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ASSOCIATION
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IN CANADA

STOWARZYSZENIE
TECHNIKÓW
POLSKICH
W KANADZIE

ASSOCIATION
DES INGÉNIEURS
POLONAIS
AU CANADA

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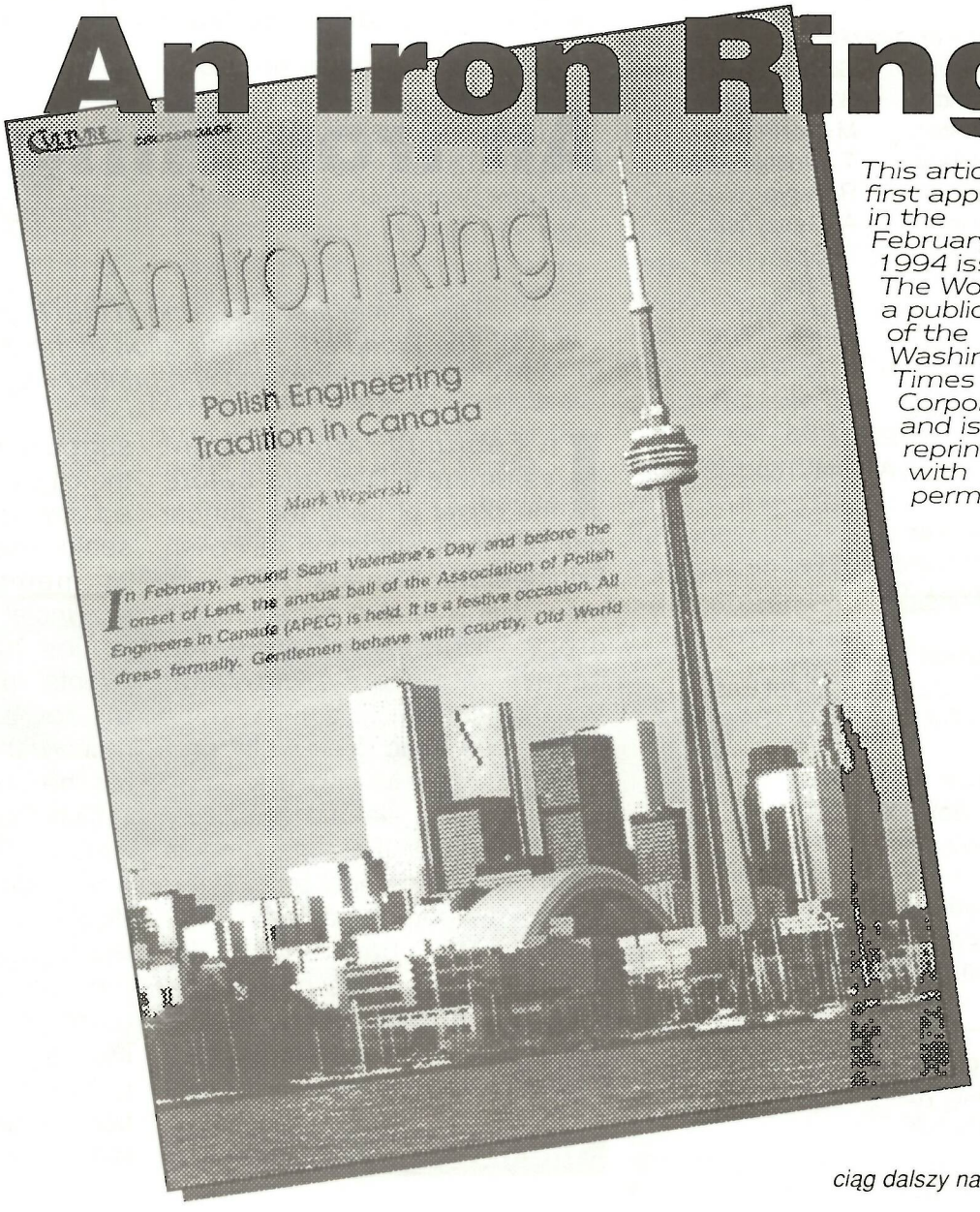
An Iron Ring



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ASSOCIATION OF POLISH ENGINEERS IN CANADA

Founded in 1941
Incorporated in 1944

contents

od redakcji

W poprzednim numerze donosiliśmy o ukazaniu się artykułu "An Iron Ring". Obecnie drukujemy artykuł ten po angielsku tak jak ukazał się w "The World & I". Kolorowe ilustracje wyglądają bardzo skromnie w naszym czarno-białym biuletynie, zamieszczamy je jednak dla zachowania autentyczności przedruku. Dla nas wartość tego artykułu polega przedewszystkim na tym, że ukazuje nam on, w pewnym stopniu, jak widzi nas publiczność kanadyjska, a w tym wypadku również amerykańska.

