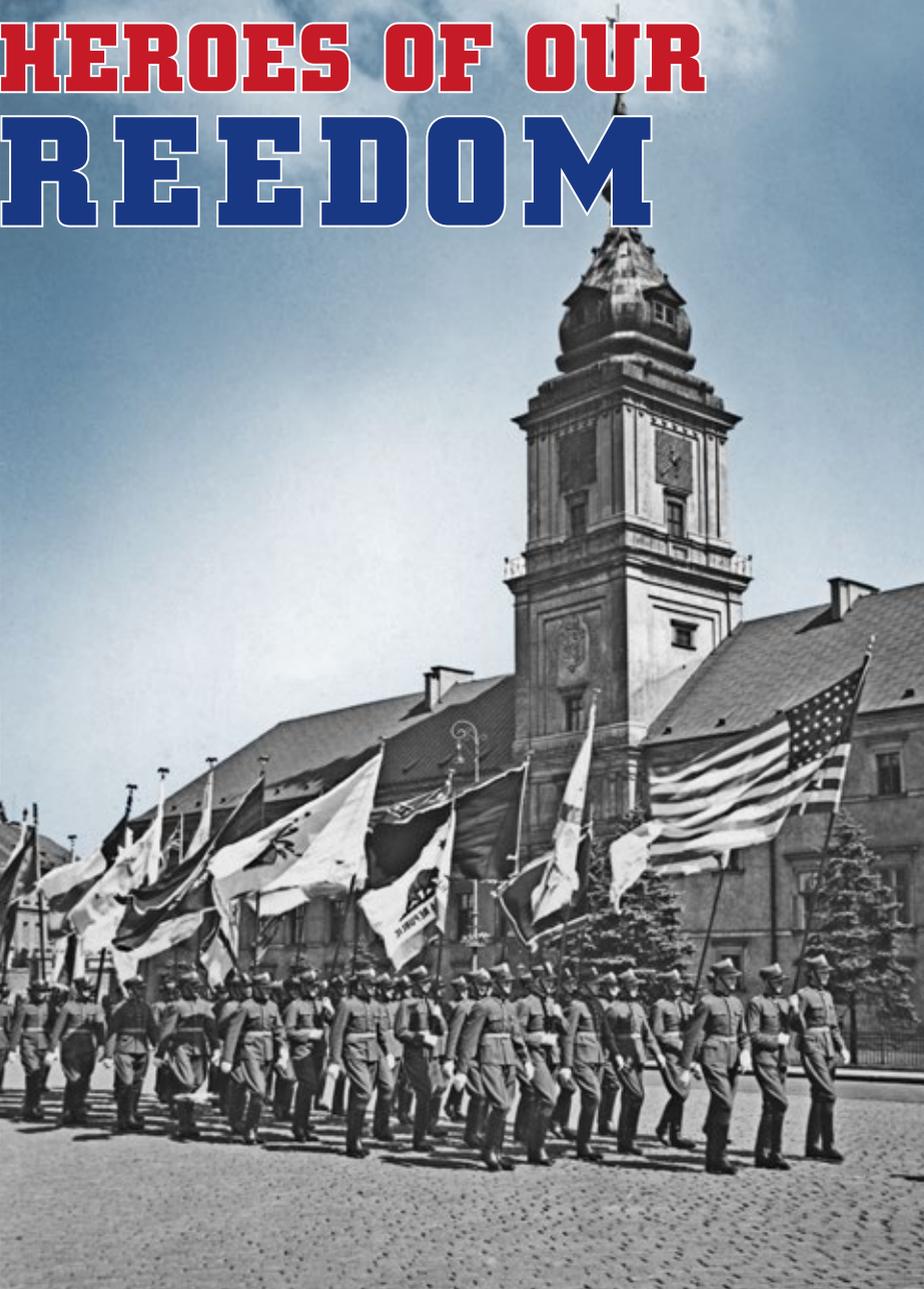




FHEROES OF OUR **F**REEDOM



**POLISH AND AMERICAN MILITARY
TRADITIONS IN THE 20TH CENTURY**

Bartosz Janczak

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Łódź – Warsaw 2022



Introduction

The Republic of Poland and the United States of America are thousands of miles apart, on different continents, and have different languages and cultures. However, they have one significant feature in common – both countries value freedom and peace. This is why, in the 20th century, the Polish and American nations fought together – with weapons and in military uniforms – for these human values which are so important.

The Polish-American military traditions date back to the 18th century. During the American War of Independence (1775–1783), the Ame-



Polish and American soldiers sightseeing in Rome, 1945 (NDA)

ican ranks were reinforced by famous and distinguished volunteers such as Tadeusz Kościuszko, co-founder of the United States Military Academy at West Point, and Kazimierz Pułaski, father of the American cavalry. They both also fought for Polish independence, lost towards the end of the 18th century when the country was partitioned by Austria, Prussia (Germany) and Russia. The American nation won its freedom in the 18th century, while the Polish people lost theirs for 123 years, to regain it in 1918.



Tadeusz Kościuszko (NAC)

The 20th century was the most tragic in world history and witnessed many armed conflicts, including two world wars – and Poles fought for their independence in both of them. The United States Armed Forces were on the same side as the Polish nation. The Polish Army fought alongside the United States Army, which had soldiers of Polish descent serving in its ranks. After 1945, when the Cold War began and Poland found itself in the Soviet Union's sphere of influence, soldiers of Polish origin joined the US Army in the wars in Korea and Vietnam.

They wanted to fight for freedom, world peace and Polish independence.

The aim of this publication is to present the Polish-American military traditions in the 20th century. It was the time when many soldiers of Polish descent joined the ranks of the United States Army, and the combat paths of the Polish Army and the United States Army crossed. The heroes of the fight for the freedom of two nations need to be remembered.



Benjamin Anuszkiewicz, Major of the US Army (on the left) hands over the flag of the 9th Mounted Rifles Regiment of the Polish Army to General Tadeusz Kasprzycki; the flag being a copy of the flag under which Kazimierz Pułaski fought near Savannah, 1733 (NDA)

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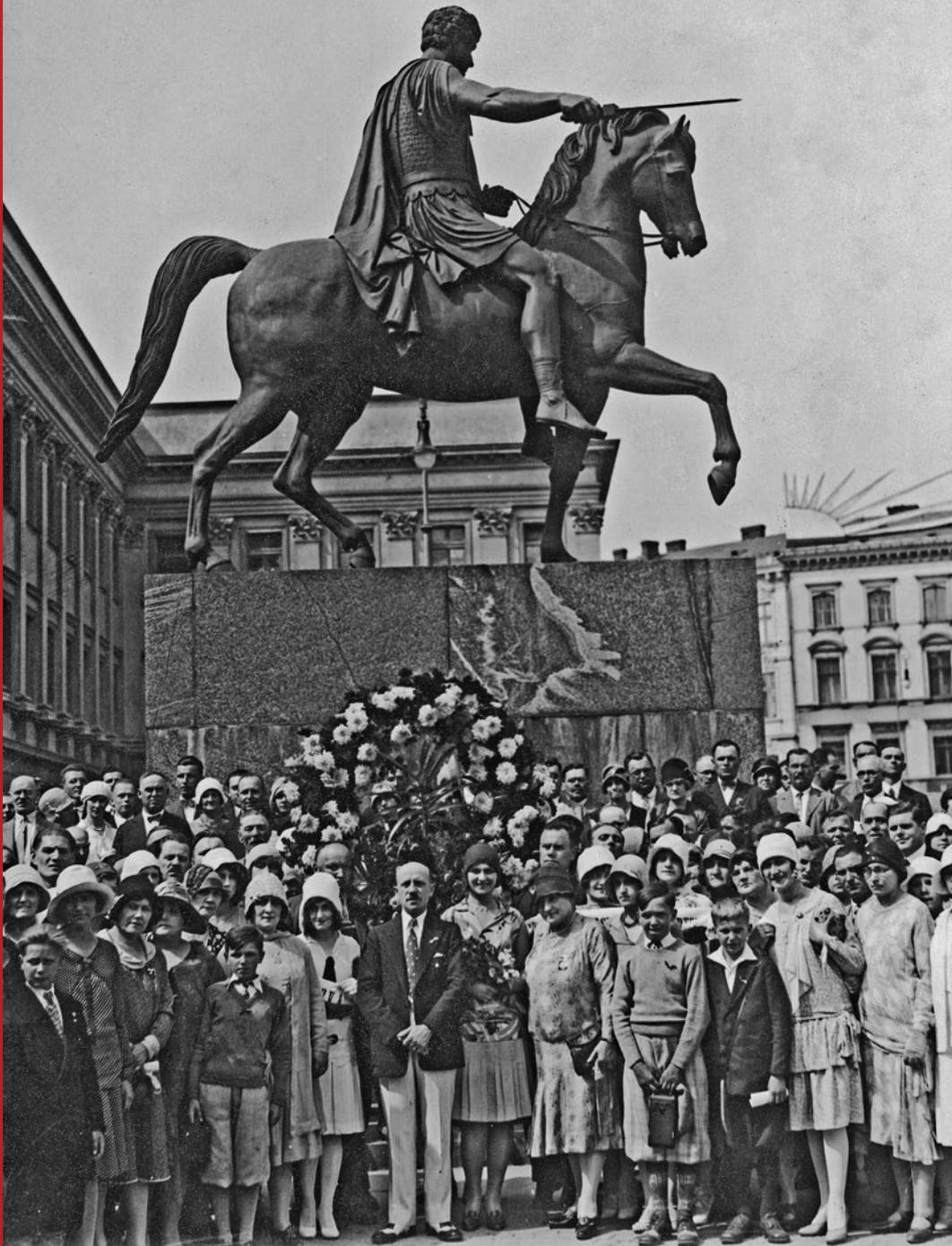
Polish community in the United States in the 20th century

