

## Interviews

These interview articles with the Dobrzynski family, 1930-43, were sourced from newspaper cuttings in the Dobrzynski archive held by the NLI and in private hands.

*The Standard* 10 January 1930

M. Dobrzynski received me in his house in Raglan Road and as soon as I entered his study I was struck by the beauty of the Polish paintings and engravings which surrounded the walls. He is a great lover of the arts, and pointed to views of wintry woods in Poland with manifest pleasure that was both patriotic and artistic. He speaks English with fluency, but sometimes expresses himself with French epithet, for French is the second language of all Poles.

“How do you like our Irish climate?” I asked, he said that he, like all other Continental visitors found the dampness trying.

(He continued in praise of the Irish countryside and the welcome and hospitality of the people. They were somewhat surprised that the Irish were familiar and sympathetic with Poland’s history but ill-informed about current developments since 1918.)



*Connacht Tribune* 21 March 1931

M. Dobrzynski and his wife arrived in Galway yesterday after a tour of the West and having visited Mr Martin McDonagh, editor of the Connacht Tribune they left for Dublin in the evening. He said they had beautiful spring weather for their tour of Achill and Connemara, and they had been delighted beyond measure with the scenery and hoped to visit Connacht often during the coming summer



Kitty Clive *Irish Times* October 4 1935

I had a most delightful chat with Madame Dobrzynski the other afternoon, and she told me much about her native Poland and the life of the people. The wife of the Polish Consul

General, who is six years in Ireland, came to us from Reval, where M Dobrzynski was Minister Plenipotentiary. She is a native of Central Poland, not the most beautiful part of the country; for it is extremely flat and quite different from the south, crowned by the great Carpathians, and the West, which is a famous hunting ground for Europeans. But Central Poland is the characteristic part of the land and adheres to all the old customs and the national dress, and attracts thousands of tourists, who yearly attend the celebrated Corpus Christi procession, when the men and women, in great religious demonstration, are seen in their picturesque native dress, with its elaborate and colourful embroideries.

Madame Dobrzynski, who is a lady of much culture, is a graduate of the Warsaw University, where her subject was 'History of Art and Philosophy'. She spent a year in Paris continuing these studies, and has devoted a great part of her time to the various organisations for the advancement of art in Poland. She is enthusiastic about the peasant industries. Poland, like Ireland, is an agricultural country, and with the long winter and many months of snow the people in the farms work industrially at weaving, rug-making and embroidery.

They are all born artists, she tells me, for they never have been taught, but create the most lovely designs and have a great eye for colour. They weave their own linen and cloth, and as everyone wears the national dress they have a busy time. Some years ago there was a danger of these country arts dying, and a group of women, of whom Madame Dobrzynski was one, formed an organisation to arouse the country to prevent this. As an example every woman in Poland wore a linen dress. These industries have done much to keep rural life untouched by the machine mind of other countries, and the people are happy on the land.

One of the movements in which Madame Dobrzynski is interested is the society for the preservation of beautiful and historical monuments, something like our own Antiquarian Society. Many of the old palaces are now museums and some of the famous castles, such as Wilanow, built by King John Sobieski, is now a museum of the city. We are not entirely ignorant, even in Ireland, of Poland's great artists. Naturally, everyone has heard of Paderewski, but our celebrity concerts have introduced us to the Polish composer Szymanowski, whose work is popular with both pianists and violinists.

Then the fine school of painting can boast of the veteran Wyczolkoioski, who, although now eighty years of age, still represents the art of his country. The modern artist Pruszkroski is Professor of Art in Warsaw. The theatre is part of the life in Poland, there is a fine school of acting. M Dobrzynski, while studying law before entering the Consular Service, went through

the Conservatoire and is an accomplished musician. With his wife and their two children they live a quiet life now in the Dublin suburbs. Mdlle Dobrzynski is but eleven years of age, and her small brother nearly two years. Madame Dobrzynski is very popular in Dublin Society



*Sunday Independent* 5 January 1936

Mdlle Dobrzynski, the young daughter of the Polish Consul-General in Dublin, has just won the Esposito Memorial Scholarship at the Royal Academy of Music. She is only eleven years of age.

