

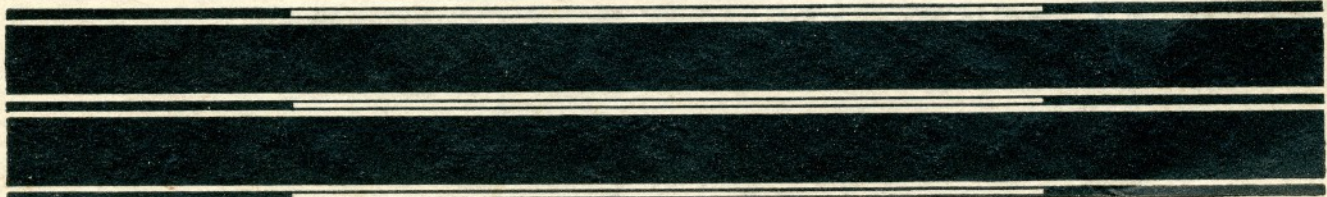


IN MEMORIAM  
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THE ROTARY CLUBS-POLAND



IN MEMORIAM  
JÓZEF PIŁSUDSKI

† 12. V. 1935.



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## Dear Rotarians,

upon the death of Joseph Piłsudski, First Marshal of Poland, the Polish Rotary Clubs received such cordial words of sympathy from Clubs of other countries that, in order to show our appreciation and at the same time to pay homage to the immortal memory of our Hero, we have decided to present to our Friends from abroad in a brief outline the personality of this Great Man and Propagator of Peace among Nations.

In this way we shall undoubtedly render a good service to Rotary ideals and above all to the principle of the devotion of the individual for the common weal, to which idea the Marshal gave his whole life.

Attached you will find a few short extracts from his writings, speeches and orders which characterise the different periods of his life and thought. They are of course far from giving a complete and comprehensive picture because the legacy of thought and moral ideas left to Poland by her National Hero far surpasses any, even the highest, level of literary expression for it is a reality which has taken root in Poland's soil and nation. — That which the prophetic poets, Mickiewicz, Słowacki, and Wyspiański, dreamed of in their inspired poetic visions was made real, with the power of genius, by Piłsudski's action. He was carried to his grave with royal honours by the whole nation; but even this symbol was unable to express sufficiently what moved the nation to the depth of its innermost soul: that implacable death had bereft all the Poles of one who was truly the father of his country.

Joseph Piłsudski came from an old noble family of soldiers and

leaders. He is rightly considered the inheritor of the last Polish Rising against the Russian oppressor in 1863. After the sanguinary crushing of this Rising a period of Polish history was closed, a period of immense sacrifices. The great Marshal was destined to open up a new course of Poland's destinies in the contemporary history of the world.

It is difficult to render justice to this great personality without first becoming acquainted with the connection existing between him, and the immense effort of the will of the nation and its tragic defeat in the unequal struggle of 1863. The struggle, however, was not in vain, because the future Marshal and Leader of the Poles drew from it the lesson for organising the national strength and preparing the building-up of the Polish state.

Piłsudski's lifelong activity as soldier, statesman, writer, thinker, tutor, and leader of the nation is even in its external results truly monumental. The work of his life almost from his earliest youth to his death was conducted and executed with astounding logic and realisation of the ultimate purpose.

His deep spiritual ability to grasp historical connections and causes, and his capability of choosing the proper means for creating historic facts, is a proof of his creative power. His complete devotion to the service of his country and state and the purity of his great heart give his figure a singular moral greatness. But the great Marshal earned for himself a deep human sympathy, also outside his own nation, not only because of the great charm of his personality as a friend of the people, a comrade-at-arms and the father of a family. He is universally appreciated for such traits of character as are found only in great minds and at the same time because of the masterpiece which he created from his own life.

We are convinced that Joseph Piłsudski as the leader of his nation brought to European culture new spiritual and moral values.

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EXCERPTS FROM THE "WRITINGS, SPEECHES AND ORDERS"  
OF MARSHAL J. PIŁSUDSKI

The Boy. (1867—1884).

