

# Issue 4

## History of Poland

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## Legend about the Beginning of the Polish Country



Long time ago Slavic tribes lived in distant lands. These were very good times with many fish in the rivers and animals in forests. Unfortunately good times finished and the people began to run out of fish and corn. Then three brothers Lech Czech and Rus began to think what they can do.

They came to conclusion that they would have to move out of this area and the next day they went on a long trip.

The road was hard. Rus said that his people were tired and they would stay in this area it was the east of today's Europe.

Two brothers said good bye to Rus and went on. After several days they arrived to the south of the Tatra mountains and Czech said to his brother that they would stay there. Lech and his people went further. They went for several days and Lech saw a big eagle at the red sunset and he said this area is the best for living and they stayed there.

On this area they built a village in the shape of the nest and they called this Gniezno. White eagle on red background was the emblem of his country - Lechistan. Later it got name Poland from the name of one of the tribes - Polans.

The date when the Polish country was established is 966.

The real first lord of Poland was Mieszko the First who was baptised and made Poland a Christian country.

In the Middle Ages Poland was one of the most powerful countries in Europe, stretching in the wide lands.



## The Golden Age of Poland

In 16<sup>th</sup> century when Zygmunt Stary and his son Zygmunt August ruled in Poland, our nation was strong and powerful. During these times Poland became the largest kingdom of Europe. We had huge army which was able to protect our country against enemies, our economy and culture developed very quickly and in those times we didn't wage any wars. That's why this period of time is called "The golden age".

The 16<sup>th</sup> century is time when all over the world the renaissance was born, also in Poland. In those times many beautiful buildings and castles were built in Poland. For example: Wawel Royal Castle, Sigismund Chapel or Zamość (wonderful renaissance city). Apart from that many talented poets, writers and artists wrote in those times. The best known are: Jan Kochanowski, Mikołaj Rej and Andrzej Frycz.



When we think about renaissance the first thought that's on our mind is Mikołaj Kopernik. He was the most talented scientist in renaissance times. He created "Heliocentric Theory" (The Earth goes around the Sun). Renaissance is the best time in our long history and we wish we lived like our predecessors in those times.

# Polish Kings



Here we present the most influential Polish kings.

## Władysław Łokietek - Wladislav the Elbow

He became the king in 1320. Władysław Łokietek united all of Poland into one country. He fought with the Teutonic Order - one of the biggest enemy of Poland in 14th century. His name is connected with the fact that he was very short and elbow was in the past the measurement.



## Kazimierz Wielki

One of the best kings in the history of Poland. The king strengthen our country and formed an Alliance with Lithuania and Hungary. He wanted good relationship with neighbours and he believed in science and education. He set up the first university in Cracow in 1364.

We say about him that *he found Poland built in wood and left it brick.*



## Władysław Jagiełło

Prince of Lithuania. He was crowned In 1386. He founded dynasty of Jagiellonians. Władysław Jagiełło had to fight with his brothers and his uncle for the throne.



## Jan III Sobieski

He became a king in 1674. He won the battle of Vienna with Turkish army and stopped in this way the power of Otoman Empire. When Kara Mustafa, the commander of the Turkish army attacked the Polish soldiers, they attacked back with the special army called "hussary" - soldiers on horseback with feathers attached to the uniform. This type of army was very powerful and scary. Poland won this fight.



## Stanisław August Poniatowski

He was the last king of Poland - during his reign Poland was divided between Germany, Russia and Austria. Stanisław August Poniatowski was a patron of the arts. He organized Thursday's dinners where famous artists met and were talking about art. He ruled while all the three partitions of Poland took place. He was a good-willed king but his politics was not very successful as he dependent too much on Tsarina Katherina who wanted to invade Poland.

# Uprisings of Poland



Poland for 123 years was under foreign rule. During this time the Poles often seized a weapon against invaders. These outbursts are called uprisings. Polish lands came to the following uprisings:

**Kosciuszko Insurrection (1794)** - The first Polish national uprising against Russia and Prussia. After the defeat of Polish-Russian war in 1792 the Republic was occupied by Russian troops.

The insurrection began on 12 March 1794, when Gen. Anthony Madaliński refused to submit to a reduction. He set out from Ostrołęka and went towards Krakow. Ended on 16 November 1794, when the last troops from the Russians was surrendered in Radoszyce. But the fight still lasted until mid-December in some areas of Poland.

**The November Uprising (Polish-Russian War 1830-1831)** - Polish national uprising against Russia, which erupted on the night of November 29 to November 30, 1830, and ended on October 21, 1831. It took the Polish Kingdom and part of the province "picked up" (Lithuania, and Volhynia Samogitia).

To fall of the uprising and war largely contributed non-believers in the possibility of victory and basically loyal towards the Tsar aristocratic political leaders.

