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# MEMORIAL

TO THE

PRESIDENT OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF  
AMERICA



K.O.N.

PILSUDSKI  
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CONVENTION OF THE COMMI-  
TTEE FOR POLISH NATIONAL  
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BUFFALO, N. Y.

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Your Excellency: —

The Committee for Polish National Defense, in convention assembled, in the city of Buffalo, State of New York, on July 4th, voted unanimously the presentation of the following memorial to you, Mr. President, as representative of the entire American nation. This memorial was adopted on the day of our great national fete, dedicated to the memory of those who, a hundred and thirty nine years ago, declared before the whole world that the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, should be the keystone of every race and nation.

These rights have become a palladium of every American citizen, a guaranty of personal and national safety, development and progress.

These noble principles became the topics of the deliberations of our Committee for Polish National Defense, not only on account of casual coincidence of events which caused our meeting day to fall on the day of Fourth of July.

The causes of our pondering over this immortal principles were much deeper and much more significant. The Committee for National Defense, pursuant to its aims, deliberated on ways and means how to assist that nation to which alien force for over a century barred the way to independent life, freedom, and happiness.

This nation is the Polish nation. It is one which at the end of the eighteenth century laid new foundations for the life of nations.

The American Declaration of Independence, the French Declaration of the Rights of Man, and Polish Manifesto announcing the Polish Revolution under Kosciuszko, began a new era for humanity.

These three nations, American, French, and Polish, several decades in advance of anybody else, laid plans for a new life, formed a type of the modern state, consisting of citizens peers, a state which, in place of government by force and privilege, by despotism and class, introduced the government of the people, for the people, and by the people. Pursuant to that high principle, the thirteen American states announced to the whole world, that: "when a long train of abuses and usurpations pursuing invariably the same object, convinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty to throw off such government and to provide a new guards for their future security", and the best guards for their future security the framers of the Declaration of Independence found to be the liberty and independence of their country.

And, although they were the lovers of peace, they began a rebellion in arms; although they appreciated and felt the ties of blood, they rose against their brethren of England; although they knew and appreciated the enormous power of England, they did not hesitate to oppose to its might their puny forces, "mutually pledging to each other lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor".



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They were not mistaken in their judgment and their foresight.

The present might, riches, and important position of the United States are the best proof that only national independence may create the conditions necessary for national development.

And, another proof of it is the comparison of the fate of those three nations which proclaimed the principles of modern statehood. The two great republics, France and America, enjoy to the full the fruits of their independence, and lead the entire humanity. The third nation, the republic of Poland, which, together with the other two, gave rise to modern political thought, lost its independence in the struggle with the three great powers of Europe, and thus fell to the utmost depths of poverty, destruction, and despair. And this happened to the people who for centuries had been devoted to progress, which tilled the soil which fed whole Europe, to the nation which was the only asylum for any and all persecuted for their political or religious convictions; the nation, which, with England, was the first to introduce parliamentary government; the nation which served as a mighty shield for western civilization against the inroads and attacks of the hordes of Asia; the nation, finally, which established the first ministry of public education in the world and adopted the first budget for public schools.

And yet, the brutal force of three despotic powers, taking advantage of the peaceful disposition of the Poles, and of the lack of permanent army to defend their extended borders introduced their despotic rule in Poland. These despoilers of Poland destroyed the guards of personal liberty, the right of habeas corpus, the right which Polish citizens had enjoyed for centuries, and in its stead introduced the rule of anarchy and despotism.

They abrogated the home rule of the people, depriving them of their rights of suffrage, and instead, introduced their venal and rapacious governors and officials.

They confiscated enormous properties which belonged to the whole people, and, with a robber's largesse, gave it away to their generals and commanders, as a reward for the subjugation and destruction of Poland.

They robbed the defenders of Poland of their respective patrimonies, and confiscated their land as a punishment for their love of their motherland.

They destroyed the economic welfare of the nation, as they did in the Prussian part of the dismembered Poland, by buying up Polish land with the proceeds of taxes collected from the Polish people themselves.

They forbade the Poles, in the Russian part of Poland, to even buy land in Poland, trying to transform the Polish nation into a land of landless beggars.

They forbade the Poles in the Prussian part

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of Poland, to even build houses on their own land, compelling them and their families to live without a roof over their heads, like gypsies or vagrants.

They deprived the Polish workmen of the possibility to earn their living in their own land, by importing alien and inimical men from afar, and giving them employment at public works, by giving over to them all the public offices and positions in Poland and compelling the sons of Poland to eternal migration across the lands and seas.

They abolished, in the Russian part of Poland, the freedom of religion, by compelling the Poles, by means of flogging, tortures, under threat of prison and banishment to Siberia, the adoption of the Russian orthodox faith.

They confiscated the Polish churches and schools, changing them into orthodox churches, military barracks, or jails.

