Christian social action, which became an expression of Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* Encyclical of 1891 and *Graves de Communi* of 1901.³¹ It must be admitted that the activities carried out by Jerzmanowski included extremely broad circles. In addition to the aforementioned work for emigrants, he supported numerous Polish associations and initiatives in the United States (such as the Polish reading room in New York, the church he founded in Jersey City and the one he helped build in New York City), in Europe, and especially on Polish soil. Among others, he organized aid for flood victims in Galicia, he initiated the work of People's Reading Society in Poznan, the construction of dormitory for female students in Krakow, the Mianowski Bank, the Land Bank in Poznan, the Galician Savings Bank in Lviv, on top of the organization of the National Exhibition in Lviv in 1894. He took care of the Polish Museum of Rapperswil (in the years 1890-1903 he remained a member of the Council of the Museum), the Summer Cano Society, and the Society of Stanisław Staszic in Lviv. He financed the stained-glass windows for the Wawel Cathedral designed by Józef Mehoffer.³² Realizing the importance of education, he tried to support various initiatives aimed at the dissemination of knowledge, especially among the peasant population. Thanks to his acquaintance of Adam Asnyk and Karol Lewakowski, he joined in the activities conducted by them, aimed at the awakening and preservation of patriotic attitudes among the rural population in Galicia. In 1890

29 BJ, Ref. 384254 RARA, *Wycinki z gazet polskich i obcych*, op. cit.

30 "Nowa Reforma," 1886, Iss. 156.

31 Cf. A.S. Więch, *Realizacja chrześcijańskiej idei miłości bliźniego – wokół katolicyzmu Erazma Józefa Jerzmanowskiego*, in: *Erazm Józef Jerzmanowski (1844-1909). Życie w służbie idei*, op. cit., pp. 49-55.

32 BJ, Ref. 384254 RARA, *Wycinki z gazet polskich i obcych*, op. cit.; J. Hulewicz, *Jerzmanowski Erazm Józef Dołęga*, op. cit., p. 179; Cf. G. Fijałkowska, *Tyle życia ile w czynie. Rzecz o Erazmie Jerzmanowskim*, Kraków 2009; I. Wodzińska, *Obraz działalności Erazma Jerzmanowskiego w polskiej publicystyce prasowej przelomu XIX i XX wieku*, in: *Erazm Józef Jerzmanowski (1844-1909). Życie w służbie idei*, op. cit., pp. 56-65.

he became financially involved in the “Lud Polski” magazine about which he said:

it can be honestly and impartially stated that this youngest swordsman in the field of our people’s education presents himself at the very beginning beautifully, appropriately up to his lofty task. He speaks to the people in a tongue that is understandable, because he speaks from the heart, honestly and fraternally, he entertains and teaches at the same time; how can one fail to trust and believe that the seed he throws on his native soil will yield graceful and abundant crops ...³³

In 1891, he became the financial founder of Adam Asnyk’s Folk School Society³⁴ whose activities he supported with numerous donations. He also founded elementary schools in his estates in Prokocim and Krzyszkowice.³⁵

Erazm Jerzmanowski very decisively opposed any activity of socialists. He warned against the slogans they proclaimed, extremely popular in the working-class circles, which were fed by Polish immigrants arriving in search of work. He wrote in his address to the participants of the Congress of the Polish National Association:

Establish laws to prevent the extravagances of the socialists because such do not agree with the spirit of our nation. Show the world that Poles are men of peace, that they want to work and have the right to independent existence and that they can provide it for themselves.³⁶

He called to organize self-help cooperatives and to help those in a difficult situation. However, the active implementation of the already mentioned ideas of Christian social activity did not prevent Jerzmanowski from decisively speaking out against the excessive clericalization of Polish organizations, for which he received a great deal of criticism, especially from the circles around *Gazeta Katolicka*. The answer to this was Jerzmanowski being awarded the Commander cross of the Order of St. Sylvester in 1889 by Pope Leo XIII for his merits to the Church, Homeland and Humanity.³⁷

For Jerzmanowski it was extremely important that the Polish organizations emerging in the United States aimed their activities primarily at the Polish territory under occupation, which aroused resistance from a large

33 BJ, ref. 384254 RARA, *Wycinki z gazet polskich i obcych*, op. cit.

34 At the time of its foundation he donated the amount of 10,000 zlotys; BJ, Ref. 384254 RARA, *Wycinki z gazet polskich i obcych*, op. cit.

