

*Piotrków the Heart of the Legions*

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MUSEUM IN PIOTRKÓW TRYBUNALSKI

***Piotrków***  
***the Heart of the Legions***

PIOTRKÓW TRYBUNALSKI, 2025 r.

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*„Even after long captivity, the Polish nation has proven itself alive and unwavering, ready to fight for its own future... For the first time in generations, it has taken its place among the nations, raising the banner of the Polish Legions.” (from the proclamation 'Polish Legions' issued in Piotrków in 1915)*

## THE GREAT WAR

In the early stages of World War I, Piotrków changed hands several times. On 13 August 1914, following the withdrawal of Russian units, the city was occupied by German troops. Less than two weeks later, Piotrków was recaptured by Russian forces, who remained for about a month. The front shifted again at the beginning of October, allowing German troops to enter the city once more, but after another two weeks they were forced to withdraw. Ultimately, as a result of fighting between Russian troops and the allied Austro-Hungarian forces, Piotrków came under Austrian occupation from 17 December 1914, which lasted uninterrupted until the end of the war in November 1918. The advancing armies caused widespread destruction: the railway line, station, and viaducts, among



*The destroyed railway station buildings in Piotrków.*



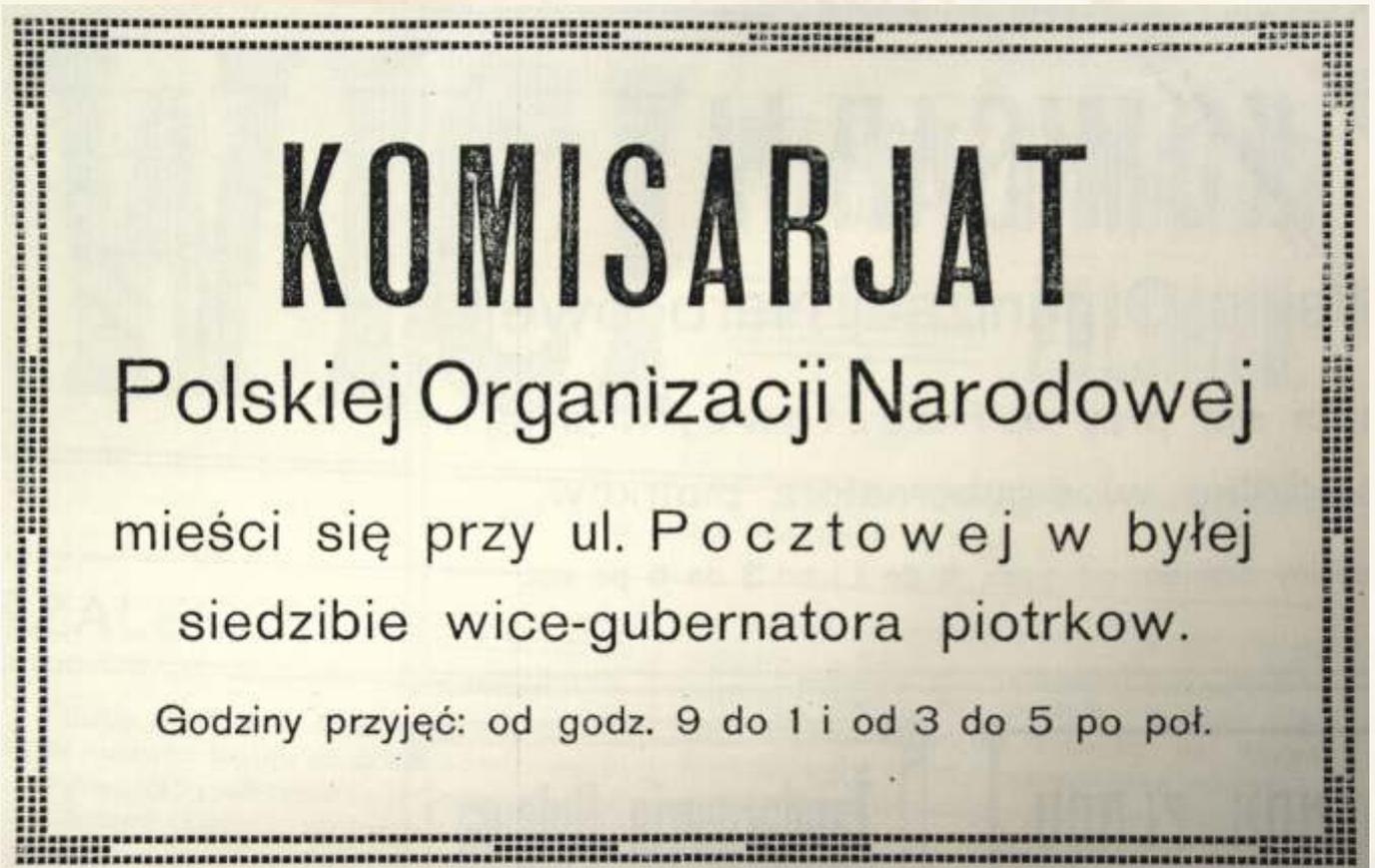
*The destroyed railway viaduct in Piotrków.*

other infrastructure, were ruined. The burdens imposed by the Austrian occupation authorities, along with systematic requisitions, contributed to the impoverishment of the inhabitants, who often faced shortages of basic necessities. The economic situation was dire. Money lost its value, and problems with food supplies led to the introduction of rationing for essential goods. Requisitions by the



*Substitute vouchers were a temporary replacement for small-denomination currency in conditions of shortage and rationing of goods. They were issued locally due to the absence of newly introduced state currency.*

Austro-Hungarian authorities further exacerbated the population's hardships, as anything of potential importance to the war economy was seized. Shortages of fuel, clothing, and medicines worsened sanitary conditions and contributed to social unrest and lawbreaking. Despite these difficult circumstances, Piotrków was designated as the site where the most important decisions regarding the formation of the Polish Legions were to be made. As a result, the city became one of the country's most significant centres of independence. The inhabitants welcomed the Legionnaires in the autumn of 1914, when, on 19 October, a squadron of lancers commanded by Captain Władysław Belina-Prażmowski briefly appeared in the city. The first Legions soldiers arrived for a longer stay, accompanied by emissaries of the Polish National



*A press announcement containing information about the headquarters of the Polish National Organization.*

Organisation. Their task was to organise commissariats and recruitment points aimed at expanding the Polish Legions and promoting the idea of independence. Alongside these legal activities, they also laid the foundations of an underground organisation, which later became known as the Polish Military Organisation. The fate of many of its members would become intricately linked to the Legions.