For Poles who were deprived of their own country from late 18th century, the United States meant an opportunity, a hope for a better future for them and their children. As a result of economic emigration, between 2.3 and 3 million people of Polish origin were living in the USA before the outbreak of World War I in 1914. They resided in such states as New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan and Minnesota. The concentrations of Poles in the United States were called the “fourth district.”

As the influx of Polish emigrants increased, it triggered the emergence of Polish immigrant organisations whose aim was to shape the national identity and, above all, to aspire to Poland’s independence. The largest such organisations were the Polish Roman Catholic Union in America [Polish: *Zjednoczenie Polskie Rzymsko-Katolickie w Ameryce*], Union of the Polish Nation [Polish: *Związek Narodu Polskiego*], Polish Falcons Alliance of America [Polish: *Związek Sokółów Polskich w Ameryce*] and Polish Women’s Union in America [Polish: *Związek Polek w Ameryce*]. That last organisation had two-time Nobel Prize winner Maria Skłodowska-Curie among its members.

Jerzy Potocki, the last Polish ambassador to the United States before the outbreak of World War II, portrayed the Polish community in the United States as follows:

‘The Polish community in the United States was characterised by great generosity and patriotic inclinations, but in any case, they were American citizens of Polish origin, something one needed to take into consideration.’



Members of the Union of the Polish Nation in America in front of the Prince Józef Poniatowski Monument in Warsaw, 1929 (NDA)



The Polish Community in the United States during the visit of Commander-in Chief General Władysław Sikorski to the United States in 1942 (NDA)

Apart from the Polish immigrants' organisations, Polish parishes also cultivated Polish culture among the emigrants and propagated the idea of freedom for their homeland. While performing pastoral duties, priests reminded people of national traditions, told them about their homeland and offered hope for a better future. They encouraged the emigrants to work for Poland's independence.

The first important initiative of Polish immigrant organisations in the USA was the 1891 Chicago celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Polish Constitution, considered the first in Europe and, after the American one, the second in the world. Another extremely important event in the history of the Polish community in the United States be-

fore the outbreak of World War I was the unveiling of monuments to Tadeusz Kościuszko and Kazimierz Pułaski, heroes for both nations, on 11 May 1910 in Washington. The act was to remind the American society how much Poles had contributed to American independence. The ceremony was attended by William Taft, the President of the United States, which was important for almost one hundred thousand Polish immigrants in the USA who gathered that day in Lafayette Square. To mark the occasion, the Polish immigrants in the USA also passed a motion including the words that the Polish community in the United States lived by:

'We Poles have the right to exist as an independent nation and consider it our sacred duty to pursue political independence for our home country Poland.'

The years 1911–1914 were a period of international tension foreshadowing the outbreak of war which was to change the world order and could bring Poland independence. The Polish community in the United States followed the development of the situation and made efforts to support the countrymen under Austrian, German and Russian rule. They established paramilitary organisations, such as Pułaski's Volunteers [Polish: *Ochotnicy Pułaskiego*], Kościuszko's Guard [*Gwardia Kościuszkii*], or the largest of them all, the Polish Falcons Alliance of America. In addition, Polish organisations set up the Committee of National Defence [Polish: *Komitet Obrony Narodowej*] which aimed to provide financial support to Poles under partitions.

In 1914, World War I broke out. The Polish and American nations were faced with new challenges. For the former, the war meant the hope of regaining their desired freedom, while for the latter, it would require involvement in Europe, so that the conflict could be ended as soon as possible and peace could come. The paths of Poles and Americans crossed in the years 1914–1918, and their shared goal was the fight for freedom.

Military efforts of Americans and the Polish community in the United States for the independence of Poland

The outbreak of World War I in 1914 filled Poles, including those living in the United States, with hope for regaining independence they had lost over a century before. However, they knew that it would not be easy to win that freedom, and counted on the American support. Polish immigrants in the USA became involved in a range of activities, including initiatives of military nature. Many young people with Polish blood wanted to join the armed struggle for the sovereignty of their home country.

The most important Polish community organisation in the United States capable of taking military action was the Polish Falcons Alliance of America [Polish: *Związek Sokolów Polskich w Ameryce*], whose first president was Dr Teofil Starzyński (graduate of medical studies at a university in Pennsylvania). He initiated military training for the Alliance members, commonly known as “Falcons,” to teach them military drill, the use of cold steel and firearms, and the command of sub-units, among other things. As the training began, more and more young Poles enlisted, dreaming of military service that would contribute to Polish independence.

Some of them decided to make their dreams come true as early as the autumn of 1914. At that time, Polish Legions commanded by Józef Piłsudski were being formed in the ranks of the Austro-Hungarian Army. When the news reached the USA, some Polish youth decided

to travel to Europe and join these Polish units. They included Witold Ścibor-Rylski, posthumously promoted to the rank of Brigadier General of the Polish Army, who left America with a group of 18 volunteers on 1 September 1914 to fight in the Legions. In late November and early December 1914, a few Falcons reached Pułaski's Legion, whose members saw a chance for independence in fighting on Russia's side. Among them were Adam Trygar and Leon Sułkowski.

The Polish community in the United States also saw its chance for regaining independence for Poland after the United States joined the war. However, this did not happen either in 1914 or in the following years. More than six months after World War I broke out, representatives of the Polish Falcons Alliance of America met with US President Thomas Woodrow Wilson. The visit took place on 10 February 1915 at the White House. Dr Teofil Starzyński wrote about this meeting:

'The President spoke very favourably about the whole matter (of Polish independence) and promised that if the Government of the United States took part in the peace congress, the United States delegate would support the Polish cause as far as possible.'

These words meant a great deal to the Polish community in the United States, as they gave much needed hope. They were confirmed on 22 January 1917 when, in a speech to the American Senate, President Thomas Woodrow Wilson called for "united, independent and sovereign Poland."

The words of the US President boosted military organisation and training of the Polish community in the United States. On 19 March 1917, Officer Cadet School was established in Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania, where 398 future officers trained. The next plan was to form a hundred-thousand-strong "Kościuszko Army" alongside the United States troops. The originator of this project was Ignacy Jan Paderewski, a prominent Polish pianist and activist in the Polish community in the United States. The formation never came into being, but even the idea was evidence of how committed to restoring Polish independence the Polish diaspora in the United States was.