35 “Dziennik Chicagowski,” 15 September 1895.

36 “Nowa Reforma,” 1886, Iss. 156.

37 BJ, Ref. 384254 RARA, *Wycinki z gazet polskich i obcych*, op. cit.

part of the Polish community, which tended rather to organize *ad hoc* assistance to its poorer members. This led to numerous misunderstandings, the result of which was that Jerzmanowski became more and more discouraged to any activity among the American Polonia. In the mid-1880s, Erazm Jerzmanowski became heavily involved in promoting the idea of the National Treasury. It was a matter dividing the American Polonia strongly into two opposing camps. One advocated the need to establish a Polish-American national treasure, the funds from which would be used to support numerous Polish-American initiatives in the United States, while the other assumed the operation of a single treasure in the Swiss Rapperswil, which would provide financial support for the reconstruction of the reborn Polish state. Erazm Jerzmanowski was definitely closer to the second of these views. He stood in line with his proclaimed need for a united work to rebuild Poland, which he often expressed. In his 1894 speech, he argued:

Your help, dear Compatriots, should aim at sustaining the national movement in all districts of the former Republic of Poland. We live in the age in which every project needs a lot of money. In order to prepare ourselves with dignity for a resolute solving of our political issue, we need to create a powerful National Treasure that could help European Poles as much as the American Irish support the emancipation movement of their European confreres.³⁸

As Treasury Commissioner for the United States, Jerzmanowski set himself the main goal not only to conduct a broad collection campaign, which he successfully did, but above all to unite the numerous American collections into one capital, which would be transferred to the headquarters at Rapperswil:

In conclusion, I call on you all without distinction of beliefs, Countrymen, to support the momentous institution of the Polish National Treasury in Rapperswil; gather contributions, even cents, but gather all of you, and tirelessly, always remembering about the final goal underpinning our work.³⁹

The most striking evidence of the subordination of his entire life to the work for the benefit of Polish society can be found in the testamentary provision established by Erazm Jerzmanowski, which established the Erazm

38 BJ, Ref. 222564 III RARA, *Zbiór druków Polonii amerykańskiej*.

39 Ibidem.

and Anna Jerzmanowski Awards Foundation,⁴⁰ which was intended to exceed all previously existing scholarship funds with its momentum. Jerzmanowski's well thought-out decision can be proved by the precision of the foundation act, which at the same time perfectly reflects the values he expressed: love for his homeland and work for its good, attachment to the Catholic religion, but also a reminder of equal rights of men and women:

One prize is to be paid each year ... A Pole or a Poland-born person, or possibly born within the borders of Poland in 1772 and of the Roman Catholic religion, who has obtained an outstanding position in Polish society through his or her literary, scientific or humanitarian work for the benefit of the home country. The choice of the person to be awarded belongs to the Academy of Learning in Kraków ...⁴¹

The Foundation, whose material basis was the amount of 1,200,000 Austro-Hungarian kronen was very quickly hailed the "Polish Nobel," to which it was compared by Stanisław Tarnowski, President of the Krakow Academy of Arts and Sciences:

Education, love of one's neighbor, the enhancement of welfare and national wealth, all those directions of life and forms of work in which the love of public good, sacrifice for it, civic and Christian virtue is expressed, are entitled to a reward. It is therefore on a smaller scale, in smaller numbers (because the funds are smaller), similar to the world-famous Nobel Foundation award.⁴²

In the years 1915-1938, the winners of the award included Bp. Adam Sapieha, Henryk Sienkiewicz, Ignacy Jan Paderewski, Jan Kasprówic, Oswald Balzer, Napoleon Cybulski, Stanisław Zaremba, Władysław Abraham, and Aleksander Brückner.