*The Commissariat of the Polish National Organization was located on Pocztowa Street.*

## THE SUPREME NATIONAL COMMITTEE

The years 1915–1917 marked a period when Piotrków emerged as an important centre of social, political, patriotic, and military life. New social and cultural initiatives were launched, and the city became a thriving publishing hub. From the spring of 1915, the Military Department of the Supreme National Committee, headed by Colonel Władysław Sikorski, operated in the city. Piotrków was chosen as the seat of the Supreme National Committee

for several reasons, including its convenient location and transport connections with the rest of Poland, particularly Kraków and Warsaw, as well as its proximity to the border with German-occupied territories. The friendliness of the inhabitants and their support for the idea of independence were also key factors. Additionally, as a former provincial capital, Piotrków possessed the necessary infrastructure, including buildings

suitable for the Committee's operations. The transfer of the Committee to Piotrków was linked to plans to replenish personnel losses and further expand the Legions formations, intended to serve as the nucleus for building a strong army for a future independent Polish state. The Supreme National Committee based in Piotrków therefore took responsibility for recruiting volunteers for the Polish Legions, overseeing recruitment centres across all areas under Austrian occupation. Poles from German-occupied territories also flocked



*The Recruitment Office in Piotrków Trybunalski. Seated from left to right: Zygmunt Klemensiewicz, Head of the Office; Dr Kapellner-Kaplicki; Dr Emil Bobrowski.*



*The headquarters of the Military Department of the Supreme National Committee in Piotrków was located in a tenement house damaged during the bombing of Piotrków in September 1939, at the corner of what are now Narutowicza Street and Sienkiewicza Street.*

to these centres. In addition to the Central Recruitment Office, the Military Department of the Supreme National Committee included the Central Registration Office, the Press Office, the Publishing Administration, and the Relief Office. The State Printing House, the Technical and Photographic Office, and the Publishing Department played a particularly vital role, especially considering the scale and intensity of the Committee's propaganda campaign, which had a significant impact on Polish society. The decision to dissolve the structures of the Supreme National Committee was made at the end of January 1917.

## THE FIRST INDEPENDENCE MARCH

The Independence Marches organised in Poland today are not, it seems, a new or original idea. In Piotrków, as contemporary accounts record, such a “procession” took place as early as 1916 in connection with the proclamation of the so-called Act of 5 November, a document containing a promise by Austria-Hungary and the German Empire to create a Kingdom of Poland with unspecified borders, while the question of establishing a Polish government was left unresolved, although provisions for the creation of a Polish army were included. Already in the spring of 1917, it became apparent that the partitioning powers approached the Polish question pragmatically, which led to the so-called oath crisis and the internment of soldiers of the 1st and 3rd Brigades who refused to swear allegiance to the German Emperor. Although, as it turned out, the document was primarily of propaganda significance,

it nevertheless placed the so-called “Polish question” among the objectives for which the war was being fought, and for the residents of Piotrków, this represented a momentous event, offering the hope that Poles might once again regain their long-desired state. On the day the Act was announced, 5 November, crowds of Piotrków residents gathered in the city centre and formed an impressive procession, complete with a fire brigade orchestra, standard-bearers from various organisations and craft guilds, and banners carried by political groups, and it was estimated that in Piotrków, which at that time had a population of nearly 43,000, as many as 10,000 participants took part, marching through the main streets of the city and pausing at intervals to hear patriotic manifestos and fiery speeches delivered by the clergy and prominent citizens. Similar demonstrations occurred on many occasions, including celebrations

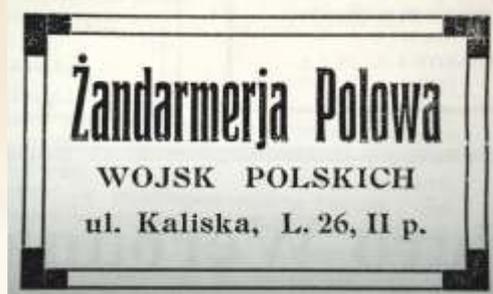


## NOT ONLY IN PIOTRKÓW

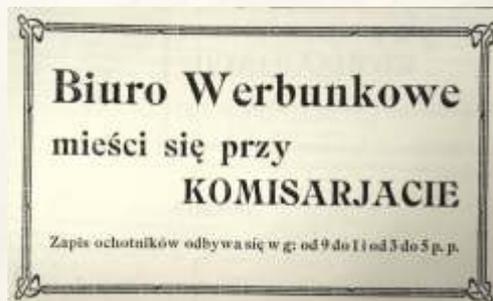
Three important Legions institutions were located in Piotrków: the Military Department of the Supreme National Committee, the Polish Legions Command, and the Polish Legions Group Command. The surrounding area accommodated reserve centres, non-commissioned officer and officer schools, and hospitals, serving as support facilities for the regiments that were to form part of the newly created 3rd Brigade of the Polish Legions. All of this meant that Piotrków quickly became the heart of the Legions. Although the Legions' units subordinate to the Piotrków command were formed in towns located in what is now the Piotrków and Radomsko counties, this was directly due to the presence of the key decision-making centres of the Legions in Piotrków itself. In the provinces, it was easier to obtain provisions for soldiers, stables, and fodder for horses, and local landowners and clergy offered their assistance in this regard, seeking to change the initially distrustful attitude of the rural population towards the Legions through personal example and appeals. In April 1915, the formation of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment began in the vicinity of Rozprza, based on a reserve battalion from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment. The subunits were stationed in towns along the railway line connecting Piotrków and Częstochowa, and Legionnaires could be found in Rozprza and Kamieńsk, among other locations, as well as in smaller towns such as Bujny, Łochyńsko, Jeżów, Milejów, Łazy, Ignaców, Cekanów, Krzyżanów, Gomunice, and the slightly more distant Radomsko and Widzów. Soon afterwards, another Legions unit was formed – the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment – and at



*The Recruitment Office was located at 14 Kaliska Street, while the headquarters of the Field Gendarmerie of the Polish Armed Forces was located at 26 Kaliska Street.*



*A press announcement providing information on the location of the headquarters of the Field Gendarmerie of the Polish Armed Forces.*



*A press announcement providing information on the location of the Recruitment Office.*



*The headquarters of the Polish Armed Forces Garrison Command was located at 18 Bankowa Street.*



*A press announcement providing information on the location of the Headquarters of the Polish Armed Forces Garrison Command.*

the Belzatka estate near Piotrków, an artillery battery was established simultaneously. Both the subunits of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment and the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment became part of the newly formed 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade of the Polish Legions. On 14 September 1915, Legionnaires of the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, formed in Rozprza under the command of Major Witold Rylski, set off for the front from the railway station in Piotrków, while the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment departed for the front on 15 July 1917, following a ceremonial farewell held at the so-called Błonia Piotrkowskie, the area of today's Piotrków Aeroclub airport. The units formed in the vicinity of Piotrków subsequently fought in the Lublin and Volhynia regions.



Legions soldiers in Rozprza.