It was in a country manor-house in Lithuania, some ten years after the Rising. The impression left after the rule of Muraviev, "The Hangman", was still so fresh that people trembled at the very sight of an official's uniform, and their faces contracted when a bell rang in the air announcing the arrival of some representative of Muscovite authority. It was at that time that my mother would sometimes draw, from a hiding-place known only to her, some books which she would read teaching us children certain passages until we knew them by heart. These were the works of our inspired poets. The mysteriousness with which these moments were enveloped, my mother's emotion which infected her small listeners, the change of scenes which followed at the moment when some undesirable witness happened to find us at our family conspiracies, all that left an indelible imprint on our minds.

The Mother.

When I am at a loss to know what to do, when everybody is against me, when a storm of indignation and accusations breaks out around me, when even circumstances seem to be working against my plans — then I ask myself what my mother would have liked me to do, what would have been her advice and I act as I think she would have counselled, with no consideration for anything else...

Wiktor — Mieczysław. The Socialist. 1895.

I realised then that socialism is not only an idea of noble-minded people who dream of making mankind happy, but that it becomes the real necessity of the immense masses of the working people at the moment when cultural and social development enables them to realise the principles of this idea. And when I pondered over the nation with which I was bound by everything that gives joy and by everything that gives pain, by everything in me that thinks and by everything that feels, I realised more and more clearly that the dreams and visions of my childhood were welding themselves with my conception of life in adolescence. A socialist in Poland must aim at the independence of the country, and independence is a characteristic condition of socialism in Poland.

The Revolutionist. 1905.

It is imperative that contempt of sudden and unexpected death for higher aims be again introduced into the spiritual consciousness of the nation!

...Nobody will consent to die for a twopenny increase of wages... People must be given an aim, worthy of sacrifice! We want an independent Poland that we might there arrange a better and more just life for all!...

Things don't just happen! Independence can be achieved neither by prayers nor speechifying nor bargaining: one must be ready to pay for it by a sacrifice of blood!...

### Preparation of the Army. 1910.

We are ideal pacifists. It is true that half a million of us incessantly serve in the army, and that well over a million will fight in the armies of our oppressors in case a war breaks out, but this somehow is no great concern of ours. When in a Polish family a son is taken to the army, he at once becomes a foreign, cut-off member. Everywhere people take pride in their soldiers, with us they are ashamed of soldiers...

In order that the nation may shake off these aversions it must create its own army, it must have its own soldiers, its loved defenders and protectors... If we do not create such an army and do not take part in the future war of Austria against Russia, we shall for a long time, perhaps for ever, erase our name from among the living nations. People will cease to reckon with us in Europe... Our neighbours will destroy us, tear from us our land and reduce us to everlasting servitude...

### Order of the Commander. August 6-th, 1914.

Soldiers! The unspeakable honour has befallen you that you will be the first to march into the Kingdom and cross the frontier of the Russian sector, as the foremost column of the Polish Army to fight for the deliverance of our Country. You are all common soldiers. I do not appoint officers, I only order the more experienced among you to fulfil the duties of leaders. Commissions you will acquire in battle. Everyone of you may become officer, and every officer may again descend to the rank of private, which should never happen. I look on you as on the cadres out of which the future Polish Army is to develop and I salute you as the First Cadre Company!

### From the Order of January 3-rd, 1915.

Five months of sanguinary and hard work have given us the reputation of first-rate troops.

### From the Order of August 6-th.

A year has passed. You have developed into a type of soldiers hitherto unknown to Poland. It is not daring, nor soldierly boastfulness that form our most essential characteristic, but that remarkable calm and poise in our work, regardless of adversities!

### From the Order of June 6-th, 1916.

Whether after us will remain only the brief tears of women and the long, nightly conversations of our countrymen — the future will show. At present we have to defend a treasure which we have indisputably won. In hard battles, with sanguinary sacrifices the soldiers of all the brigades have wrested from the relentless Fates what we did not yet have when marching into the war — the Honour of the Polish Soldier!

July. 1917.

