

POLISH INDEPENDENCE DAY – SPEECH

Distinguished guests,

Exactly 102 years ago, on the 11th of November 11, 1918, the Regency Council created two years before by German and Austro-Hungarian Empire occupation authorities to rule the so-called Polish Kingdom, handed over its military power to Józef Piłsudski. At that time, the famous Polish independence fighter, had just returned from more than one year captivity in Magdeburg, in Germany. On the same day, Germany signed the armistice – the World War I has ended and Poland, after 123 years of partition began the process of regaining its independence.

The end of the first global conflict – the so-called “Great War” – for most Europeans is a remembrance of mass destruction and suffering on a previously unknown scale, but also of the collapse of a long – standing European order. For many it was just a tragic end of the “beautiful nineteenth century”. In the Polish collective memory however, as for other countries in the region, the outbreak of World War I is not the beginning of a tragedy, but a harbinger of freedom regained 4 years later.

Polish long-lasting political friendships are linked with this special moment - the regaining of our independence. It is since World War I, that Poles recognize the English and the French as allied nations. It is also since then, that as a nation, we have stood for a strong American presence in Europe. This perception survived, even if some pointed out that the position taken by those countries during World War II did not prevent Poland from becoming dependent on the Soviet Union for half a century.

Let us remember that already 100 years ago among emerging Polish political elites the thinking in terms of a broader, Central European Union, was strong. Although a plan for forming a military alliance with Ukrainians and Belarusians, wanting to liberate themselves from Russian dominion had not come to fruition as a result of the Red Army offensive. However, the echo of those ideas is still present in Polish politics to this day. It is this fact which can explain Polish enthusiasm for our membership in the European Union. It also explains our support for the further enlargement of the Union towards Western Europe - Ukraine, Moldova or Georgia.

The Second Republic of Poland – despite many flaws and imperfections - restored Poles' pride. We all remember such symbols of independence as the port in Gdynia - since 1934 the largest port in the Baltic. We remember the Polish state railway of that period, known for its legendary punctuality to such an extent, that it was possible to adjust the watches according to its time-schedule or almost the lightning-fast speed with which the Central Industrial District was created. During this period Władysław Reymont received the fourth Nobel Prize for Poland (and the second, after H. Sienkiewicz, for literature), and it was then that comedies that still entertain us today were being created, such as "Everyone is allowed to love" or "Is Lucy a girl?". Finally, it was then, despite all the problems and adversities, that the pro-state intellectual elite was formed, which, although strongly weakened as a result of the German and Soviet crimes of World War II and discrimination of the communist period, has survived until this days, in the ethos passed on to their descendants.

Distinguished guests,

It is a great joy to have the possibility to celebrate the 102nd anniversary of Polish regained independence with You. The more so, because we are doing it in such a limited group, due to the fact that the coronavirus pandemic is gaining its momentum once again. Although the times in which we live are complicated, and for many of us - simply difficult, on the Polish National Day, let us remember, what we have achieved through our collective effort as a nation over the past 100 years. And about our friends and allies!

Thank you for coming!