A tall bright young lady she is much interested in sport and is a good hockey player. Her chief pleasure, is however, riding, and she tells me that she is going to hunt with the Bray Harriers all this season.



*Dublin Evening Mail* 7 November 1936

Madame Dobrzynski combines the rare qualities of being musical, artistic and intellectual. She shares the musical interests with her husband, who is an accomplished pianist. Her young daughter, Christina, is already following in her parent's footsteps, for early this year she won a scholarship with the Royal Irish Academy of Music. Madame Dobrzynski is very interested in interior decoration and has designed with great taste the arrangement of her own house. She is always developing new ideas. Much of her embroidery adorns her house. One of her pieces of Polish embroidery and design was recently shown at an exhibition at Lady Holmpatrick's house, Abbotstown, Castleknock.

She is shortly to lecture to the Junior League of Nations Society, St. Brigid's School, Terenure, on Poland, when she will talk about its history, its great kings and statesmen, its geography, its food, customs, houses, clothes, and above all the attitude of the Poles to the League of Nations. After Christmas, she intends to start organising for the Irish-Polish dance which was such an enormous success last year.



## Women of Poland by Josephine McNeill *Sunday Independent* May 9 1937

I was sitting in a quiet Dublin drawing-room with the wife of the Consul-General for Poland, looking out on gardens that were gay with spring and a magnolia tree riotously blooming. I found it fascinating to watch the varying features of expression in Madame Dobrzynski's clever brown eyes and pretty features as we travelled the surface of Polish life. Her face shone with pleasure as she described its gaiety and colour. It was shadowed as if by a cloud when she recalled the tragic days when her country was bereft of liberty and the bitter anguish it had to endure before it won its way back to freedom

Talking in the first about home life she says

“It was the Polish home and, in particular, the Polish mother, that preserved our language and love of faith and fatherland in Polish hearts. She taught Polish to her children and spoke it with them. She taught them the truths of the Catholic faith and made them practise it devoutly. She taught them the history of their native land. She filled them with love of religion and their country, and the courage to die, if necessary in their defence. When Poland became free once more after the Great War, the fact that the whole nation had one faith and one language was a strongly unifying factor. Polish women were, to a large extent, responsible for that fortunate circumstance.” Panna Basia, heroine of Sienkiewicz, is a paradigm of the ideal women.

However due to partition the economic circumstances of women changed. “Polish women who had known comfort and security, who had presided over stately homes and broad acres found themselves absolutely penniless. Their social and domestic training had not prepared them for commercial life. They had to earn what money they could in whatever way they could. The lesson sank deep into their minds. The untrained woman is a defenceless woman. They were determined not to find themselves in that position again. Nowadays the Polish girl makes sure she can earn her own living, and seeks training for whatever occupation she intends to take up.”



## Article<sup>1</sup>

Madame Dobrzynski described their seven-week family holiday by boat from London to Gdynia, then to Warsaw and later to the Hel peninsula. They returned the same way and arrived back in time for the Dublin Horse Show. At time of interview she was wearing a floral silk frock and rose-coloured jacket.



### Irishman's Diary *Irish Times* 28 September 1939

I met the Polish Consul-General in Dublin the other day, and, although naturally he was distressed at the news from his native country, he was remarkably hopeful and courageous. Dr. Dobrzynski and his wife have been a long time in Dublin now and have made many friends among all classes of the population. They both are charming and highly cultured and it is always a pleasure to meet them. The Consul General's family had estates near Kiev, in the Ukraine, but when the Bolsheviks came to power in Russia all its property confiscated and the family moved to Warsaw.

Dr. Dobrzynski's aged mother and brother are in the Polish capital and presumably have gone through all the agonies of the past fortnight in that tragic city. Madame Dobrzynski's mother and brother also are in Warsaw; so one can imagine the ordeal through which this exiled couple has been passing since the war began. They will have the heartfelt sympathy of all their Irish friends, not only on personal grounds, but also on account of their tortured country.

