THE POLANDERS IN WISCONSIN.

The causes of Polish immigration are not difficult to find. Previous to 1872 they were chiefly economic. The low wages paid in Europe and the great difficulty of obtaining land drove many Poles to this country. Those who came to this country sent for their friends, frequently sending them money with which to come. To the economic causes was added in 1871 the religious. Bismarck determined that all of the inhabitants of Prussia should speak the German language and laws were passed to give the government a control of the parochial schools which was very irritating to the Catholics, and especially to the clergy. Another decree banished the Jesuit priests from the empire. About the same time the severe military law began to operate as a cause of emigration. Every Polish youth was obliged to serve in the German army for four years.

The effect of these laws is seen almost immediately upon the Polish immigration in Wisconsin. There had been a very gradual immigration since 1855. In 1872 there was a large immigration of priests and through their influence a great impetus was given to the movement. That there was not a wholesale emigration from Prussian Poland at this time was due partly to the efforts of the government to restrain it, but more largely to the lack of funds to make the necessary journey. Most of the emigrants were young, as few men had the money to transport a large family to America, even if they had the courage at an advanced age to begin the battle of life over again in a New World.

The terms Polish colony and Polish settlement, so frequently used in regard to the Polish districts of our large cities, might indicate that the Poles came in large numbers and immediately established a Polish colony, Polish churches and schools. This has not been the case in any of the large settlements in Wisconsin. In Milwaukee the first Polish family came about 1855. It was ten years before there was a church and at that time there were only about thirty families. The growth of the Polish colony was evidently slow. Even these few Poles did not live close together. Some of them were on the West and East sides, but the location of the church at Grove and Mineral streets fixed a center around which the Polish element tended to settle. Just as among other nationalities, the tendency of the Poles

to gather around this church drove others away from the vicinity, especially as it soon became necessary to speak the Polish language order to do business in this locality.

By 1872 the old church was not large enough to hold all of the Poles, and two new ones were erected—St. Stanislaus on the corner of Grove and Mitchell, and St. Hedwig's, on the corner of Franklin and Brady, on the East side. The former is the center of the settlement of the Twelfth and Fourteenth wards; the latter of the First and Eighteenth wards. Every effort was made by the settlers to induce immigration. August Rudzinski had lithographs made of the St. Stanislaus church which he had sent to his friends and distributed in the old country.

The process of settlement was similar in other cities. Neither in Stevens Point nor in Berlin was there a large original settlement, and in Marinette the Poles are so scattered that with a population of about 500 there is no parochial school.

Some of the smaller settlements, however, have been made on the wholesale plan. The following article from the *Marinette Eagle* will show how this is done:

Inside of another year Ellis Junction will be one of the most populous villages in the County of Marinette, and it will be due mainly to the efforts of H. Zech, the Chilton man who bought the plant of Butler & Mueller, with thousands of acres of wild land in that vicinity.

Through his efforts a big Polack colony has been induced to locate there and four or five hundred Poles from Chicago, Milwaukee and the southern part of the state are buying land there.

A Marinette real estate dealer returned from there this morning and while there for two days says that he disposed of ten forties of land to Poles who wanted farms. Twenty-five or thirty of the colony visit the place every week and buy their farms. They return home and will locate on them next spring. All the transactions are conducted by means of a syndicate and the head man is now living at Ellis Junction in a handsome residence. A beautiful home which will rank with any in Marinette has been constructed there and he is now living in that. The Poles will bring a priest with them next year and it is said that he will occupy the house after the colony is located.

Bishop Messmer, of Green Bay, it is said, interested himself in inducing the Poles to locate there, owing to the efforts of H. Zech. Nothing that has occurred in recent years means so much for Marinette county as this new Polish settlement. It means that a wild, uninhabitated part of Marinette county will be made to blossom like a rose and much added to the resources of the county.

Owners of land around Ellis Junction are now holding onto the property which they probably acquired through a tax title. The *Eagle* will have more to say about this colony in the near future. It is located in Town 32, Range 10.

Of course a settlement made in this way is solidly Polish. If other settlers come to Ellis Junction, they will probably choose to settle by themselves and there will always be a Polish colony.

I have already spoken of how the Poles have worked into certain wards in Milwaukee. The result of this in city and county politics will appear later.

In Stevens Point the Poles are largely in the Fourth Ward. In Antigo there are 50 Polish voters in the Third and Fourth Wards and only 17 in the other four wards. In Two Rivers they are bunched in the adjoining districts of two wards. On the other hand, in Berlin and Marinette they are scattered throughout the city.

