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JEF PIŁSUDSKI

*Poland, Minister of War.*

## **The Psychology of the Prisoner**

(„*Revue Pénitentiaire de Pologne*“, Vol. IV, Nr. 1/2, 1929).



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*First Marshal of Poland, Minister of War.*

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## THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE PRISONER.

I have been invited by the Committee of Aid for Former Political Prisoners to give a lecture on the subject of the psychology of the prisoner <sup>1)</sup>. Poland is perhaps the only country existing at present amongst so many other nations and countries, where it is still possible to speak freely about such a derogatory subject as gaol. When I stand before you in the uniform of an officer of the highest rank, in the uniform of the supreme representative of the Polish Army, and I speak openly on this subject, it is solely because 150 years of Polish history have made of gaol a daily factor in the every-day life of the people. In Poland gaol was, as one might say, the permanent daily companion of human thought, a part of intellectual culture, of political culture, of the general culture of Polish life. Year after year, decade after decade, one generation after another familiarized itself with imprisonment as an every-day occurrence penetrating human thought, as it has been penetrated elsewhere by problems of another nature.

Literature is the reflection of life, and the small black letters set down on paper have the property that, when they are inscribed by the hand of genius, they are not only evidence of talent, but constitute an evidence of

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<sup>1)</sup> Lecture given by Marshal Józef Piłsudski on 24th May, 1925, and published by virtue of special authorization dated 19th December, 1928.

that which filled the existence of many millions of men. One of our greatest poets, in his beautiful verses addressed to the Polish mother, wrote: „Twine from the first your infant's neck in chains, teach it to breathe foul and damp air“. Anything of this kind would have been impossible elsewhere, but in Poland these sentiments were forced into the feelings of every mother, of the mother thinking of the future of her child, of the mother, fearing in her maternal heart the advent of some disaster or mishap which could befall her beloved child. The child was born predestined to reflect on, and think of, prison. If, immediately after the loss of Polish independence, we had a name which the smallest child repeats until this day as being intimately connected with the Polish heart and thought, the name of *Tadeusz Kościuszko*, we see in him one of the first who knew the prison of the oppressors.

*Tadeusz Kościuszko*, after being wounded at the battle of Maciejowice, was taken prisoner and confined in the fortress of Peter and Paul at St. Petersburg.

Even a name, as celebrated as that of the great *Mickiewicz*, is also connected with imprisonment at the beginning of the poet's life.

I cannot, therefore, be taxed with exaggeration by the generation before which I am speaking, if I mention gaol as an every-day event, in the same manner that it is not an exaggeration to speak of heroism, devotion, sacrifice, for all these are phenomena as vast as the field covered by human thought casting back over a period of 150 long years.

Permit me also to quote myself as an example which appears to confirm historically the value of prison as an integral part of Polish life.

I arrived in Poland straight from prison, for Magdeburg could not otherwise be described, and I arrived at the dawn of the rebirth of Poland, to rise immediately to the highest rank of the State, I — a man straight from pri-

son. This is an incontestable truth, a simple truth which could not be disfigured by the use of extraordinary words, as its simplicity speaks for itself in the Poland of our fathers and our ancestors and has no need of high faluting phrases.

When I was devoting consideration to the manner in which I should treat the subject which I have chosen, the psychology of the prisoner, many different methods of treatment occurred to me. I rejected them one after the other, with the exception of one which was the easiest for me. I have not the gift of being able to treat a subject in the so-called scientific manner, the only subject which I have investigated in this way being the art of warfare. I have applied different treatment to all other subjects.

To investigate scientifically the system of prisons, and the psychology of a man locked up in prison, it would be necessary to commence by obtaining statistical data of health destroyed by imprisonment, of cases of madness caused by it, of premature deaths of prisoners who committed suicide, of the number of cubic metres of air, that damp and foul vapour, which is often breathed by prisoners. Afterwards to take all these data, to divide, to multiply and to subtract them in various manners, to reduce them to algebraical formulae and then to condense them into a shape suitable for my short discourse, is for me quite impossible, as I could not examine my own life in such a fashion. That is why, after rejecting this method, I have decided upon the simplest, although perhaps the most egoistical manner of treatment.