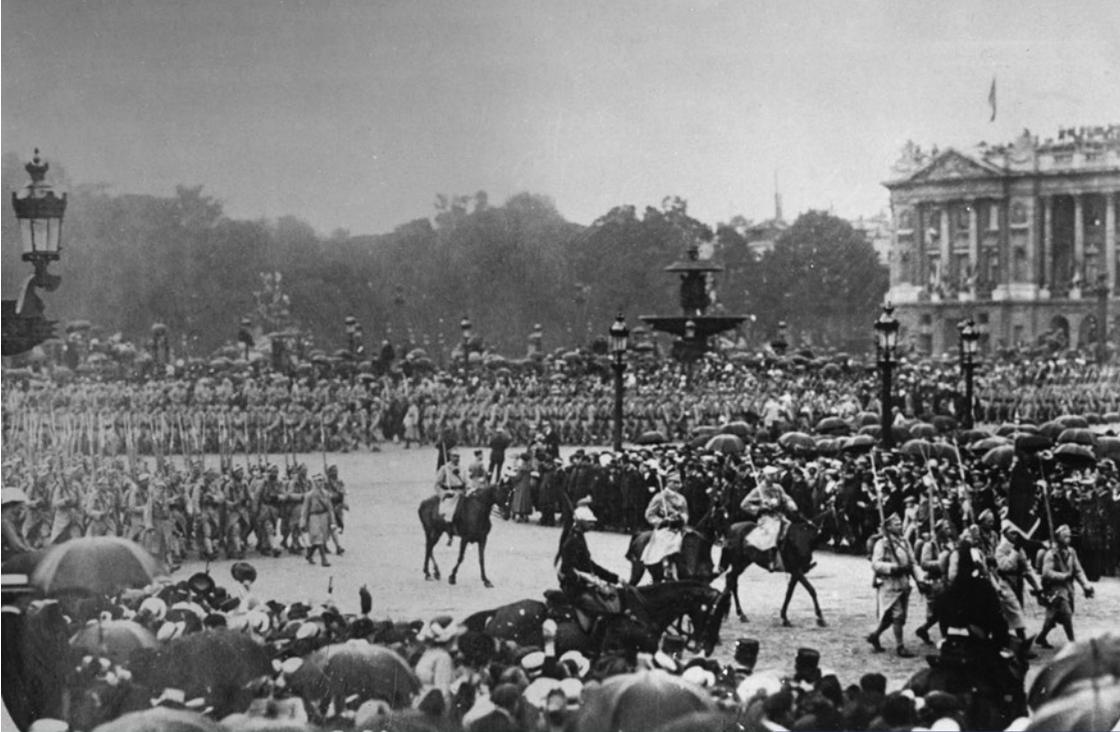
Captain Frank Boguszewski, 1917 (INR)

After the United States had declared war on Germany on 6 April 1917, the hopes for an independent Polish state were raised. The moment the US got involved in the Great War, its army numbered about 200,000 soldiers, but reached 2.5 million a year later. Within the first three months, nearly 40,000 Poles and people of Polish descent living in the United States volunteered for the US Army, and by the end of the war their number grew to 300,000. Many of these people felt a bond with the old country and believed that it was worth fighting in the ranks of American units for the freedom of Poland.

In 1917, the American Expeditionary Forces were sent to Europe under the command of General John J. Pershing to fight against the German army. The soldiers serving

in AEF were called 'doughboys.' The ranks of the AEF included men of Polish origin, such as Captain Frank Boguszewski, Frank "Hardtack Murphy" Kviatek and John Kuroski (Jan Kurowski). Kuroski was awarded the French Cross for Military Valour (*Croix de la valeur militaire*) for his deeds. Many soldiers of Polish descent fell in combat, including Andrew Andrzejczyk (19 July 1918), John W. Bielatowicz, Francis J. Jaskolski (both fell on 6 December 1917), John V. Janiszewski (3 August 1918), Frank Lewandowski (23 May 1918), Teodor Milewski (19 July 1918), or Wawrzyniec Saracki (29 September 1918).

In June 1917, organisation of the Polish Army in France, which was to fight for the independence of Poland, began with the consent of



The Polish Army marching in Paris, France, 1918 (NDA)

the highest state authorities. Its core were Polish volunteers from the United States. On 6 October 1917, the US government agreed to the recruitment for the Polish Army in France. A total of over 20,000 Polish soldiers were sent from the United States to Europe. The first transport of 1,200 servicemen sailed for Europe on 16 December 1917. Each ship's departure was an emotional moment for the volunteers and their relatives. Young people coming from Polish families but born in the USA were leaving their loved ones to fight for the freedom of Poland.

The Polish Army in France, commonly referred to as the Blue Army because of the colour of its uniforms, was recognised by the US government as an allied and friendly force.

The day of 11 November 1918 witnessed the fulfilment of the dream cherished by the soldiers of Polish descent serving in the United States Army, the Polish Army in France, and by all Poles – Poland regained its independence after more than 100 years. This was possible



Ignacy Mościcki, the President of Poland, pays tribute in front of the monument to Thomas Woodrow Wilson in Poznań, 1931 (NDA)

thanks partly to the help of the United States and the aforementioned Thomas Woodrow Wilson. First, the President of the United States gave his Fourteen Points Speech on 8 January 1918, in the 13th point calling for independent Poland. Then, at the Paris Peace Conference ending World War I, the support for the sovereignty of Poland expressed by the President and the American delegation proved essential in the negotiations. It should also be remembered that the United States were among the first countries to recognise the independence of the Republic of Poland in January 1919.

Despite the end of World War I and the restoration of independence, Poland was still under threat. In the years 1918–1920, Poles had to defend their hard-won sovereignty. One of the wars they fought was against the Soviet Union. The Polish Army, which had numerous volunteers from the Blue Army in its ranks, was also reinforced by Americans.

The Polish soldiers could count on the help of American pilots from the 7th Tadeusz Kościuszko Air Escadrille, better known as the



Lieutenant Edmund
P. Graves, a pilot
(public domain)

Kościuszko Squadron. It had been formed on the initiative of Merian C. Cooper, whose great-grandfather, Colonel John Cooper, fought alongside Kazimierz Pułaski and witnessed his death. The Squadron was commanded by several American officers: Major Cedric Fauntleroy, the aforementioned Captain Merian C. Cooper and Captain George Crawford. In addition, the emblem of the squadron depicted the symbols associated with Tadeusz Kościuszko against a background made of the colours of the United States flag.

During the Polish-Soviet War, the airmen of the Kościuszko Squadron performed many important tasks. In August 1920, they served with distinction during the Battle of Lviv, which earned them the name of the 'Lviv airmen'. One of them was Wacław Czupajko, who had served with the United States army in Europe during World War I. After returning to the USA, he joined the Polish Army and came back to Europe, where he was assigned to the Kościuszko Squadron. A few American soldiers fell in combat, like Lieutenant Edmund P. Graves (born in 1891 in Boston, Massachusetts, fallen on 22 November 1919 in Lviv), Captain Arthur



American volunteers of the 7th Tadeusz Kościuszko Air Escadrille (public domain)

H. Kelly (born in 1890 in Richmond, Virginia, fallen on 16 July 1920 near Łuck), and Captain John McCallum (born in 1890 in Detroit, Michigan, fallen on 31 August 1920 near Lviv). All of them are buried in the Cemetery of the Defenders of Lviv.

Women emigrants were also involved in the activities aimed at restoring Polish independence. The volunteers heading for Europe were joined by a group of Polish women led by Helena Gaczorowa and Agnieszka Wiśła. The women tended to soldiers' wounds and helped the civilian population, also in the ranks of several organisations, including the American Relief Administration headed by Herbert Hoover, US President from 1929 to 1933. They remained in service until 1921.

The Polish community in the United States, the American authorities and soldiers of Polish origin serving in the United States army made a significant contribution to Poland's independence. The signing of the peace treaty with the Soviet Union in 1921 marked the beginning of a period of peace in the history of Poland, lasting nearly 20 years. It was a time when the Polish-American bonds, including military cooperation, were being strengthened.



The Polish White Cross hands over an ambulance funded by the Polish community in Bloomfield (New Jersey) to the Polish Army in France (INR)

Poland and the USA between the wars

After the end of World War I and the Polish-Soviet War in 1921, a period of peace began that lasted almost twenty years. The citizens of Poland and the United States tried to rebuild their everyday lives. Doing that, they did not forget the heroes of the struggle for freedom in the recent armed conflicts, and made efforts to commemorate their service.