1	Imię i nazwisko	Koleczko Leon
2	wzrost	189 cm
3	wiek w roku	1897 Kraków
4	przynależny (gmina i powiat)	Kraków
5	studyt w	e. i k. armii Strzelen dr. strzelackich dr. harcerzów
6	stopień (ranga) w wył. wym. organ.	
7	szczególne kwalifikacje wojskowe	
8	wzięty do legionu dnia	15 maja 1915 r.
<b>DEPARTAMENT WOJSKOWY N. K. N.</b> <b>CENTRALNY URZĄD EWIDENCYJNY</b> <b>Legionów Polskich</b> <i>Wojciechowski</i>		

The military service booklet of Leon Koleczko - the son of a veteran of the January Uprising of 1863 - with confirmation of his enlistment in the Polish Legions.



Officers of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment of the Legions during a farewell field mass on the Piotrków Commons on 15 July 1915.

## IN THE SERVICE OF POLAND

Among the prominent figures connected with Piotrków who have left a lasting mark on Polish statehood and military history, it is worth noting not only Józef Piłsudski, who, according to unverified reports from the Austrian authorities, is said to have visited the city briefly, but also the links between the city and such distinguished individuals as Władysław Sikorski, head of the Military Department at the Supreme National Committee; Stanisław Kot, head of the Press Office of the Military Department; Waclaw Tokarz, deputy head of the Military Department; Bolesław Roja, commander of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiments of the Legions; Andrzej Galica, commander of the battalion in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiments of the Legions; Karol Trzaska-Durski, who until December 1915 served as commander of the Polish Legions on behalf of Austria; Wilhelm Orlik-Rückmann, officer of the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment; Józef Kustroń, commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Company of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment; and Władysław Belina-Prażmowski, creator of the Legions' cavalry units known as Beliniaki, which included men from Piotrków and the surrounding region. Piotrków was also home to the spiritual guide and honorary chaplain of the Polish Legions, Bishop Władysław Bandurski. Among those cooperating with the Supreme National Committee were native residents of Piotrków who had previously been involved in scouting, notably Leon Strzelecki, who served as squadron commander in Józef Piłsudski's 1<sup>st</sup> Light Cavalry Regiment; Stefan Rowecki, military practitioner and theorist, later Commander-in-Chief of the Home Army during the Second World War; and Paweł Górecki, who went on to become the founder of the Polish Telegraph Agency and Polish Radio.



*The Presidial Office of the Military Department of the Supreme National Committee. From left: Lt. Col. Władysław Sikorski, Head of the Department; Stanisław Kot, Head of the Press Office; Col. Waclaw Tokarz, Deputy Head of the Department.*



*Recruitment Office in Piotrków. Zygmunt Klemensiewicz (third from the left) with his assistants.*

## THE CAVALRY ARRIVED AT THE WINDOW...

Feliks Gwiżdż, author of the lyrics to the popular soldier's song *Przybyli ułani pod okienko* ('The Cavalry Arrived at the Window'), was an officer in the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment of the Legions, which had been formed in Piotrków. It is possible that the song was inspired by the author's observations on estates in the vicinity of Piotrków, where cavalry units were

raised. Piotrków itself was an attractive place for Legionnaires to spend their leisure time. The charm of the local girls was difficult to resist, not only for the Legionnaires stationed in Piotrków but also for individuals associated with the Supreme National Committee. One example is Professor Stanisław Kot, head of the NKN Press Office, who recruited the



A Beliniak in front of a peasant cottage.

„most beautiful women of Piotrków” to work with him. The young women, employed as secretaries or typists, were somewhat mockingly referred to as „kittens”, a playful reference to the surname of their supervisor. Also noteworthy were the activities undertaken on behalf of the Legionnaires and Piotrków scouts by the Piotrków branch of the Women's War Emergency League. Its members initiated a wide range of efforts, including the distribution of publications, the transfer of correspondence across the border cordon, and the provision of material assistance to Legionnaires and



In the cash section of the Military Department. From left: Józefa Wróblewska Starzyńska and Adam Piątkowski from the Allowance Office for the Families of Legionnaires.

their families. They also supported convalescents and organised fundraising, religious, and cultural events. It is therefore unsurprising that professional relationships occasionally became more personal over time. Legion soldiers, and sometimes officers, were often called to order for spending too much time in the company of young women; yet the presence of the Polish uniform meant that „many a young lady and many a widow, seeing a cavalryman, would be ready to love him.” These and other songs, collected in songbooks published in Piotrków, were passed down to subsequent generations, becoming a part of the cultural heritage of the Polish nation. And yet, amidst these romantic encounters, there were also moments of poignant parting, ending brief acquaintances. Such experiences were reflected in a poem by Karol Wądołkowski, dedicated to Jadwiga Ciszewska:



A songbook page featuring a graphic created after a design by Kazimierz Zaborowski.



Karol Wądołkowski in a Legion uniform - commander of the 5th District of the Polish Military Organization, operating clandestinely in Piotrków, the Piotrków County, and the Radomsko County.



Jadwiga Ciszewska - a resident of Piotrków cooperating with the Polish Military Organization.

„A soldier must go where he is ordered,  
 And so he marches boldly, with a steady face,  
 Though he leaves behind a heart that has made  
 him forget the battle,  
 For he carries with him a single weapon:  
 the hope of return,  
 Confident that happiness awaits along the way.”

A page from Jadwiga's autograph album (keepsake book) featuring a farewell entry by Karol.



## THE PUBLISHING CENTRE

The Military Department of the Supreme National Committee conducted a large-scale propaganda campaign. Printing houses in the city, managed by the Supreme National Committee, published local newspapers, proclamations, posters, patriotic brochures, and various leaflets, as well as scholarly and popular works on Polish history. The city thus became an important centre of free Polish thought. Over a period of two years, more than two million magazines and brochures, over 740,000 proclamations of distinct types, 30,000 calendars, nearly 100 history books, and numerous works of political journalism on current affairs were published. Textbooks on military matters and informational publications were also produced, including lists of sick, wounded, killed, and missing Legionnaires. Countless announcements, posters, placards, and postcards were circulated, with a total print run estimated at 2.5 million copies. The work of the Press Office of the Supreme National Committee was directed by Professor Stanisław Kot, assisted by Colonel Władysław Sikorski, Władysław Orkan, Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski, Professor Waclaw Tokarz, Gustaw Daniłowski, Maria Dąbrowska, Izabela Moszyńska, and Halina Redlińska. Numerous social, cultural, and political organisations also developed their activities, and in cooperation with



A press advertising notice featuring an offer from the Polish Printing House.

