

# TRENCHES OF HOPE





**THE INFLUENCE&EFFECT  
OF THE POLISH LEGIONS  
ON POST FIRST WORLD  
WAR EUROPE**





# PARTITION

- In 1618 The Kingdom of Poland spanned over 990,000 sq. km with territories reaching from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea but by the end of the 18th Century devastating wars and the deterioration of the country's political system led the once powerful Kingdom of Poland into a state of decline.
- The turning point in it's existence came with the third partitioning by Austria, Russia and Prussia when in 1795 Poland disappeared from the European map for the next one hundred and twenty three years.
- Despite the Poles several efforts in trying to regain independence both diplomatically and through armed uprising, the consequences were such that the Poles situation did not change and in fact deteriorated to such an extent that the occupying nations wished to suppress and wipe out any last vestiges of Polish patriotism.
- A noteworthy fact is that only the Turks - then the Ottoman Empire, refused to acknowledge the dissolution of the Kingdom of Poland and to emphasise this fact, at every meeting of visiting ambassadors and diplomats at the Sultan's Court, it was announced that "the representative from Lechistan has not yet arrived".







R. S. N. Siegfried Koe

Dreikaiserreich - Ecke bei Myslowitz

Reuthe n<sup>o</sup> 18, Jan 22. 1904  
Fürstentum Gmünd und Tief, Tief  
Herrn und Gmündert 12  
H. Herr



# WAITING IN HOPE

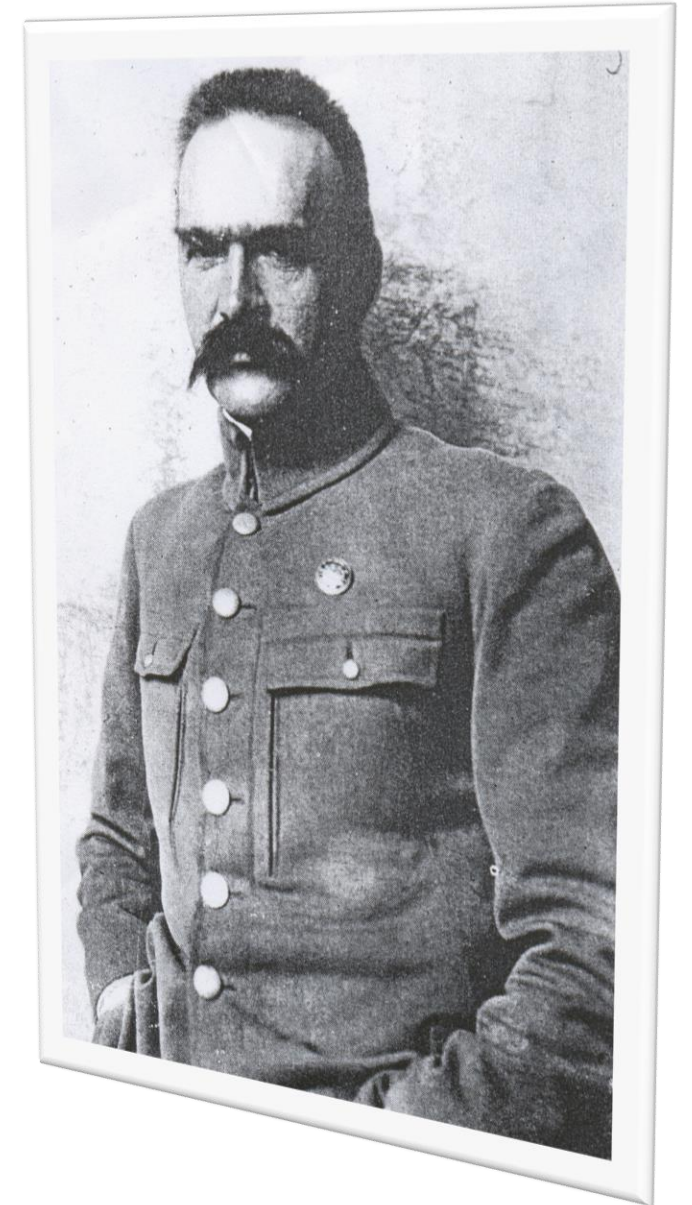
- Never losing hope in recovering their homeland, the Poles waited for a favourable change in international relations which might assist them in their fight for independence.
- The beginning of the 20th Century brought a change in relations between European states. This was caused by political and social changes which resulted in the division of Europe into two alliances based on political affiliation and economic rivalry. On one side stood the Triple Alliance formed by the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Prussia and on the other side, the Triple Entente made up of England, France and Russia.
- In the occupied territories, the Polish underground independence movements began to emerge and develop. Under the Austro-Hungarian partition, the treatment of Poles was quite liberal compared with the other two partitions and Polish paramilitary organisations began to operate, training future soldiers. Among them were - “Związki i Towarzystwa Strzeleckie” and „Drużyny Bartoszone i Sokole”. One of the main leaders was Joseph Pilsudski.