An Iron Ring

Polish Engineering Tradition in Canada
Mark Wegierski

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In February, around Saint Valentine's Day and before the onset of Lent, the annual ball of the Association of Polish Engineers in Canada (APEC) is held. It is a festive occasion. All dress formally. Gentlemen behave with courtly, Old World Polish gallantry, kissing a lady's hand in greeting. The waltz predominates. Memories are evoked of the elaborate balls of pre-World War II Poland and of the royal and imperial balls of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy.

The APEC ball reached its opulent height in the mid-1980s. For years, it was held in an elegant hotel. More recently, it has been moved to more intimate surroundings in a lodge outside the city, but it still may be attended by government officials, senior executives of major firms, or members of federal and provincial parliaments.

The ball is one of various events, including graduation rituals for engineers who are to receive their iron rings, that mirror the unique place, both in the Polish-Canadian community and in Canada, held by engineers and technicians of Polish descent. They are accepted at the highest levels of society and form an unabashedly elite immigrant group that has maintained its status because of intellectual, rather than folkloric, ethnic traditions. Indeed, the formal political leadership of the entire Polish-

Canadian community *(particularly the Canadian Polish Congress) has largely consisted of engineers and technicians.

In fact, since World War II, Polish immigrants and their descendants have made a significant contribution to the intellectual and physical development of Canada, one out of proportion to their overall numbers. It has been possible to descry a specific Polish, or Polish-descended, tradition of technical, engineering, architectural, and scholarly achievement and a particular community focus in that direction. A community and technically oriented Polish-and English-language newsletter, the New Link, has been published for many years.

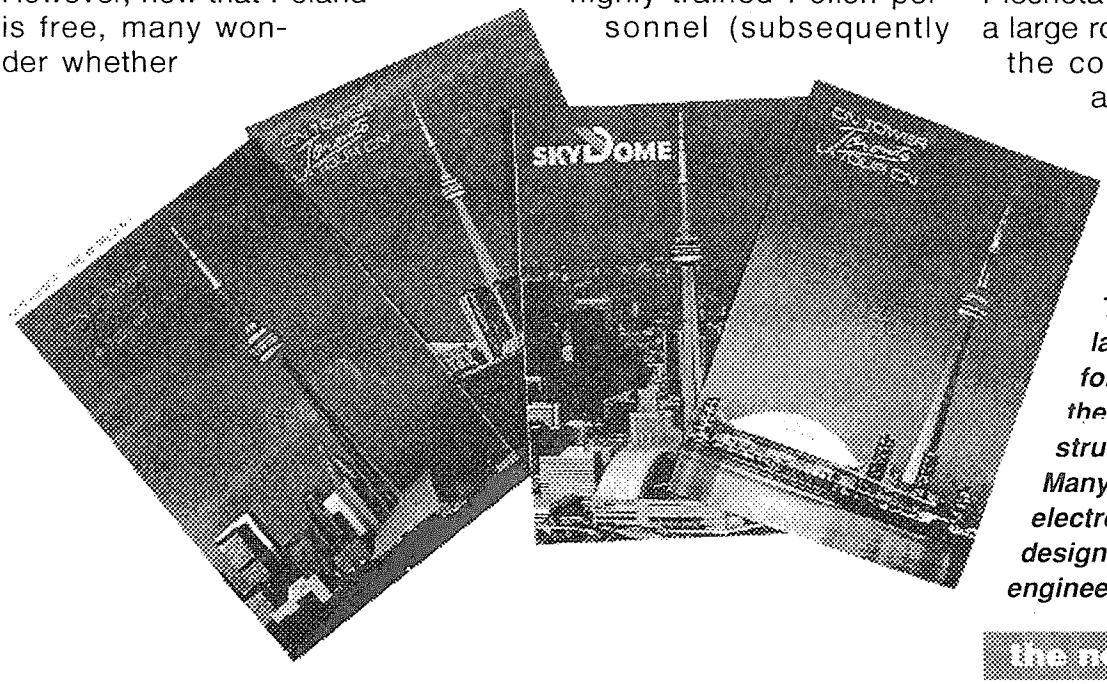
During the 1960s, '70s, and '80s, a significant number of Polish immigrants were qualified in the technical professions: there were also a few scholars in the theoretical, applied, and social sciences. The émigrés were able to parlay these abilities into securing and elevating their social status in Canada. The continued arrival of immigrants with scientific and technical backgrounds is expected. However, now that Poland is free, many wonder whether the scientific and technical talents of people clamouring to immigrate to North America would not be better utilized in their homeland. Some émigrés have considered going back at some point, but, to date, most prefer to remain in Canada.