**The Cracow Uprising** (from 21 February to 4 March 1846 year) - an attempt to create a national uprising under the slogans of democracy, taken in Cracow. Cracow uprising in 1846, is the only Polish uprising against the three occupants at the same time: Russia, Prussia and Austria.

Not only in the plans but also in practice and because they were formally called "welfare states" the Republic of Cracow. For the insurgent fighting, armed clashes and instances occurred in Krakow and Galicia, Wielkopolska and the Congress Kingdom and so on all three partitions.

**January Uprising** - it was the largest Polish national uprising against Russia. Broke out on January 22, 1863 in the Polish Kingdom and 1 February 1863 in the former Grand Duchy of the Lithuanian lasted until autumn 1864. Was due to the growing Russian state terror which spread on Polish lands. Covered areas of the Polish Kingdom, Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine, to a lesser extent also supported by the Polish population of the Prussian and Austrian partitions. The January Uprising was completed of the military defeat of the Poles in 1865.

Finally after 123 years without independence Poland became a Free Nation at 1918.



*Partitions of Poland*

blue: Prussia; green: Russia; yellow: Austria

# Independent Poland

After three partitions made by Russia, Austria and Germany, Poland completely disappeared from maps for 123 years. Our country regained independence in 1918 after The First World War. In those days Polish people accounted for only 67% of Polish population. There were many people of other nationalities, for example Jews, Germans and Russians. People who lived in Poland were very happy, because they were independent.

At that time Polish economy developed quite slowly. Thing that developed the most quickly was a social life of Polish people. There were many cafes, restaurants and theatres in Polish cities. However, people sensed that the second war is approaching. They were right. This period called "Independent Poland" lasted a very short time. In September 1939 German army invaded Polish lands. It was a beginning of the worst battle in the whole world – The Second World War.

## Katyń

On 17 September 1939, two weeks after Poland was invaded by Nazi Army from the west, the Soviet army attacked Poland from the east.

Weak and poorly equipped Polish army tried to defend our territory, however facing the power of two aggressors we had to give in. Among the prisoners of war take by the Russians there were several thousands of officers, doctors, politicians and other representatives of Polish upper class.

In April and May 1940, in the forest near Katyń NKWD (Russian political police) murdered about 4200 Polish officers. They had been arrested by NKWD before 17 September 1939 and kept in special prisoners' camps. They were executed like ordinary villains or even worse as no trial was prepared for them. Russian soldiers tied their hands at the back and shoot at the back of their heads - it was a slaughter house like nothing in the history of Europe.



## Second World War



The Second World War is the biggest, bloodiest and most tragic armed conflict in world history. Then died almost 60 million people. It was between 1 September 1939 to 2 September 1945. The war took place in Europe, Africa, Asia, and in all oceans. Most of countries which took place in the war were: Germany, Italy, Japan , United Kingdom, United States and the USSR.

Adolf Hitler with his army began the war with attack on Poland. German also occupied Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg and unexpectedly France gave up very quickly.

In the same time German-Italian army was trying to conquer Africa. At the beginning German-Italian forces were successful, but after a long conflict they were forced to leave Africa.

At the first step of war Germany quickly invaded the territory of the USSR. During this time Japan attacked the American in the Pearl Harbour.

The German army in the east stopped at Moscow. Germany lost the battle in Stalingrad. In 1944 Soviets crossed the boundary of Poland. Also Japanese were losing the battles. After successes they treated failure as a failure.

6 June 1944 the Americans and the British conducted a landing on the beaches of Normandy. They managed to break the German resistance and begin to march in occupied Europe. Surprise met them in the forests of the Ardennes, where the Germans began the counteroffensive, which, ended in defeat of the Nazis. Shortly after the Russians began to besiege Berlin, which gave up on 2 May 1945, Germany surrendered on May 7, 1945. Japan surrendered on September 2, 1945.



## Auschwitz



At first, the Germans held Polish political prisoners in the camp. From the spring of 1942 Auschwitz became the largest site for the murder of Jews brought here under the Nazi plan for their extermination. More than 1,100,000 men, women, and children lost their lives here.

All over the world, Auschwitz has become a symbol of terror, genocide, and the Holocaust. It was established by Germans in 1940, in the suburbs of Oswiecim. Its name was changed to Auschwitz, which also became the name of Konzentrationslager Auschwitz.

The direct reason for the establishment of the camp was the fact that mass arrests of Poles were increasing beyond the capacity of existing "local" prisons. Auschwitz was to be one more concentration camp of the type that the Nazis had been setting up since the early 1930. It also became the largest of the death camps.