I am a prisoner who has passed through more than one prison. And, as I mentioned statistics, I would say that if you were to add up all the prisons and all the years of imprisonment and to divide the total by the sum of the Polish population, you would find that my share was greater than the average per capita. As I have always been exceptionally favoured by fortune, chance has

also been kind to me in this respect, for, as I have said, the share of prison which I have received has surpassed the average.

So I can affirm with a certain amount of right and with a certain moral authority that, in speaking of the psychology of the prisoner, I shall speak more of myself than of others, for I have passed through many prisons and spent more than one year behind prison bars. As the material basis of imprisonment is the same for any individual, I do not think I shall be straying far from my subject in painting for you the psychology of that prisoner which I remember I was, as a fundamental characteristic of every prisoner.

Prison has two distinct characteristics, which, if all additional circumstances are abstracted, may be resumed in a very simple manner. Firstly imprisonment is meant to be unpleasant. No one is put into prison for pleasure. The unpleasantness consists in the restriction of material freedom to a minimum, a limitation of freedom of movement to a small space destined as a place of residence, a space bound with four walls, with a door, more or less large, which is always locked, and an eternally barred window. That is what prison is.

Secondly it is an undoubted fact that every prisoner is subjected to daily and hourly observation. His life and his actions no longer depend on his desires and his will. This is the second aspect which comes up very clearly in the consideration of a prison; and that regardless of the why and wherefore of the imprisonment, which is a matter of indifference.

These are the characteristics which, if everything else is rejected, remain permanent and unchangeable for every prison.

Whenever I have been in prison and have had plenty of leisure to reflect upon my position, I have tried to alleviate my incarceration by telling myself that prison life

is not so very much worse than that which has to be endured by many persons outside those walls. A man who dislikes his office work has an unbearable feeling at being compelled, day after day, to walk the same road to a place he hates, to sit down at the same desk, to handle the same accursed paper, to copy or write, to always gaze at the same walls, the same, though unbarred, windows, — all this only to return, when the pangs of hunger call, bored and sick of life, through the same dreary streets to his home. When I drew such an exaggerated picture of the existence of such a man, it was for the purpose of brightening my own lot, by comparing it with that of people who could walk about the streets. The above statement may, perhaps, serve to define the general psychology of a man who is deprived, against his will, of the essence of his being, who has an enclosed space for his free movement and who cannot bear this for the pain it causes him.

To bring out the second aspect, that of constant surveillance, I may take as an example an unsuitable marriage, where the one partner is constantly under the suspicious eye of the other; a couple who have been joined, but who wish to be parted. And, speaking as a man, it is of small import whether the eyes are pretty or ugly, whether they are blue or black, they are an unbearable burden from which there is no escape except in flight; for the other partner has, in this case, a full right to do this and may use and abuse it at will.

It might be thought that I am speaking against women, but this is not the case. Any woman has the right to say the same about a man in an unhappy marriage, therefore I withdraw what I have said.

I have often thought, when I was a prisoner, how much harder it is for a woman to be in prison than for a man, as she is incessantly under the eye of a brute of a man, who observes her without ceremony, who has the right of looking at her at all moments in which a woman

usually desires to avoid masculine observation, and she feels this as a brutal foot trampling on the very essence of her being. Such is a prison.

I will now pass to the psychology of the struggle with all that the prison represents that is difficult and unendurable. There is not a prisoner who, after a certain time, does not begin to fight against the burden of prison life in one way or another, who does not seek a remedy for the lack of material freedom and for that unbearable feeling of brutal restraint, which is expressed before all by the presence of the ever-watchful eye, and to fight against the conditions under which a man has nothing of which he can freely dispose.

