

EXERCISING NEW FREEDOMS

Canadians are training a new generation of language teachers at eight colleges across southeastern Poland. Democratic reform means Polish students are now free to study English, French or German as a second language, instead of Russian.

To meet the pressing need for 22 000 new language teachers, Poland turned to Canada and other countries including the United States, Britain, France and Germany. Canada is the only country able to provide both English and French qualified teachers.

With support from the Task Force on Central and Eastern Europe, 45 Canadian teachers will provide language instruction in Poland over the next three years, as well as advanced training in Canada for some Polish teachers and students.

This is one of several projects through which the Task Force is carrying out its mandate to foster democracy. The project is sponsored by Solidarity Eastern Europe, a non-profit organization from Montreal. Director Louis Gibeau says, "I've worked in the international field for 25 years and the reception from the Poles is among the most promising I've encountered."

The teachers are between 28 and 65 years of age and represent all parts of Canada. "What sets these people apart are their values," says Gibeau. "They have a strong sense of adventure and a desire to make a difference."

When the project concludes in 1994, the Canadians will have trained more than 900 Polish teachers.

Health Care

Toronto-based Resources Management Consultants (RMC) is advising the Polish Ministry of Health and Social Welfare on overhauling its health care delivery system. "Expectations are racing ahead for better social services," says RMC President Walter Kudryk. "The task is to balance those expectations with limited resources." As well as decentralizing its health care system, the Poles need a national health insurance scheme. They are "favourably impressed" with Canada's medical insurance plan, with its mix of public and private programs.

"We don't preach," Kudryk cautions. "We discuss the issues but Poles must decide for themselves what is right for Poland." Poland is about to negotiate details of a \$195-million loan for the health care sector with the World Bank. RMC hopes its close collaboration with senior ministry officials will lead to more opportunities for Canadian health services companies to share their expertise.

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Protecting Basic Rights

The Task Force has overseen the successful completion of several projects for Poland. Last August, J.P. Kingsley, Canada's Chief Electoral Officer, advised Polish officials on electoral reform. The Canadian Bar Association sponsored three-month internships for 27 lawyers from Poland and elsewhere in Eastern Europe. Many of the participating firms and legal institutions provided the trainees with lawyer-mentors who spoke their language. The Canadian Labour Congress helped Polish workers improve job-site safety, occupational health and women's rights in the workplace. ■