A unique community emerges

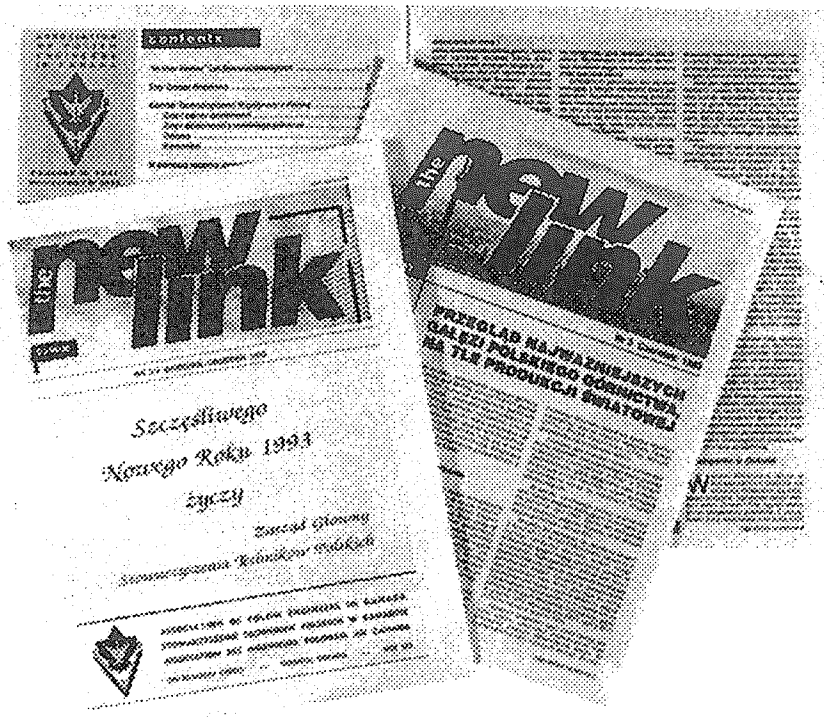
Prior to 1939, Polish immigration, ongoing since the 1850s, had largely consisted of peasants and labourers. Nevertheless, the influence of two prominent engineers, Sir Casimir Gzowski and Aleksander Edward Kierzkowski, is seen in projects such as the bridging of the Niagara River and the construction of various roads, railways, and bridges across Upper Canada (Ontario's pre-1867 name) during the second half of the nineteenth century. Note should be made of the work of eighteenth-century cartographer Charles Blaskowitz, a Loyalist who came to Canada as a result of the expulsion of the Tories from the United States.

In 1940, about a thousand highly trained Polish personnel (subsequently joined by about three thousand family members) were allowed to enter Canada to help with the war effort. APEC was founded in 1941 and incorporated in 1944. Immigration expanded in the 1950s. Thousands more technically trained persons, as well as some scholars, entered Canada, mostly via Britain. (They had refused to return to a Poland ruled by communists.). Generally speaking, this generation of Polish engineers and scientists operated according to rigorous, Continental European traditions of design and craftwork. Their approach was new to the Canadians, who were accustomed to provincial, British-derived technological models. (Some immigrants had finished their education in Britain, and this was highly regarded by Canadians.).

The Polish engineering tradition bore fruit in the 1950s. This was a time when design, research, and development work was done by individuals or small project teams. Consequently, considerable individual credit could be claimed, and that reflected on the community as a whole. For example, Antoni Piechota is credited with playing a large role in the construction of the country's military radar-antenna system. In recent years, research and devel-



The CN Tower, Toronto's newest landmark and attraction for sighteers, is one of the tallest freestanding structures in the world. Many of the tower's electronic systems were designed and installed by engineer Eugeniusz Danowski.



