

# Institute of National Remembrance

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## On 11 November Poland celebrates the National Independence Day

11 November 2023, marks 105 years since Poland regained its independence



On 11 November 1918, after 123 years, Poland regained its independence. Alongside diplomatic activities, Józef Piłsudski's armed action, undeniably, played a significant role in the process of the

struggle and the reconstruction of Polish statehood. Through his steadfast attitude towards all three partitioners, Piłsudski won the trust and respect of both the general public and numerous political circles. That is why the Regency Council, appointed by Germany and Austria-Hungary, decided to transfer its authority and supreme command over the Polish Army to him.

Until then, the Regents knew that their political role was coming to an end and they were trying to form a government with the widest possible social support. An important aspect was also the certainty that elections to the Sejm would be held as soon as possible. On 10 November 1918, Józef Piłsudski, who had previously been imprisoned in the Magdeburg fortress, came to the capital of the reviving Poland by a special train from Berlin. Thus, discussions on finding the right person who would win the support of Poles and try to achieve the above goals, came to an end.

On 11 November 1918, Germany signed the Armistice putting an end to the war operations of World War I. The Regency Council was resolved three days later, passing all of its authority and power over the Kingdom of Poland to Józef Piłsudski. Thanks to his unquestionable authority, most of the Polish pro-independence centres submitted to his will. Piłsudski took command of the emerging Polish Army on November 11 – the day that went down in history as the day Poland regained independence.

**On 16 November Józef Piłsudski notified the states of the world, both those which fought in WWI as well as the neutral**

**states, about the creation of the independent Polish State.** The note was dispatched in the nick of time as preparations for the peace conference ending the war were already underway. The presence of Polish State representatives at the conference was indispensable to ensure that the borders of the reborn state would be drawn in a way that benefited Poland.

**Józef Piłsudski's note of the creation of an independent Polish State:**

*To the President of the United States, Her Majesty's Government, The Government of the French Republic, The Government of the Kingdom of Italy, The Government of the Empire of Japan, The Government of the German Republic and Governments of all belligerent and neutral States*

*As the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army, I hereby notify belligerent and neutral governments and nations of the existence of an Independent Polish State within all the territories of the united Poland. The political situation in Poland and the yoke of the occupation have so far made it impossible for the Polish nation to speak freely about their fate. Thanks to the changes caused by the great victories of the allied armies, the restoration of Poland's independence and sovereignty has now become a fact.*

*The Polish State is formed upon the will of the whole nation and based on democratic foundations. The Polish Government will replace the rule of violence that hung over the country for a hundred and forty years with a system built on order and justice. Relying on the Polish Army under my command, I believe that no foreign army will from now on enter Poland before we express our formal stance on the case. I am convinced that the powerful Western democracies will offer help and brotherly support to the reborn and independent Republic of Poland.*

*Commander-in-Chief Piłsudski*

*In the name of the Minister of External Affairs Filipowicz*

*Warsaw, 16 November 1918*

November 1918 was merely the beginning of the process of building a strong and independent Poland and the fight for the shape of its borders. This was well understood by Józef Piłsudski, who later said that "a long-term lack of sovereignty had inhibited our development in many ways [...]. So now all of the citizens of free Poland must use the time of peace and make a special effort, in order to catch up with the world and stand as equals in this great family of free nations. "

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