



Jozef Klemens Pilsudski; (1867-1935) statesman; Chief of State (1918-22), “First Marshal of Poland” (from 1920), and de facto leader (1926-35) of the Second Polish Republic and Minister of Military Affairs. He anticipated the eruption of war between the major European powers, resulting in his organization and command of what was to be the Polish Legions, the nucleus of a future Polish Army. When Pilsudski forbade Polish soldiers to swear a loyalty oath to the

Central Powers, he was arrested and imprisoned in Germany. His arrest greatly enhanced Pilsudski’s reputation among Poles, many of whom began to see him as the most determined Polish leader, willing to take on all the partitioning powers. On 8 November 1918, three days before the Armistice, Pilsudski was released and placed on a train, bound for Warsaw. On 11 November 1918, he was appointed Commander in Chief of Polish forces and entrusted with creating a national government. On that very day, which would become Poland’s Independence Day, Pilsudski proclaimed an independent Polish state. He is viewed as a founding father of the Second Polish Republic; 123 years after the country had been divided between Russia, Austria and Prussia.



Ignacy Jan Paderewski; (1860-1941) pianist, composer, politician, statesman and spokesman for Polish independence. He was a favorite of concert audiences around the world. Paderewski’s fame opened access to diplomacy and the media. During World War I, Paderewski was an active member of the Polish National Committee. He played a critical role in obtaining from President Woodrow Wilson the explicit inclusion of a recreated, independent Poland as point 13 in Wilson’s peace terms, the Fourteen Points. Paderewski was the first Prime Minister of Poland and also Poland’s foreign minister, representing Poland at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. His government achieved remarkable milestones: democratic elections to Parliament, ratification of the Versailles Treaty, passage of a treaty protecting ethnic minorities, establishment of a public education system, tackling unemployment and social strife, the outbreak of epidemics and averting a looming famine after the devastation of war.



Roman Stanislaw Dmowski; (1864 - 1939) politician and statesman. He favored the reestablishment of Polish independence through increased autonomy by nonviolent means and promoted national solidarity across class lines. In 1915, Dmowski, increasingly convinced of Russia’s impending defeat, decided that, to support the cause of Polish independence, he should go abroad to campaign on behalf of Poland in the capitals of the western Allies. In Paris, through his Polish National Committee, aimed at rebuilding the Polish state, he was a prominent spokesman for Polish aspirations. As a Polish delegate at the Paris Peace Conference and a signatory of the Versailles Treaty, Dmowski exerted a substantial influence on the Treaty’s favorable decisions regarding Poland. He was a principal figure instrumental in the post-war restoration of Poland’s independent existence.

Some Key Events in the Rebirth of Poland

June 28, 1914 - The heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne is murdered in Sarajevo; in August, war breaks out between Austria-Hungary and Germany vs. tsarist Russia, France and Britain.

August 1914- Jozef Pilsudski leads his Polish legion into Russian ruled Poland.

December 1915 - Roman Dmowski is in France and heads a Polish national committee. Ignacy Paderewski, already in the United States, works with Chicago’s John Smulski to mobilize the four million member Polish community on behalf of independence.

November 5, 1916- in need of Polish troops in their war against Russia, Austria-Hungary and Germany propose the creation of a post war Poland under their control. In December Russia’s Tsar goes further to back a free Poland, including territories held by all three partitioners. Pilsudski refuses to swear allegiance to Germany, is imprisoned and becomes a national hero.

January 22, 1917 -Influenced by Paderewski, President Wilson gives his “Peace without Victory” speech where he proposes creating an independent postwar Poland.

March 1917- Revolution in Russia: the Tsar abdicates. Russia eventually leaves the war.

April 2, 1917- At the Polish Falcons’ convention in Pittsburgh, Paderewski proposes creation of a 100,000 man “Kosciuszko Army” for Poland. Days later the U.S. enters the War. By 1918 a 100,000 man Polish army from many countries is organized in France under Gen. Jozef Haller.

January 8, 1918- Wilson’s “14 Points” speech to Congress outlines America’s war aims. Point 13 calls for an independent Poland.

September, 1918 -At its congress in Detroit, American Polonia commits to raising \$200 million for an independent Poland.

November 11,1918- Pilsudski proclaims Polish independence in Warsaw. The War ends with an “armistice” on the western front. The Second Polish Republic comes into existence.

1918-1921- Poland’s borders are debated at the Versailles Peace Conference (Dmowski and Paderewski represent Poland). Pilsudski unites the country and leads the fight for its borders - in the north and west vs. Germany, in the south vs. Czechoslovakia, in the southeast vs. Ukraine and from May to October 1920 in a colossal and victorious war for survival against the new revolutionary Bolshevik Russian state (Battle of Warsaw, August 1920). Wilno is captured (September 1920), and Silesia is divided up between Poland and Germany (October 1921). The new international League of Nations makes Danzig (Gdansk) a “free city”.



NOVEMBER 11, 1918 CELEBRATING THE CENTENNIAL OF POLAND’S REBIRTH

The year 2018 is special for Poland’s citizens, for people of Polish heritage, and for their friends everywhere. It marks the 100th anniversary of Poland’s rebirth as an independent state.

