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Poland Is Still Attempting to Get Gypsy Population to Settle Down

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WARSAW, May 17—Poland's Communist regime is trying the impossible once again: making the country's gypsies settle down to regular jobs and a stationary niche in socialist society.

The usual official hopes are being expressed that results will at last be achieved. But there is little conviction that this will really happen.

Polish Communists have been trying for 12 years to convince the gypsies that the sedentary life, with electric lights and indoor plumbing, is preferable to the rootless caravan.

But it has all been in vain. T brightly painted little houses on wheels still trundle along the roads and the smoke of gypsy campfires still rises from the meadows and woods.

13,000 to 14,000 Listed

The Government lists 13,000 to 14,000 gypsies in Poland, but there probably are more. They do not usually stay still long enough to be counted.

The question of what was to be done with them was brought up again at a recent session of the Sejm, the Polish parliament, by Zygmunt Sznek, a Deputy Interior Minister.

Mr. Sznek disclosed that more than 12 years of pressure and persuasion on the part of the regime had convinced only about 3,500 gypsies to settle down.

Poles are less than fond of gypsies, regarding them all as thieves or rogues. Mr. Sznek described them as "an exclusively separate group on a low level of social and cultural development."

The Deputy Minister disclosed that earlier this year

local government organs, "at the invitation of the Ministry, had put into effect new measures aimed "at speeding up the settling process of gypsies."

These measures included the granting of financial assistance and the assigning of jobs. At the same time, Mr. Sznek added, "administrative regulations with respect to nomadic people are now much more strictly enforced."

Pestered by Officials

This means that the gypsies are being pestered by all kinds of officials demanding identity and registration cards, insisting that their children attend school and that their camps observe health and fire regulations.

As a result of the measures taken, one can state that there are groups of gypsies who want to settle down," the Deputy Minister asserted. "The authorities will consistently continue efforts toward this end."

This boast was received by the public with a large grain of salt. After all, it has all been tried before and it did not work.

If a gypsy needs papers, he has papers. Exactly where they come from no one knows, but they are valid.

The children must go to school. Of course. Off they go. But in a week or two, they are absent. The caravan is gone. Where to? No one knows.

So most Poles smile knowingly when the Government expresses the belief that now the gypsies will settle down. They have heard this before, but the gypsies still roam the countryside.

Few are convinced the situation will be changed in their lifetime.