The technically oriented bilingual publication New Link

opment work has generally been assigned to much larger teams, at least in major firms.

During the 1950s, may Polish technicians, designers, and even test pilots were involved with a grand project, the Avro Arrow. This advanced-prototype jet fighter was claimed to be two decades ahead of its time. The project was cancelled by a parsimonious government, a decision that virtually crippled Canada's putatively independent air and aerospace industries. Many engineers went on to work for de Havilland, the major airplane builder from the 1950s to 1980s, and that firm hired significant numbers of Poles in all technical capacities.

Another significant contribution is in the realm of architecture and building. Civil engineer Ludwik Alejski was involved in the design and supervision of construction of the first real high rises in Toronto: the stark black Toronto-Dominion Bank towers, the Robarts Library at the University of Toronto, and Toronto's premier symphony concert venue, Roy Thomson Hall. In recent years, much of the construction and electronics for Toronto's newest landmark, the CN Tower, one of the tallest free-standing structures in the world, were designed and installed under the supervision of Eugeniusz Danowski. Architect and builder Tadeusz Jeruzalski has been involved in many construction projects in Montreal and Toronto.

The 1950s émigrés made a significant literary contribution as well. B.D.E. Prazmowski wrote on the Polish wartime experience in Eagles' Brood: A Life in the Polish Resistance. During most of World War II, Prazmowski served in the Polish Underground Home Army (Armia Krajowa). In 1945, he escaped

Cover designs for Bohdan Ejbich's books recalling the wartime exploits of Polish squadrons in the Royal Air Force.

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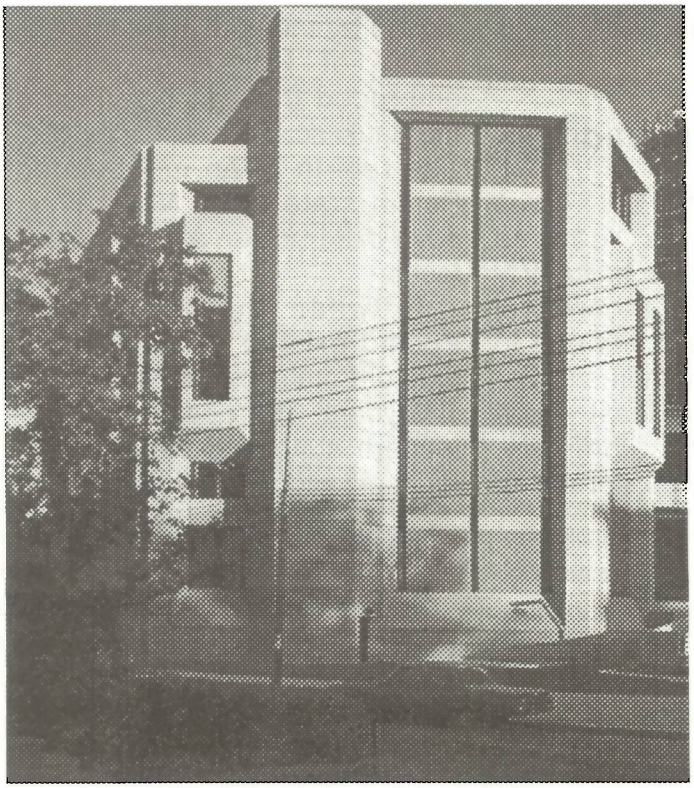
the oncoming Soviet armies and joined the Polish army under British command in Italy. Between 1951 and 195\66, as an engineer involved in oil-refinery construction, he travelled throughout the Far East and Africa. He immigrated to Canada in 1967 and is now president of a research and development firm dealing with environmental technologies that holds several patents in Canada and the United States.

Another engineer/author, Bohdan Ejbich, has written several books about the heroic wartime experiences of the Polish air force squadrons that fought beside the British Royal Air force during World War II. Ejbich is known as a wit and raconteur in the Polish-Canadian community. He completed his engineering studies at the London Polytechnic after World War II and worked for Westinghouse in Britain as an electrical engineer. After coming to Canada, he worked for many years at General Electric, designing electrical transformers. Ejbich's youngest son is the manager of safety engineering at Warren & Lambert, a multinational that produces everything from pharmaceuticals to chewing gum.