Erazm Józef Jerzmanowski is primarily remembered as the founder of the prize, but it is worth remembering that belonging to the generation of participants in the January Uprising, a generation of emigrants who had to face numerous adversities, he was a man who, having achieved significant financial success, considered it most important to use it to work for the modernization of Polish society, and thus for the rebirth of the Polish state in the future.

40 Cf. T. Skrzyński, *Fundacja Nagród imienia Erazma i Anny małżonków Jerzmanowskich. Zakończenia i rzeczywistość*, in: *Prokocim dawniej i dziś*, ed. T. Ściężor, Kraków 2018, pp. 91-106.

41 AN PAN i PAU, KSG 366/1913, *Odpis testamentu Erazma Jerzmanowskiego z dnia 29 kwietnia 1908 roku*.

42 *Rocznik Akademii Umiejętności*, 1908/1909, p. 66.

Annex

The appeal addressed by Erazm Jerzmanowski to the delegates to the Congress of the Polish National Alliance in 1886. Distributed to the participants and published in the Polish press (*Nowa Reforma*, Iss. 156, July 13, 1886).

Compatriots!

Leaving the shores of this great country in order to see my beloved family after so many years of separation, yearning to breathe the air of the part of Poland, where so far being a Pole is not considered to be a crime after so many years of hard work, I would like to say *goodbye* to you. But in doing so, and being aware of the fact that at a time when I am away from you, the delegates presented by yourselves will be meeting at the convention in Bay-City called by the Association's Censor, I take the liberty of making a few remarks which come from a deep love for the Homeland, as a man who, with his persistent work, was able to gain respect for himself among his own and in others, who, needing nothing from others, wants only your good, your exaltation and improvement of your material being, as well as raising patriotism, which every Pole should be animated by. I hope that not only will they not be pushed away, but that they will be received with the same feeling as that with which I utter them.

Respect everyone during your debates, because although opinions differ, they will be guided by a common sense of duty to work for the good of the Homeland and the public.

Work out the Constitution in such a way that the elected board has the right to put into practice the institutions necessary for your moral and material well-being, so that it can support young people in higher education or crafts to prepare them for useful citizenship.

Authorize it to create loan cash registers in order to support the craftsmen and give by way of a loan more opportunities for the development of industry between Poles, always with the condition that such supported industry will not employ others than Poles.

Do not forget about old people, widows and orphans, for it is everyone's duty to remember those who are unable to cope on their own.

Make up your Board of Directors of impeccable people meritorious to the Homeland, who have a position in this country, because only those can influence the improvement of the material existence of their countrymen with their influence and relations.

Establish laws to prevent the extravagances of the socialists because such do not agree with the spirit of our nation. Show the world that Poles

are men of peace, that they want to work and have the right to independent existence and that they can provide it for themselves.

Show that, knowing how to respect the laws of this great country, you deserve to have its free institutions, seek and encourage others to try to take with you the place in this country which you are entitled to along with other nationalities.

Give your government a regulation, so that every person, every association entering into the tracks of socialist principles, as incompatible with the Polish spirit as these are, can be removed from your circles.

Show that most of you were raised in the holy Catholic faith, you know how to live according to its principles, as your fathers and forefathers did.

Away from you, I will think of you and I will say there, on the banks of the Vistula River, in this ancient city next to the Mound of Krak, that Poles, though miles and miles away, always breathe one spirit for Poland and on a foreign land, from the heights of which the goddess of freedom is gazing, bringing the torch of Europe's progress to the disempowered, a field of work is being prepared for the rebirth of our Homeland.

I, on my part, warmed up by the heat of my homeland, having looked at those parts of the country from afar, where, although I was born, I am not allowed to come, I will return to you again and with new enthusiasm I will work with you for the good of the Homeland and yours.

Goodbye, then, Dear Compatriots! May the Most High have you in His care, may He guide your steps, may this desired moment of our beloved Homeland's rebirth come to pass.

My ending words: Long live Poland! Fraternal greetings to you, from

Erazm J. Jerzmanowski

Speech delivered by Erazm Jerzmanowski during the anniversary of the January Uprising in New York in 1887 (*Nowa Reforma*, 1887, Iss. 45, 25 February).

Compatriots!

