

Why studying in Poland could become a real option for British students

Polish students flock to the UK, but there are dramatic reasons to head the other way.

In an Independent newspaper in London article dated September 21, 2007, Nick Jackson writes about... The quarter of a million Poles who have come to the UK in the past three years have had a mixed reception, but one place they have been welcomed is at universities.

Since Poland became a full member of the European Union in 2004, the number of Poles at British universities has tripled. More than 3,000 were given places last year. For the first time this summer, Oxford's Boat Race crew included a Polish student.

Few British students are going the other way, but Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) is looking in a small way to address that, with an MA in acting based in Poland but aimed at British and international students.

Many British universities have links with Polish counterparts, but where these are institutionalised – as with Bradford's franchised Masters in business and management – they often take the form of British expertise on offer to local students.

Manchester Metropolitan University's Masters is something else. Now in its second year, the MA in acting is taught in Poland and run jointly with Pieśń Kozła, the award-winning theatre company. Just one of the students last year was Polish. Pieśń Kozła set the pace, with MMU tutors and special guest lecturers shuttled in and out during the year.

Students spend most time at the company's studio in Wrocław, along with a research trip (to Siberia this year) that forms the foundation of the graduation performance, which is a tour of Europe.

"The course is for students who want to move into a different world," says Niamh Dowling, course director at MMU. Dowling was working with Pieśń Kozła as part of MMU's undergraduate programme before the company hit the limelight by scooping awards at the 2004 Edinburgh Festival. To turn that into a partnership for the MA meant persuading students to up sticks to Poland for a grueling year of physical theatre.

"For the university, it's an extraordinary thing to do," Dowling says, but she hopes it becomes more common: "There is a model, definitely." MMR could strike similar deals with companies in Africa and America. No matter how exciting a group is, though, who would choose to spend a year studying full-time in a country where they cannot speak the language? Ewan Downie was one of the first students to take the course. "It was tricky to start with," he says. "But in some ways it was an advantage, being taken out of your normal life where all you have is this very intense course."

Downie became enthused by Pieśń Kozła's work when he did a one-month workshop after leaving drama school. Disillusioned with much British and Irish theatre, Downie was looking for a new way to engage with the audience.

"It seemed completely different," he says. "Most theatre in the UK and Ireland starts with words or concepts. This is the reverse: you're trying to create a physical flow between performers and the text derives

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Polish Women's Alliance Out of state members

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This article was written in 1999

Pahiatua Children

On 1 November 1944, 733 children, mostly orphans and half orphans, arrived in Wellington Harbour. Some 100 adults - teachers, doctors and administrators - accompanied the group to Pahiatua where a camp was established to give a temporary home for the children..

The entrance to the new home read "Polish Childrens Camp in Pahiatua". As far as the children were concerned this was their little Poland.

A number of books have been written about the children of Pahiatua but the main one, "The Invited", written by their teacher and the Principal of the Boys' Primary School Krystyna Skwarko is being located on this web-site through the kindness of Krystyna Tomaszuk, the daughter of Krystyna Skwarko.

Also included on this site are photographs of the Pahiatua camp and the children. These photographs were assembled and children identified by Joseph and Stefania Zawada of Wellington., both of Pahiatua Camp.

It is interesting to note that in 1947 and again in 1948 the Warsaw regime (the Communist regime dominated by USSR) demanded that the children be returned to Poland, but the New Zealand Government refused. Prior to the request, the Consul General, Dr K. A. Wodzicki, in co-operation with the Polish authorities in London (the then Internationally recognised seat of the Polish Government) and the New Zealand Government had formed the Guardianship Council for the Polish children in New Zealand. This council which comprised of three New Zealanders and five Poles was approved by the highest court in New Zealand in May 1945. The council was presided over by Dr J. P. Kavanagh, Bishop of Dunedin.

Following formation of the council, the children were prepared for their permanent life in New Zealand. The teaching of English was intensified and some were given the opportunity to enter private Catholic schools in New Zealand Accommodation was provided in boarding houses in Wellington and Hawera.

Now in 1999, 55 years after their arrival, the Pahiatua children can look back with pride at their significant achievements.

From personal knowledge and observation it is my view that:

They all retained their Polishness, their language and sense of their history - truly a remarkable achievement.

They all retained their Catholic religion with special devotion to Our Lady, the Queen of Poland

They all retained a special bond and concern for one another - one large family.

They all became good citizens of New Zealand, contributing significantly to the development of economic, cultural and religious life of the country, more than repaying the people of New Zealand for their generosity in 1944

The Pahiatua children, in reality, were not immigrants to this country. They were guests, invited for a short but undetermined period of time in 1944.

The plan was for them to go back home to Poland, but because that part of Poland where the children had come from, Eastern Poland, was incorporated into the USSR following the Yalta Agreement, they had no home to go back to. Their homes and possessions were confiscated, their families were either murdered or transported to Russia, so there simply was no point going back to a place that had ceased to exist.

The New Zealand Government gave the children permanent residency and many became N.Z. citizens.