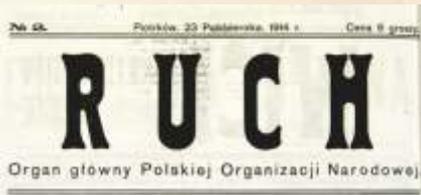
them, often on their initiative, celebrations of anniversaries and national holidays were organised. The most spectacular of these were the so-called “Kościuszko anniversaries” and events commemorating the adoption of the Constitution of 3 May. In addition, charity collections, fundraisers for convalescents, and Christmas aid for Legionnaires were organised. The activities of associations, unions, and organisations officially came to an end by virtue of a decree issued by the Austrian occupation authorities on 19 September 1918. However, many continued their work despite the restrictions, disregarding the legal prohibitions.



▲ The masthead of *Wiadomości Polskie*, published in Piotrków.



The masthead of *Goniec Polowy Legionów*, published in Piotrków.



The masthead of the periodical *Ruch*, the press organ of the Polish National Organization.



The masthead of *Wici*, a periodical of Polish Legionnaires published in Piotrków.

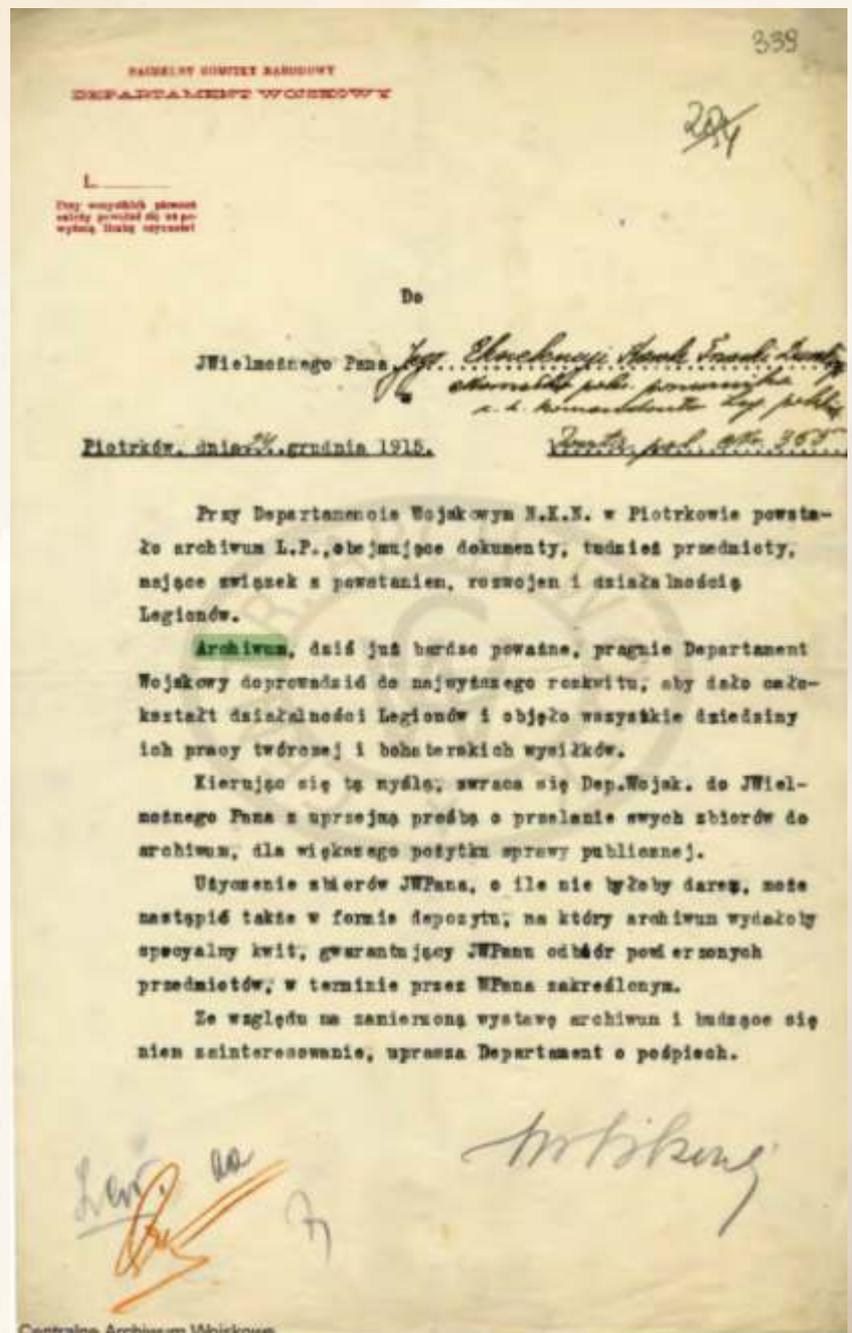


The masthead of *Dziennik Narodowy*, published in Piotrków, which had a significant influence on shaping pro-independence attitudes within the local community.

