

Marshal Josef Pilsudski as I Knew Him

ARTICLE III.

BY ANTHONY CZARNECKI.

Pilsudski in November, 1918, was released from his prison in the Magdenburg fortress and Nov. 10 he appeared in Warsaw. Here the council of the Polish state, which the German imperial command had created, submitted its resignation to Pilsudski, as did also the government of Daszynski in Lublin.

On Nov. 18, 1918, a new government was formed with Andrew Moraczewski at the head of the cabinet. Ten days later Pilsudski issued a decree calling for an election throughout the new republic of Poland for seats in the new Polish law-making body, the sejm, for Jan. 26, 1919.

The opening and first session of the sejm took place Feb. 10, 1919. Pilsudski opened the proceedings and read his message. On Feb. 20, at the third session of this national assembly, he offered his resignation as chief of state or marshal, but unanimously the assembly voted to continue to entrust this place to him.

Defeat of Bolsheviks.

Pilsudski at once began to organize the Polish army, believing that the safety of the new republic required it. It was in March of 1920 that the Polish army, in recognition of the great services of their commander in chief, offered Pilsudski the post of first marshal of the Polish fighting forces.

It was in 1920 that the now historical bolshevik invasion in Poland was made and repelled by the Polish forces under Pilsudski. During

this struggle a number of American aviators who had served in the world war volunteered and fought with the Polish forces against the bolsheviks.

The victory over the bolsheviks was heralded throughout the world as the saving of Europe's civilization, of as great importance as the checking of the Moslem forces by King John III Sobieski several centuries ago at Vienna, when Christianity was in danger.

In 1921 the wife of the marshal, for years his inseparable companion in his dangerous work, died. In 1922 Pilsudski married a close friend of his deceased wife, Mrs. Alexandra Szczersinska, a widow, who too had been for years an active worker in the secret fight for Poland's freedom and independence. She is the mother of two daughters by her former marriage and she survives the marshal.

Eager to Visit U. S.

During the preworld war activities the secret organizations which Pilsudski formed and directed extended beyond Poland and had contacts wherever there were people of Polish descent who wished the land of their fathers to be free and independent.

Although Pilsudski never visited the United States, it was one of his wishes that he might do so. He knew the history of our country, he knew our institutions, our ideals and our constitution. He admired our great men, our Washington and Lincoln. He revered the memory of Woodrow Wilson and was a friend and admirer of Herbert Hoover,

whom he met in Warsaw after the resurrection of Poland and when Hoover visited that country in connection with relief administration work.

He respected all religions and was a close friend and confidant of the present pope, who during the world war and during the formative days of the new republic was the papal nuncio, Monsignore Ratti, in Warsaw.

Had Varied Friendships.

It was my privilege to visit Pilsudski repeatedly at the Belvedere palace in Warsaw and to become well acquainted with him. There were functions at which the marshal of Poland was present in those days of 1919 when it was my good fortune to be with him and the present Roman pontiff, Hoover, Gen. Kernan, who headed the American mission, and our American representative to Poland, Hugh Gibson, and upon other occasions. There were occasions when I went to see him with our American and other newspaper correspondents.

Pilsudski was chief of state from the forming of the republic until the election of the first president, Prof. Gabriel Narutowicz, into whose hands he placed the authority of that position Dec. 14, 1922. After the assassination of the first president Marshal Pilsudski be-

came chief of the general staff of the army.

When the crisis following the assassination passed Pilsudski withdrew from this position and went into retirement in a villa at Sulejewka, given to him by the Polish army. There he wrote some historical works.

Overthrow of Witos.

In the spring of 1926 the new republic of Poland under the government of Vincent Witos was facing its most serious crisis from within and it was then that Pilsudski emerged from his retirement and headed his faithful fighting men, going to Warsaw to demand the withdrawal of Witos from the government. After three days of siege Pilsudski entered and took Warsaw and caused the Witos government to resign. This resulted also in the resignation of the president, Stanislas Wojciechowski.

A new government was called by Pilsudski with Prof. Casimir Bartel at the head. At the same time he called together the national assembly which on May 31, 1926, proclaimed Pilsudski as president of the republic, an office which the marshal declined. Assembled again, the national body on June 1, 1926, named Ignace Moscicki, the incumbent, as president.

In the cabinet of Bartel, Pilsudski was named the premier and he remained as such until his death, at the same time having charge of all military and defense matters.

His final and greatest peace

achievement was the new constitution of Poland, which was adopted and made the law of the republic in April 23, 1935. He was proud of it and happy when he saw it put into effect. He considered this basic law the foundation upon which peace, progress and security of his country will safely rest for generations to come.

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