Wojciech Krajewski began his engineering studies at the Polytechnic of Lwow, in what was southeastern Poland before the Second World War and is now part of Ukraine. His autobiography, My Home, is both a personal and historical record. It describes the massacre of the professors of Lwow University (including an especially large number of teachers from the Polytechnic) by the Nazi occupiers, apparently with the connivance of Ukrainian collaborators.



The Robarts Library at the University of Toronto.

After the war, Krajeski was offered employment by Ontario Hydro, the provincial public utility. He joined his compatriot Czeslaw Brzozowicz at the huge firm. It was snidely said by some Anglo-Saxons in the late 1950s that the Poles had "virtually taken over" Ontario Hydro. Krajewski worked on the design and casting of ironworks for several coal-generating stations, among them Lakeview (2,400 megawatts); Lambton (2,000 megawatts); and Lennox (2,300 megawatts.) Krajewski also worked on hydroelectric and atomic power stations. He is known in the community for his gallantry and Old World politesse, typical of the Kresy (Poland's eastern borderlands) from whence he comes. His friend Brzozowicz worked as a longtime consultant to Ontario Hydro rather than as a salaried employee, because he preferred

Participants at the fiftieth anniversary of the APEC ball, held on May 19, 1991, in Ottawa. Guests included the Polish ambassador to Canada and a senator from Poland.

to be independent. Krajewski's son is geophisist.

Longevity of the tradition

Poles were the only group to bring a defined Continental technical tradition to Canada. Furthermore, Polish immigrants continued to consciously identify themselves - in some measure at least - as a non-Anglo-Saxon community. These two elements served to create a discernible line of continuity among Polish Canadians. Other European immigrant groups, even those with an engineering and technical tradition, such as the Germans, generally assimilated so rapidly as to become indistinguishable from Canada's Anglo-Saxon majority. Most immigrant groups lacked any real tradition of technical excellence.

The official poster of the fiftieth anniversary APEC ball.

The Polish engineering traditions were ultimately derived, in their scientific and technical aspects, from German models. Standards were probably most demanding at the imperial German academies and technical schools. Their emphasis on excellence was combined with the quasi-aristocratic traditions (and generally more humanistic focus) of the nationalist Polish intelligentsia. Some Poles, desiring psychological release from Romanticism, frustrated under the rule of imperial Germany and imperial Russia, and disillusioned by the continued immateriality of Polish statehood, embraced the concreteness of the nauki scisle (exact sciences). The rebirth of an independent Polish state after World War I gave this tradition a fully national focus.

Between the world wars, Poland existed as a fully independent state for the first time in 123 years. The desire to build a modern state and the necessity for rapid industrial advancement fuelled the development of traditions of technical specialization and professional excellence. The intellectual appeal of ideas such as Positivism, futurism, the Marxist concept of the "engineer of souls" (the superior man raised by the role of technology), and the exaltation of hard, bracing Technik (technology) added to the attraction of technical professions. Technocratic and civil-service elites emerged in a state model called dirigisme (bureaucratic authoritarianism). Thus, the groundwork was laid for a cultural identification with the engineering professions that continued among immigrants in Canada.

But it seems that the Polish-Canadian engineering and scholarly tradition may not possess any particular longevity. Immigrants with technical training were able to quickly find a social niche in Canada. Their children, seeking to maintain their parents' social prestige, also entered the technical professions. Their parents even encouraged them to intermarry within the professional circles and thereby continue a sense of family tradition. The community was further enlarged by other Canadians of Polish descent, whose parents were of humbler working origins. They too looked to engineering and technical work as professions that would elevate their social status. Added to this was the large number of persons with technical training continually arriving form Poland, particularly in the 1980s.

Nevertheless, the largest demographic group in the Polish-Canadian community today is the generation born in Canada. It has been estimated that no more than 20 percent of those persons identify strongly with their Polish heritage and that the transmission of Polish cultural values has been somewhat sporadic. Ironically, those who retain a substantial sense of identification with the engineering community might actually be holding on to intellectual and social ideas that are somewhat archaic even in comparison to those in Poland today.

The point to be made is that the Polish-Canadian technical and scholarly tradition springs from cultural roots that no longer obtain in North America. What were once modern ideas now appear distinctly reactionary. Therefore, those born in Canada who attempt to follow that tradition have to find ways to adapt it to newly emerging circumstances. The result is an imperfect fit of the values received - if only in modified form - from a

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generaton of immigrant parents with the values held by society at large.