# JÓZEF PIŁSUDSKI



Zakopane 1913 r. Polish Rifleman on training.





# WAR!

- The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Austrian throne, by the Serb Gavrilo Princip on the 28<sup>th</sup> June 1914 was the tipping point in the delicate and tense situation in Europe and sparked the outbreak of the First World War.
- The territories of the former Republic of Poland became battle grounds for the conflicts between its occupiers – Prussia and Austro-Hungary of The Triple Alliance against Russia of The Triple Entente. The Poles, as citizens of the ruling states were conscripted into their armies, but also created autonomous Polish divisions – “The Legions,” which fought under the orders of Russia, Prussia and Austria. Other Poles chose to fight with the French, British and Italian armies. There were occasions where members of the same family found themselves facing each other across the battlefields. It was not uncommon that Polish songs sung in the trenches on one side, were picked up and joined in by Polish soldiers from the other side.



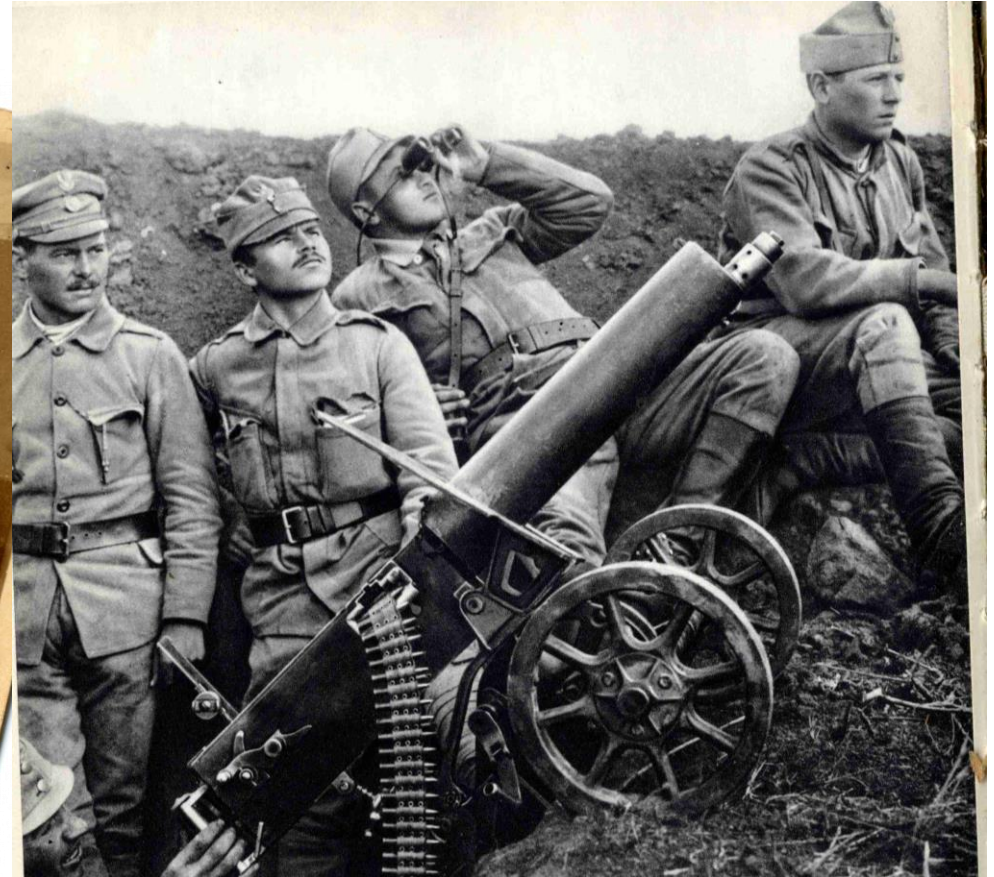


# LEGIONNAIRE AND PRUSSIAN SOLDIERS 1914-1918





# EVERYDAY LIFE OF THE LEGIONNAIRE IN THE TRENCHES









## Dining in the trenches









# Easter masquerades









# PAINT BRUSH AND UNIFORM



The soldiers way of life was recorded by numerous painters, draughtsmen and sculptors who served in the Polish Legions



# Leopold Gottlieb



*Young Drummer*

*Karol Trzaska Durski*





# WOMEN IN THE WAR EFFORT







Some women fought on the  
front line disguised as a  
men.

