

NOTES

ON THE SENATE



SENATE
OF THE REPUBLIC
OF POLAND

Involvement of the Senate of the Third Republic of Poland in the lives of Poles abroad

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DURING THE INTER-WAR PERIOD, THE SENATE OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND ATTACHED GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THE ISSUE OF EMIGRATION AND STROVE TO MAINTAIN TIES WITH GROUPS OF POLISH IMMIGRANTS ABROAD, WHICH HAD ALREADY GROWN IN NUMBER BY THEN. Various activities were undertaken to integrate Polish expatriate and émigré communities abroad.

In 1929, the 1st Congress of Poles from Abroad took place and an Organization Council was set up to coordinate initiatives for the benefit of Polish expatriates and émigrés. The Marshal of the Senate, Juliusz Szymański, was appointed as its president. Participants of the 2nd Congress (1934) established the World Association of Poles Living Abroad (“Światpol”), bringing together most of Polish Diaspora communities. Władysław Raczkiewicz, the Marshal of the Senate, became its first president. “Światpol” aimed at reinforcing ties between Polish emigrants and their homeland, collaborated with Polish émigré educational and cultural organizations, raised funds and subsidized Polish émigré publishing houses, with a view to promoting “Polishness” and preserving national identity, especially among younger generations born abroad.

FOLLOWING THE TRADITION OF THE INTER-WAR PERIOD, THE SENATE REINSTATED IN 1989 ONCE AGAIN ASSUMED THE PATRONAGE OVER POLES LIVING OUTSIDE POLAND. In 1990, the Association “Polish Community” was established. Andrzej Stelmachowski, the Marshal of the Senate of the First Term, became its president.

The Marshal of the Senate is the principle honorary sponsor of numerous initiatives taken for the benefit of the Polish Diaspora and important events which involve compatriots from abroad. The Senate strives to maintain ties with Poles and people of Polish origin residing abroad mainly through the work of the Emigration Affairs and Contacts with Poles Abroad Committee. The Senate takes interest in their current problems and legal status in their countries of residence. It initiates activity and cooperation of Polish Diaspora and Polish communities all over the world and contributes to the protection of Polish cultural heritage, traditions and customs abroad.

Frequent meetings and visits of representatives of Polish Diaspora organisations enable the Senate to become familiar with the situation of the communities they represent, their problems and needs. Contacts with the Committee have already become an integral part of visits to Poland by émigré and expatriate community representatives.

INITIALLY, THE SENATE FOCUSED ON PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO OUR COMPATRIOTS LIVING IN COUNTRIES OF THE FORMER SOVIET UNION. It also provided support for Polish Diaspora and Polish education and cultural institutions,

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organizing summer holidays for children and young people, promotes patriotic attitudes among the young generation, social assistance and charitable activities to help senior citizens or those in need. The Polish Senate has played an important role in the rebirth of Polish identity in countries to the east of Poland and in the promotion of Polish culture and language in the world. Thanks to the Senate and its cooperation with the non-governmental sector in Poland and with Polish communities in the East, education and culture are developing there at a brisk pace, although not without problems. Direct contacts between Poles (particularly children and young people from Polish families) from the East and their homeland have increased. Many new Polish periodicals have been founded and numerous Polish radio and TV programmes have been created.

COOPERATION WITH POLISH EXPATRIATE AND ÉMIGRÉ COMMUNITIES IN THE WEST IS OF A DIFFERENT NATURE. Polish communities living in countries with a long-standing democratic tradition have been free to organize and acquire experience in conducting social, cultural or even political activities. Poles living in the West expect, above all, that Poland will support their activities in their countries of residence to boost the prestige of the Polish ethnic minority, contributing to the positive image of our country abroad.

LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES TAKEN BY THE FOURTH TERM SENATE AND THEN ADOPTED BY THE SEJM WERE AN IMPORTANT BREAKTHROUGH IN POLAND'S POLICY WITH RESPECT TO POLES LIVING ABROAD. Under one of them, all repatriates, especially those from Kazakhstan and Asian regions, have been given the right to return to Poland. Another initiative enabled Poles living abroad to participate in the second round of presidential elections. The process of legislating the act on Polish citizenship, the act on the Pole's Charter, and the law on declaring May 2nd as the Day of Polish Émigré and Expatriate Communities was interrupted by the expiry of the parliamentary term. The Fifth Term Senate returned to the initiative of **DECLARING MAY 2ND AS THE DAY OF POLISH ÉMIGRÉ AND EXPATRIATE COMMUNITIES.** The Sejm adopted it in 2002. This initiative refers to the pre-World War II tradition of celebrating the Day of Care for the Welfare of Polish Compatriots in Foreign Lands. It also implements one of the resolutions adopted by the 2nd Congress of Polish Communities and Poles Abroad. In 2008 during the Sixth Term of the Senate, **THE ACT ON THE POLE'S CHARTER** entered into force, adopted at the initiative of the government. It simplifies procedures and grants privileges to our compatriots living in the East, including multiple-entry permits, visa fee reimbursements and access to Polish education.