The first fight which the prisoner always puts up is the desire to outwit at least those who are responsible for his detention, and to do so within the four walls of his cell. Therefore he tries to deceive the ever-watchful eye of the warder. He seeks for means of succeeding in this deception, if only for a moment. Each man has a different way of doing this. I, myself, being bold by nature, used to breathe in the dark on the small glass loopholes in the door of my cell to prevent the warder from seeing me, even for a moment; I also used to try and hide in the corner and to press myself as flat as paper against the wall.

At the beginning all prisoners are much annoyed and irritated by the sensation of being constantly watched, but, after a time, they forget it easily, becoming accustomed to, and disregarding of, this strange eye which sees perfectly and watches, although bored with having to do this, and seeks distraction, just as does the prisoner in his cell.

The second thing which happens — and there is not a single prisoner in the world who has not passed through this stage after a certain length of time spent in prison — is that he seeks some methods of escaping from prison.

This is such a psychological truth that it is almost a law to which every prisoner becomes subject, when the lack of material freedom begins to be felt by him.

Some seek this by means of ingenious methods of deceiving those in charge of the prison, while others try to invent cunning and out of the way methods of filing through the prison bars, etc. However, this idea obstinately recurs to the mind of the prisoner, it becomes an obsession hugged by him in his heart of hearts. To escape from prison! To get away from the lack of material freedom! To become a man like others! To have the possibility of walking through the streets!

Then begins for the unfortunate prisoner the internal struggle to create for himself something which is independent of any outsider; the creation out of his own resources of a life in prison. This is perhaps the hardest part of imprisonment. To create life — but from what? From oneself, from one's own resources, to create a life under such abnormal conditions, to create it alone, without assistance, seeking to find by some means or other a source of that which I call „the luxury of prison“.

The luxury of prison consists of the internal creation out of one's own resources of something which is necessary for oneself alone, and which is independent of those who have cast one into prison. When a man seeks for material to achieve this end, he finds that he is so limited in means, so restricted in methods, that he almost gives up the attempt. The hands have nothing to do. There are no tools available to make anything. Material things are so limited, and so insignificant, that the mind gropes with difficulty for something to which to cling.

What is there in a prison?

There are walls, of one kind or another, a small number of objects destined for the use of the prisoner. One makes various attempts to imitate the life which is teeming elsewhere. In the prison cell there are flies and other

creatures which have got there in one way or another. It will not be an untruth to say that there have even been prisoners who have had great affection for bugs, and who have made them the object of their studies, and have centered their need for independence in such disgusting vermin as this; not to speak of the story which I once read, of a prisoner who was confined for many years and had a spider with which he made rendez-vous for a long time, and which he even tried to domesticate and to teach to perform little tricks. It is the necessity for seeking a life outside of prison conditions, of creating a luxury for oneself alone, which is the psychological necessity of the prisoner.

As far as I am concerned, I always jokingly held that I was a born prisoner, because it was easy for me to reconstruct the charm of life. I could evoke in my soul extraordinary dreams and ideas, solely because my mind worked easily in this direction. I did not become attached to any material things, nevertheless, when I look back at my experiences in many prisons, I find one thing which was particularly pleasant, namely that it was a great joy for me to be able to move things about in my cell. There are, however, many prisons where nothing can be moved, because everything is fixed and screwed immovably. That is why I look with pleasurable emotion on the time when I was confined in the 10th Pavilion of the Warsaw Citadel. In other prisons a man had nothing for himself, but here everything belonged to the man who had the right to move it.

The delightful cell № 26 in the 10th Pavilion of the Warsaw Citadel, when I was brought to it, appeared to me to be a beautiful phenomenon resembling a room in a hotel, a most mediocre one, it must be admitted, but, nevertheless, a hotel room, in which my suitcase was lying, where I could move my things and put them freely in one

corner or another, where I could kick the table which yielded to my will and displaced itself.