John Roy-Wojciechowski

(known in Pahiatua Camp as Jan Wojciechowski)

Honorary Consul

Auckland, New Zealand

July 1999 ☐

Pole position

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London, UK HIGH LIFE/Taki/ Gstaad

June 17, 2004

As everyone who has ever read history knows, Poland is the country most trodden on by bad guys, set as she is at the heart of Europe between two, er, shall we say voracious powers, Germany and Russia. Throughout the centuries bad guys have tried to enslave the Poles, the bravest and most devout Christian people in Europe. They, in turn, did not exactly roll over and play dead à la Belgians in the first and second world wars. They rose against the Russkies in 1830, 1863 and 1905; fought the Bolshies in 1920-1; finally rose against the Nazis in 1944 only to be betrayed by the murderous Stalin whose armies just sat across the Vistula outside Warsaw and watched the capital reduced to rubble and hundreds of thousands of courageous Polish fighters killed.

So much for those scummy types who until 1989 believed Uncle Joe to have been a nice sort of person. We, of course, were not much better. We supposedly went to war against Hitler for Poland, but in reality all we did was to declare a state of war against Germany, which was not exactly the same thing as going to war to help the beleaguered Poles. In fact, we did the contrary. The Poles retreated in orderly fashion in the first two weeks of September 1939, hoping that an Anglo - French expeditionary force would come to their aid. Count Potocki, who had resisted the Anglo - French - Polish treaty, knew that this was horsefeathers. Neither the Brits nor the French were capable of helping anyone in 1939, so why sign the treaty? On 17 September someone did come, in the name of the Soviet hordes who attacked from the east. So what did we do? Did we declare war on Stalin? Yes, we did, and if you believe that you also believe that the Russian oligarchs are honest businessmen.

Mind you, if we had, the British trade unions would have overthrown the government. So what did the Poles do in return for the Allied betrayal? Easy. They volunteered en masse, saved England with their airmen during the Battle of Britain in the summer of 1940, and distinguished themselves as the bravest soldiers fighting for the good guys. (Not such good guys in my not so humble opinion.) And the Allies continued to thank them by betraying them in Yalta when Churchill and Roosevelt connived to appease Stalin by ceding Polish territory to him. No people have ever been betrayed as much by so many. Even Napoleon, under the influence of the wonderful Marie Walewska, betrayed Poland, although he had 2,000 Polish lancers come all the way to Spain to break the stubborn Spanish resistance in the Somosierra ridge. (Once the Poles took it, Napoleon bared his head in saluting them, the only time in his career he did so.)

What does all this have to do with 'High life'? Well, as some readers of this column may have noticed, I am a very big Polish fan and try to praise them whenever the opportunity arises. Sometime last winter I received a letter from the Lady Belhaven and Stenton. Polish-born and active in her country's affairs, she suggested that I have my portrait painted and hung at the Polish Club, 55 Exhibition Road. I agreed, and a very talented Polish artist, Barbara Kaczmarowska Hamilton, finished it in pastel after just three sittings. In return I gave a dinner at the Polish Club for the unveiling. My friend Prince Radziwill, with typical Polish generosity of spirit, flew back from Gstaad for the dinner, as did the mother of my children. (John Radziwill's uncle was the same Count Potocki who was against the shameful treaty.) Barbara Hamilton's portraits are in the De Laszlo style, soft pastel hues, lending her subjects a dream-like quality. I was very happy with my portrait, wrinkles and all. Bravo, Basia.

Given that my own country Greece was, like Poland, second to none in its gallant resistance to both the Nazi and communist tyrannies, I felt extremely honoured by the unveiling. The chairman of the Polish Hearth Club and the Polish Council both pointed out this fact in brief speeches. The

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Poland's growth will draw migrants home, says bank

Rapid economic growth in eastern European countries is providing a big attraction to east European workers, who could soon start to return home from the west, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) said yesterday.

In the longer term, large numbers of Polish workers in particular are highly likely to return home, according to the EBRD's chief economist Erik Berghof.

"Many Poles would much prefer to work in Poland. There is a strong force of gravitation, and in the longer term, we would expect to see emigration," he said.

He added that in recent years, the departure of large numbers of Poles seeking work in Britain had led to a big shortage of skilled workers in Poland that was now pushing wages there sharply upwards. That, combined with rapid economic growth, could start the flow home.

The prediction comes after last week's political row prompted by large upward revisions to official data on the number of immigrants who have come to Britain in recent years. Immigration has been a key factor in projections of how rapidly the British population and need for housing and social services will expand in the coming two decades.

The EBRD's annual transition report on the countries of the former Soviet Union said the bloc would enjoy its fastest ever growth this year, at around 7%, with Poland expected to grow 6.5% this year and 5.5% next year, more than double the rate of the British economy.

Mr Berghof warned, though, that problems in global credit markets had already restricted the flow of funds and credit into many of the EBRD's member countries and would crimp growth rates next year. The high price of oil could also be a problem for many countries, though not Russia, which is a major producer.

The report also contained a warning for Britons who have bought property in eastern Europe in recent years. It said it expected house price growth in the region to moderate sharply and possibly fall in some places. Mr Berghof said he did not expect a crash everywhere. "We are looking for a soft landing," he said. ☐

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