All Poles are intensely patriotic. In this respect they resemble the Irish, with whom they have so much in common, including a passionate devotion to the Roman Catholic Religion. I hope that I am not being guilty of any breach of neutrality when I say that the hearts of the Irish people go out in deep feeling to the people of Poland in their gallant, but hopeless, struggle against appalling odds.



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<sup>1</sup> Unknown paper and date but probably summer 1938, sub heading: Fashion Gossip in Dublin today

Diplomats in Dublin by Kees Van Hoek *Irish Independent* 16 February 1940<sup>2</sup>

I sit in the cosy study of the Polish Consul-General in quiet St. Kevin's Park of residential Dartry. The sun shines on the stately trees outside the house, before which a CD number-plated car waits patiently. My host tells me of his youth. He was born in that part of the Polish Ukraine that which the Czars had seized after the first partition of Poland of his unhappy and much tried country. M. Dobrzynski's father was a lawyer and landowner at Kieff; there he himself studied law and graduated as a barrister.

But no tyranny, however despotic, no century, however long, could dim Polish nationalism. Polish was spoken at home, and after Polish, French. The English governess came after the French had accomplished her task. Russian was only spoken where it was absolutely unavoidable. Law was his profession, but music his hobby, the influence of his mother, whose yellowed portrait still stands on his desk.

A lovely face, her hair made up with the high curls of the gentlewomen of her time. She had et Liszt when she was a child. An Irishman used to come to their house to play music with his mother, a Mr. O'Connor. There was nothing strange in that, the Irish, themselves persecuted, were all over Europe: Butlers, O'Briens, and O'Rourkes galore.

#### A World in Turmoil

When the Revolution came in 1917, the Poles who had been compelled to fight in the Russian Army (just as other Poles had been conscripted in the German and Austrian armies) withdrew from this army and founded their own detachments, M. Dobrzynski, a cavalry officer, among them. His mother and sister had already fled to Constantinople, their world in turmoil.

At Odessa British warships lay in port, Greek royal guards in their plaited skirts and French colonial troops in the town made a veritable motley. From there began the Anabasis of a Polish division, the last to leave Odessa, to the Rumanian frontier. They were in rags when they left, but walking wardrobes and munition stores when they arrived in Poland via

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<sup>2</sup> *Irish Independent* 16 February 1940; 10<sup>th</sup> of a series of Diplomatic Personalities in Dublin and subsequently published as *Diplomats in Dublin* in 1943. The others were, with their dates of appointment: Papal Nuncio, Cardinal Robinson 1930; Germany, HE Hempel 1937; Belgium, HE Goor 1923; Italy, HE Berardis 1937; Spain, HE Ontiveros y Laplana 1935; USA, HE Gray 1940; France, HE Laforcade 1935; UK, HE Maffey 1939; Canada, HE Kearney; Swiss, HE Benziger, 1939; Netherlands, HE Weenink 1923; Sweden HE Jaenson 1937; Czech, HE Kostal 1937; Japan HE Bepu 1937; Brazil, HE Nunes de Sa 1942

Romania, for the troops preceding the Poles in retreat had strewn their effects all along the roads.

Barely thirty, he joined the new Polish Foreign Office, at Warsaw, that old baroque palace of the last Saxonian King in the heart of the capital. Then the bugles called to arms again. The Reds invaded Poland. Warsaw – where the late Pope Pius XI was Nuncio Apostolic at the time – was in imminent danger. The strategy of General Sikorski, now the Polish Prime Minister, and of General Weygand, and the élan of the Polish army under Marshal Pilsudski saved Poland, and with her Western civilisation, at the eleventh hour.

The present Consul-General fought under General Haller and was awarded the military medal, ‘Poland to her Defender’. To-day his former Army Commander is one of the members of the Polish Government in exile in the French town of Angers.