*Wanda Gertz  
as Kazik Żuchowicz*



# SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT LEGIONNAIRES BATTLES:

1. Rafajłowa

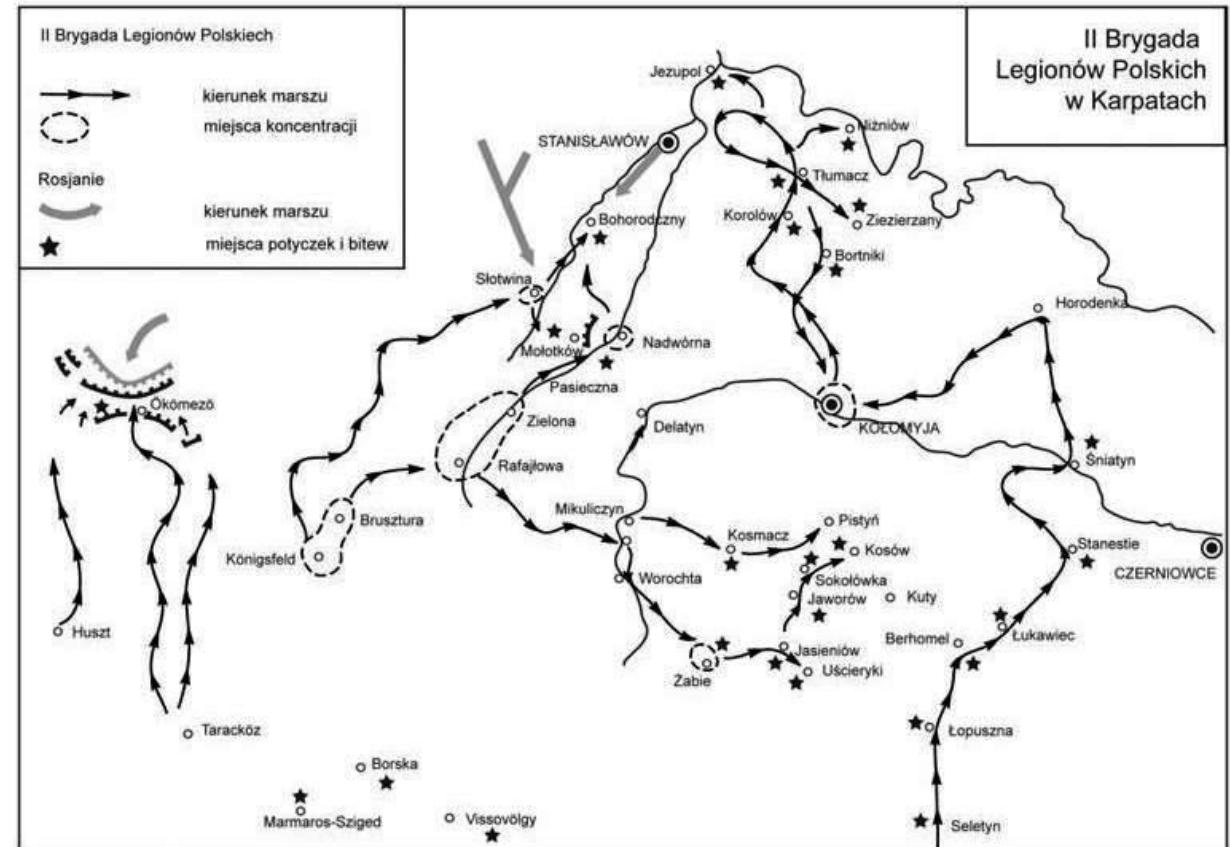
2. Rokitna



Karabiny maszynowe

Fot. St. J.

3. Łowczówek





Despite Pilsudski's autonomous Legions, first fighting alongside the Austrian army against the Russian occupiers, in order to preserve the good relations, Pilsudski re-assured Russia's allies – Britain and France that the Polish Legionnaires would never be used to fight against them on the Western Front. Legionnaires fought in Małopolska, in Hungary and in the Ukraine, taking part in bloody battles of Łowczówek (1914), Rafajłowa (1914), Rarańcza (1915), Rokitna (1915) and Kostiuchnówka (1916). Legionnaires fought and died, but their aim of regaining independence for Poland seemed as impossible and distant as during the first days of the war.

Disillusioned by the attitudes of Germany and Austro-Hungary in early July 1917 and coerced to swear allegiance to the German Emperor, the Legionnaires refused. The consequences were internment in Szczypiorno and Beniaminów.

Józef Piłsudski was imprisoned in the Fortress of Magdeburg.





POŁACY! CZY WIECIE CO SIĘ DZIEJE Z LEGIONAMI?

Legionistów wywożą do obozu jeńców za to, że nie chcą przysięgać.

Kazano im przysięgać Ojczyźnie i Królowi.  
Ale Ojczyzna nie może rozporządzać Legionami, bo  
austriacy oddali Legiony nie polskiemu rządowi,  