I have already mentioned the establishment of the two earliest churches in Milwaukee. There are now seven Polish churches in Milwaukee and a parochial school connected with each one. The aggregate attendance at these parochial schools is 4,605.

Besides these parochial schools, which correspond roughly in grade to the ward schools, there is a Polish High School for boys—St. Josephat's High School. This school is more like a business college than a public high school. There are 78 pupils. In Milwaukee there are very few Polish children in the public schools. This was demonstrated last spring, during the controversy over the introduction of the study of Polish into the public schools in Polish wards. It is noticeable that this proposition was opposed by the priests.

Outside of Milwaukee there are a few cities which have Polish parochial schools, Berlin, Stevens Point and Menasha having the largest attendance. In these places very few Polish children attend the public schools. But in places where there are no Polish parochial schools, the children attend the public schools largely even though there are German and English Catholic schools in the place.

In Marinette, for instance, there are 76 Polish children in the public schools out of an estimated population of 500. This must include nearly all of the children who attend school, as the proportion is as large as that in the parochial schools here in Milwaukee. This would indicate that the desire to send the children to the parochial school was more a matter of nationality than of religion.

In the spring of 1886 the eight-hour movement came to a head. The Knights of Labor took up the movement and it was the time of the greatest strength of that order. The Common Council, in April, 1886, passed an eight-hour ordinance for city employes, and this seemed to give the more ignorant laboring men the idea that every employer who did not give his men an eight-hour day was breaking the law.

Demonstrations by the labor unions became common. There was a large but peaceful demonstration on the South Side by the Polish laborers on May 3. The next day an attack was made upon the E. P. Allis machinery works; 150 Poles armed with clubs, sticks, and knives attempted to compel the men to quit work, but they were dispersed by the employes without bloodshed. On the same day

the employes in the carshops were compelled to quit work. In this demonstration also the Poles were prominent.

On May 5 a mob composed largely of Polish workmen gathered on the South Side and marched to the Bay View rolling mills to persuade the 1,700 men engaged there to quit work. The men in the mills evidently had no grievance. Most of them were working by the piece and so had no sympathy with the eight-hour movement. They heated iron bars and attached the hose to the hot water tanks in order to give the strikers a warm reception.

The National Guard of the state had already been called out and part of the First Regiment of National Guards was stationed at the rolling mills. The Polish company of Kosciusko Guards of Milwaukee, belonging to the Fourth Battalion, were also on duty at Bay View and were obliged to fire upon their own countrymen. This made them the object of the particular hatred of the mob and many of them were hit by stones and sticks as they passed into the rolling mills. This was before any shooting had been done. Captain Francis Borchardt himself was hit by a stone. Some of the Polish company turned and fired, but nobody was injured.

John Odoi was arrested for throwing a stone at Sheriff Paschen and for making incendiary speeches to the Poles. He had called upon them to attack and burn the building.

In the evening a mass meeting was held at Rudzinski's hall to protest against the action of the Kosciusko Guards in shooting at their own countrymen. Speeches were made by Alderman Rudzinski and others, condemning the Guards for shooting so low that the bullets might have hit somebody. I have spoken of this crowd at the rolling mills as Polish. Of course there were other elements, and the exact proportions it is impossible to get, but the action of this mass-meeting in which the speeches were in Polish evidently claims the mob as their own. *The Sentinel* says in an editorial: "There are thousands of men who are kept in idleness to-day through the terrorization of this mob. At the West Milwaukee works 1,700, at Allis's some 1,200, and at Bay View mills 1,200 and hundreds in smaller establishments, solely because a few hundred Polish and Bohemian laborers, mostly new importations who are not American citizens, have undertaken to run the town." In answer to this a Bohemian writes: "Except about a dozen shoptailors, there are comparatively few Bohemian laborers on the strike. Not a single Bohemian took part in the last rows either on the South or West Side."

Another evidence of the almost purely Polish character of the riot is the fact that the five men killed by the firing May 5 were Poles. By the treatment of the Kosciusko Guards after the riots the Poles adopted the movement as their own. The Guards were compelled

to vacate their hall. Captain Borchardt, who was a lawyer, lost his practice almost entirely for a time; Kolpacki, Hanizeski and Schubert were to be boycotted in politics. Alderman Rudzinski was prominent in carrying on this boycott. In the Common Council an investigation into his conduct during the strike was instituted and Borchardt appeared against him. Nothing came of the investigation.

On May 11 one of the Guards was ordered out of Rudzinski's saloon and drew a revolver. Rudzinski had him arrested for carrying concealed weapons. The Guard said that Captain Borchardt had instructed them to carry weapons to protect themselves.

