**The Significance of Cultural Associations in the Modern World**

(Address delivered at the Convention of the American Council of Polish Cultural Clubs at the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana, July 30, 1953)

Cultural associations are associations whose members share a common culture and cooperate in maintaining this culture, contributing to its growth, and helping other people learn to appreciate it. In the modern world there are two main types of culture: religious culture - Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodex, Islamic, Buddhist, etc. - and national culture - French, Italian, German, Polish, etc, Here we shall cnnsider only associations whose members share a *national* culture. Polish "Arts Clubs" are, obviously, national culture clubs. These associations are not so well known as religious associations; yet they are tremendously important for mankind in general.

But before discussing these associations, I should give a brief definition of national culture. National cultures are relatively new. They developed in Europe after the Renaissance, some earlier, others much later; and now quite a few of them are growing outside of Europe.

Every national culture presupposes, first of all, a written language and works of literature in that language. Both language and literature grow together, as a result of the creative works of men of letters - lyric and epic poets, dramatists, and novelists. This is followed or accompanied by the development of history, philosophy, technology, science, art, and music. This national culture eventually becomes superimposed upon the local and regional folk cultures with spoken dialects,

Thus, Italian national culture started to grow in the fourteenth century; French, in the fifteenth; English and German, in the first half of the sixteenth; Polish, in the second half of the sixteenth; Russian, in the eighteenth; Norwegian, Finnish, Hungarian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Serbian, Croatian, and modern Greek, in the nineteenth century,

Now, a well-developed national culture is a very strong bond of social solidarity, unifying the people who share it. In the long run, it is stronger than the political state or the economic class, as defined by Marx and his followers, And this is mainly due to the cultural associations which preserve a national culture, contribute to its further growth, and spread it by education among the masses, Though these associations do not use force, they have proved more influential than autocratic governments, army, and police.

Three well-known examples of the powerful unifying influence of the cultural associations are the Italian, the German, and the Polish.

Both Italy and Germany were politically divided when their national cultures began to grow, and remained divided for centuries. But Italian solidarity, based on common culture, started slowly in the fifteenth century, when numerous literary, artistic, philosphic, scientific, and musical associations were formed all over Italy, and cooperated in spite of political divisions. Later, Italian universities also cooperated, and eventually education in Italian culture began to spread through the lower schools, until finallly in the neneteenth century the cultural solidarity was strong enough to overcome political divisions, and Italy became united.

Similar cultural trends led to the political unification of Germany, although the development of cultural solidarity was partly impeded by religious conflicts following the Protestant Revolution.

But even more instructive - in fact, the most instructive historical example of the unifying power of cultural associations - is the modern history of the Polish nationality, *naród polski*, to use a better term. Although you are already familiar with it, let us review it briefly, for it throws some light not only on the present amd future of Polish nationalism, but also on other nationalities and their relationships.

The Polish nationality was the only one which was far more than a century politically didided among three large foreign states. Each of these states had political and military power enabling it to control by force the inhabitatnts of that part of Poland which was included in it; and each conteracted all attempts of the Poles within its area to regain political independence and unity. Each of them during certain periods tried to assimilate the Poles and incorporate them into its own dominant nationality. And yet, throughout the divided territory inhabited by the Poles, not only did Polish culture continue to grow creatively (though not so fast as it would have grown, if not impeded by autocratic rulers), but Polish national solidarity increased and expanded. This was due to the vast multiplicity and diversity of cultural associations, large and small, formal and informal, complex and simple, formed by the Poles within Poland.

During the second half of the eighteenth century, Poland (including Lithuania and Western Ukraine) had numerous cultural associations - scientific, artistic, professional, and especially educational from universities down to the lower schools. As you know, Poland was the first country in the world to establish a Ministry of Education; though education in Polish culture had not yet reached the masses of the people, it was being organized.

After the partition of Poland, the roles attempted to preserve their existing associations and to develop new ones, but their success depended upon the policies of the ruling governments, which were different in each part and moreover changing from time to time. No association could exist in any part of Poland which was considered dangerous, rebellious, or disloyal by the power which ruled that part. Certain associations - artistic, musical, or theatrical - were tolerated, so long as they manifested no such disloyality; and Polish books and periodicals could be published, so long as they conformed with the rules of the governmental censors. Other associations, however, which interfered with the policies of the ruling power, were destroyed or inhibited.

But, whenever, in any part of Poland the government repressed certain kinds of associations or prevented them from functioning effectively, the Poles tried to organize similar associations in another part, where they were tolerated. Thus, after Polish institutions of higher education were eliminated in Russia and Prussia (beginning with the universities of Wilno and Warsaw in 1831), the universities of Cracow and Lwow became reorganized on a higher level than before the partition, since Galicia was granted some autonomy by the Austrians. when the functions of Polish scientific associations were impeded under Russian and Prussian domination, a Polish Academy of Science was founded in Cracow, which became the main intellectual center of Polish scientists and scholars.