lecz gen. Beselerowi na własność, nie króla prze-  
ciw niemu jeszcze.

Kazano przysięgać im braterstwo z ni-  
mi, a nie z nami, ciemni i austriacy.  
Ale niemy i austriacy nie będą przysięgać na  
przymierze z Polską.  
Kazano przysięgać na posłuszeństwo dowódcy  
i przelotnym.

Dowódcą jest generał v. Beseler!

Przełożeni to także niemy z Abt. Poln. Wehrmacht.

Przysięga ta oddawała Legiony w ręce Niemców.

Rada Stanu kazala Legionistom przysięgać.

Legiony odmówily złożenia przysięgi.

Wtedy Komenda Legionów i Rada Stanu uchwały wydać z Legionów tych,  
co nie przysięgną.

Rada Stanu i Komenda Legionów wiedzieli,  
że w ten sposób **rozbite zostaną całe pułki**,  
ponieważ **wszystkie pułki** i oddziały złoży-  
ły deklarację, że przysięgać nie będą.

Garska żołnierzy uległa namowom i podję-  
pom. Całość oparła się przysięgam.

Oto co dnia idzie podążać z żołnierzami polski-  
mi w stronę niemieckiej granicy, do Skalmierzyca.

Oto po ulicach Warszawy prowadzą legionistów  
— legionistów pod bagnami.

W nocy z 12-go na 13-go, z czwartku na piątkę  
o godz. 12-ej i pół prowadzono pod koczowem  
200 żołnierzy z 3-go pułku na dworzec Kaliski,  
aby ich stamtąd wysłać do Skalmierzyca, do Szczypi-  
ornia.

Kamietwem jest to, co mówi Urzędowy Komu-  
nikat Komendy Legionów, że 3-ci pułk w całości  
złożył przysięgę.

Rada Stanu nie umiała nic dla kraju zrobić!

I dzisiaj chce wziąć w ręce Władzę.