The Polish community in the United States had made a major contribution to the struggle for Polish independence in the years 1914–1921. During the First General Meeting of Veterans held at the Polish Home in Cleveland on 28–30 May 1921, the Polish Army Veterans' Association in America was established. Its first President was Dr Teofil Starzyński – the President of the Polish Falcons Alliance of America during World War I. The mission of the Polish Army Veterans' Association in America was to work for the benefit of its members, for the Polish community in the United States and, above all, for Poland.

During the inter-war period, many memorial sites were established in Poland and the United States to commemorate the achievements of Polish and American soldiers in the struggle for freedom, as well as joint Polish-American efforts. There, representatives of Poland and the United States met and paid tribute to the heroes.

One of the first important commemorations of the Polish-American military activities was the unveiling – on 30 May 1925 at the Cemetery of the Defenders of Lviv – of a monument dedicated to the soldiers of the 7th Tadeusz Kościuszko Air Escadrille, the so-called Kościuszko Squadron. The monument depicted an airman with wings and his head pointing upwards. It was located by the grave of three fallen squadron pilots. The Polish and English sign above the monument read, "To American heroes who gave their lives for Poland in the years



Chargé d'affaires of the United States Embassy in Poland, Orsen Nielsen (on the left) in front of the grave of the American pilots at the Cemetery of the Defenders of Lviv (NDA)

1919–1920.” In subsequent years, the monument to the airmen of the Kościuszko Squadron was visited by the United States ambassadors to Poland. For example, wreaths were laid and speeches delivered at the monument by John Willys in 1931, John Cudahy in 1934, and two years later, by *chargé d'affaires* of the US Embassy in Poland, Orsen Nielsen.

The American ambassadors to Poland during the inter-war period also paid tribute to Polish soldiers, laying wreaths at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Warsaw. In 1932, Poland was visited by the Chief of Staff of the American land forces General Douglas MacArthur; on behalf of the US Army, he paid tribute to Polish Army soldiers who had fought for the freedom of their homeland.

The Americans offered their sympathy in moments of sorrow. In May 1935, Józef Piłsudski, a distinguished figure in Poland’s struggle for independence, died and was laid to rest at the Wawel Royal Castle.



John Cudahy, the United States Ambassador in Poland, walks past the guard of honour of the 20th Land of Kraków Infantry Regiment on a platform at the railway station in Cracow, 1935 (NDA)

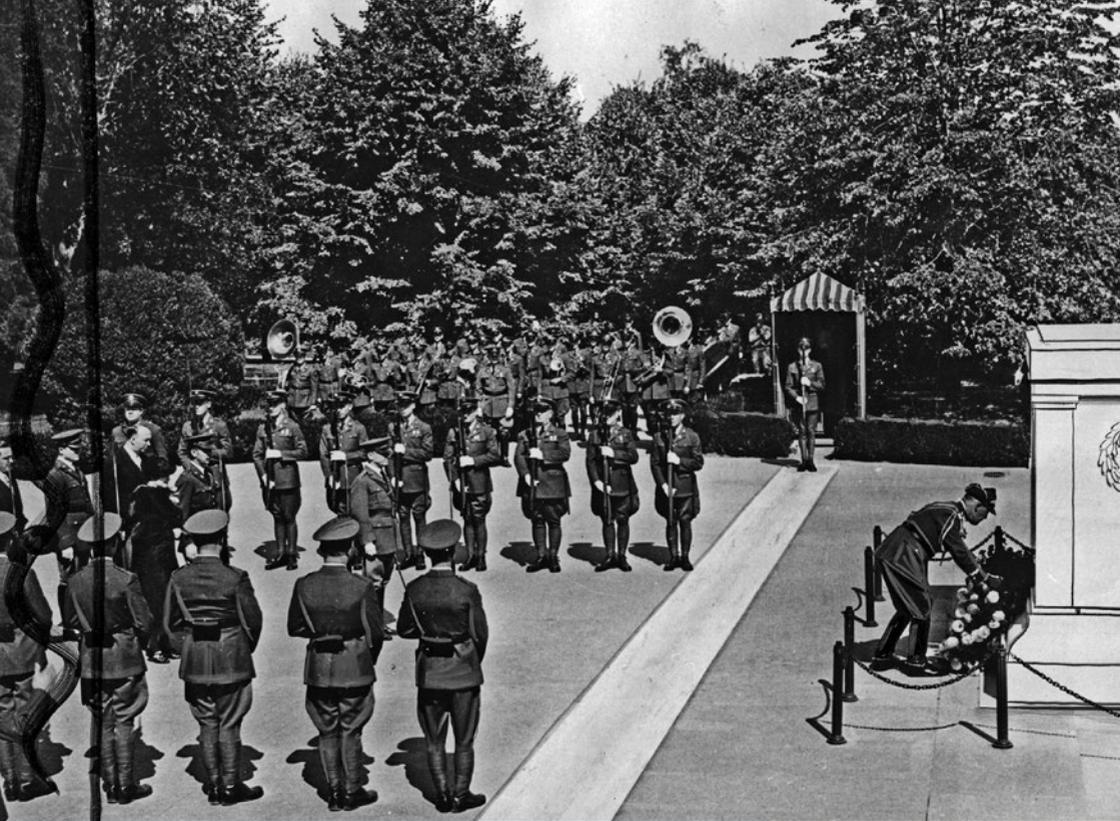




The delegation headed by US Ambassador John Cudahy with a wreath decorated with ribbons in the colours of the United States. The entrance to Wawel Cathedral in the background on the right, 1935 (NDA)

The deceased leader was honoured the same year by John Cudahy, the US Ambassador to Poland. A company of the Polish Army greeted the American diplomat at the railway station, Polish and American national flags were flown at the Market Square in Cracow, and then John Cudahy proceeded to the Wawel crypt. Since a mound in Cracow was being erected in honour of Józef Piłsudski, Cudahy brought to the construction site some soil from historical places in every American state, and scattered it there. The event was of great importance for Polish-American relations.

In the United States, Polish representatives also paid tribute to American soldiers who took part in armed conflicts. In 1925 for instance, members of the Polish parliament laid a wreath at the Tomb



General Gustaw Orlicz-Dreszer lays a wreath in Arlington National Cemetery, 1931 (NDA)

of the Unknown Soldiers in the Arlington National Cemetery. In 1931, General Gustaw Orlicz-Dreszer, distinguished Polish Army cavalry officer, visited the United States on behalf of the Polish government and military authorities. He travelled overseas at the invitation of the American Legion, the largest veterans' organisation in the USA. The General met with President Herbert Hoover, watched a parade of the hundred-thousand-strong American Legion in Detroit, visited the military school at West Point, and laid a wreath at the Arlington Cemetery.

The same Arlington National Cemetery was also the venue of a military ceremony important for Polish-American relations. It was connected with the transfer of the coffin containing the remains of Civil War combatant General Włodzimierz Krzyżanowski. This event



Anthony J. Drexel Biddle, the US Ambassador in Poland, lays a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, 23 August 1939 (NDA)

was attended by, among others, the Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to the United States, Jerzy Potocki, and the General's son, Józef Krzyżanowski, who also laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers.

An extremely important, solemn and ground-breaking Polish-American ceremony took place on 23 August 1939, a few days before the outbreak of World War II. At the Royal Castle in Warsaw, Anthony J. Drexler Biddle, the US Ambassador to Poland, handed Ignacy Mościcki, the President of Poland, the flags of all states and territories of the United States, donated by their Governors to mark the 20th anniversary of Poland's regained independence. Afterwards, soldiers from the Castle Guards carried the flags to Marshal Józef Piłsudski Square, where Anthony J. Drexler Biddle laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

In addition to the flags, each Governor sent President Ignacy Mościcki a letter of tribute. Missouri Governor Lloyd C. Stark wrote:

'We faithfully stand by Poland, recognizing its courage in opposing external interference and plans of the invaders. As an officer of the United States Army, I admired your brave troops in France. We also stood up to tyrants there. As long as the love for the home country is alive in the American and Polish nations and great patriotism fills the hearts of the citizens, they will always stand faithfully by each other and support each other, resist destruction, oppose enslavement and never allow the annihilation of freedom-loving nations.'

