



ONE POLISH MOTHER

by Henry Archacki

Mothers will have their Day this coming Sunday ... Most certainly one day devoted to the attention and thought of one's mother is not enough! Most every day some thought or act should be devoted to the one person that brought us into this world and then step-by-step taught us how to live in it! Even an only child receives about twenty years of a mother's close love and attention - and once away from the family nest, mother seems to the one who is patiently waiting for news from her offspring. Your life continues to be her life. Your children become her joy and pride!

This, of course, is the natural role of a mother. It seems to be a passive one fraught with daily cares and woes. Nothing dramatic or earth moving. But the role of a mother



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Maria Piłsudska - Mother of Józef Piłsudski.

can become courageous and dramatic when the family circle is threatened or in a larger sense a community or even a country suffer some form of disaster.

The Polish nation could not have survived through the long generations of dismemberment were it not for the Polish Mother. It was she who raised the sons who in turn gave their lives for the land of their birth. It was she who instilled the patriotism in the youthful breast. It was She who taught her children Polish under the pain of reprisal by occupying powers intent upon eradicating all that was Polish ... Those of us who still cherish our Polish background invariably can trace that inborn trait to our mothers.

Perhaps the greatest tribute to a Polish Mother, which in a sense symbolizes a national tribute, was demonstrated by Marshal Józef Piłsudski who asked in his last will and testament that his heart be buried at the foot of his mother's grave.

Piłsudski's mother Maria (Billewiczówna) was a fine looking woman and young Józef inherited her features and his father's mustache. He also inherited her love of country and the deep hatred for the Muscovite oppressor. Her love of country overcame her fear of the oppressor and out of the hiding places would come out the forbidden Polish books which Maria would read to her sons Bronisław and Józef. Józef Piłsudski was the second son born in 1867 and he was named after his father who took part in the unsuccessful Uprising of 1863, being an area commissioner of the National Liberation Movement.

The Uprising of 1863 and its brutal aftermath was fresh in the minds in the Piłsudski home. The father had to walk a tight rope to keep the authorities from sending him to Siberia. So it was left to the mother to raise her sons in the Polish spirit.

Years later Bronisław was to write in his memoirs the following words: "I teraz jeszcze tkwi mi, w pamięci psalm: 'Będzie Polska w imię Pana...'"

Józef Piłsudski also was to write of his mother the following poignant phrase: "nie starała się nawet ukrywać przed nami bólu i zawodów z powodu upadku powstania, owszem, wychowała nas, robiąc właśnie nacisk na konieczność dalszej walki z wrogiem ojczyzny."

Piłsudski's mother died young, barely 42. Józef was only 14 then. The tragic fire that burned down the family manor and all the family estate buildings in Zułów in 1874 placed an additional burden upon the mother. The family had to move to Wilno and there tried to pick up the threads of their ruined fortunes. There Maria Piłsudska died in 1884.

Fifty years later the heart of her son, by his will, was to join her in eternity. A son who had realized her dreams by winning back the independence of their cherished homeland - POLAND.