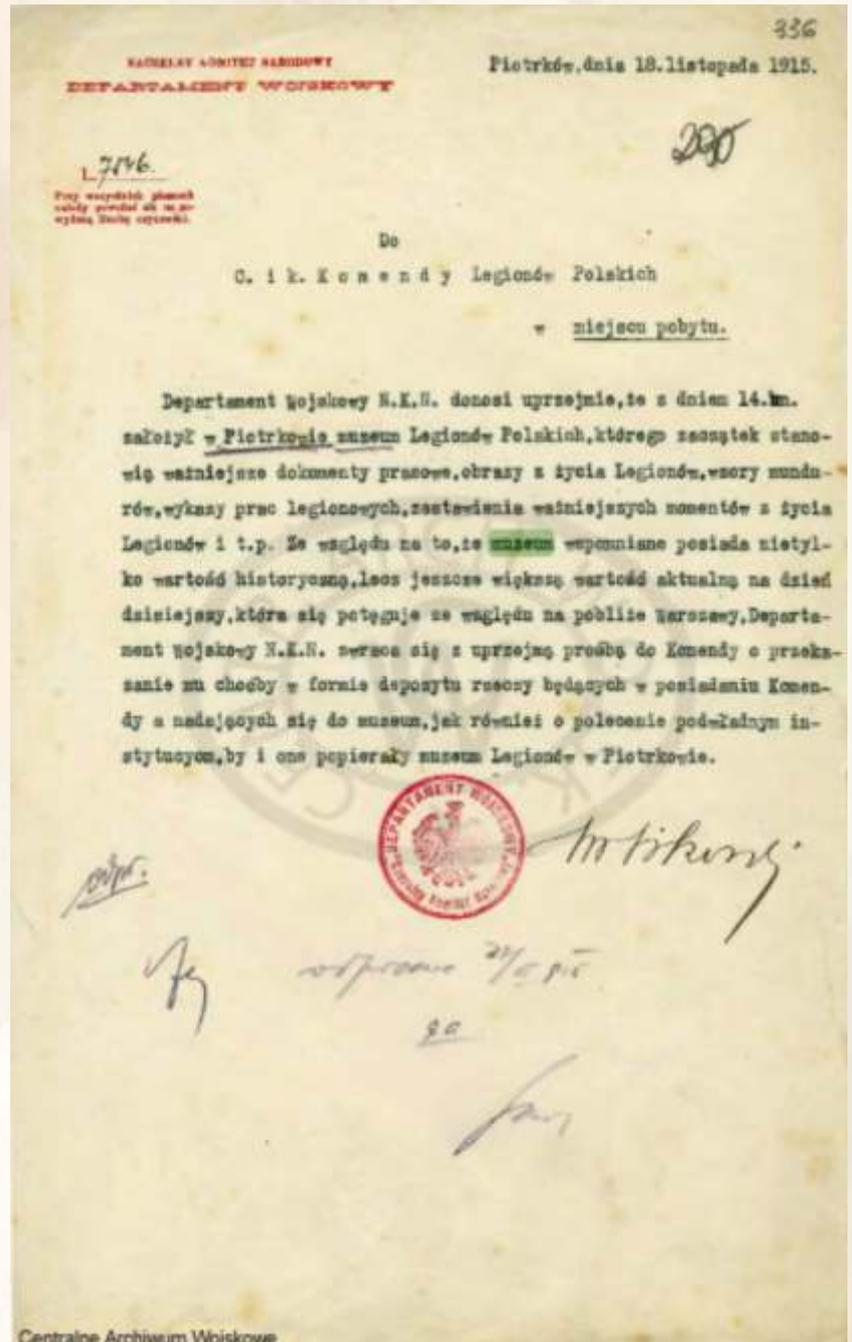
## THE MUSEUM THAT NEVER WAS

Even during the war, the idea emerged of collecting archival materials, objects, memoirs, and personal accounts, which would later enable the scientific study and popularisation of the Legion's struggle for independence. This initiative was considered at the end of 1915 by the Military Department of the Supreme National Committee and led to the establishment of the Polish Legions Archive and the Polish Legions Museum. The museum was to be built upon the wealth of press documents and publications available in Piotrków. Plans also included the collection of memoirs recounting service in the Legions, inventories of Legions works, summaries of key events in the life of the Legions, and, for instance, guidelines for uniform design. The drive to create a Legions archive was motivated not only by the practical need to preserve documents, which ultimately had to be gathered and stored, but also by the recognised necessity of demonstrating, for future generations, how the Polish military effort had been undertaken. In this context, Józef Piłsudski's appeal to his subordinates was widely understood: "Write your documents, because others will falsify them." The importance of preserving Legions memora-

*A document issued by the Military Department of the Supreme National Committee informing of the establishment of the Legions' archive in Piotrków.*



bilia was also recognised by the enlightened citizens of Piotrków. Items collected by Michał Rawita Witanowski, founder of the Piotrków Museum, and his colleagues – including documents reflecting social life – remain, despite being dispersed across the holdings of the State Archives in Piotrków Trybunalski, the collections of the Museum in Piotrków Trybunalski, and the library of the Piotrków Branch of the Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society, an invaluable source of knowledge about the legacy of the Legions in Piotrków.



*A document issued by the Military Department of the Supreme National Committee informing of the establishment of the Legions Museum in Piotrków.*

## THE LEGIONS' FOOTBALL TEAM

Volunteers enlisted in the Legions learned to read, write, and count, and they also took part in cultural and sporting events. Sport, in fact, formed the basis for maintaining the soldiers' physical fitness, leaving the young army little time to seek out dubious entertainment. The focus was on strength training, gymnastics, and team sports, one of which was football. The initiative to create a football team came from Antoni Poznański, a well-known

footballer from Kraków, whose ambition was to assemble a team of seasoned players. Knowing that many footballers from Lviv and Kraków had joined the Legions, he began recruiting for the new Legions football team in Piotrków at the railway station, selecting players he knew from among the new arrivals. The Piotrków team consisted almost exclusively of pre-war professional footballers, which ensured a high standard from the very



*The Legions football team - Warsaw, 1917.*

beginning. This simple measure allowed the 'Legia Sports Team' to be quickly established in Piotrków. It is also worth noting that the Legionnaires contributed to the popularisation of handball. However, the rise of the game was intertwined with the sadder circumstances of the Legionnaires' internment in the camp at Szczypiorno, which is why the game became known as *szczypiorniak*

(handball). Władysław Broniewski, a soldier of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, recalled in his memoirs: "...during the day, my comrades ran after a rag ball, and this game captured their hearts for days, making them forget that they were interned." Although the game did not originate in Piotrków, it is there that it continues to enjoy enduring popularity today.

## THE SHIELD OF THE LEGIONS

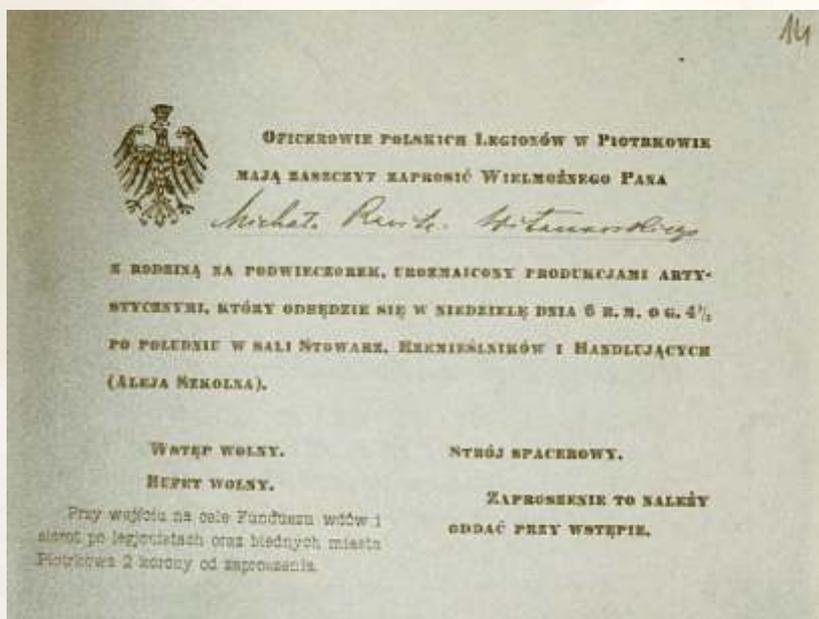
On 6 August 1916, the 'Shield of the Legions' was unveiled in the post-Bernardine garden, as part of the celebrations marking the second anniversary of the departure of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cadet Company from Kraków's Oleandry. This first monument of its kind in the Kingdom of Poland was designed by Kazimierz Zaborowski and produced by the local Strzelczyk workshop. According to Michał Rawita Witanowski, the composition featured a silver Polish eagle on an amaranth background, surro-