On 1 September 1939, less than a week after this extraordinary American states' collective tribute to Poland, the most terrible global war in history broke out and German bombs fell on the Royal Castle, the ceremony venue. Polish-American friendship, clearly pronounced in August, was put to a severe test. Poles and Americans would fight for freedom again.

4

American military aid for Poland in World War II

The most tragic war in history, World War II, broke out on 1 September 1939. Poland was the first to oppose the German aggressor supported by Italy and Japan. Until 6 October 1939, the Polish Army bravely resisted Wehrmacht units. The Polish spirit was not even broken by the Soviet Union's invasion on 17 September 1939.

Poles did not intend to lay down their arms, but instead continued to fight for the independence of their country. In the next years of World War II, Polish soldiers fought for the independence of Poland alongside the Allies in Europe and other parts of the world. In the second half of 1940, Polish government-in-exile was established in Great Britain. The Polish Armed Forces were formed outside the country, and consisted of land, air and naval units. General Władysław Sikorski became their first Commander-in-Chief. Meanwhile, an underground armed organisation had been created in the occupied territories.

The United States was one of the allies of the Polish soldiers during World War II. The American authorities recognised the Polish Government in Exile, and the post of ambassador was held by Anthony J. Drexler Biddle, the same man who had handed over the American flags at the Royal Castle in Warsaw in August 1939 as a sign of friendship between the two nations. In 1943, he was replaced by Rudolf Schoenfeld, serving as *chargé d'affaires ad interim* until 1945.

During World War II, the Polish community in the United States became involved in providing help for occupied Poland. Polish War Relief, founded in 1938, after 1939 carried out activities aimed at organising all charitable help for the Poles scattered by the war all over the world. The Commander-in-Chief met with the Polish community in



Meeting of Commander-in-Chief General Władysław Sikorski with representatives of the Polish Community in the United States (NDA)

the United States and discussed, among other things, the enlistment of Polish youth into the Polish Armed Forces. General Sikorski visited the USA three times. During each of his visits, he met with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Just like in World War I, the youth from the Polish community in the United States joined Polish military units during World War II. By 31 December 1941, a total of 1,175 American Poles had enlisted in the Polish Armed Forces. These included Frederick Dudek, Bronisław Godlewski, Józef R. Sawicki, Marian Subala, or Tadeusz Śrutwa. The first two participated in bombing raids on German cities. During one of the missions, Bronisław Godlewski was seriously wounded and lost both his hands. Marian Skubala was also wounded during a combat flight, and Józef R. Sawicki lost his life during a raid on Bremen in 1943. The Polish volunteers were decorated with Polish, American and British medals for their courage and sacrifice.

The troops of the Polish Armed Forces fought in Europe, as well as other parts of the world. As they followed the path of combat which was to end in a free and independent Poland, they fought alongside the United States Army. The United States entered the war after 7 December 1941. American soldiers fought, among other places, in the Pacific, North Africa, Italy, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Czechoslovakia and Austria.

In Italy, the 2nd Polish Corps commanded by General Władysław Anders fought against the German army since 1944. In November 1943, General Kazimierz Sosnkowski, the successor to General Władysław Sikorski, who tragically died in a plane crash, had met with the Commander of the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Force in North-Western Europe, General Dwight Eisenhower, to discuss the participation of the Corps in the battles on the Italian Peninsula.

Colonel Klemens Rudnicki shakes hands with US General Mark Clark after takeover of Bologne, 1945 (NDA)





General Dwight Eisenhower in the 1st Armoured Division.
General Stanisław Maczek on the right, 1944 (public domain)

The 2nd Corps took Monte Cassino in May 1944, opening the way to Rome for the soldiers of the 5th United States Army commanded by General Mark Clark. A year later, in April 1945, the 2nd Corps fought alongside British and American troops in the battle for Bologna. The first units to enter the city, ahead of the American troops, were Poles under the command of Colonel Klemens Rudnicki.

On 6 June 1944, the Allied forces landed in Normandy in Operation Overlord, in order to open the so-called Second Front in Europe. At the end of July 1944, the 1st Armoured Division commanded by General Stanisław Maczek, part of the Polish Armed Forces, was moved to Normandy. It fought in France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany. On its combat path it faced, together with American troops, German forces. The 1st Armoured Division also took part in the Battle of Falaise (12–21 August 1944), Chambois (18–20 August 1944), along, among others, the 3rd United States Army commanded by General George Smith Patton. After taking Breda in October 1944, the 1st Armoured Division was visited by General Dwight Eisenhower.

On 29 April 1945, the aforementioned 3rd Army commanded by General Patton liberated Oflag VII A Murnau, a German POW camp where Polish Army officers fighting against the Wehrmacht

in September and October 1939 were detained. Following the liberation of the camp, many former prisoners of war joined the ranks of the Polish Armed Forces. One of the first people to talk to the Polish POWs was a United States Army officer of Polish descent, graduate of the military academy at West Point, Colonel Henry J. Szymański, a liaison officer for the 3rd Army.

The Polish Armed Forces included the Independent Parachute Brigade, an airborne unit. In September 1944, the Brigade, commanded by General Stanisław Sosabowski, took part in the largest military operation involving airborne troops in World War II – Operation Market Garden. The combat took place in the occupied Netherlands. American soldiers from the 82nd (commanded by General James Gavin) and 101st (General Maxwell Taylor) Airborne Divisions also fought there against the German troops.

The Poles resisted the German and Soviet invaders in occupied Poland. Sabotage and armed actions were carried out by soldiers of the Home Army and other underground organisations. The largest armed uprising against the Germans was the Warsaw Uprising, which broke out on 1 August 1944 and lasted until early October. The US Air Force became involved in helping the insurgents fight. As part of Operation Frantic VII, 110 American B-17 bomber crews set off for occupied Poland – 107 of them completed their airdrops, and one crew did not return from the mission. The Americans were delivering containers with supplies.

Polish airmen displayed great heroism and courage during World War II. Polish air force squadrons bravely confronted the German Luftwaffe. The most famous of these was the 303rd Tadeusz Kościuszko Warsaw Fighter Squadron, which took part in the Battle of Britain in 1940. One of the important guests who visited the Squadron in March 1941 was Merian C. Cooper, former commander of the 7th Tadeusz Kościuszko Air Escadrille, the so-called Kościuszko Squadron, whose tradition was continued by the 303rd.

Polish-American military cooperation during World War II also took place in the field of intelligence. One of the officers of the Polish Armed Forces, Major Mieczysław “Rygor” Słowikowski, established

the Intelligence Branch for North Africa (Agency Africa). The branch also provided information for the United States Army. The Major's achievements were appreciated by the Americans, who awarded him the Order of the Legion of Merit. Polish intelligence officers also took part in Operation Eagle, carried out in 1945 by American intelligence and aimed at gathering military and economic information in the territory of the Third Reich.

On many battlefields in various parts of Europe and the world the soldiers of the Polish Armed Forces fought alongside the United States Army servicemen. Their goal was to defeat the Third Reich and its allies, as well as to restore Poland's independence. They displayed heroism, courage and gallantry in combat. The soldiers of the Polish Armed Forces earned the respect of their American brothers in arms. After visiting the 2nd Polish Corps, General George S. Patton wrote in his memoirs, 'Polish troops present themselves better than any troops, including British and American, that I have ever seen.'



General Władysław Anders decorated by General Jacob L. Devers with the American Legion of Merit in Rome, 1 August 1944 (INR)

5

Brotherhood-in-arms on the war fronts

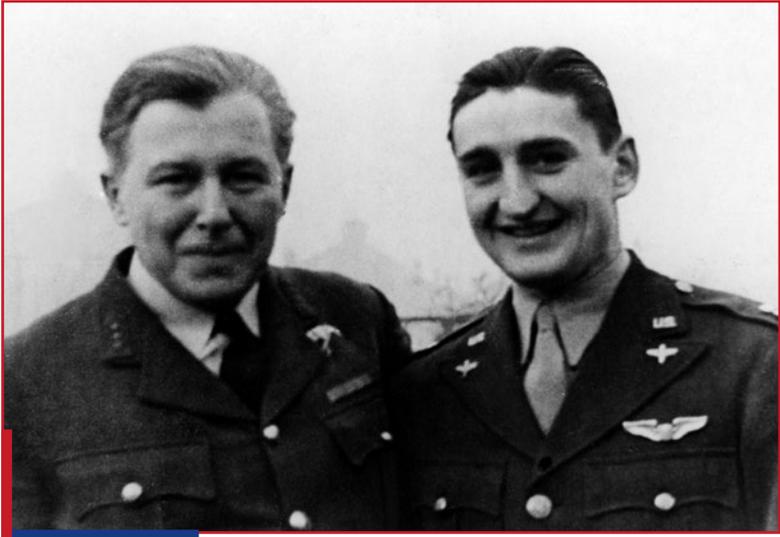
During World War II, the United States Armed Forces consisted of the Army, Navy, Marines and Coast Guard. At that time, the Air Force (USAF) was not yet an independent branch of the Armed Forces. In 1939, the army numbered 188,000 soldiers, and by mid-1945, it had grown to over 8 million, about 3 million of whom were in Europe.