If I represent prison life in this manner it is because I do not consider that it was totally without pleasure. I could fight against prison conditions, I had a lively and vivid imagination, I was able to create for myself a life of thought, a life of dreams, a life of illusions, a life in which I had freer rein than was possible in every-day life, in which there are so many eyes watching one with suspicion. One is conscious of no restraint when one neglects the watchful eye of the gaoler. I was then able to create in myself everything that I required, for time was not lacking.

If you believe that I, who had this vivid imagination, which grasped at everything, which covered all the domains of human thought, differed in this respect from other prisoners, who were devoid of that freedom of thought which I had, you are mistaken, for, whenever I enquired of other prisoners on this point, I always found that they did the same as I.

They try in thought to relive their past, to search for faults in themselves or in others. The sense of self-criticism and self-analysis becomes doubly acute in consequence of living one's past over again. This very frequently leads the prisoner into erroneous and difficult paths, it leads to a hatred of people, such as would never have been experienced had one not been in prison. Because of this more acute criticism of past times, one tends to attach particular importance to things which would never have been treated in this way in the course of normal life. Whenever I observed prisoners after their release, I noticed in them that pathological symptom of prison life.

In how many prisoners have I not seen this desire to create for themselves a luxury independent of themselves. Is there anything with which the poor prisoner

does not occupy himself? He commences the study of languages. He, who has never studied languages in his life before, begins to do so now. He toils, poor man, over strange words and queer expressions, in which he vainly endeavours to find some sense, and which he does not know how to pronounce, so that he acquires faults of pronunciation of which he is never able to rid himself afterwards. I, myself, had this experience with the English language, which I studied whilst in prison, and in which I became so used to faulty and incorrect pronunciation that I have never been able to speak it properly since. Never having had a particular fondness for the study of languages while I was free, I should never have had the courage to learn them, and yet I committed this crime against myself in moiling and toiling at the English language while I was in prison.

I used to be passionately fond of chess, although, unfortunately, this is a game that requires a partner. I tried to make a tiny chessboard, and I vividly remember how, in the Peter and Paul fortress at St. Petersburg, I managed to make a chessboard on the back of a book which lay there in every cell — the Bible. With the help of matches, which I had, as, fortunately, I was permitted to smoke, I was able to make the black squares of the board. The chessmen I fashioned with such clumsy hands, that I would be most ashamed for anybody to see the miserable rooks or bishops which I produced. I concealed this with cunning and skill during the daily cell inspection in order that I might retain, as long as possible, this treasure by which I deceived my merciless oppressors. Often, even now, the recollection of this episode in my career brings a smile to my lips.

Other prisoners gave themselves over to other things, and, when I speak of this ability to create one's own life, I always remember a few people whose names remained dear to me.

They were two inmates of the harshest prison in Russia, Schlisselburg. One of my compatriots from the province of Samogitia, a M. *Janowicz*, who was imprisoned at Schlisselburg, managed to put up a psychological defence against the poison of prison, which kills human psychology. He worked out a scheme of statistical research, based on the scanty material at his disposal, in order to prove his cherished idea of the necessity of the independence of Poland. He drew his arguments rather from the stores of his own mind, than from those of the scanty sheets which he managed to obtain for perusal. What an onerous labour had to be accomplished by this soul before reaching the belief — for M. *Janowicz* was a most intelligent man — that what he was doing was real, in spite of the poverty of the material of which he disposed. I always recollect with regret that a man, who had managed to extract so much charm from prison life, used up his spiritual powers to such an extent that, when he was released from prison and deported to Siberia, he could no longer bear life, and ended by committing suicide. The other person whose name obtrudes on my memory is another compatriot of mine from Wilno, M. *Łukasiewicz*. I remember him as a young fellow, when he was about to matriculate, as the pride of his school. He afterwards took up the study of natural science, and, just before taking his degree, he was imprisoned at Schlisselburg. What did he do then? He examined the grasses growing miserably in the prison courtyard, he sought for traces of life there in Schlisselburg, in a space of some 100 square metres. Here was a great scientific mind which saved the soul of its owner in its own manner. Always when I meet him at Wilno, at my beloved University of Wilno, I see how this physical giant, with his kindly face, works to-day with a smile.