However, preservation, development, and expansion of Polish culture was not achieved only by means of such formal associations. A very important part in the preservation of Polish culture and the maintenance of Polish national solidarity was performed by the family and the neighborly groups of families which shared Polish literary culture. These families were interconnected, sometimes by bonds of common descent or marriage, sometimes by lasting friendships, sometimes merely by polite acquaintance; but, in any case, they kept in contact with one another. And within each family, the basic components of Polish culture were transmitted by private education from generation to generation.

In rural areas, the heads of these family groups were mostly owners or managers of large estates; in towns and cities, they were mostly intellectuals - physicians, lawyers, engineers, economic leaders, writers, publicists, and artists, How influential these neighborly groups were, is well exemplified by the preservation of Polish culture in the eastern provinces in spite of abolition of the University of Wilno and of other Polish cultural centers. As late as the beginning of the twentieth century, the gentry in rural areas and the intellectuals in cities still spoke and wrote Polish, though a few used Lithuanian, which began to be revived as a literary language. Nobody ever used Russian in private life, except some people of Russian origin who were given estates confiscated from Polish and Lithuanian rebels, In Central and Western Poland, the cultural influence of Polish associations was so strong that it even induced many descendants of German settlers in Polish cities to become voluntarily Polonized, and their descendants have proved to be loyal Polish patriots.

The Polish clergy also made important contributions to the preservation of Polish culture. In all Catholic churches within areas inhabited by Poles, oral and written Polish was used and frequently taught to the young.

When school education was used for coercive Russification or Germanization, Polish students, especially in the secondary schools, developed a new kind of organized resistance. They formed secret self-educational groups, starting usually at the age of 13 or 14, and lasting 5 or 6 years. They studied cooperatively Polish literature, history, and art, and gathered information about Russia and Prussia which they were not allowed to learn from their teachers and textbooks. Later they studied other subjects which were not taught in the schools - political science, philosophy, sociology, theory of religion, etc. - and frequently attempted to make new creative contributions to Polish culture. Many of them eventually became prominent Polish leaders. As a matter of fact, after Poland regained independence in 1920, a survey of the life-histories of important Polish leaders in every realm of culture who had been educated in Russian or German secondary schools showed that nearly all of them had belonged in their young days to such secret self-educational groups.

Of course, throughout Polish history, there were always class conflicts, as everywhere else, and these conflicts did interfere with the cultural unification of the Poles. Slowly and gradually, however, they decreased; and national solidarity increased, as many peasants and some estate-owners, many workers and some capitalists, under the influence of intellectual leaders, came to the conclusion that, if Poland regained independence from authoritarian foreign rule and became united, these conflicts could be solved by democratic methods.

In rural areas, the people gradually learned the Polish literary language, acquired some knowledge about the many regions inhabited by their fellow-Poles, and became aware that they constituted the majority of the Polish national society. This was sometimes achieved by private education undertaken under the leadership of priests and of wives and daughters of estate-owners, but mostly by the formation of small self-educational associations, on the initiative of some village members who had learned to read, obtained books or periodicals, and helped their fellow-villagers to learn. Communication and interaction between villagers led to the organization of much larger groups, and finally of peasant parties with common ideals. In the cities, workers also became partly educated, partly self-educated in Polish culture, under the leadership of intellectuals, and eventually formed organized groups, the most important of which was the Polish Socialist Party.

That national solidarity became more influential than class conflicts was proved by the opposition of Poles of all classes to the invasion of Poland by Russian communists in 1920, in spite of the Bolshevik propaganda appealing especially to Polish workers and peasants.

But the most conclusive proof how fully Polish national solidarity has grown and how widely it has spread was the voluntary underground resistance to the Nazi invaders in the last war. From two to three million Poles took part in this resistance, 200,000 as soldiers in the underground army. No other nationality has ever struggled so valiantly as the Poles under such terrible conditions, with hardly any outside help. There was nothing like the Vichy regime in France, nor even to a Quisling or a Vlasov.

Now, having surveyed the unifying power of modern national culture, as exemplified by the development and integration of the *naród Polski* in Poland, let us turn to another important aspect of modern nationalities: expansion through migration. Most nationalities have expanded through migration beyond the area which they originally occupied, and have thus come into contact with other nationalities, with mutual influence on one another. Take two instructive examples of this: expansion of the Germans, on the one hand, and expansion of the Poles, on the other hand.

German expansion has been the widest and the most influential. By the end of the nineteenth century, there were many German settlements in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Russia, some in western European countries, but most of all in the United States and Latin America, Usually, these settlers formed various associations in order to preserve their cultural heritage and transmit it to the young generation. But they and their descendants, especially in cities, also adopted parts of the culture of the nationality surrounding them, and made many important contributions to it. Indeed, until the last quarter of the nineteenth century more cooperation than conflict existed between them and the people among whom they lived. Then the Hohenzollern and later, still more ruthlessly, the Nazi government began to use them as tools for aggressive German imperialism. This worked pretty well in some European and Latin American countries, not so well in the United States; but, in any case, it impeded cooperation and stimulated conflict between the German nationality and other nationalities.

Now, when we compare Polish expansion outside of Poland with this German expansion, we notice certain basic similarities, but also significant differences.