We are gathered today to celebrate the anniversary of the Polish Nation's uprising in 1863. On this day 24 years ago, we Poles, to whom the Homeland was more precious than our personal existence, raised our weapons, defending the undying rights of our Nation and its ideals, which humanity should cherish in its womb in order not to descend to the level of animality. Slavery, even if the links of its handcuffs were adorned with most beautiful flowers, is still slavery, as it destroys the body like gangrene, pulls

the whole organism of society into corruption, and knocks down the nation from the pedestal of the sublime, with the love of the Homeland of the cherished principles, into the realm of often base motives and a wicked life of calculation, so that it finally bursts apart and falls. Slavery has changed the Roman legions into gangs of street troubadours, and the proud sons of Athens and Sparta it made into slow tools of tyranny. Fortunately, the year 1863, having drenched the Polish soil with our blood, was a proof that patriotism and great ideals of the past were not yet extinct in our souls. This manifestation was a victory by itself, because the generosity and the long living nature of these ideals in us give us the right to call out "Poland is not dead yet!" Caring for these ideals in ourselves and in our children, instilling a sense of sacrificial duty into the future generation is one of those sacred obligations which a Pole should observe always and everywhere in his homeland and abroad. Year after year, with our hearts full of grief, we come together on this day, reminding ourselves how Poland was defeated and trampled on, how everything was taken away, the freedom of national, social and economic development, and even what man's heart should be most precious to: language and religion, have been threatened. The enemy reached out like a vulture with his claws to the heart of the nation, to rip it out of our living bodies and finally end the fight once started, with complete demoralization and degeneration. Shall I remind you of all the harshness of exile to Siberia and the Irkutsk mines, the piles of the burnt bodies of our brothers fallen in the uprising, the insults to our mothers, our wives, to Polish virgins? Should I remind you of the ruins of our burnt cities and home villages, and of all the horror of this oppression, of the mockery that cries out for vengeance to Heaven! Would it be possible to forget, even miles away, this image of the nation's misery even in a lifetime? Is there anyone between us who cannot feel the excess of misery, the humiliation!? Now, Compatriots, we are being asked the involuntary question of whether we are to give up, to give up morally as we have given up physically? Is it befitting for a man to stand indifferently with his hands folded, and to idly make grievances on the shore of the water in which his mother is drowning?

So, are we to give ourselves and our nation to be trampled on due to our own smallness and given up for eternal contempt? History points out similar facts: the sons of Israel went into disarray, but their national sense was not snatched from them. They have a common weapon for their ailments, which forces the mighty of this world to reckon with them. The same weapon is wielded by Ireland today. Their power is the generosity of the nation, the money that every one of them, rich and poor places on the altar of the Fatherland, according to his ability. And we Poles, the descendants of the victorious army from Vienna, would stand below the Jews, below the Irish? For this our hearts, our national pride would never allow. If we are

to die, let us die in armor, with our breast turned to the enemy. Die, but the death of heroes. You will say: after all, we have it all, but for us, for our own protection. We collect the money in order to give it back by way of post-humous capital or charitable institutions. And what about the Fatherland?

Starting with yourselves, as befits you, having built a fortress of your own use, let us go a step further. Let us give a hand to our homeland from this national fortress. Let us follow in the footsteps of the noble sons of Ire, let us erect, as they did, a great altar for our mother, our Poland who is held in shackles. Let us not let other nations surpass us in the ability to sacrifice ourselves for such a sacred cause.

When I was an adolescent, I clenched my fists, seeing our enemies handling us so disdainfully. When I became a man, I reached for arms. And I fought in the ranks of the insurgents of 1863, [saying] prayerfully: "Freedom give us, o Lord," but God has ordered otherwise. When I grabbed the pilgrim stick of a Polish wanderer, there was one thought that guided me. To earn a fortune.

And why did this desire arise in my heart? ... I wanted a fortune, because I felt that it is such a power which we need if indeed we are going to rebuild Poland in the first place.