A pierwszą próbę używania władzy Rada Sta-  
nu zrobiła właśnie z Legionami: rozbiła Legiony,  
**oddaje polakich żołnierzy w niewolę  
pruska.**  
I po tej **zbrodni** Rada Stanu wyłącza ręce  
po władzę!

Rozbijając legionów i słalacy pruscy chcą  
stać rządem!

Przecież z nim! przez z Radą Stanu!

Naród polski nie będzie słuchał, by Rząd  
składował, ludźmi zawił od okupantów, nie  
od woli narodu!

## Les Arrestations en Pologne

MEETING  
DE PROTESTATION  
A GENEVE  
(SALLE CENTRALE)

LE 31 JUILLET 1917



Joseph PIŁSUDSKI  
Créateur de la Légion polonaise, en chef de la Commission militaire  
du Conseil d'Etat polonais, arrêté le 22 juillet, à Varsovie,  
par les autorités allemandes.

ORATEURS :

MM. RENÉ CLAPARÈDE

Prof. LASKOWSKI

EDMOND PRIVAT

### Qui est Joseph Piłsudski ?

Né en 1867 d'une vieille famille lituanienne, élevé dans  
une atmosphère du plus pur patriotisme polonais, Piłsudski, en-  
tente libérale. Il revient à Vilna et devient l'âme d'une conspira-  
tion polonaise naissante. En 1887, il est condamné à 2 ans de  
déportation en Sibérie orientale. A partir de 1892, aussitôt son  
retour, son activité devient abondante, et le 12 juillet 1894 appa-  
raît (Rothschild) l'organe qui anime dans les milieux de l'émigra-  
tion polonaise une conscience nouvelle, une orientation politi-  
que, qui groupe les esprits, entraîne sous le jour du tricolore

Vers 1897, la police tombe enfin sur les traces de Piłsudski  
et de son insaisissable séduction. Il est emprisonné, feint la  
folie, transporté à St-Petersbourg. Il est libéré, par miracle,  
pour un subterfuge habile de son parti. Il passe cette fois à  
Vienne et s'installe à Cracovie. Là, en dépit de l'hostilité des  
Poles du parti constitutionnel pour un militarisme quelconque,  
Piłsudski entreprend une campagne sournoise.

Aux rives de l'Indépendance de la Pologne, il décide de  
substituer une action fertile en résultats pratiques. Pour recon-  
quérir la Pologne, pour ressusciter la grande assemblée, il fait  
une armée.

Prisnt les cadres étroits de la tactique politique de son  
parti, Piłsudski écrit, parle, s'agit.

La guerre russo-japonaise déchaînée, Piłsudski part à Tokio  
et propose au Japon la création d'une armée polonaise qui lui  
obéirait l'armée de l'armée tsariste.

Mais M. Roman Dmowski, fidèle serviteur de la cour de  
Petersbourg, arrive également à Tokio et paralyse l'action de  
Piłsudski.

Arrive 1913. En vain, Piłsudski veut créer une agitation  
dans le pays. Il est l'occupé, isolé, méprisé par le parti de la  
démocratie nationale qui malgré tout persiste dans son  
russophilisme.

Mais peu à peu Piłsudski réalise son idée. Ses volontaires  
s'organisent et, seuls, parmi tant de groupes de partisans d'a-  
lors, deviennent le germe d'un corps d'armée militairement orga-  
nisé. Les Légions polonaises viennent de naître.

Travailleur acharné, esprit d'une haute élévation, pratique,  
prompt et positif dans ses décisions, d'une humilité sans égale,  
Piłsudski devient l'idole de la jeunesse qui remplit ses légions.

Son idéalisme patriotique dicte à ce politicien profond une  
doctrine pure et simple : pour sauver la Patrie, il faut d'abord  
lutter avec le tricolore, le plus fort des occupants, celui dont le  
domaine est le plus étendu.

Pour arracher la Patrie des griffes de l'ennemi, il faut une  
armée.

Arrive 1914. Les Légions polonaises marchent vers le  
front oriental.