## Warsaw Uprising

It was the biggest battle between Polish Army and German occupant during The World War II. Poland had been occupied by the forces of Nazi Germany for almost five years. It was July 1944. Polish Underground State (also known as the Polish Secret State), the secret forces of Poland decided to attack German occupant. The uprising began on 1 August 1944. It lasted to October 1944, 63 days. The Warsaw Uprising, led by General Tadeusz 'Bor' Komorowski, failed for a variety of reasons.

General Komorowski had decided that the uprising would start at 05.00 on August 1st. He had about 40 000 soldiers at his disposal but only 2 500 had weapons. They faced a German force in the city that numbered 15 000 men. Unlike the Polish Army, the Germans had tanks, planes and artillery at their disposal. Not only soldiers were fighting in the uprising. Many civils died in the battle, also children. All those who fought for their freedom in the Warsaw Uprising, are real heroes. Over 200 thousands of people died in the Warsaw Uprising, the most heroic and tragic 63-day struggle to liberate Warsaw from occupation. There is a monument in Warsaw, dedicated to all heroes, who died for freedom.

## Poland after World War II

After World War II Poland was ruled by Communists. The Soviet Government imposed political system in many countries in eastern Europe treating us like their colonies. In 1945, there was the Yalta Conference. It was the meeting of the three anti-Nazi empires: USA president - Franklin Delan Roosevelt, prime minister of Great Britain - Winston Churchill and the leader of USSR - Joseph Stalin (Big Three). There, they took many important decisions about Europe (including Poland) after World War II. Also there, Provisional Government of the Republic of Poland was created. During the Yalta Conference great empires decided about a important things but they didn't care about smaller countries and in this way they were responsible for a new shape of post-war world.

In the end of World War II, in 1945 borders of Poland weren't marked out actually. The formal West and North border was recognized in 1990. We got so-called "Recovered Territories". The rationale for the term "Recovered" was that these territories had been part of the Polish state at various times in history, mostly during the rule of the medieval Piast dynasty. The post-war border between Germany and Poland goes along the Oder and the Lusatian



*Winston Churchill, Franklin Roosevelt and Józef Stalin on Yalta Conference*



*Poland after and before World War II*

Neisse. We obtained grounds in the West and the North. By agreement in 1945 between Provisional Government of the Republic of Poland and Moscow, Poland lost about 78 000km<sup>2</sup>.

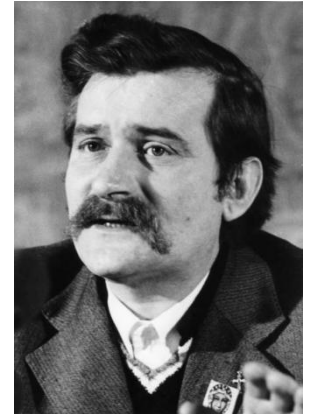
Country after World War II was entirely destroyed, many towns didn't exist, a huge losses in the civil population and in the State Treasury. New communist slavery have made start of liberation movements. Poles tried to repair Poland on their own. There was "Marshall Plan" - American program helped Europe to repair after WW2, but Polish communists didn't take it. In 1945 industry and agriculture become the state properties but they couldn't be controlled well. Effects of these bad decision were rebellions and workers strikes. In shops there was nothing or you had to bought certain amount of something. Government has treated Poland like factory, they have sent stocks and retrieved finished products, that leded to crisis and economic disaster. In the period of time from December 13, 1981 to July 22, 1983 Wojciech Jaruzelski implemented martial law. The worst effects of the martial law were: killed people, serious crisis and hyperinflation. Great popularity gained Solidarity - Polish trade union and the leader - Lech Wałęsa. Date: July 4 1989 considered to be the end of communistic regime.

## Solidarność

The full name of "Solidarność" is Independent Self Governing Trade Union "Solidarity". This trade union was founded on 31 August 1981 in Gdańsk shipyard. The leaders were Lech Wałęsa and other simple workers – Andrzej Gwiazda and Anna Walentynowicz. It was the first non- communistic union behind the Iron Courtain. This trade union reached 9,5 million members.

Solidarity was a broad anti-bureaucratic social movement to improve the status of workers. The government tried to destroy this trade union during the period of martial law. By the end of August 1990 Solidarity and government got a agreement – it was called the Round Table. In December leader of Solidarity was a President of Poland.

Solidarity still exists today. This is the emblem of this movement:



*Lech Wałęsa*

# SOLIDARNOŚĆ

## Smoleńsk

On 10 April 2010 there was a terrible tragedy. Many very important people from Polish government, army and other institutions were going to celebrate the anniversary of Katyń crime.

Unfortunately the plane crashed. We lost the president of Poland and his wife (Lech Kaczyński and Maria Kaczyńska), outstanding politicians, generals and many other eminent people from our political life. It was a great loss for Poland.