The question of ethnic identity and traditional loyalties - that is, whether immigrants and the second generation consider themselves Polish, Canadian, or both - is not clear cut. Canada is officially a multicultural country and does not seek to assimilate ethnic groups in any way. It does not formally ask a person to give up his language or culture as a condition of citizenship. Practically speaking, however, Canada (with the possible, partial exception of French-speaking Quebec) is part of a North American mass-media culture and technology field that exercises powerful assimilative pressures.

For white ethnics like Poles, the situation is curious. Contemporary society and media culture ever-more insistently focus on gender and visible-minority issues. Indeed, the accommodation of visible minorities might be offered as the real implication of the term multicultural in today's North American academia and media. However, white ethnic groups are not considered accredited minorities. For example, the program responsible for employment equity in Ontario mandates numerical employment targets in virtually all job categories, public and private, for designated groups. However, the program does not consider any white ethnic minority so designated. Over time, European immigrants are being reduced to a bland, generic, "white" category, essentially ignoring the residues and distinction the cultures of their nations of origin. Curiously, in the 1950s, long before it became a fashionable topic in Canadian society as a whole. social scientists of Polish descent pioneered studies of ethnic identity and of the problems of conflict between competing identities in the individual and community.

Diminishing expectations

In the 1990s, the community of Polish engineers faces an era of diminishing expectations. The intellectual traditions that defined their cultural identification and social status have limited vitality; a renewed influx of highly trained compatriots from the homeland - who could share and revitalize their community tradition - is unlikely; and an ethnic identification according to folk culture can prove no more than an archaic curiosity. Some have moved to the path of least resistance: wholesale assimilation, if not for themselves, then certainly for their children. But the attractiveness of North America, despite its offered living standards, may also diminish. With the possibility that skilled, well-motivated persons may eventually be able to succeed socially and economically in a free eastern Europe (Poland, until recently, seemed in a particularly favourable position), there might even be a move toward remigration.

For those who immigrated before World War II, or during the 1950s or '60s, and have reached or are approaching retirement age, there is little question of returning to Poland. This could only be a journey to die symbolically in the homeland. In fact, many cannot return to familiar locales: Poland's eastern regions (one third of prewar Poland) were absorbed into Soviet territory after World War II and are no longer considered part of the nation.

But for those who came to Canada in the 1970s and '80s, who generally were the products of postwar Poland and were introduced to the earlier tradition in Canada, the possibility of return is likely to be considered. Even in a free Poland, the prospects for obtaining appropriate rewards for technical and scientific endeavour remain bleak. Nevertheless, the brain drain, the departure to the West of technical talent from eastern Europe and Russia, has created a vacuum that skilled persons with a cultural affinity for the Old Country might wish to fill.

The Polish technical and scholarly tradition in Canada, which crystallized in the first three decades of the twentieth century, at one time was definitely forward looking. The history of this tradition demonstrates how rapidly the process of massive technological change is affecting cultures, subcultures, and folkways across the planet. In the era of mass culture, MTV, and CNN, the tradition appears stodgy and generally inaccessible to younger people.

In fact, the perennial problem facing all ethnically based cultures is how much technology can enter a given society or fragment culture before the seemingly inevitable corrosion occurs. The ultimate fragility of a tradition challenged by technological development, even when that tradition is buttressed by its grounding in a technical and professional status, leaves one pessimistic about the endurance of any particularity in the onrushing arrival of, in George Parkin Grant's words, the "global, homogenous world-state". In this context, the Polish engineering and scholarly tradition in Canada possesses no extraordinary staying power.

Ten, który poświęcał swe ziemskie życie dla dobra innych

W dniu 7 kwietnia 1994 odszedł na wieczny spoczynek nasz kolega, członek Stowarzyszenia Techników Polskich w Kanadzie od roku 1948, Wojciech Adam Krajewski.

Urodził się 9 sierpnia 1912 roku, wychowany w Rzeszowie, gdzie otrzymał średnie wykształcenie. Absolwent wydziału Inżynierii Lądowo-Wodnej Politechniki Lwowskiej i asystent na wydziale Leśnym przy katedrze Zabudowania Górskich Potoków (1937-38). Pracował nad projektami inżynieryjnymi w Karpatach Wschodnich. Jako podchorąży rezerwy brał udział w Kampanii Wrześniowej, a następnie służył w wojsku polskim we Francji oraz w polskich siłach zbrojnych na terenach Szkocji, Anglii i Niemiec. Pracował przy projektowaniu i budowie lotnisk dla ciężkich bombowców alianckich w Wielkiej Brytanii. Zakończył służbę wojskową w stopniu porucznika lotnictwa. Resztę życia spędził w Kanadzie.