Il faut comprendre la situation de la Pologne pour bien  
pouvoir apprécier l'action patriotique de Piłsudski, pour voir la  
fonction essentielle de ce grand Polonais qui se dresse, seul  
d'abord, levant haut le drapeau de l'Indépendance, l'idée gran-  
diose d'une Pologne indivisible, démocratique et unie.

Lorsque les Empires centraux déclarent par l'acte du 6  
novembre 1914 l'Indépendance, restreinte assurément, de la Po-  
logne, Piłsudski entre au Conseil d'Etat de Varsovie sans trop  
se fier aux promesses de Berlin, mais considérant qu'il était de  
son devoir de participer aux travaux de ce conseil de gouverne-  
ment polonais. Il voulait surtout surveiller de près l'évolution  
de l'idée de la création d'une armée polonaise, pour laquelle,  
l'œuvre de toute sa vie — les Légions polonaises — devaient  
servir de cadres.

Po szeregu gwałtów i aresztowań, wywieziony został

## JÓZEF PIŁSUDZKI

Warszawa nie może i nie powinna dłużej milczeć,  
wyczekując na nowe gwałty. Wzywamy społeczeń-  
stwo do zmanifestowania swego protestującego  
stanowiska przez przerwanie widowisk i zabaw  
w dniu dzisiejszym.

## Rado Regencyjna!

**Żołnierze polscy uwięzieni są  
w obozie jeńców!**

Jakże przystąpić do budowy armii, a dopuścić do krzywdy  
tych, co pierwsi na czyn zbrojny się wzięli. Jak tworzyć woj-  
sko, gdy marnują się jedynie zdolni i uprawnieni do stworzenia  
dlań kadrów.

Naród domaga się uwolnienia Legionistów  
ze Szczypiorna, Benjaminowa, Hawelberga.  
Domaga się umożliwienia w ten sposób kole-  
gom ich z Galicji powrotu do szeregów!

## Żąda zwolnienia wodza ich Piłsudskiego!

Wtedy tylko możliwym będzie stworzyć samodzielne wojsko  
polskie.

Naród czeka na pierwszy twój czyn—Rado  
Regencyjna!



Aresztowanie Piłsudskiego przez Niemców, które odbiło się  
szerokim echem także w Europie, zakończyło ostatecznie  
proces rozchodzenia się interesów Polaków i zaborców.

Z jednej strony, pozbawienie ruchu legionowego jego  
komendanta mogło doprowadzić do dekompozycji formacji.

Z drugiej — uwolniony z Magdeburga mógł powrócić do  
Polski w glorii zwycięzcy, co właśnie ostatecznie się stało.



# REAL PEACE?

- The devastating battles of Marna (1914), of Verdun (1916) and of the Somme (1916), increased the need for new recruits into the armies on both sides of the conflict. Since it was illegal under international law for occupying countries to conscript citizens of the occupied territory into their own armies, Prussia, Russia and Austria simultaneously, in a bid to tempt Poles into their armies, made promises offering to create an independent Polish state. As the war dragged on, the economic situation deteriorated and the high death toll on both sides led to an eruption in social unrest.
- Estimated nearly two million soldiers of Polish Nationality were conscripted during the First World War: about 55,000 Poles fell in battle as soldiers of the Russian army, about 110,000 as soldiers of the German Army, and about 220,000 of the Austrian army.
- Revolution fuelled by political ideologies, nationalism and economic problems ultimately resulted in the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II (March 1917), the collapse of the German Empire (the November Revolution 1918) and the resignation of the Austrian Emperor Charles II from government (November 1918).
- The collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Bolshevik revolution in Russia and social unrest in Germany provided Poland with a realistic opportunity for political and military independence. After his release from Magdeburg, Joseph Pilsudski arrived in Warsaw and sent a declaration which confirmed the recreation of an independent Polish State on the international arena. This official letter sent by Joseph Pilsudski on the 16th November 1918 to the United States of America, Great Britain, France, Italy, Japan and Germany stated: "I wish to notify all states and nations, both those at war and those that remain neutral, of the existence of an independent Polish State, encompassing all of the reunited Polish territories".