On November 11, 1918 General Jozef Pilsudski declared Poland’s independence in Warsaw. On that very day the German empire agreed to an armistice, or truce, with France, Britain and the United States, on the western front. That truce became permanent and ended World War One which had begun in 1914.

In assuming authority, Pilsudski acted quickly to bring about the exit of the German forces in the country and to begin uniting the Polish territories that for 123 years had been divided up and ruled by the Russian, German and Austrian empires. These three empires had fought each other in the War and on Polish territory. As a result, the Polish lands and their inhabitants had suffered terrible devastation.

But declaring independence was just the start. Three more years of fighting and negotiation would follow before an independent Poland with secure borders to the north, south, east, and west was won. This restored state would be the Second Polish Republic.

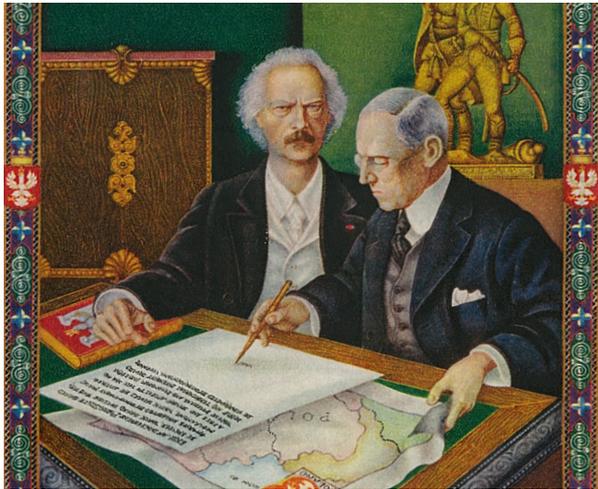
Countless thousands of brave men and women played their part in Poland’s rebirth. But three individuals deserve special mention for achieving a goal that had seemed impossible in 1914, a goal for which thousands of patriots had given their lives in the nineteenth century.

First there was Pilsudski, a charismatic political figure of remarkable foresight who believed independence depended on the defeat of all three

of Poland's oppressors in the War which is exactly what did happen. Before the War, Pilsudski, a self-taught student of military science, had organized a highly disciplined legion prepared to lead the fight for freedom when the time at last came. It was Pilsudski's unbreakable commitment to his principles that by 1918 made him a national hero.

Then there was Roman Dmowski, leader of the National Democratic movement. After arriving in France in 1915, Dmowski was able to organize a Polish national committee whose members worked tirelessly to persuade the French and British governments to support Poland's independence after the war was won. This support at last came in 1917 after their Russian ally dropped out of the War. Dmowski then won France's approval to create a Polish army (the 'Blue Army' after the color of its uniform) that joined the conflict in 1918 on the side of the Allies and under the command of General Jozef Haller.

A third figure was the internationally celebrated concert pianist and patriot, Ignacy Jan Paderewski. Operating in the United States, Paderewski used



his fame and eloquence to educate the public about the justice of the Polish independence cause. He met with President Woodrow Wilson, first to win U.S. support for humanitarian aid to Poland's suffering people, later to persuade him to give his support to Poland's right to independence.

The idealistic Wilson was impressed by Paderewski's passionate patriotism. Already in January 1917, even before the United States entered the War on the side of Britain and France, Wilson had given his public support to Poland's rebirth. Later, following America's entry into the conflict, Wilson, in his 'Fourteen Points' speech to Congress in January 1918, made Poland's restoration one of the 14 reasons why American soldiers were in the fight.

Paderewski also threw himself into working to unite the organizations of the four million member Polish community in America behind the Polish cause. His effort was rewarded at the massive Congress of the Polish Emigration in Detroit where the delegates committed the community to raising \$200 million on behalf of a postwar Poland, independent at last.

In April 1917 Paderewski spoke in Pittsburgh to a special convention of the Polish Falcons. There he called on the Falcons to lead the drive to create a "Kosciuszko Army" of Poles in America to fight in France as part of General Haller's Blue Army. Amazingly, this force came to be. More than 20,000 young men (750 of them from Wisconsin) went on to serve in its ranks, first in France and then in Poland under Pilsudski.

With the War ended, Paderewski travelled to the newly independent Polish republic. There, working with Pilsudski, the country's chief of state and military commander, he became Poland's first Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. At the Paris Peace Conference, he and Dmowski represented Poland in the very difficult negotiations aimed at winning international recognition for Poland's new borders.

By 1921, independence and peace had at last been secured.

The seemingly impossible dream of generations of patriots who had fought for a free Poland in 1794, in the time of Napoleon, in 1830 and in 1863, was at last a reality. What seemed beyond reach in 1914 was no longer a dream or a hope.

Indeed, the Poland of today, the Third Polish Republic, another dream before it was born in 1989, is a true successor to what the patriots of the First World War had accomplished.

Today, November 11 is again a National Day of Celebration in Poland - Poland's own Fourth of July.