It is absolutely essential to search for resources in oneself, and to seek to fashion from the crumbs of that which one has brought into prison and from the scraps

which fall into one's hands, a new spiritual prison life. Everything happens in time. Time the mathematician, time which heals all scars, time which makes new wounds. Time flows differently in prison. When I sought, as I frequently did in prison, to determine the manner in which the time flows there, I found a definition, perhaps nonsensical, namely that, while standing still, it is flowing rapidly, for in reality time does not move. By what do we human beings measure the passage of time? By its division into portions, by gaining certain impressions, by the fact that something has come before and that something will come after; we measure time spiritually. The more impressions we have, the longer the day and the hour are, or, at least, seem to be. In spite of the fact that every hour is of equal duration, both for the happy man and the unhappy one, this is not the case in prison, where nothing really happens. Prison impressions are so meagre and flat that the mind snatches at the most ridiculous trifles in order to split time into portions. I do not think that I can be mistaken in this respect, although I have never specially questioned prisoners on the subject, and although I personally have never attached any importance to food. In prison, however, dinner and supper are extraordinarily important elements of life, as they serve as divisions of time, as a necessity to which the mind constantly returns, as something connected with the law of every-day life. Time is divided up into a certain number of meals. Automatically the prisoner begins to think of his food, of the menu for dinner and supper, and even a man who is not in the least a gourmet, has undoubtedly the same thoughts, as he considers dinner and supper to be the most important events of his life. This indigence of every-day life, through which the prisoner passes, forces him to seek some sort of a division of time, while one day is so like another that they can only differ by some personal impressions, as, for instance, that one is in a better mood one day than another.

In reality nothing actually happens in prison. Days when the doors are opened and one is summoned, not for a walk, but for an examination, when one passes through a certain number of corridors, a certain distance, or when one is placed in a prison van and rapidly taken through the town, are events of a tremendous importance. Something has happened in life! One day resembles another to such an extent, nothing important ever happening, that time seems to stand still, the hours drag with inordinate slowness, so slowly that an hour seems almost a day. It is difficult to live through the hours, and yet how easy it is to live through whole weeks when the hand of time stands still.

How many ingenious and humiliating means and methods are used by prisoners in order to communicate with one another. How many cunning signs have not been invented in order to enable a man to transmit even one word a day to another and to have the other reply by means of knocks on the wall. I always avoided yielding to this psychological impulse of a prisoner, but I recollect my feelings on one occasion, when my neighbour began to bang the wall with his fist, in his fury that I neither listened nor replied to him; subsequently I began to transmit signs to my fellow prisoner to the effect that I did not understand him.

M. *Lukasiewicz* studied the fauna and flora, while I concentrated my investigations in every prison on the highest genus of the fauna — man. All warders, every movement of their muscles, every change of their expression, I noticed immediately; I sought man and, in accordance with my fighting instinct, that of a man who has never shirked a fight, I sought the enemy in order to examine and understand him. How many delightful moments have I spent in the Warsaw Citadel, which was so badly designed acoustically that it was possible to hear from the cells every word spoken in the corridors, just as

If the cells had been specially built to facilitate the examination of the warders and not of the prisoners. I spent hours listening to the conversations of the warders and examining their psychology. The scope of observation was limited, but all the more vivid. I do not know if any other prisoner will confirm my words, but I consider that the hearing of prisoners is extra sensitive; they catch the slightest sounds, they seek „particles of life“, they are transformed almost into mice, which are sensitive to the slightest rustle.

Those are the principal characteristic psychological traits of the prisoner. A prisoner is a man greatly restricted in his movements and forced to submit to daily observation by others. For this reason there arises in the psychology of the prisoner a need for resistance, resistance against the daily observation, by neglecting it as frequently as possible, in order to rid the soul of the noxious burden of observation. There is also a second need, that of creating a life from one's own resources, in spite of the paucity of the means for the building up of existence.

