

POLPEX 1968



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Smigly-Rydz, Kukiel and Skladowski, received their initial training. It was also here in Galicia where gradually the Riflemen's Union was formed into regular military units ("Kompanie Kadrowe") and the whole movement was formed into Legions ("Legiony").

Upon the outbreak of war between Russia and Austria, the first units of the Legion ("Pierwsza Kadrowa") moved into action on August 6, 1914 from Krakow. The Legions were an auxiliary corps with Austria and fought bravely in Galicia, at Bukowina, Besarabia and Wolyn. The bravery and insurrectional spirit of Pilsudski and his Legions soon gained respect, even among the enemy.

In August, 1915, Warsaw and the central part of Poland was freed from Russia and the Poles were but a step from freedom in belief of the promises of Austria and Prussia to help them establish an independent Poland. But instead, they again divided the former Russian territories and created a Kingdom of Poland under their protectorate.

This did not satisfy the Polish people as it was not what they had fought and hoped for. Further, an oath of allegiance to Prussia and Austria was demanded of the Polish Legions. A Council of Regency was also established with strict supervision over the Legions. Such a course of events resulted in repressions and even led to the imprisonment of the commander-in-chief of the Legions, Jozef Pilsudski. In July, 1917, he was sent to prison at Magdeburg from which he was released not until November 10, 1918 after the collapse of Germany.

The impact of the Russian Revolution of 1917 brought about changes in Central Europe. The Allied Powers responded to the request of President Woodrow Wilson and they declared that victory should bring restitution of all provinces and the liberation of their inhabitants. After lengthy discussions and political repressions, Austria and Prussia finally gave up and attended the Peace Conference talks.

At Warsaw in the meantime, the Polish Council of Regency issued a Manifesto of Independence and recog-

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RESTORATION OF POLAND'S INDEPENDENCE

The situation in the whole of Europe in the years prior to the war of 1914 was very unstable and tense. The outbreak of war did not surprise any of the Polish leaders of the Independence Movement. Poland at that time was in a very peculiar position as it was divided between the three mightiest powers of Europe: Austria, Prussia and Russia.

For the Poles the outbreak of the war brought their hopes closer to the moment when their flag with the white eagle would fly high once again. Their hearts were filled with hopes of independence and freedom.

But at the same time they also knew, that they would have to fight against each other. Being taken into the armies of the three occupying powers, they knew that a Pole from Lwow, Krakow or Poznan would have to fight a Pole from Warsaw or Wilno. Under each occupation, there were a number of Polish leaders who had hopes for independence and each tried to contribute to this Independence Movement.

In the Austrian territory the Poles enjoyed more privileges. In Galicia, long before the war, Jozef Pilsudski found support for his ideas, beliefs and activities, which mainly were military in character. Many organizations and societies were formed, like the Gymnastic Society ("Sokol") under the leadership of future General Haller; the Rifle Society ("Druzyny Strzeleckie") under the future General Neugebauer and Januszajtis. Future General Sikorski organized a Students' Circle for military training. There were Farmer Units ("Druzyny Bartoszowe"), Scout Units ("Druzyny Harcerskie"), etc. All were semi-military organizations and all were eager to give their lives in fighting for freedom.

Jozef Pilsudski, being an individualist and an ardent leader, made the greatest contribution at that time. He organized a more uniform, devoted and disciplined group known as the Riflemen's Union ("Zwiazki Strzeleckie"). In this movement in Galicia many of the future leaders of the Polish Army, like Generals Sosnkowski,

nized Jozef Pilsudski as the leader of the Polish Armed Forces ("Naczelnik Rzeczypospolitej") and Smigly-Rydz as his deputy.

In other parts of the world many Polish patriots worked for Poland's Independence, mainly among the Allied Powers. The names of Roman Dmowski, Ignacy Jan Paderewski, General Haller, Count Sobieski, Skirmunt, Daszynski and many others are carved deep in the pages of Poland's history.

The Treaty of Versailles was finally signed and sealed fulfilling the promise of the long awaited independence. The eastern border line of Poland was fluid as Russia was still in the midst of a revolution. Actually, the land promised to Poland was not quite free and secured and many parts of the land had to be fought for.

Silesia and East Prussia had to be resolved by means of a plebiscite. From the Poznan provinces, the Germans were driven out and Lwow had to be defended, even by women and children, in a most gallant way. To fight the Russians for the eastern parts of Poland many volunteers from France, led by General Haller, and the Kosciuszko Escadril composed of American pilots, fought ever so bravely. The eastern border lines were very important to Poland and they still constituted many glorious pages of Poland's history. One of the most significant was the bloody battle near Warsaw when the Russians executed one of their greatest offensives. Thanks to the heroic efforts of the thousands of brave soldiers and to the well executed strategy of Jozef Pilsudski, the Russians were completely defeated on August 15, 1920. The heroism and determined stand on the battle grounds at Warsaw on the banks of the Wisla, was called The Miracle ("Cud Nad Wisla").

And once again the flag of the white eagle and the cross of christianity became a symbol of independence and freedom. And those, who died in the battle, gave their lives for Poland:

... THAT SHE, NEVER DESTROYED,
WOULD BE REBORN FROM THEIR BLOOD ...

— Roman H. Strzelecki

Allegro moderato
 1. We - le - gion - naires, the ar - my's mu - sic,
 1. Le - gion - ny to, — zof - nierska mu - ta,

Poland's 50th Anniversary
 of Independence
 1918 — 1968



Polonus Philatelic Society
 POLPEX 1968
 March 2-3
 Chicago



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