They stole children from their parents, kidnapping them in the streets, and brought them up in the interior of Russia in soldier schools, educating them to be enemies of their own people.

They deprived the Polish people of their mother tongue, compelling them, in the Russian and Prussian section of Poland, to speak, in their own land, the language of their foes, in court, in office, and in schools, forbidding little children to say even their prayers in their mother tongue, forbidding any and all to speak Polish, even among themselves, while in public places.

They pronounced as treason, and punished as such, when a Pole spoke about Poland, when the Poles held council, or worked for themselves or their country.

They murdered hundreds of thousands of Polish patriots, hung them on the gallows, sentenced them to slow death in prisons and mines. They peopled the wild and barren tundras of Siberia with the best sons of Poland.

They executed without trial, hanging the Poles simply at the orders of a casual governor-general; in the twentieth century they introduced the tortures to compell alleged confessions, instituting for that purpose special quarters, special apparatus and specialist gaolers in the City Hall of Warsaw, in the very center of civilized Europe.

And now, battling among themselves, over the land of that Poland, which they had robbed more than a century ago, they compel the Polish population to murder each other while serving in the Russian, Prussian and Austrian troops, to bring fire and sword to their own land, and to perpetuate their own slavery. They have devastated and razed to the ground tens of thousands of Polish cities, towns, and villages, they have left eleven millions of inhabitants of Poland without a roof over their head, without even hope for the morrow.

The measure of slavery and suffering is certainly overflowing, and yet, the Polish people are not broken down — their spirit still lives.

By a glorious, though ill-fated chain of revol-



utions of 1794, 1806, 1809, 1830, 1833, 1848, 1863, and 1905, the people of Poland have borne testimony to their desire for independent life, to their determination to achieve their full national independence — the only guarantee of personal security and personal happiness.

And in the present war where three despoilers battle each other across the Polish land, unable to rise against all three foes, the Polish people struck out against their worst enemy, against the one who holds in his grasp three - fourths of the lands of olden Poland, against the one who poisoned the spirit of Poland with the servile treachery and despotism of the East, against the one who held the Polish people in physical and mental darkness, against despotic Russia went forth the Polish Legions under the leadership of the modern national hero of Poland, Joseph Pilsudski, against Russia arose the Supreme National Committee, the nucleus of the future government, of coming free and independent Poland.

The coming Congress of Peace, to be convened after the present war is over, will have to deliberate over the fate of the most unhappy Polish people. America will have to be represented at this Congress, and will have to take a stand and express its judgment in the matter. In the matter of this coming decision we appeal to all American citizens, laying into your hands, Mr. President, this memorial.

We all, as American citizens, gathered from all the States of the Union, most solemnly declare our readiness to sacrifice our lives in case an armed force attacks America, or attempts to assail, in any way, the organic laws and rights of the nation. At the same time, we hereby testify to our appreciation and approval of the words in which you, Mr. President, have described the character and guiding principles of the national conduct of the United States. Together with you, Mr. President, we deem, that, "we are the trustees for the greatest heritage that any nation ever had, the love of justice and righteousness and human liberty. For, fundamentally, those are the things to which America is addicted, and to which she is devoted". Together with you, Mr. President, we agree that the oath of allegiance of an American citizen is "an oath of allegiance to a great ideal, to a great body of principles, to a great hope of the human race".

These are the identical ideals which compelled the Poles under John Sobleski, in 1683, to go to the rescue of Vienna, beleagured by the Turks. There were no treaties, or agreements of any kind, which bound the Poles to do it, they had no interest of their own to serve in going to the assistance of Austria — that Austria which later took part in the partition of Poland.

Only the high conception of a duty to be performed, the duty to defend the western civilization against the barbarians of the East, only great expectation and desire of future peaceful development for

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nations of freemen, led the Poles in this memorable war.

In the name of the same ideals, thousands of Poles fought in the Polish legions which alongside the troops of the great French revolution, liberated Italy from foreign yoke while raising on high its battle flags with the slogan: "All freemen are brothers". In the name of the same ideals, the Polish revolutionists of 1830 went to battle with Russia carrying on their banners the inscription: "For our liberty and for yours"—thus testifying that any struggle for freedom is free of enmity and flows from a deeply understood love of humanity.

The same ideals made France to hear the voice of Freedom struggling with despotism in America, and made her hasten to its assistance, being the first power to recognize the independence of a new nation.

In the name of these same ideals, the Congress of the United States, on the 16th day of April, 1898, recognized that "the abhorrent conditions which had existed in the Island of Cuba have shocked the moral sense of the people of the United States, and that the people of the Island of Cuba are, and of a right ought to be, free and independent". It is in the defence of these ideals that the American Congress recognized that "it is the duty of the United States to demand that the government of Spain at once relinquish its authority and government in the Island of Cuba, and withdraw its land and naval forces from Cuba and Cuban waters".