For the prisoner there are no other men — and there are vital necessities. There are no tools to satisfy even the most intellectual nature. Owing to this a heavy burden of life is formed, under which time flows slowly, suffocating the man and destroying his soul. That is when moments of rebellion occur, even for the most trifling causes.

In conclusion, I would like to recapitulate the impressions which I have garnered from the many prisons in which I have stayed.

In Russian prisons I remarked that the chief object of the prison regime was to create a condition of fear in the prisoner. It was a system which tried to create „the desire of the prisoner to reform“ by terror, the whole prison system being based on this, similarly to the way of correcting naughty children by hurting them.

In the Russian prisons the relations with the prisoner were based to a certain extent on law, but only on the law of the gaoler towards the prisoner. The standard of conduct was not one of pure violence and force, but one of an almost scientific research for methods of inflicting pain and suffering upon the prisoner, for his systematic intimidation, in order to make him „different from all others“.

The Polish prisons under the Russian regime were quite different. A typical specimen of one of these prisons was the 10th Pavilion of the Warsaw Citadel. Those who locked us up in these prisons did not have a care for anything. Force and violence were the rule, without any effort for their justification by arguments of „morality“. All undesirables were confined there. For this reason I have never encountered a gayer prison than the 10th Pavilion. Almost everything, which was strictly forbidden elsewhere, was admissible there. Every generation of prisoners used to dig tunnels under the walls, and these were filled up with complete indifference, leaving to the next generation the task of reconstructing them, as if it were but a formality that, though it was in reality forbidden to dig tunnels, no one cared in the least if the prisoners did so. A prison cell, in which everything can be moved, where you could change all the furniture around, move the bed from place to place, such a hotel-like prison in fact, I have never met before. In this isolation, to which it was wished to reduce the prisoners, there was an orgy of brute force, crushing the prisoner as an overpowering force, which was unhampered by any restraint. I remember my extreme astonishment when, on being taken for a walk, I noticed some soldiers' tents erected in the garden. In this garden there were a few fruit trees, from which the soldiers were engaged in knocking down pears by throwing stones. This would have been unthinkable in any Russian prison, where the application of the law was

coupled with an appreciation of its proper value. I have seen similar things in Siberia, where one's fate is already decided, where one goes to endure one's punishment, where there are no more cross examinations, where the criminal emerges as a finished product.

I think that there could hardly have been more free prisons than those which existed in Poland under the old Russian regime. It was for that reason that, in the Warsaw Citadel, in my time at any rate, people suffered least and felt the most free. They felt themselves to be lords of the prison to a larger extent than anywhere else.

It was a kind of collective rule of the prisoners and the gaolers over the prison. This was a characteristic trait which struck me particularly. That is why it was with a certain amount of anxiety that I went to an unknown prison in a strange country, namely Germany. In common with the majority of Poles, I had always imagined the Germans as the personification of order. However, nothing is worse for the prisoner than prison discipline, as he always desires to violate it. In addition the circumstances under which I found myself in this prison were unusual, as the ordinary prison regulations were not applied in my case. Being treated as an „exceptional person“ I was kept in the Magdeburg prison in complete isolation, but was granted many comforts and unusual freedom. I was treated as a general, I was given three rooms, a small garden was placed at my disposal, I had orderlies, etc., and thus I had the freest prison life imaginable. I was never treated so kindly in Russia. However, before reaching this prison, I passed through four other prisons, which were anything but suitable for the confinement of generals, and, in this manner, I was able to observe German prison conditions. There the treatment was deliberately brutal for the purpose of maintaining order and discipline, but I never noticed any tendency to bully the prisoners, to terrorize them, or to cause them

undue pain. One had to adhere to the regulations, which were hung on the walls of every cell, a thing which was never found in Russia. Thus, from the moment when one had read these regulations, and everyone in Germany is able to read, one knew what one had to face. Everyone there was on duty, the gaoler was on duty, the prisoner sitting in his cell was on duty, and both had to carry out the regulations.

