

Another Date in Polish History



100th Anniversary of Poland's Independence Day Sunday, November 11, 2018

It was 100 years ago on November 11, 1918, Armistice Day, that Poland's Independence and its rightful place on the map of Europe were restored after 123 years of political partitions.

The loss of independence happened after the enactment of the May 3rd 1791 Constitution, the second oldest written democratic constitution in the world, when the countries surrounding Poland invaded and partitioned Poland, claiming it for themselves out of fear of the spread of democracy to their own lands.

Poland's Path to Regained Independence

There were many attempts by the Polish people to regain independence over the years. Restoration of Poland's independence was finally made possible in 1918 with the assistance of United States leaders, Polonia in America, and the powers of Europe and the Polish state.

Notable Efforts

At the beginning of World War I, Ignacy Jan Paderewski, pianist and diplomat, founded a committee to assist the people of Poland and established branches in Paris, London, and throughout the United States. After four years of promoting Poland's freedom (1914-1918), he witnessed the reestablishment of Poland's Independence.

January 1917: Ignacy Jan Paderewski urged U.S. President Woodrow Wilson to propose the basis for the "establishment of an independent Polish state with access to the sea."

August 1917: The Polish National Committee formed with the help of Paderewski and Roman Dmowski. The goal of the committee was to revive the Polish state in cooperation with the governments of France, Great Britain, and Italy.

January 8, 1918: On January 18, 1918, President Woodrow Wilson gave a speech to the United States Congress that outlined Fourteen Points for peace and the end to World War I. In President Wilson's Fourteen Points plan was his vision of Europe in which he proposed the regained independence of Poland.

November 11, 1918: After being released from a German prison for refusing to take an oath of fidelity with the German and Austrian-Hungarian forces, Jozef Pilsudski arrived in Warsaw where he assumed command of the Polish Army.

November 14, 1918: Pilsudski proclaimed the establishment of the Republic of Poland. Between November 11, 1918, and the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, Pilsudski worked with Polish and other foreign leaders to reorganize their reacquired territory.

November 16, 1918: Pilsudski notified the Great Powers of the progress of the foundation of an independent Polish state.

November 22, 1918: Pilsudski assumed the highest authority of the Republic of Poland as Head of State. Pilsudski did more than any other single Pole, working primarily with Poles, to achieve the independence of Poland during the First World War.

January 29, 1919: Roman Dmowski, a co-founder of Poland's National Democracy party, delivered a five-hour speech at the Paris Peace Conference presenting Poland's border demands.

June 28, 1919: Paderewski and Dmowski signed the Treaty of Versailles, formally restoring Poland to the map of Europe. Paderewski's efforts succeeded largely due to the support of the American government and the American people.

Throughout its history, the people of Poland have fought for the freedom of not only their own homeland, but for the freedom of other nations. The Polish language, culture, and history are kept alive not just in Poland, but across the world wherever people of Polish heritage live. Polish communities outside of Poland are known as Polonia. In the United States, millions of people of Polish heritage live and strive to maintain organizations that keep Polish and Polish American heritage alive for Polonia in America and for future generations.