An example of one of the many propaganda posters  
with Józef Piłsudski





# FIGHTING FOR BOUNDARIES

- Following lengthy negotiations, the terms establishing peace and ending the First World War were agreed and on the 28th June 1919 in Versailles outside Paris. Germany, the states of the Triple Entente and allies signed the peace treaty. The Treaty of Versailles formalised the new territorial and political order in Europe and in so doing, confirmed the creation of the Polish state.
- Unfortunately, the newly established Polish State had no defined borders and it was forced into a further three years of conflict over regions in Ukraine, Czechoslovakia and Germany and the territories formally under the Prussian Partition. A further threat came from Soviet Russia and its desire to conquer European States and turn them into Soviet Republics. Additional difficulties which Poland faced, was in creating a unified administration system, merging the three former systems which were operated under partitioning.



# Silesian Uprsinig



# Italian Peace Mission in Poznan 11.09 1919





# THE POLISH-BOLSHEVIK WAR

- Poland's situation in 1920 was unenviable. The demands of the four year war had taken their toll on the economy. At the dawn of Poland's independence, there was a lack of economic unity and any general uniformity between the territories. Newly unified territories which had been under partition for over one hundred years still used three different monetary, weights and measures and legal systems. The young state had to standardise and consolidate its operations of administration, finance as well as develop its educational, economic, communication, transportation systems to improve its industry.
- Disputes surrounding the new borders led to the Silesian and Wielkopolska region uprisings. The threat of invasion increased due to the Soviets aggrandizement policy and with the planned Communist revolutions in Europe, as illustrated by Lenin's speech: "somewhere near Warsaw lies the [...] centre of the whole imperialistic system, current circumstances will allow us to uproot this system and lead politics not only in Poland but into Germany and England". The Polish Legionnaires once again defended their independence. Initially the Red Army faced one defeat after the next but in the spring of 1920 the Russian Army advanced as far as Warsaw.
- Despite the Red Army's successful advances which brought a real threat of Soviet expansion into the whole of Europe, Poland did not receive any form of assistance from any European country to protect it against this onslaught. The atmosphere in Europe at this time was one of pacifism and appeasement. The extent of the military support offered by the Allies in July and August 1920 was limited to sending a reconnaissance diplomatic team to Poland led by Maxime Weygand (France) and Henry Radcliffe (Great Britain) and supported by only one United States Air force squadron. On the 15th August 1920, the Polish army, led by Joseph Pilsudski, made a tactical manoeuvre in the defense of Warsaw which not only resulted in winning the battle but halting the whole Soviets advancing campaign which forced the Bolshevik Army into an unconditional retreat. At the time, Edgar Vincent, the First Viscount D'Abernon, a British politician, diplomat and writer rated the Battle of Warsaw as the eighteenth most important deciding battle in the history of the world. The Polish Soviet War ended on the 18th March 1921 with the signing of the peace treaty in Ryga.



# Propaganda conscription poster





# American Flying Squadron helping Poles during the Polish-Bolshevik War





1921  
BIBLIOTEKA WYDAWNICTW AKTUALNYCH № 1.

# TRAKTAT POKOJU

MIĘDZY

POLSKĄ A ROSJĄ I UKRAINĄ

z przedmową A. de Rosseta  
Posła na Sejm i Członka Komisji do Spraw Zagranicznych

# МИРНЫЙ ДОГОВОР

МЕЖДУ

ПОЛЬШЕЙ А РОССИЕЙ  
И УКРАИНОЙ

3796  
WARSZAWA — LWÓW  
KSIĘGARNIA GUSTAWA SZYLINGA  
1921

Treaty of Riga (1921)  
document cover



# Map of Poland before WW2





# THE SECOND POLISH REPUBLIC

At the end of 1921 the borders of the Republic of Poland covered 388,600 sq.km. The main problem after gaining independence was creating a unified economy and ensuring its growth. The constitution outlining the principles on which the state was to be run were agreed and the rebuilding of the economy began with the introduction of a standardised monetary and tax system as well as a common education and healthcare system. Key administration positions were taken by Legionnaires in 1926.