I was particularly surprised when I was imprisoned at Spandau, near Berlin. All I had known of this prison was that *Microslawski* had been imprisoned there in 1848, when conditions had probably been quite different. During my stay this prison was humming with life, which one noticed at every step one took. Everyone was occupied, everyone worked in a different manner, everyone was busy, was running about, was talking; apart from the infliction of the punishment itself, there was no desire whatsoever to cause pain to the prisoners.

Magdeburg was a special prison, the object of which was the isolation of the prisoner because he was dangerous, rather than the enforcement of prison conditions. I had an orderly and some N. C. Os who were my prison guardians. I had three rooms and a garden in which I was allowed to walk. The chief restriction was that at 10 p. m. the lights had to be put out, as all lights in the prison had to be extinguished at that hour. In this respect no difference was made between a general, a lieutenant, and a private soldier. Beyond such trifling regulations, the life there was the freest I have ever known in prison.

As I am nearing the end of my discourse, I would like to return to its beginning.

For a long period of time, prisons formed a part of Polish culture. This is a sad admission, but there is a certain charm and fascination about it. In the most serious part of one of the greatest poems of *Mickiewicz*, the author takes his readers to a prison, where the poet-prisoner, after

having undergone the moral pangs of prison life, after passing over that road of which I have spoken, after having created there his own prison life, writes: „*A new man is born. Natus est Conradus*“. A new prison man is born, a man created by his own might, by his own strength of soul, transformed into a diamond which cuts the hardest objects and which sparkled so marvellously in the poetry of *Mickiewicz*. This diamond was created by the internal force of a man who passed through such a hard trial.

The power of prison life to create a new life is undoubtedly great, and has an undoubted charm. There is no doubt that, during those 150 years, the Polish prison psychology was something which was deeply felt by people in Poland, and there was hardly a man who, on looking back at the Polish life of the old days, did not come into contact with a prison, did not speak about a prison, and did not come near a prison. During those 150 past years, those 150 long years, so many years that the oldest man is not able to remember them all, there has not been a single prominent movement where prison has not been the companion of the life of the Pole from the cradle to the grave.

Everyone spoke of prison as of a living part of his soul... I frequently asked myself if all those prison experiences of Poland, with all their sacrifices and heroism, with all the charm of the torment of the human soul detained in abnormal conditions, garrotted, beaten and tired, and yet prompt to rebel, if this charm is not one of the characteristic traits of ourselves and of our generation. When I think of this, when I gaze on the eyes of children and young people, living under happier conditions than ours, I ask myself if the time is not far distant when those verses, which caused our hearts to beat in times past, will not be read and recited in schools as strange and distant which will be passed over in the same manner as we passed

over and disregarded the beauties of Greek poetry when they were forced upon us.

And then a great sadness comes to those who have passed through prison life with rebellion and fight in their souls, and who created from themselves and their greater and lesser sufferings the Polish culture, which is now passing. If in prison there is a force, there is also a charm of forgetfulness. We, the people of the prison era, are fading into the past. A new generation is arising, a new generation which will soon be alien to us, as its lips have never quaffed, as did ours, that cup of mingled bitterness and delight. And always, when my thoughts are fixed on this question, I see the eyes of children which are wide open with surprise at the idea that there could have been times when prison, that is to say something which is a humiliation for a man and which crushes him to the ground, was able to awake in us a spark of enthusiasm, to light the fire in our eyes and bring smiles to our lips. However, at the end of my contemplations. I, as a prison man, always consider with equanimity those who are coming after us. May they forget us, may they forget our struggles and sufferings, may they advance to a new life, where the charm of prisons will not bring a smile to the lips nor poison to the heart. May they freely forget us in order to create a new life.

**Józef Pilsudski,**

*First Marshal of Poland, Minister  
of War.*