During the first two years of the armed conflict, the United States remained neutral. The US President could not order military action against the Third Reich and its allies without the approval of the Congress. The situation changed after 7 December 1941. On that day, Japanese planes attacked the Pacific Fleet and Air Force base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, without a declaration of war. The raid resulted in 18 military ships sunk or severely damaged, including USS Arizona.

The bombing of Pearl Harbor made the United States enter World War II. In November 1942, American troops landed in North Africa, a year later in Sicily and the Italian Peninsula, and in mid-1944 in Normandy, northern France, where the second European front was established. Through France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, the United States troops reached Germany, to stop at the Elbe River line in Czechoslovakia and Austria in 1945.

Soldiers of Polish origin also served in the ranks of the United States military during World War II. It is estimated that approximately 1 million of them were in the US Army. The first volunteers enlisted as early as 1939. Their motivation was to fight for world peace and to restore the independence of Poland occupied by the Third Reich and the Soviet Union.

The soldiers of Polish descent serving in the US Army fought on several fronts during World War II. Some of them were at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 during the Japanese raid. Those serving



Francis S. "Gabby" Gabreski (on the right) accompanied by a Polish pilot (NDA)

aboard the USS Arizona included, among others, 17-year-old John S. Malinowski, or Henry S. Kalinowski, who gave up his Saturday pass to a friend who was getting married. Both of them, Malinowski and Kalinowski, went down with the bombed ship and were posthumously awarded the Purple Heart. In addition, the Pearl Harbor raid killed Stanley Czarnecki (from the state of Michigan), Alexander L. Piasecki (Colorado), Roman W. Sadlowski (Massachusetts, remains found in 2018), Robert N. Walkowiak (Wisconsin, remains found in 2017), Steve A. Ziembicki (New York). They were all posthumously awarded the Purple Heart.

During World War II, the military aviation played a large role in combat operations. Air superiority meant dominance on land, therefore outstanding military pilots were of great value. The US Air Force also had such pilots, some of Polish descent. One of them was Francis S. "Gabby" Gabreski, aka Franciszek Gabryszewski, who witnessed the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. The parents of this American fighter ace were Poles who arrived in the US in search of a better life. Gabreski was born in Pennsylvania. He graduated from Parks Air



General Władysław Sikorski awards Francis Gabreski the Cross of Valour (NDA)

College in Alabama in 1941, and began his military service in Hawaii the following year. In 1942–1943, he flew combat aircraft with the Polish Armed Forces in the 315th “Dęblin” Fighter Squadron. Commander-in-Chief Sikorski awarded “Gabby” the Cross of Valour. After that, Gabreski returned to the United States Air Force and downed a confirmed 30 enemy aircraft over the next years of the war. In 1944, he was taken prisoner by the Germans. He returned to the US a year later and continued his service in a US uniform.

Another fighter ace serving in the US Air Force during World War II was General Witold Urbanowicz. During the Polish campaign of 1939, he fought as a pilot of the Polish Army against the German Luftwaffe. He then made his way to Great Britain and fought in the Polish Armed Forces in the 303rd Tadeusz Kościuszko Warsaw Fighter Squadron. From 1943, Urbanowicz flew American Curtiss P-40 Warhawk fighter on the Japan-China front. He was assigned to the famous “Flying Tigers” Group. After the end of World War II, he lived in the USA.

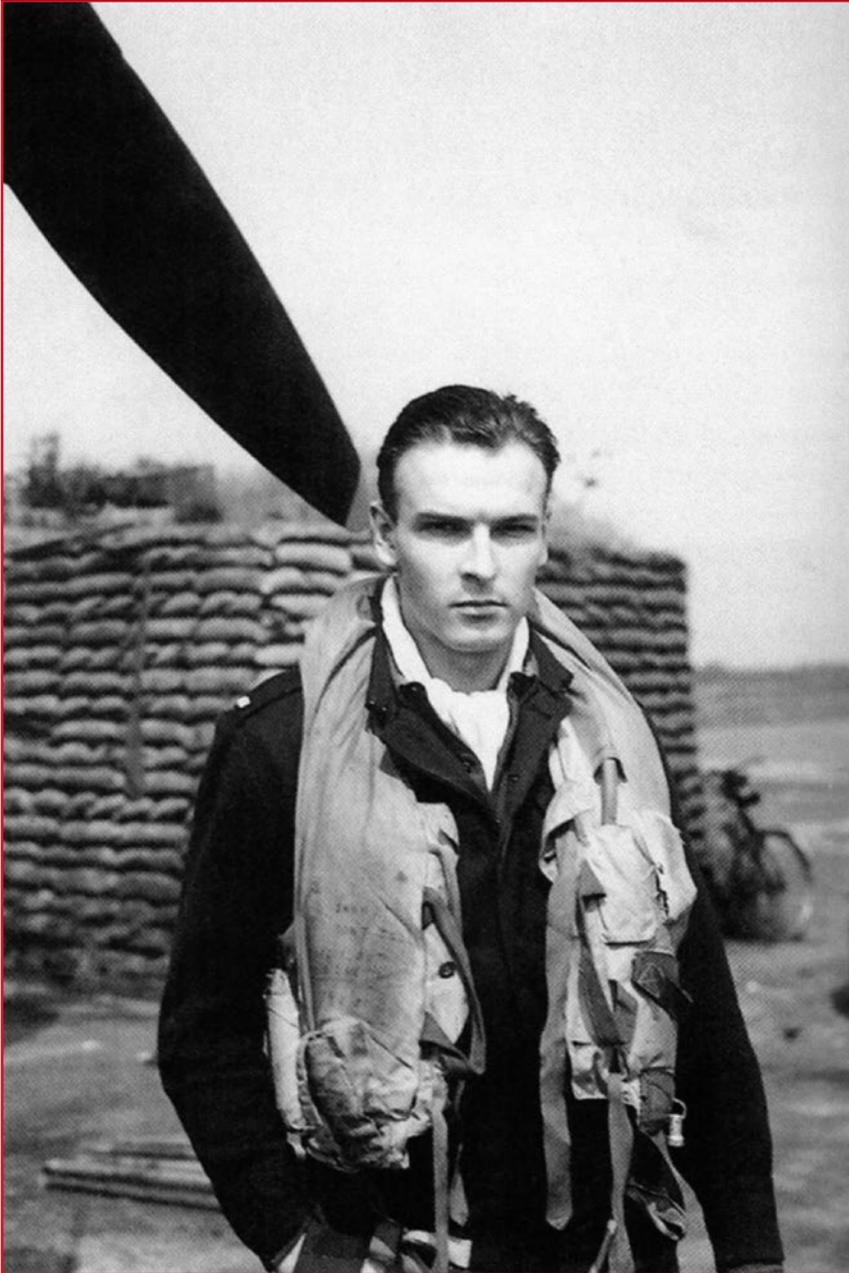
In addition to aviation, very important during World War II was the Navy. The ships of the US Navy fought German and Japanese vessels. One US Navy officer of Polish origin was Leon “Bobo” Grabowsky, stationed at Pearl Harbor in December 1941 on the crew of USS Arizona. He survived the Japanese air raid and fought in the Pacific in the following years of the war. He went down in history as the US Navy’s youngest ever destroyer commander.