On May 12 there is an editorial in *The Sentinel* on the boycott, urging patronage for the Guards outside of the Polish district. On May 11 an ordinance was passed stating that "No man or men shall be allowed to boycott any individual, firm or corporation."

May 14 Captain Borchardt says: "The boycott is being relentlessly waged against all of the boys, but the Kosciuskos are becoming famous. I received a letter from Connecticut university students congratulating us upon our conduct."

The Guards now began to take up a subscription for the building of an armory. *The Sentinel* has an editorial urging attendance at a performance at the Academy for the benefit of this project. The benefit was given and was said to have netted a handsome sum.

On May 13 there was an editorial in *The Sentinel* in which the boycott was deprecated and the necessity of sending Polish children to the public schools was urged.

After this no further notice is taken of the boycott. How completely the feeling against the Guards died out in a couple of years will be shown in another place.

The editorials of this period are notable for the entire absence of any discussion of the immigration question. This is not only true of the newspaper, but of the magazine articles. Every magazine has some article bearing on the strikes of May, 1886, but not one of them bears out the immigration question. They are largely given to the discussion of the theoretical principles of the strike, the boycott and the eight-hour movement. Labor organizations are also fully discussed, especially the Knights of Labor, but the bearing of the foreign population upon these organizations is hardly touched upon.

It is also worthy of note that while five men were killed in the riot of May 5 hardly a mention of it is made in papers outside of Milwaukee, even in the Chicago papers. Nothing like the attention that was given to the strike of '96 is paid to the infinitely more serious strikes of 1886. This, of course, is due to the greater riots that took place in Chicago at the same time.

I find only one notice of the riots in Milwaukee in the magazines. This was an editorial in *The Nation* May 13 and is as follows:

"The riots in Cleveland, Chicago and Milwaukee are producing a rapid change of sentiment in regard to the partition of Poland. It has hitherto been considered by the bulk of the American people as a monstrous crime on the part of the three powers which took part in it. But the events of the last few weeks are leading many to condemn the powers for not having partitioned the individual Poles as well as Poland. One hears everywhere very severe comments on their action from this point of view. But this is unjust. The Poland which was partitioned was the Poland of the nobles; the Poles who are bomb throwing and roving around with red flags in the West are drawn from the ranks of a very degraded peasantry, for whose barbarism the present owners of Poland are responsible." Even in this article, so severely condemning the Poles, the general question of immigration is not touched.

There is one strong bit of evidence in favor of the Poles here in Milwaukee. That is the nationality of those arrested. On May 15 there were 23 under arrest for taking part in the riots of May 5. Of these 20 were Germans and 3 Poles. The Germans were usually socialists. This would indicate that the movement was one of ignorant Polish laborers under the leadership of German socialists.

The Polanders have been Democrats both in Milwaukee and outside in the state. In Milwaukee they exercised very little influence in politics previous to 1885. In that year they were represented in the Common Council by Theodore Rudzinski and succeeded in electing Peter Sytowski supervisor. Both of these men were on the Democratic ticket and from the Twelfth Ward, which was largely Polish. In the spring of 1886 occurred the riots in which the Poles were active. This caused a breach between the Poles and the Democratic party, especially as John Black, who had been foreman of the jury which indicted the leaders in the riot, became the Democratic candidate for congressman in the fall of 1886.

The Poles bolted and joined the People's party, which nominated Henry Smith for Congress. The district had previously been Democratic, but so great was the loss by this bolt that the Democrats came out third in the race. The vote was as follows: Henry Smith, People's, 13,272; Thos. H. Brown, Rep., 9,754; John Black, Dem., 8,300. In the state election, also, the People's party was successful and elected Theodore Rudzinski to the assembly, leaving the Democrats third in the race. Rudzinski was the first Pole elected to the State Legislature. The Poles also succeeded in electing in the county John Czerwinski as coroner. In the city election in 1887 the Democrats and the Republicans fused and put up a Citizens' ticket, which was elected. The Poles succeeded in electing an alderman on the People's ticket, Stanislaus Hanizeski in the Fourteenth Ward. Peter Pawinski in the Twelfth Ward was defeated by the Citizens' ticket. In 1888 the Democrats and the Republicans again united and elected their city ticket. In the Fourteenth Ward the Poles were again successful

and elected Michael Huntowski as alderman and Stanislaus Hanizeski as supervisor. In the Eighteenth Ward, also, a Pole was elected, John Weiher. In the fall election of 1888 there were three county tickets—Republican, Democratic and Labor party. In the two last the Poles were given places, but the Republican ticket was elected. There was a Democratic Labor fusion ticket for Congress with Henry Smith again as candidate, but he was defeated. E. J. Slupecki was elected to the Assembly on the Democratic ticket. The importance attached to the Polish vote is shown by the fact that Rudzinski was put on the ticket for register of deeds, an office worth at that time $30,000 per annum.