unded by a wide frame with two Polish swords on either side, engraved with the inscription 'Polish Legions 1914–1916'. At the bottom, space was left for silver nails commemorating benefactors of the Legions. The purpose of creating such souvenirs, whose origins were linked to Austrian territories, was to provide charitable assistance to convalescents, children, and widows of Legionnaires. The shield was originally donated to the collection of the Local History Museum in Piotrków, where it

remained until the outbreak of the Second World War. It was likely hidden by local historians during the war to prevent its destruction by the Germans. Unfortunately, all traces of it were lost, and only a photograph of the original location survives. However, the museum's collection includes another shield from the same period: the coat of arms of Piotrków, donated to the first City Council after the partitions. In materials collected for his monograph on Piotrków, Michał Rawita Witanowski reported the events as follows: "Amidst the general excitement, a letter from the Women's War Emergency League was read, announcing that it was offering the work of its hands, an embroidered eagle, as the emblem of free Poland, ending the proclamation with the words: "may it adorn your meeting room and be the motto of your work." The white eagle, cut from white fabric, was trimmed with silver thread and decorated with glass and silver beads. It was sewn onto red satin and mounted on a decorative wooden shield. The obverse bore the inscription „3 MAY 1917”, and the reverse read "Council of Piotrków Women's War Emergency League".



*The gazebo in the former Bernardine Garden featuring the so-called „Legions' Shield.”*



*An invitation issued by officers of the Polish Legions to the social activist and founder of the Museum in Piotrków - Michał Rawita-Witanowski.*



*The coat of arms of Piotrków, presented to the city's first Municipal Council after the Partitions of Poland by members of the Women's League of War Emergency Service.*

## PIOTRKÓW LEADS THE WAY: INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATED ON 2 NOVEMBER 1918

As early as the beginning of November 1918, the residents of Piotrków were celebrating independence. Upon learning that the Polish Liquidation Commission had taken power in Kraków, they began disarming the occupation troops stationed in the city. On 1 November 1918, Colonel Jan Rządkowski was appointed the head of Military District No. VI, headquartered in Piotrków, and Major Oskar Brezany assumed the command of the Polish troops in Piotrków. As *Dziennik Narodowy* reported on 3 November 1918, foreign inscriptions and foreign eagles-visible here as symbols of alien rule-vanished from the walls and public buildings, while the houses were decorated with flags in national colours. Before 9:00 a.m., the unit of Polish soldiers with a colour guard, led by Sergeant Sadowski, marched along the Kaliska Street (today's Słowackiego Street) to the Bernardine church. Besides the soldiers and the city's residents, the service was attended by Polish officers, representatives of the City Council, Mayor Nowicki and Deputy Mayor Ostrowski, members of the District Council (Sejmik) and the District Court, as well as delegations and colour parties from Piotrków societies, organisations and local businesses. After the service, sub-units of the emerging Polish army took their oath-although the Piotrków press rather imprecisely referred to them as „Legionnaires”, despite the fact that the Polish Legions had been dissolved in 1916 and some of their soldiers subsequently formed the Polish Auxiliary Corps and



*A procession marking the anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution of 3 May, organized in Piotrków in 1915. At the head march representatives of the Military Department of the Supreme National Committee.*

the Polish Armed Force (the so-called *Polnische Wehrmacht*). These changes were linked to the so-called oath crisis, as a result of which some Legionnaires from the disbanded units were interned in camps at Beniaminów and Szczypiorno. At the turn of October and November 1918, however, one can already speak of units of the reborn Polish Army. This does not alter the fact that the “Legionary epic” left a lasting imprint on the consciousness of the Piotrków residents, for whom a Polish uniform was inextricably associated with the Legions. On 2 November 1918, the soldiers under Captain Ruciński swore allegiance to reborn Poland and the Regency Council. The ceremony began at around 11:00 a.m. and was conducted by Lieutenant Marian Hudek, who had arrived from Warsaw as the officer responsible for recruitment matters. The following day, Poles who had previously served in the Austro-Hungarian army were also to be sworn in. Order during the ceremonies was maintained by the City Militia under the supervision of the solicitor Krajewski and his deputy Kamala. The celebrations concluded with a passionate address by Mayor Nowicki. The next day, *Dziennik Narodowy* reported on the enthusiasm of the crowds.

### “Citizens!

**Let us dare to be worthy of these great and beautiful days; let us preserve the solemnity and dignity of a mature and resolute nation, and let us exercise the prudence and self-restraint required in these momentous times. Submitting to the common leadership of the nation is now the paramount duty of every citizen. There must be authority, and there must be obedience to orders. Today, let us show that we can be good hosts in our own home.”**

At the same time, residents were urged to respect the orders of the newly established Polish authorities and to safeguard public property, reminded that nothing should be destroyed on Polish soil “...because it all belongs to the state treasury and is essential for the life of the nation.”

All these measures were intended to ensure order, peace, and security, while also laying the groundwork for the rapid reconstruction of the city and the nation following the devastation of war.

## NATIONAL SYMBOLS

During those days, crowds of Piotrków residents cheered in honour of the Polish army. The songs *Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła* ("Poland has not yet perished") and *Rota* were sung, performed in public with the solemnity befitting the national anthem. Above the heads of the city's residents who gathered in great numbers in the centre, "national banners" were flying, displayed in windows and on the balconies of tenement houses along the main streets. This is confirmed by documentary photographs of patriotic events, celebrations of holidays and anniversary demonstrations held in Piotrków during the Legionary period. It is worth noting a certain freedom in the arrangement of colours, which persisted for several years after independence was regained. It was also visible during the struggle to defend independence and determine Poland's final borders—particularly



*A patriotic demonstration in Piotrków on Kaliska Street had already taken the form of an independence march in 1915. For the duration of the event, the windows and balconies of the houses were decorated with Polish flags.*



*The banner of the Volunteer Army.*

during the Polish–Russian War, when in the summer of 1920 recruitment of volunteers began anew, this time for the Volunteer Army, an important component of the Polish Army. Many Piotrków residents enlisted, and were incorporated, among others, into the newly formed 202nd Volunteer Infantry Regiment. Above them flew the standard of the Volunteer Army, on which red stood above white. In the circumstances of the time, such freedom in the use of national colours was by no means an isolated phenomenon. A fine expression of patriotic symbolism can also be seen in the gesture of presenting Colonel Bolesław Roja with a banner for the 4th Infantry Regiment, made by hand by the artistically and practically gifted girls of the Piotrków scout troop. The event took place in Łochyńsko on 14 July 1915, in the presence of a delegation of Piotrków representatives led by Kazimierz Rudnicki.