Domestically, alongside economic and industrial achievements such as the construction of the new port in Gdynia, a “Central Industrial District”, there were also developments in cultural activities. Theatres and concert halls were built. Radio became an influential source of information. Literary and artistic creativity flourished.

Internationally, Poland entered into a military alliance with Britain and France. Signing non-aggression pacts with Russia in 1932 and 1934 and with Germany in 1934 did not take away the threat of aggression to Poland's borders. As a result great importance was placed on military service and the expansion of the army. Submarines “Blyskawica” and “Grom” were brought into service. These two submarines later fought under the British Navy during the second world war. Intelligence services were developed. Polish cryptographers Marian Rajewski, Henryk Zygański and Jerzy Różycki began deciphering the German coding machine Enigma, later providing an immeasurable contribution to Bletchley Park's code breaking.



Polish athletes: *Halina Konopacka* and *Stanisław Kusociński*





*Hanna Ordonówna*  
singer and actress



*Władysław Reymont*  
novelist

laureate of the Nobel Prize in Literature (1924)





## Enigma Machine



Marshal Józef Piłsudski  
on his favourite horse – *Kasztanka*.

*By: Wojciech Kossak*





# WAR AGAIN

- The developments of the Polish Second Republic were brought to an abrupt halt by German aggression on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 1939. The reaction, despite signed treaties of mutual military assistance was for the allies to declare a state of war and regrettably the only action taken was to drop leaflets from the air urging peaceful settlement. Poland once again faced their aggressors alone. The battle worn Legionnaires stood to defend their homeland once more. The Commander in Chief of the Polish forces was the ex-Legionnaire Marshal Edward Smigly Rydz. The sheer military superiority of the enemy as well as the sudden and unexpected attack from Soviet Russia in the Eastern territories forced the government to evacuate to Paris and then later to London.
- The Poles once again found themselves fighting on all fronts in the Second World War. In their invaded homeland, the Poles created the Polish Underground State which fought the occupiers. In France, Poles fought in the 1st Grenadier's Brigade, in Norway in the "Samodzielna Brygada Strzelców Podhalańskich". After the Russian invasion Poles were deported to the Siberian gulags. Following their liberation, the Second Polish Corps was formed and they fought alongside the British at Tobruk and Monte Cassino. Poles also played a crucial role in The Battle of Britain. It was the Polish pilots as well as British pilots Winston Churchill referred to in his famous speech: "never was so much owed by so many to so few".



# Polish Second Corps in Tobruk and Monte Cassino





# WW2 OUTCOME

Despite the huge losses Poland suffered fighting on all the fronts in the Second World War, the disastrous Warsaw Uprising and the Yalta Agreements of 1944 crushed all hopes of regaining their independence. Post war Poland was 312,000 km sq. and was smaller than she had been before the war. Poland was forced into forty years under communist Russian control. The Poles who had fought alongside the British and Allies for four years had no home to return to.

Refugees, displaced families some stayed here in England where they located their Polish Government in Exile. The Poles formed historical institutions (amongst them the Józef Pilsudski Institute of Research), parishes, schools, clubs and societies. They published daily newspapers and magazines as well as books. For many years London became the centre of life for Poles in exile.



# Outlined Map of Poland after WW2





In 1989 the Poles liberated themselves from the Communist regime. Poland joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1999 and European Union in 2004, the Poles had gained a new opportunity to rebuild their state. Finally free, independent and democratic.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

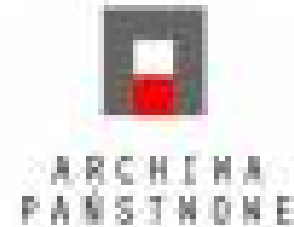


Embassy  
of the Republic of Poland  
in London



LOTTERY FUNDED

Ministerstwo  
**Kultury**  
i Dziedzictwa  
Narodowego.





## OPENNING HOURS:

Tuesdays: 11.00-16.00

Thursdays: 11.00 - 19.00

Every first Saturday of the month: 11.00-16.00.