Private First Class Frank Witek fought in the Pacific as a volunteer in the United States Marine Corps, and fell on 3 August 1944 on the island of Guam. For his heroic conduct, he was awarded the highest military decoration in the United States – the Medal of Honour. During World War II, other American soldiers of Polish descent also received this decoration, including Second Lieutenant Joseph R. Sarnoski, who fell on 16 July 1943 on Bougainville Island in the Solomon Islands and received it posthumously, and Sergeant Sylvester A. Antolak, awarded for his deeds in Italy in May 1944. The latter was buried in the Cemetery of American Soldiers in Nettuno near Rome.

One of the key operations of World War II in western Europe involving the US Army was the so-called opening of the Second Front. The operation began in Normandy on 6 June 1944 and was commanded by General Dwight Eisenhower. The day the soldiers landed on the beaches of Normandy was codenamed “D-Day.” Air force units of the Polish Armed Forces and ships of the Polish Navy also took part in the assault in Normandy.

During the Normandy landing, soldiers of Polish descent, like Kazimierz Lenard and Fryderyk Tomczyk, also fought in the US Army. Many of them were killed, for instance

- Matthew H. Biernacki – from New York state, the 1st Infantry Division, awarded the Purple Heart,
- Stephen Jaskulski – from Pennsylvania, the 70th Tank Battalion, awarded the Purple Heart,
- Edward Morozewicz – from New Jersey, the 1st Infantry Division, awarded the Purple Heart and the Silver Star,
- Joseph Zukowski – from New York state, Sergeant of the 1st Infantry Division, awarded the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star.



Major Winslow M. Sobanski (American Air Museum in Britain)

All of them were buried in the American Military Cemetery in Colleville-sur-Mer in Normandy (Normandy American Cemetery).

American officer of Polish descent, Major Wacław Michał Sobański, aka Winslow Michael Sobański, also fell on the beaches of Normandy. He was born in New York, grew up in Warsaw, and came to the USA after the outbreak of World War II in 1941. He served in the USAF, and trained his skills in Great Britain, where he had the opportunity to fly alongside the airmen of the Polish Armed Forces. On 15 April 1944, he became commander of the American 334th Fighter Squadron, and on 1 June 1944, was promoted to the rank of major. Five days after his promotion, he took part in D-Day. During the heroic fight against German planes, he was shot down and literally crashed into a train car. The remains of Major Wacław M. Sobański were laid to rest in Belgium at the American War Cemetery in Neupre, Ardennes. He was awarded the Air Medal, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Purple Heart, and other honours.

World War II was the most tragic military conflict in the history of the world. Many millions of soldiers had to fight to defeat the Third Reich and its allies. The US Army made a huge contribution to the victory over the aggressors. US Army uniforms were also worn by soldiers of Polish origin who were fighting for world peace and the independence of Poland. The end of hostilities in 1945 opened a new chapter in world history, in which Poland was not a sovereign state. This period is known as the Cold War.

Armed conflicts of the Cold War

The end of World War II resulted in a divided world. Some countries, including Poland, fell under the influence of the Soviet Union. Once again in their history, Poles had to make effort to win back the sovereignty of their homeland, and again counted on the help of the United States, which became the most important country in the world after 1945.

The United States and the Soviet Union were states with different systems. The former was a democracy, where human rights were respected, the latter a totalitarian regime, where the rule of law was not observed. This division led to the Cold War, which lasted from 1947 to 1991. On one side of the conflict were the countries of the so-called Eastern Bloc, dominated by the Soviet Union, and on the other side the so-called Western Bloc, the non-communist countries led by the United States. The Cold War was characterised by an arms race between the two military blocs, and a number of armed conflicts.

When Poland became dependent on the Soviet Union in 1945, Poles had to make the basic decision whether to live in a communist-ruled homeland or emigrate. Many chose the life abroad. Some of them joined the Polish Guard Companies established in the US Army in post-war Germany.

The formation of the Polish Guard Companies (Labor Service) began on 15 May 1945 in France and Germany, following an agreement between the Polish military authorities and the US command. In Germany, the guard companies were organised by the 7th United States Army in Heidelberg and the 3rd Army in Munich. The companies were joined by former prisoners of war (soldiers of the Polish Army and the Home Army), concentration camp inmates, forced labourers and political refugees.



Soldiers of Polish Guard Companies in Germany, 1946 (public domain)

The largest number of Polish Guard Companies was based in the Mannheim and Munich areas. The soldiers' duties included guarding military facilities, warehouses and storerooms, construction of new military buildings and protection of convoys of military supplies. The most difficult task was guarding German war criminals, Gestapo functionaries, SS and NSDAP leaders in camps and prisons, and escorting them to courthouses. In the 1950s, some of the guard units were transformed into specialised technical communication or transport formations.

In 1952, several soldiers of the Polish Guard Companies joined the US Army Special Forces, the so-called Green Berets, and trained in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Due to the presence of soldiers of the Polish Guard Companies, they were called the "Liberation Corps" because they were to work together in the defence of Western Europe against the Soviet invasion. They were prepared to carry out the most difficult combat missions, including parachuting behind enemy lines and conducting guerrilla warfare.

It is estimated that about 160,000 people went through the Polish Guard Companies in the years 1945–1990. They tried to win back the independence and sovereignty of their homeland by serving in

Francis Gabreski getting
on North American F-86 Sabre
(National Museum of
the United States Air Force)



the US Army. The political transformations of 1989 and the consequent restoration of Poland's independence ended their long and dedicated service.

The first major armed conflict after 1945 broke out on the Korean Peninsula between the communist forces of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, supported, among others, by the Soviet Union, and the Republic of Korea, whose allies included the United States. The Korean war lasted from 1950 to 1953.

The soldiers sent to the Korean Peninsula were not only Americans, as there were also Polish Americans there. One such soldier fighting in the Korean War was World War II veteran Francis S. "Gabby" Gabreski who shot down 6.5 enemy planes. He served in the US Air Force until 1967 and was the third pilot on the USAF Ace List. Several soldiers of Polish origin fell in Korea during the war, among them Felix P. Baginski (on 28 November 1950), Sergeant John S. Baczewski (16 May 1952), Corporal Joseph A. Janczak Jr. (26 March 1953), Richard J. Janowski (19 December 1952), Sergeant Adrian Kurowski (28 November 1950) and Edwin S. Goraj. The last man on this list was born on 31 December 1928 in Chicago, the son of Marek and Leokadia Goraj, who came from the Rzeszów area. During the Korean War, Private Edwin S. Goraj served as medical orderly in the 7th Cavalry Regiment of the 1st Cavalry Division. He was killed on 12 October 1951 while tending to wounded comrades south-east of Tosan, North Korea. He was awarded the Purple Heart and other decorations.

During the Korean War, several soldiers of Polish descent serving in the US Army were taken prisoner in Korea and never returned. This was the fate of, among others, Edward S. Florczyk, who was taken on the "Tiger Death March" and died in a cornfield near Manpo, North Korea, on 26 October 1950; Corporal Francis J. Krygowski, taken prisoner in battle near Hadong, South Korea, on 27 July 1950, and declared dead on 16 February 1954; Corporal Frank M. Malczewski, who was taken prisoner near Kunu-ri, North Korea, on 30 November 1950, and died in a camp on 31 March 1951.

Aleksander Sosnkowski, son of the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Armed Forces, Lieutenant General Kazimierz Sosnkowski, also



Private Edwin S. Goraj
(www.honorstates.org)

took part in the Korean War. At the end of World War II, he enlisted in the United States Army and served in the Air Force, taking part in air raids on Japan. After World War II, he settled in the USA and was mobilised again following the outbreak of the Korean War.

The next conflict in which the United States Army participated was the Vietnam War. Once again, the democratic and communist worlds clashed. The war lasted from 1 November 1955 to 30 April 1975. This was another time when soldiers of Polish descent fought

in the ranks of the US Army. The most famous of them was Donald Kutyna. He was born on 6 December 1933 into a family of Polish emigrants from the Podkarpacie region. He graduated from the famous military school at West Point and then began his service in the US Air Force. During the Vietnam War, he flew 120 missions over North and South Vietnam. He decorated his F-105 Thunderchief with the Polish national emblem painted under the cockpit, and he added a large inscription "Polish Glider" in white paint on the engine air intakes. He reached the rank of general in the US Army.

