

POLAND IN THE HEART OF EUROPEAN HISTORY

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OUR MAIN ANNIVERSARIES

The Eighteenth Decisive Battle of the World - The Battle of Warsaw - August 13-25, 1920:

The Polish-Soviet war of 1919-1920 was the biggest challenge for the newly reborn Poland. The year 1920 was a breakthrough in this conflict. In April 1920, the Chief of State Marshal Józef Piłsudski signed a military alliance with Symon Petliura, the Supreme Ataman of the Ukrainian People's Republic. Soon after, the Polish Army launched an offensive against the Red Army in Ukraine and Belarus. Unfortunately, in June 1920, the Soviets launched a successful counter-offensive. As a result, the front line moved near to Warsaw and Lviv. The decisive battle near Warsaw took place on August 13-25. Thanks to the appropriate plans and actions of the commanders, mainly Józef Piłsudski and Generals Tadeusz Rozwadowski and Władysław Sikorski, and the courage of Polish soldiers, the Red Army was defeated. Thanks to this victory, the march of the Soviets to the West of Europe was stopped. The British diplomat Edgar Vincent, 1st Viscount D'Abernon, regards this event as one of the most important battles in World's history.

Katyń Massacre - April 3 - May 12, 1940:

After the outbreak of World War II, Poland became a victim of the aggression of two neighboring totalitarian states. Third Reich and Soviet Russia. After the heroic defense of the country, many Polish officers were taken to Soviet captivity. Many of them were not professional officers but representatives of the Polish elites, mobilized to the Polish Army. Together with them, the Soviets took Polish policemen to POW camps. March 5, 1940 the Soviet authorities, headed by Stalin, decided to murder most of Polish POWs. Officers and policemen were murdered in Katyń, Kharkiv, Miednoje and Bykownia near Kiev. The number of victims of the massacre was about 22,000. The Soviets killed them with a shot in the back of the head. For three years their fate was unknown. In the spring of 1943, the Germans revealed that they had found mass graves of murdered Polish officers in Katyń. Their investigation found the Soviets responsibility for this crime. During the Cold War the USSR denied that his special secret police massacred Polish POW. The truth about this crime was banned in the communist countries. In the Polish People's Republic people mentioning about Katyń "met" with numerous unpleasant events and repressions from the authorities. The truth about this crime was revealed only after the fall of communism and political transformation in Eastern Europe in 1989-1991. There are reasonable suspicions that the Katyń massacre was Stalin's revenge for the defeat of Soviet Russia in the war with Poland in 1920.

Other important anniversaries

Poland's Wedding to the Sea - February 10, 1920:

It was a ceremony symbolizing the recovery of Poland's access to the Baltic Sea. Access to the sea was lost as a result of the Partitions of Poland in 1772 and 1793. The wedding ceremony was performed by General Józef Haller in the city of Puck. Wojciech Kossak immortalized this wonderful event in his painting.

Pope's birth - May 18, 1920:

On May 18, 1920 Karol Wojtyła was born in Wadowice. Nobody expected that in 1978 he would become 264 Pope.

December 1970 - Polish protests and bloody crime committed by communist authorities - December 14-22, 1970:

At the beginning of December 1970, Polish workers protested against the rise in meat prices. Strikes and protests took place in the voivodships on the Coast. The strikes were suppressed by the Polish People's Army and the Citizens' Militia. At the order of the communist authorities, soldiers and militiamen used firearms. As a result of the massacres dozens of unarmed citizens lost their lives and almost a thousand were wounded. The events on the Coast led to the resignation of Władysław Gomułka from the function in the government of the Polish People's Republic.

Establishment of Independent Self-governing Labour Union "Solidarity" - August 1980.

In the last decades of the existence of the Polish People's Republic, the civic movement seeking change in the state has grown in strength. The establishment of Free Trade Unions by Andrzej Gwiazda and Krzysztof Wyszowski in 1978 and the visit of Pope John Paul II the following year were very important events. Especially the last event strengthened the courage of Poles who wanted change. On August 14, 1980, a strike broke out at the Gdańsk Shipyard. This was due to the unlawful dismissal of oppositionist Anna Walentynowicz and the decision of the communist authorities to increase meat prices. On August 17, the Inter-Enterprise Strike Committee presented 21 Demands to the authorities. They were difficult for the authorities to accept, because many of them concerned political issues: workers demanded the right to have their own representation in the state or the right to strike. Others were related to the economy and social issues. Striking factories also became a space of freedom in the communist state: they organized performances of independent culture, concerts, historical lectures, and Holy Masses. In addition to the well-known figure such as Lech Wałęsa, it is worth mentioning 21-year-old leader of the strike in Gdynia Shipyard Andrzej Kołodziej and Alina Pieńkowska, a nurse from the Shipyard, who at the time of the collapse of the strike in Gdańsk Shipyard stopped the workers to continue on strike. Thanks to such people, on August 30 and 31 and September 3 and 11, 1980, the authorities signed agreements with workers, guaranteeing the implementation of their demands. In a short time protests and strikes broke out in other workplaces in other regions of Poland. There, the

communist authorities also signed agreements with the strikers. It was a great victory of Polish society in resistance against the communist authorities and the beginning of the history of "Solidarity".