Peace restored, M. Dobrzynski was sent as Polish Envoy to Estonia. All the Baltic personalities so much in the news to-day he knew well: General Laidoner, the Estonian Commander-in-Chief, and the Finnish Minister and Secretary at Tallinn; M. Holsti and M. Erko, to-day leading members of the Finnish Foreign Office.

Back at the Polish Foreign Office, where he was head of the Confidential Correspondence Department, he became in 1929 the first Polish Representative in Ireland, as Consul-General retaining his personal title of Minister Plenipotentiary.

There have always been strong Irish-Polish interests – a spontaneous sympathy based on a common religion and on a common struggle for independence from alien domination. Apart from the early Irish missionaries who penetrated into Poland, some Irish-Polish contacts can even be traced to the 17<sup>th</sup> century Muscovite Court of the Czars.

This sympathy was sustained throughout the ages, during the great famine in Ireland the Pole, Edmund Strzelecki, came over here with an international relief fund.

The Consul-General has all these names and data at his finger-tips, for in the best Polish tradition he is not only a diplomat but a writer. No one of his Dublin colleagues can have written so much about Ireland. There are whole files of it in his study, and also an imposing record of writings about Poland, with Prof. John Marcus O’Sullivan, Col. J J O’Connell and Gertrude Gaffney prominent.

## Economic War boosted Trade

Irish trade with Poland – and these links are as important as sentimental bonds – reached a peak in 1934. During the Economic War with Great Britain, imports of Polish goods, mainly coal, reached a figure of £850,000. But the normal level was round about a quarter of that record – mainly timber, also hops, cotton and other textiles.

Sporting contacts have equally been close. A miniature silver boxing ring in one of the salons in his house reminds one of the Dublin International boxing contest last year, where the Polish team retained the Cup. History was made when President Hyde and Prime Minister de Valera attended the Polish-Irish Association football match at Dalymount Park in November, 1938.

Distinguished Poles have frequently visited Ireland; the litterateur, Prof Borowy; Mlle Illakowicz, the poetess, lectured at the National University. M. Dobrzynski himself lectured at the University Colleges in Dublin, Cork and Galway; at TCD, at the League of Nations Society, and the Irish Institute of International Affairs, to name only a few.

A delegation of Polish Parliamentarians attended the meeting of the International Parliamentary Union here in 1930.

## The Visit of Cardinal Hlond

Most important, qualitatively and numerically, was, of course, the Polish participation in the Eucharistic Conference, led by the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Hlond, now himself an exile in Rome.

The Cardinal was deeply moved by all he saw here, but towards the end of his stay he remarked to his host, with some surprise: “Tell me, Mr. Minister, I have been told so much about the Irish rain, yet I have not experienced any”. Notwithstanding the cloudless summer day, his host answered full of reassurance: “I’ll show your eminence Irish rain”, and promptly took him to Glendalough. It was as good as his word.

A fine crayon-portrait of the Cardinal is the remembrance of his visit. Another dedicated portrait is Ignace Paderewski, the first Prime Minister of Poland, and a bronze effigy of Marshal Pilsudski. There are portraits of Mr. De Valera and Mr. Cosgrave, and the late Chief Justice Kennedy, with a Gaelic dedication.

Mr. Dobrzynski has deep blue probing eyes, a short clipped moustache in a distinguished face. He is of medium structure, with the open air complexion of a sportsman, the hands of an artist. They denote his two great passions: his lovely pictures, the sunlight in the clearing of a virginal forest, wood cuts of winter scenes, his Polish, English and Gaelic books. And: his car to drive through Irish Paradise. When this Pole speaks about the Ring of Kerry, of Derrynane and Dingle Bay, he waxes eloquent. He has seen much of Europe, but seldom comparison with so much grandeur.

Today he recalls with a gratitude which comes from the soul the touching sympathy which he has received from far and wide in Ireland, from the great and humble, with the cruel fate which has befallen Poland again.

That good may come out of evil, that the mistakes of the past may have been a lesson, that the real Poland may be restored to her rightful place among the nations of the world is undoubtedly the unanimous wish of all Irishmen, as it is of all Christians, whatever their denomination, and of every true patriot, whatever his nationality.