Soon after the partition of Poland, some Polish intellectuals who had opposed Russian, Austrian, or Prussian domination, and struggled in vain for national freedom, migrated abroad and organized associations in order to maintain Polish culture, promote its creative growth, and, if possible, induce other nationalities to help Poland regain her independence. The main cultural center was located in Paris, but others were formed in Belgium, Holland, England, Switzerland, Italy, and, later, the United States, 'This migration of intellectuals continued until Poland became independent after the First World War, and was resumed again after the german and russian invasions of 1939.

Of course, other nationalities also had intellectual centers abroad, composed mostly of exiled rebels, but none of them were so long-lasting or influential as the Polish ones, Many Polish leaders from various parts of Poland and from settlements outside of Poland congregated in these centers. For instance, such a congregation met in 1908 at the Polish library of Rapperswil, Switzerland, where I was an assistant librarian. I remember the political plans for the future of Poland which Roman Dmowski presented to a group of leaders there; but they had different ideas, and no general agreement, only some compromise was reached.

One important consequence of these associations was cooperation between the Polish leaders abroad and the intellectual leaders of those countries where the Polish cultural centers were organized. The main basis for this cooperation was the common ideal of freedom for all nationalities. This was an ideal which the Polish leaders shared; indeed, many of them explicitly formulated it - e. g., Mickiewicz and Lelewel. From their own tragic experiences and ceaseless striving for liberation, they knew better than anybody else what freedom means to the people who are deprived of it. Some of them, beginning with Kosciuszko and Pulaski, took active part in the struggles for freedom of other nationalities. During the struggle of 1830-31, they coined the famous slogan: "For your freedom and ours". For Polish leaders were fully aware that the freedom of no nationality is saie so long as any nationality is being oppressed. Thus, the Polish ideal is manifestly different from German nationalistic ideology; and it is still very significant now, when free creative development of the national cultures behind the Iron Curtain is impeded by Russian domination.

Besides political exiles, many Polish youths went abroad to study, especially after higher education was suppressed in the Russian and German parts of Poland. Although some remained abroad and obtained teaching positions in foreign universities, most of them returned to Poland, bringing with them the culture acquired in foreign centers and using it to develop Polish culture. When Poland regained independence and organized new Polish universities in Warsaw, Wilno, and Poznan, Polish instructors in foreign countries were invited to come back. For instance, those who joined the University of Poznan had taught in universities ranging from Chicago to Tomsk in Siberia and from Stockholm to Lisbon in Portugal.

More important, however, than the individual migration of intellecutals was mass migration. Although many soldiers migrated after the Napoleonic wars and the insurrection of 1830-31, mass migration on a large scale did not develop until the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Then the great majority of migrants were workers, mostly rural, partly urban; and they migrated in search of economic advancement. Most of them, as you know, settled in the United States; some, in Latin American countries, especially in Parana, Brazil; some, in Western Germany; and, later, many in France,

Whenever a number of immigrants settled within a rural area, a township, or a city. they at once began to congregate and found more or less united local associations. These were usually organized on the initiative of a few leaders - at first, mainly Polish priests or members of religious orders, who often migrated for this very purpose, but sometimes also secular leaders who had left Poland for various reasons or who came after 1920 as representatives of the new Polish government.

It seemed, at first, that such associations were simply due to the fact that the immigrants, who formed a minority of "strangers" among a majority of people with an entirely different culture, had to be in some degree united for common religious services and economic cooperation, or merely to maintain the kind of family and community life to which they had been accustomed in the old country.

When Thomas and I studied the Poles in America from 1914 to 1919, we thought that these associations would eventually disappear, as the Poles became culturally assimilated and absorbed in American society. It was a surprise to me to find, on my return to this country in 1939, that the Poles in the United States were better organized and more socially integrated than they had been in 1919, and that many new varieties of Polish cultural associations had evolved which did not exist before - especially, but not only, the Polish Arts Clubs. And this in spite of the fact that nearly all members of these associations are active participants in American culture,

This new development is one of the many proofs that the old cultural separation between peoples of different nationalities is nearly gone. For the most significant historical trend in modern times is cultural cooperation between nationalities, as I mentioned in my latest book on *Modern Nationalities*. We now realize that every nationality can contribute something to the creative growth of other nationalities, by what we call "crossfertilization of cultures". Furthermore, we believe that the peoples of many nationalities, functioning together, can develop creatively a world culture; and that this is the only effective way of unifying all mankind.

Such cooperation requires that peoples of different cultures should understand and appreciate one another. As the first step in this direction, every individual should participate in at least two cultures and fully appreciate both; and that is what members of Polish cultural associations in the United States are doing.

As participants in American culture, you are aware that America is no longer a closed "melting pot", but the main cultural center of the modern world. American culture is of primary importance to mankind, for the American nationality is trying to promote the cultural developinent and cooperation of all nationalities.

As participants in Polish culture, you are the connecting link between the American nationality and the Polish nationality. Your function is not only to make Americans appreciate the Polish creative products of the past, but to induce them to help the Poles - whenever help is needed - in making *new* creative contributions to their to their own culture as well as to world culture.

Florian Znaniecki Professor-emeritus University of Illinois