Osiedlił się w Toronto, gdzie od roku 1948 do 1977 pracował jako inżynier w Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario. W latach 1960-76 był kierownikiem grupy projektantów konstrukcji stalowych i żelbetowych dla elektrowni: Lakeview (2400 MW) w Mississauga, Lambton (2300 MW) koło Sarnia, Nanticoke (4000 MW) na jeziorem Erie, Wellesley (2300 MW) i Lennox (2300 MW) koło Kingston. Projekty te wymagały ścisłej współpracy zespołów lądowo-wodnego, mechanicznego, elektrycznego i architektonicznego. Kol. Krajewski był znany wśród współpracowników, podwładnych i zwierzchników, jako wybitny fachowiec z którym każdy chętnie pracował. Dzięki jego umiejętnościom połączenia podstaw teoretycznych z praktycznym doświadczeniem, zrozumienia całokształtu zadań oraz znajomości detali - dzięki jego sumiennej pracy oraz szacunkowi i wyrozumieniu dla współpracowników - projekty wykonywane pod jego kierownictwem osiągały wyniki szczytowe. Elektrownia Lennox została wyróżniona na zjeździe Canadian Electrical Association w Winnipeg, Manitoba, w roku 1976, jako projekt wyjątkowo praktyczny, ekonomiczny i estetyczny, wykonany w terminie.

Kol. Krajewski był członkiem Association of Professional Engineers of Ontario. Jego praca zatytułowana "Structures for Power Stations in Ontario" została opublikowana w American Society of Civil Engineers Proceedings 1976. Przeszedł na emeryturę w roku 1977, lecz pracował społecznie do końca życia. W roku 1978 wygłosił odczyt o elektrowniach w Kanadzie na Politechnice Warszawskiej.

Polonia Kanadyjska znała kol. Krajewskiego jako niestrudzonego pracownika w ramach wielu organizacji. O szczegółach jego wkładu serca, talentu i żmudnej pracy w życie polonijne pisało już szereg osób na łamach prasy. Jego wieloletnia aktywność w STP objawiała się w odczytach, zebraniach, dyskusjach, sympozjach, pracach organizacyjnych, uroczystościach jubileuszowych, wykładach na kursach techniczno-informacyjnych. Stale nawoływał do większego udziału w życiu społecznym i hojniejszego popierania wysiłków Polonii. Był przewodniczącym Zarządu Oddziału STP Toronto. Był wieloletnim pracownikiem Kongresu Polonii Kanadyjskiej, prezesem Zarządu Okręgu KPK Toronto (1950-52), wiceprezesem Zarządu Głównego KPK (1952-54), inicjatorem obchodów Tysiąclecia Polski Chrześcijańskiej, przewodniczącym Komisji Millenium, sekretarzem obchodu setnej rocznicy śmierci A. Mickiewicza, założycielem i pierwszym prezesem Fundacji A. Mickiewicza, członkiem Zarządu Polsko-Kanadyjskiego Instytutu Badawczego, członkiem Zarządu Głównego Związku Polaków w Kanadzie, sekretarzem i przewodniczącym Dyrekcji Prasowej Związkowca (1955-60), członkiem Stowarzyszenia Polskich Kombatantów, członkiem Zarządu Klubu Sportowego "Biały Orzeł" (1950-55), współpracownikiem pism polonijnych, autorem wielu artykułów, felietonów zatytułowanych "A życie polonijne biegnie..." oraz książki pt. "Mój dom". Został wielokrotnie odznaczony za pracę społeczną przez organizacje polonijne i instytucje kanadyjskie.

Kol. Krajewski zostawił żonę Marię, syna Krzysztofa i córkę Annę.

Kol. Maria Krajewska, wieloletnia członkini STP pełniła funkcje sekretarza Zarządu Oddziału Toronto oraz Zarządu Głównego przez kilka kadencji.

Serdeczne wyrazy współczucia dla całej Rodziny składa na ręce koleżanki M. Krajewskiej w imieniu członków STP

Zarząd Główny