Well, let's all join together on this journey today. We are working to create a great national treasure for the benefit of the Homeland with our diligence and perseverance. In this way, we will build a permanent monument to the patriotism of Polish emigration in America. I was happy to choose this day to mark the anniversary of the centuries-old struggle for the freedom and independence of Poland, to make you aware of the fact that some action in this direction has been started among the noble members of the patriotic, generally well known Society for the Union of Poles in New York City, which took the aim of building a Polish home. The Society, believing that the Homeland for the Pole is the Polish House, which should be the most important enterprise for each of us to build, decided on a night meeting on 13th of this month, under the signature at 228 E, at 30th Street, that the Society's money, amounting to 1,270 dollars in pledge letters in nominal value, and 230 dollars in bank and cash, shall constitute the foundation of the National Treasury for Polish use; around this treasure, other societies should group together for its multiplication. The Society has further enacted, that the treasure is subject to the administration of the Union of Poles, and that I was elected as President of the Board. The Polish Club in New York City, giving an example of encouragement, donated 2/5 of its treasury, with 25 cents per month from each of its members to pay for it.

The resolution of the Union of Poles was welcomed with enthusiasm at a meeting I deliberately convened for this purpose by the Presidents of Polish Societies in New York City and the surrounding area, on 18th of

this month, at 228 E. 30th Street. The above meeting also resolved to send this appeal to all Polish Societies, asking them for:

1. voluntary taxation of 5, 10 cents, or more, from each member.
2. sending their taxable member lists for writing down their names in the golden book of the National Treasury.
3. encouraging private contributions and creating patriotic clubs to collect contributions or voluntary taxation.
4. The Presidents accepted my request that the \$1,000 I donated to the Polish people (which had not yet been used in the Safe Deposit) should be added to the National Treasury.
5. All correspondence should be addressed to: Erazm Jerzmanowski, 340, Third Avenue New York.

Citizens!

In addition to making you aware of the above program, I would like to add that I am increasing this fund by a further 1,000 dollars, and I think that you will approve of this action and in the shortest time you will provide the lists of contributors capable of proving our love and generosity for our beloved Poland.

Long live Poland!

Appeal of the Commissioner of the Polish National Treasury of the United States of North America Erazm Jerzmanowski delivered on November 1, 1894 in New York City (Jagiellonian Library in Krakow, ref. 222564 III RARA).

Compatriots!

When, after the last Polish armed movement, aiming at regaining the lost political independence, the enemy victors raised a great cry of triumph on all front lines, it may have seemed for the moment that a great nation had fallen once and for all, and that it could be crossed out of the list of the living.

But the history of the last thirty years has proven that the national spirit not only was not extinguished in the restrained body, but on the contrary, it began a new era of its existence.

With the exception of a large crowd of people of small heart, who easily agreed with the new order, the whole nation, after a momentary lethargy that followed the general pogrom, quickly woke up from numbness and with all its strength began to think about a fundamental revival. And the thought soon went into action and the symptoms of our vitality began to appear everywhere. In Congress Poland, the era of positivism, in the

Duchy of Poznan, the years of the “Kulturkampf,” and in Galicia a long and yet infinite struggle for our autonomy – these are undeniable signs of the progress of rebirth.

The Kingdom, deprived of all freedom, was forced to work mainly on increasing trade and industries. Galicia boasts the creation and development of institutions such as national banks, financing societies, the Gymnastics Society (Sokół), the Folk Education Association, and finally the Lviv exhibition, which turned the eyes of the whole of Europe on our poor country. The Duchy of Poznan, moaning under the blows of Bismarckian policy, multiplied the national wealth by the creation and development of institutions such as the Marcinkowski Association, folk reading rooms, raising awareness at the national folk rallies, and the land bank whose aim is to keep the land in the hands of native Poles.

Last year was Kosciuszko’s Year, which resulted in so many conventions and excursions to Lviv and proved spiritual solidarity in all the partitions, which is undoubtedly a breakthrough in our post-partition life. Today we know for certain that we are alive, not only physically but also morally, and spiritually, and this adds us strength to continue to fight even though it is so burdensome.

When our affairs in Europe took a relatively successful turn, a new symptom of our national vitality appeared in the second hemisphere of the world, an overseas exile was created, which has been working on securing material prosperity here for thirty years, i.e. since the first larger Polish settlements were established in the United States.