And to support with deeds those high ideals, the American nation did not hesitate to begin the war of liberation, even at the price of the lives of many, many of its citizens — thus giving the Cubans their freedom and independence, to the eternal glory of the United States.

The American people always did, do now, and always will strive to secure for other nations those benefactions of peace which they themselves enjoy so much. They will not shut themselves up in egotistical seclusion, and even in the present war, the most terrible that ever tried suffering humanity, America quietly but persistently tends to restore the peace.

The period of preliminary armistice is perhaps not very far off. Three-fourths of the universe, bathed in blood of the best of their sons, anxiously wait for the moment when murder and pillage by fire and sword, will make room for constructive labor, and when happiness will again cease to be a dream. The frightful suffering of all the combatants will compel the armistice, but the peace resulting must be permanent. The half-way solution of the questions and wrongs which lie at the bottom of this war would be a crime and a horror. Everything which may be a cause of a new conflict should be removed.

Consequently, in the first place, we should persevere that those principles, to which America owes its happiness and its peace should be the guiding principles of European life as well, that the



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guarantee of a permanent peace — the freedom and independence of all the nations, that the government of the peoples, for the peoples, and by the peoples, should be inviolably secured in the peace treaties.

It is the lands of Poland that are the bone of contention in this war, they are the spoils over which battle among themselves Russia, Prussia, and Austria.

No new partition of those lands, no carving out of the borders of Russia, Prussia or Austria out of the living body of the Polish nation, shall secure the peace, no manifestos of Grand Dukes, no promises of uniting of Poles under the yoke of the Czar, no doling out some alleviation of persecution, no partial home-rule will satisfy the desires of the Poles who, even though the Czar may succeed in finding some Poles who, like the American loyalists at the time of the American War for Independence, will loudly proclaim to the world that Poland has already united with Russia, that Poland trusts Russia.

We all know what is Russia's conception of this uniting of Poland under the scepter of the Czar. Immediately after Russia occupied Lemberg and the eastern portion of Galicia, the only part of former Poland where the Poles had some measure of autonomy, the Russian officials immediately closed the Polish university, the Polish Politechnique, the Polish colleges and schools, they abolished the use of the Polish language in public offices and courts, removing Polish officials and replacing them by their own people imported from the interior of Russia; they immediately began to coerce the local population by bribes and by threats, to accept Russian orthodox faith; they arrested and put in prison the Archbishop Szeptycki, because he stood true to his faith and would not submit to the invaders. In view of such conception by invaders of the idea of self-government and of the rights of freemen, it becomes perfectly clear that only the complete and unconditional independence of Poland will assure the stability of peace in Europe and that nothing less will permit the Polish people to develop in peace according to their inborn right, nothing else will permit the genius of an able and sturdy race to shine again.

But neither Russia, Prussia, nor Austria will advocate the rights of Poland at the peace congress. Only the neutral powers, and, especially the great American republic, which itself was born from the struggle with despotism and force, can raise this important question.

At the cradle of the American nation have merged the lines of fate of America with those of Poland. In the same year when Poland was dismembered for the first time, almost in the same month when the star of freedom began to decline in middle Europe, a handful of American patriots, under the leadership of Abraham Whipple, burned the English ship *Gaspee*, thus renouncing their subjection to Great Britain and at the same time, kindling a new hearth-fire of freedom. In the ranks of the American revolutionary army entered the Polish patriots who

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were later to astonish the world by their deeds there beginning the long line of Poland's battles for "their freedom and that of others". And so, in the moment of opening of the coming great Peace Congress, let the great American republic raise its decisive voice. Let her raise her voice in the name of those ideals which shone bright at the birth of her freedom, in the name of ideals which guided her when she undertook the war for liberation of Cuba. Let her demand the right for life, for freedom and for happiness, for the Polish people, demanding its complete and unconditional independence, the restoration of the Polish state and nation.

Let America prove before the world the truth of the words of her President, pregnant with such deep meaning and understanding, let her give "solemn evidence that the force of America is the force of moral principles, that there is not anything else that she loves, and there is not anything else for which she will contend".

We are sure that the whole civilized world will undersand then, that, though the thunder of cannon, the clash of arms, the crackle of conflagration eating up the millions of human homes, that through the groans of the sufferers from politiless and senseless war, America, vigilant and sensitive to any injustice, was able to hear and to understand that cry so well remembered, that cry which was emitted at the assembly of Richmond by the lips of an American patriot, and which is now echoed by twenty-five millions of Poles, "Give us liberty, or give us death".

Buffalo, New York,  
July 4th, 1915.

For Committee for Polish National Defense:

Dr. J. Zaleski, president  
J. M. Sienkiewicz, v. pres.  
Dr. K. Żurawski, v. pres.  
S. Rayzacher, secretary  
B. Kułakowski.



N.K.N.