Then I had nothing to gain, except my own death. For a moment I hesitated whether not to start action with arms in hand. I decided, however, that at that time the moment was not yet appropriate, that the fight was hopeless for which the whole of society must later assume responsibility. For a moment I thought whether not to adopt the following method: in the Austrian Occupation I thought of seizing Dęblin with arms in hand and of holding it till the time when new negotiations could be forced. The absence of my most reliable regiments from the vicinity of Dęblin caused me to abandon this plan. I took the decision of going to Russia and I had even prepared my way. But here again I was stopped by my honour as Commander. It was then that I wrote a letter to Bessler, stating that I wished to share the fate of my interned soldiers...

1918/19.

...When my foot rested once more on Polish soil and when Fate entrusted to my hands the helm of the Polish ship of state, I decided at once to try and excel all others in Central and Eastern Europe in the work of building up the state amidst general chaos. And there was need for haste not only out of consideration for Poland's neighbours. At home there was enough chaos — I was simply overwhelmed by it.

...I was proud in the beginning of February 1919 when, having overcome a thousand obstacles and a strong internal resistance, I could place my powers in the hands of the first Parliament of re-born Poland.

After December 1922 and before May 1926.

Night over Poland.

The Polish soul must mature and subdue itself... This is a slow process! We have to arm ourselves with patience... There must be an improvement of our morals, bought at the price of difficult experiences... There is no other way! No sermon, even the most ardent, no reasoning, even the wisest, not even the severest prohibitions will attain this purpose... If only our external enemies would allow us to live through that instructive period in peace...

The night of May 12-th and 13-th, 1926.

I cannot speak long. I am very tired both physically and morally because, being opposed to the use of violence, which I proved during my term of office as Chief of State, I decided after a hard struggle with myself to use force with all its consequences.

During all my life I have fought for the proper meaning of what are called imponderables, such as Honour, Virtue, Valour, and in general the inner forces of man, and not for the care of my own advantages or for the gains of those closely surrounding me.

There cannot be in a state too much injustice towards those who give their toil for others, there cannot be in a state — when it does not want to head for ruin — too much iniquity.

### The Dictator of Hearts.

In this way I certainly disappointed many hopes placed in me when I renounced the form, which seems so easy when one shouts about it, of the dictatorship of one man. I did this, however, with full consideration and conscious decision, in spite of the fact that I have confidence in my strength and my internal value. And I did it in order that people with us in Poland might leave off the custom of calmly throwing everything on one man, giving him after this only reluctant help, without giving the daily genuine work of a great number of people, indispensable for reforming the habits so strongly criticised — incidentally — in the whole state machinery.

For the integrity of the frontiers and the independence of the Polish State I am responsible before the thousands of soldiers who fell at my command for their acquisition. Therefore in case the existence of the Republic were in danger I shall defend her at any price, above all from external enemies...

As to internal affairs, I think, that the Poles should themselves learn how to run their own government because I am not everlasting and cannot do everything myself.

### The Commander's Last Letter to His Legionaries. Pikieliszki, August 4-th, 1933.

Dear Friends,

being unable to attend your Convention in Warsaw — I am writing this letter.

When I now sit on the banks of this beautiful lake near Wilno and listen to the murmur of the softly splashing waves, I live again, in my mind, through the history of my stormy past, full of adventures. Then I repeat the wonderful words of the poet:

For when I dig in the ashes of my Country  
And then again put my hands on my heart,  
Such beautiful phantoms arise before me from the graves,  
So transparent, fresh, vivid, young,  
That I could not really weep for them.

And most often there are passing through my head these moments of horror and of tension of mind, of which we have so many, many behind us.

Moments when our hearts almost broke from pain und fatigue and when our foreheads were bedewed not only with sweat, but often with blood — and I had to encourage you to endurance and perseverance. Undoubtedly they belonged to the period of "Our Country in Ashes"; and therefore they are "beautiful", this our work and our endurance.

And — by a strange coincidence — at the same time when I recall the moments of horror — I see in the blue waves of the lake the eyes — so dear to me and so sincerely beloved — of a child full of enchantment and full of curiosity.

And I always think that to live as I lived — was worth while. — It was well worth while to overcome this pain and fatigue, as I overcame it.

*Józef Piłsudski.*

Pikieliszki, August 4-th, 1933.



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