To you, Compatriots, creating the Polish colonies in America, I address these words today.

For thirty years you have been working on yourselves, setting up churches, schools, and various patriotic institutions that keep the national spirit in you and protect the lives of your families.

This work was successfully crowned by the result: today in the free land of America, we speak of a New Poland.

But with the best of intentions you have forgotten one thing, Compatriots, namely, that the love of the Fatherland is not founded only on singing patriotic songs, wearing bright uniforms and celebrating national anniversaries, so dear to every Pole’s heart, but on fulfilling patriotic duties.

We need deeds, Compatriots, because faith without deed is dead.

We must admit that you did what you could, but you forgot about one thing, Compatriots: that Poland should be rebuilt not in America, but in Europe.

In this respect, you have not done everything that the Fatherland demands of you, and rightly so, because here on American soil the conditions are in a hundred times better than for our brothers in Europe.

To help the Motherland is a sacred duty of the Polish colonies in America, counting a half million heads.

Your help, dear Compatriots, should aim at sustaining the national movement in all districts of the former Republic of Poland. We live in the age in which every project needs a lot of money.

In order to prepare ourselves with dignity for a resolute resolution of our political issue, we need to create a powerful National Treasure that could help European Poles as much as the American Irish support the emancipation movement of their European confreres.

Many of you, Countrymen, have understood this need, therefore, such National Treasures emerged in America, but their organization rested on an incorrect basis.

Having been trusted the office of the Commissioner of the Treasury of the United States of North America from the Board of the National Treasury under the supervision of the Polish museum in Rapperswil council, I decided at the outset to speak to you, my Confreres, to turn your attention to what is wrong and what should be improved.

Having left your Homeland a longer or shorter time ago, you no longer have that knowledge of Polish affairs which is necessary for their management. Polish emigration was born out of economic motivation, it was recruited from elements that did not take political stances in the old country, hence not having a precise knowledge of our national situation and not being able to create plans of action, hence all Polish National Treasures in America today do not have the importance they should and will not have until you limit yourselves. Compatriots, to collect funds only, leaving the management thereof in the hands of enlightened people, with sophisticated characters will ensure a financial guarantee and keep your hands, so to speak, on the pulse of national life.

The National Polish Treasure under the supervision of the Board of the Museum in Rapperswil is already known to everyone well from the articles and proclamations hundredfold repeated by the local press, therefore I will not repeat these details, and I will say only that accepting the office of the Commissioner of the Treasury, I decided and promised to strive to confluence the Treasure existing on American soil in one piece with the Treasury Europe, all based on strong fundamentals, resting in blameless hands, and what is the most important, managed by people standing at the helm of the national movement, thoroughly familiar with the needs of the country and living in the Homeland.

I hope that the above cited reasons motivate you, Countrymen, to recognize that the national work carried out here in America, in its previous form, will not produce such results, which – I am convinced – we wholeheartedly desire, since it is based on the erroneous belief that you are almost

entitled to the old country governance and deciding on historic, groundbreaking matters in the political existence of our Matrix. Convinced that my words will reach your enlightened minds and patriotic hearts, I urge you, Compatriots, drop this belief, work not for satisfying your own vanity, but for the good of primary importance, our unhappy Fatherland! I have said what my conscience dictated – the rest belongs to you.

In conclusion, I call on you all without distinction of beliefs, Countrymen, to support the momentous institution of the Polish National Treasury in Rapperswil; gather contributions, even cents, but gather all of you, tirelessly, always remembering about the final goal underpinning our work.

To you Polish women, I make an urgent call to support national projects. The patriotism and sacrifice of Polish women have never disappointed our nation. As wives, sisters and mothers, instill the need to work for the good of the Homeland and encourage contributions to the National Treasury. Not great contributions, but constant ones produce serious results.

Let those be reckoned as the indifferent to the national cause who are oblivious of the sad fate of our Country and put selfishness and self-centeredness as the guard of their hearts and pockets!

Let Kosciuszko's Year lay the foundations for building a happy future.

Erazm J. Jerzmanowski

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