*Members of the Women's League and Girl Scouts present a banner from the city of Piotrków to the 4th Infantry Regiment - Łochyńsko, 1915.*





*A commemorative window sticker marking 3 May, designed by Kazimierz Zaborowski.*



*A portrait of Commander Józef Piłsudski, drawn by Kazimierz Zaborowski.*

known in Piotrków for his patriotic designs, reproduced in numerous publications and in the press issued by the Supreme National Committee. His portrait of Józef Piłsudski adorned the interiors of rooms used by the Committee and was carried by crowds through the city streets during patriotic ceremonies, marches, and demonstrations. In promoting the ideas of the Legions, Zaborowski

collaborated with the painter Stanisław Janowski, as well as with staff of the Technical and Photographic Office, including photographers Kazimierz Berger and Tadeusz Zwoliński. He also worked alongside distinguished historians such as Stanisław Kot and Waław Tokarz. Tragically, Kazimierz Zaborowski died on 19 November 1918, aged only 28. The immediate cause was pneumonia, a complication of the prevailing Spanish flu epidemic. He enjoyed the long-awaited freedom of his homeland – the country for which he had served and fought with a pencil in his hand – for just over a week. Appreciated by his contemporaries but largely forgotten today, the artist rests in a grave in the old Roman Catholic cemetery in Piotrków, section 43-VI-2.



*A commemorative window sticker featuring the likeness of Tadeusz Kościuszko, designed by Kazimierz Zaborowski.*

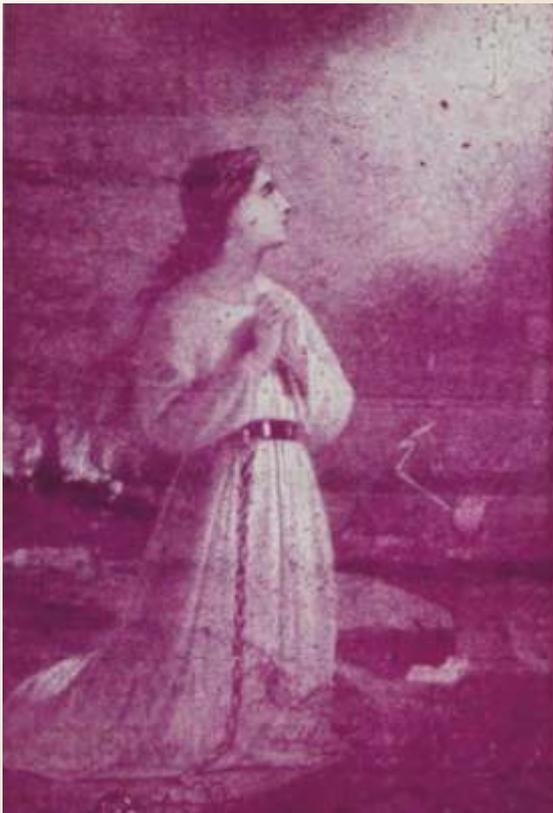


*An obituary announcing the funeral ceremonies of Kazimierz Zaborowski.*

## MAY YOU DREAM ABOUT POLAND...

Many soldiers who fought in the Legions formations formed in Piotrków and the surrounding area did not live to see the longed-for freedom and resurrection of the Polish state. Their sacrifice is commemorated today at the Legions Cemetery, situated alongside other cemeteries in Piotrków. Regularly compiled and published lists of Legions

casualties document the successive victims of the Great War, although verification allows the identification of only some of the soldiers connected to the Piotrków region. Countless others rest in unmarked graves, having given their hearts to the Legions and to their homeland.



### MODLITWA do Chrystusa Pana i Matki Jego. Królowej Korony Polskiej, (Wyjątki z „Drogi krzyżowej Polski“ Ks. Biskupa Wł. Bandurskiego – Piotrków 1916.)

„Wejrzyj, o Panie, na skrwawione i zeszczone oblicze tej Ziemi, co się Polską zowie! Ziemia ta zupełnie zniszczona, krwią i łzami ludzkimi na wskroś przeziąknięta, ta niegdyś żyzna i bogata, żywiąca innych, dziś swoich dzieci wyżywić niezdolna! Kiedy nam przyślesz, o Panie, takiego Anioła, któryby powszechne obudził współczucie i bronił Twej Polski od dalszych nieszczęść? Przyślij co rychlej, Ty, który znasz cenę cierpienia, krwi i łez, spraw aby tyle łez, krwi i cierpienia nie zostało daremne! Daj nieszczęśliwej Polskiej Ziemi jedną z łez Twoich, jeden płacz Twój, ażeby boleść nasza podniosła się aż do Nieba i tam zbudziła potęgę i sprawiedliwość Ojca i mego!”

A Ty, Matko i Królowo Nasza, sił przysparzaj rycerzom dzisiejszym, walczącym w Legionach „za Wiarę i Ojczyznę!” Poczieszaj tych, co na wygnaniu i tułactwie smutne wiodą życie! Nie daj zginąć z głodu Twym dzieciom, co dotąd Ci ufali, a których domy, chaty, ziemia i mienie okrutnie i doszczętnie zniszczone. Nadzieję wlej w serca tych, co trwożą się o los Swych najbliższych, będących na polu walki, w niewoli i w niedoli! Błogosław Matko polskiej biednej ziemi, Te, przeobfitej w nieszczęścia i łzy! O chroń jej dzieci idąc razem z nimi. Przez wichry, burze i przez ciemne mgły! A wszystkim daj wiarę w sprawiedliwość Boga i w zmartwychwstanie Ojczyzny! Amen.“

„Poland in the Shackles of Captivity” - a patriotic postcard featuring reflections by Bishop Władysław Bandurski.

## LIST OF LEGIONNAIRES FROM PIOTRKÓW TRYBUNALSKI AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

(according to the list compiled by Dr Ryszard Kotewicz)

- |                        |                         |                       |
|------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Adamski Mieczysław  | 8. Błasiak Waław        | 15. Budzyła Augustyn  |
| 2. Babich Zenon        | 9. Błaszczyk Józef      | 16. Cape Piotr        |
| 3. Babski Stefan       | 10. Błaszczyk Władysław | 17. Chmielewski Ant.  |
| 4. Berłowski Władysław | 11. Bober               | 18. Chmielewski Józef |
| 5. Biel Franciszek     | 12. Boczek Franciszek   | 19. Cieślowski Cz.    |
| 6. Bińczyk             | 13. Bogus Eugeniusz     | 20. Czerwiński Stefan |
| 7. Blumsztajn Arnold   | 14. Bruhm Jerzy         | 21. Dąbrowski Leonard |