Another important person that fought in the Vietnam War was World War II veteran Albin F. Irzyk. He was the commander of the Saigon area. His greatest achievement was saving the South Vietnamese capital during the Tết Offensive in 1968.

Among those fallen in the Vietnam War were Staff Sergeant Alfons A. Bankowski (23 March 1961), Staff Sergeant Walter A. Cichon (30 March 1968), Staff Sergeant Raymond G. Czerwiec (27 March 1969), Daniel E. Jurecko (8 May 1968), Captain Albin E. Lucki (23 April 1970), Leonard J. Lewandowski (19 October 1966), Captain Alan P. Mateja (16 April 1972), Lieutenant Richard J. Solczyk (27 December 1967), and

Major Frederick J. Wozniak (17 January 1967).

The last one of these was born on 11 June 1941, and came from Michigan. He served in the 11th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron. On 17 January 1967, Wozniak's aircraft was downed and his remains were never found. For his service in the United States Army, Major Wozniak was honoured with many decorations, including the Air Medal, the Purple Heart, and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal. His name is on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., and in the Courts of the Missing at the Honolulu Memorial, alongside the names of many other American soldiers fallen and declared missing in the 20th century wars.

The end of World War II in 1945 did not bring about world peace. The second half of the 20th century was marked by the Cold War between the democratic and communist worlds. This division led to conflicts on the Korean and Indochina Peninsulas, among other places. The American army took part in these conflicts, and the soldiers of Polish origin serving in its ranks fought against communism, with the aim of restoring Polish sovereignty. This goal was achieved in 1989.



Lieutenant Richard John Solczyk – fell on 27 December 1967 in Biên Hòa in South Vietnam (INR)

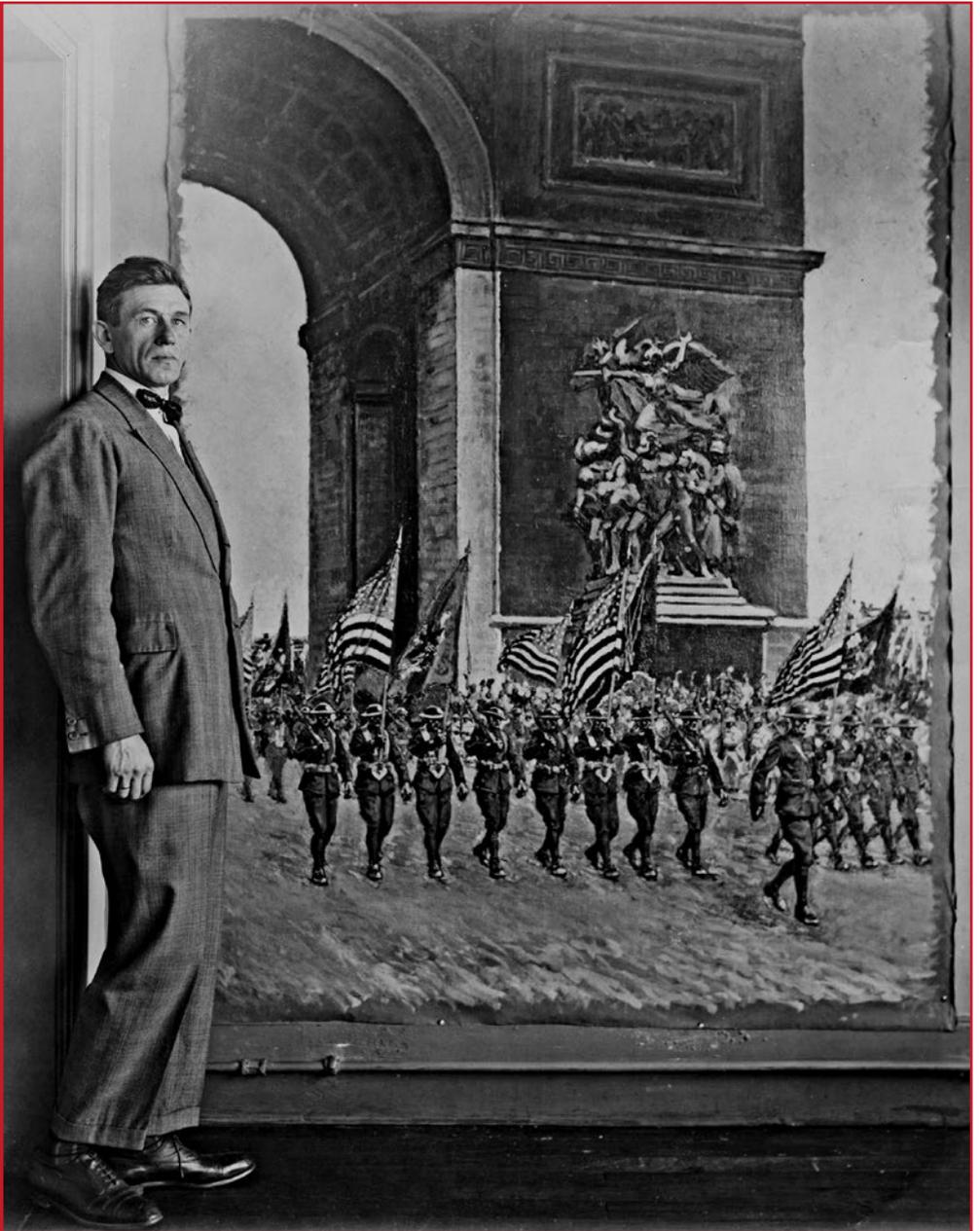
Epilogue

In 1927, the Académie de la Grande Chaumière in Paris exhibited the painting *World War I Victory Parade at the Arc de Triomphe* by Leon Wróblewski. This work depicts American soldiers from the times of World War I marching under the famous Arc de Triomphe in Paris. The author was a painter and graphic artist. He studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Berlin and at the above-mentioned academy in Paris, and was taught by Wojciech Kossak, an outstanding master. Leon Wróblewski fought in the victorious Greater Poland Uprising of 1918–1919.

Leon Wróblewski's painting *World War I Victory Parade at the Arc de Triomphe* is one of the symbols of the Polish-American military traditions. It was painted by a Polish soldier and depicts soldiers of the United States Army during World War I, when Poles were fighting for the independence of their country, and the French Arc de Triomphe symbolises here more than victory. France was an important country in Polish-American relations. On French soil, the Polish military units were established in the 20th century, and from France, Poles and Americans began their military paths for freedom in the last century.

Another important symbol of Polish-American military traditions is the monument to American pilots at the Cemetery of the Defenders of Lviv, which after 1945 found itself in the borders of the Soviet Union. In 1971, Soviet tanks destroyed this Cemetery, including the monument unveiled in 1925 which commemorated the airmen from the 7th Tadeusz Kościuszko Air Escadrille, the so-called Kościuszko Squadron. The combat vehicles crushing the graves of the fallen were to erase the memory of the Polish and American soldiers' heroism. They failed, and the memory survived. The monument was rebuilt after Poland regained its sovereignty.

The culmination of joint Polish-American military efforts for freedom and sovereignty in the 20th century was the signing of the Act of



Painting *World War I Victory Parade at the Arc de Triomphe* and its author Leon Wróblewski (NDA)

Accession of Poland to the North Atlantic Treaty on 12 March 1999. As the Republic of Poland became one of the members of the NATO, its security was guaranteed and Polish-American military cooperation strengthened. In this way, the 13th point of the peace terms outlined on 8 January 1918 by US President Thomas Woodrow Wilson was fulfilled. It read:

‘An independent Polish state should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea, and whose political and economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenant.’



Crowd gathered around the monument to Thomas Woodrow Wilson being unveiled in Poznań, 1931 (NDA)

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Table of contents

Introduction	5
1. Polish community in the United States in the 20th century	8
2. Military efforts of Americans and the Polish community in the United States for the independence of Poland	12
3. Poland and the USA between the wars	20
4. American military aid for Poland in World War II	28
5. Brotherhood-in-arms on the war fronts	34
6. Armed conflicts of the Cold War	40
Epilogue	46
Bibliography	49

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Cover photo: The Castle Guards with the flags of the United States
against the background of the Royal Castle in Warsaw, 23 August 1939 (NDA)

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