In 1889 the Poles elected aldermen and supervisors for the Twelfth, Fourteenth and Eighteenth Wards. In 1890 they again elected three aldermen and comptroller. In the fall election Michael Kruszka was elected to the assembly on the Democratic ticket. Ignatz Czerwinski was elected clerk of the courts.

F. J. Borchardt, the captain of the Kosciusko Guards at the time of the riots, who had been so severely boycotted in 1886, seems to have regained the goodwill of his countrymen, as he is elected justice of the peace.

In 1892 Michael Kruszka was elected to the State Senate—the first Pole to sit in that body. Michael Blenski was elected to the Assembly. He became famous by supporting Bragg for United States Senator to the bitter end when the rest of the Milwaukee delegation had gone over to Mitchell. Out of gratitude for this, Gen. Bragg secured Blenski a position in the civil service at Washington. In 1894 the Poles attempted to get C. J. M. Malek on the state ticket for insurance commissioner, but failed to do so. He was placated, however, by a place in the state land office.

Enough has been said to show how the Poles have been working into a place of influence that necessitates their recognition on county and city tickets by the Democratic party. Undoubtedly the riots of 1886 and the bolt which followed were of service to them in showing them their strength and demonstrating to the Democratic party the necessity of obtaining the Polish vote if they wished to win in city and county elections. They are now—1896—represented by five aldermen, three school commissioners, two members of the County Board, one assemblyman and a state senator. Another recognition of the Polish element is the fact that the state laws and city ordinances are published in Polish since 1891, *The Kuryer Polski* being the official organ.

In Berlin, Wis., where the Poles have nearly one-third of the entire population, they have been uniformly Democratic. In 1886 there was evidently an echo of the Milwaukee bolt, as the Democratic vote was decreased about a hundred. Most of these bolters voted the Peo-

ple's party ticket and they were probably Poles, but as the Polish population in Berlin is very evenly divided throughout the city, this is not so evident as it is in Milwaukee, where they are massed in three wards. Evidently the bolt was not very serious, as the entire Democratic loss was but 100 and there were nearly 300 Polish voters. Here also they have been recognized on the Democratic city and county tickets for the past ten years. This year two of the most important places on the county ticket were given them, the offices of sheriff and county clerk. However, the whole Republican ticket was elected and they were defeated. Several times they have been elected and served as city officials.

In Stevens Point about one-fifth of the population is Polish and they are mostly in the Fourth Ward, and for several years this ward has sent two Polish aldermen to the Common Council. The register of deeds in the county is a Pole.

The first Polish paper in Wisconsin was the *Przyjaciel Ludu*, edited by Ignatz Wendzeski. It was published from 1878 to 1880. In November, 1885, Michael Kruszka started the *Krytyka*, a Polish labor paper. In November a stock company was organized to publish, as daily, the *Dziennik Polski*. The publication was suspended in May, 1888, on account of dissensions among the stockholders. In June, 1888, the *Daily Kuryer Polski* was started, which is in existence to-day. It is a Democratic labor paper. The *Zgoda*, the organ of the Polish National Alliance, first published in Chicago, was removed to Milwaukee in 1882 and remained here until 1888. It was educational and non-political. *Orzel Bialy* and *Opiekun*, Republican labor papers, in opposition to *The Kuryer Polski*, were started in June, 1888, and suspended in February, 1890. The *Pozolanèt*, a Republican weekly, was started in September, 1890; failed in April, 1891. *Slowo*, a Republican weekly, existed from July, 1893, to April, 1895. Mr. Kruszka also publishes two weeklies, one political and one agricultural. There are two other Polish weeklies in Wisconsin, one in Milwaukee and one in Stevens Point.

The large majority of the Poles are common laborers. They are employed in the factories and upon the streets. In every large Polish settlement there are Polish shopkeepers of all kinds. The majority of them are in the cities, but these are forming communities in the vicinity of all of the larger settlements. Their industry and thrift are evidenced by the fact that a large number of Polish workmen in Milwaukee own their homes, although their wages are less than $1.50 a day.

At the time St. Stanislaus' church was built, a large number of Poles in the vicinity mortgaged their places to raise the money. These mortgages were recorded on the same day and were published in the old *News*.

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