- |                          |                             |                              |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 22. Dąbrowski Wacław     | 75. Krakowiak Józef         | 128. Rózga Władysław         |
| 23. Dobke Józef          | 76. Krakowiak Zygmunt       | 129. Sałaciński Adam         |
| 24. Dobke Stanisław      | 77. Krauze Władysław        | 130. Sałkowski Euzebiusz     |
| 25. Dulęba Czesław       | 78. Krawczyński Józef       | 131. Serafin Jan             |
| 26. Dwornik Piotr        | 79. Krupa Janzer            | 132. Siciński Kazimierz      |
| 27. Dymus Władysław      | 80. Kubałowski Jan          | 133. Sielski Jan             |
| 28. Edyk Antoni          | 81. Kubiak Antoni           | 134. Sikorski Bronisław      |
| 29. Falkowski Klemens    | 82. Kubiak Józef            | 135. Skalski Ludwik          |
| 30. Felker Stanisław     | 83. Kucharski Antoni        | 136. Skotnicki Stanisław     |
| 31. Gałas Józef          | 84. Kucharski Bolesław      | 137. Słoka Bolesław          |
| 32. Gawroński            | 85. Kucharski Juliusz       | 138. Socha Antoni            |
| 33. Geszcz Józef         | 86. Kuderciński Józef       | 139. Sokół Wincenty          |
| 34. Gębarowski W.        | 87. Kwiatkowski Stefan      | 140. Srodowski Antonii       |
| 35. Gil Ludwik           | 88. Laskowski Stefan        | 141. Stanisławski Aleksander |
| 36. Gilewicz Franciszek  | 89. Lesiakowski Józef       | 142. Stankiewicz Kazimierz   |
| 37. Gliwicz Jerzy        | 90. Lewandowski Zenon       | 143. Stanowski Ryszard       |
| 38. Gliwicz Stanisław    | 91. Lis Michał              | 144. Stawiej Henryk          |
| 39. Głowacki Łukasz      | 92. Litych Marian           | 145. Stawowski Szczepan      |
| 40. Gnoiński Alfons      | 93. Łęgowski Stanisław      | 146. Strzelecki Bronisław    |
| 41. Gnoiński Bolesław    | 94. Majchrowski Jan         | 147. Strzelecki Janusz       |
| 42. Godlewski Józef      | 95. Margasiński Konstanty   | 148. Strzelecki Leon         |
| 43. Gosławski Jan        | 96. Maszczyk Władysław      | 149. Sujnowski Feliks        |
| 44. Gozdek Jan           | 97. Michalski Hilary        | 150. Sułkowski Kazimierz     |
| 45. Górski Bogdan        | 98. Mielczarek Bolesław     | 151. Suwart Antoni           |
| 46. Górski Jan           | 99. Mielczarek Feliks       | 152. Szczech Teofil          |
| 47. Grabowski Jan        | 100. Mielczarski Lucjan     | 153. Szczygielski Roman      |
| 48. Grzędo Witold        | 101. Mieszkowski Fr.        | 154. Szmidt Józef            |
| 49. Hebda Stanisław      | 102. Miller Zygmunt         | 155. Szwarc Edmund           |
| 50. Hiszcza Stanisław    | 103. Mirecki Stanisław      | 156. Szyposzyński Izidor     |
| 51. Jabłonowski Al.      | 104. Mrozik Dam.            | 157. Śliwiński Bolesław      |
| 52. Jakubowski Stefan    | 105. Murczak Józef          | 158. Świdwiński Wojciech     |
| 53. Janiszewski Józef    | 106. Nakonieczny Leon       | 159. Tabolczyk Teodor        |
| 54. Janowski Adam        | 107. Nowak Mikołaj          | 160. Wawszczak Jan           |
| 55. Jarek Władysław      | 108. Nowakowski Bronisław   | 161. Werner Feliks           |
| 56. Jursz Stanisław      | 109. Nowakowski Kazimierz   | 162. Węgrzych Leopold        |
| 57. Jursz Władysław      | 110. Nowakowski Wacław      | 163. Witkowski Władysław     |
| 58. Kaczmarczyk Bolesław | 111. Olejnik Ludwik         | 164. Wojciechowski Karol     |
| 59. Kaczmarek Bolesław   | 112. Owieczek Kazimierz     | 165. Wojnicz Walerian        |
| 60. Kaczorowski Zygmunt  | 113. Pasek Jan 1880         | 166. Wolski Antoni           |
| 61. Kadym Stanisław      | 114. Pawlikowski Roman      | 167. Woźniak Jan             |
| 62. Kawalek Władysław    | 115. Pawłowski Jan          | 168. Wyłykowski Damian       |
| 63. Kaźmierczak Jan      | 116. Pągowski Bolesław      | 169. Wysocki Władysław       |
| 64. Kędzierski Apolinary | 117. Piasecki Władysław     | 170. Wyszkowski Damian       |
| 65. Kędzierski Józef     | 118. Piekarski Błażej       | 171. Wytykowski Damian       |
| 66. Kłębowski Stanisław  | 119. Piekarski Jan          | 172. Wyżykowski Jan          |
| 67. Kociemba Władysław   | 120. Piotrowski Alfons      | 173. Zielenek Henryk         |
| 68. Kock Wacław          | 121. Popławski Mieczysław   | 174. Ziemkowski Kazimierz    |
| 69. Komornicki Stanisław | 122. Postułka Eugeniusz     | 175. Ziółkowski Edward       |
| 70. Konopacki Karol      | 123. Poszczalski Mieczysław | 176. Ziółkowski Stanisław    |
| 71. Kopeć Franciszek     | 124. Ptaszyński Marian      | 177. Żarski Wiesław          |
| 72. Kossowski Wiesław    | 125. Puszczyński Tadeusz    | 178. Żarski Witold           |
| 73. Kowalski Michał      | 126. Ratajczyk Piotr        | 179. Żychliński Leopold      |
| 74. Kozak Jan            | 127. Rowecki Stefan         | 180. Żychliński Lucjan       |

## IT HAPPENED IN PIOTRKÓW

### 1914

**29 July 1914:** Residents of Piotrków learned of the outbreak of war, as reported in the 30th issue of *Kronika Piotrkowska*.

**30 July 1914:** The authorities of the Russian Empire ordered a general mobilisation.

**1 August 1914:** Piotrków Governor Michał Jaczewski issued an order to evacuate the provincial authorities.

**3 August 1914:** Officials, military families, reservists, and military units evacuated from the southern counties of Piotrków Province arrived in Piotrków.

**3 August 1914:** A Citizens' Committee was established to organise life in the city abandoned by the Russian authorities, headed by Rector Eugeniusz Lipiński.

**4 August 1914:** *Kronika Piotrkowska* published the 'Supreme Manifesto,' in which Tsar Nicholas II announced the start of war with Austria and Germany.

**6 August 1914:** In response to growing lawlessness and arbitrariness, the Citizens' Committee formed a Citizens' Militia to maintain order in the city, commanded by Maksymilian Rudowski, vice-president of the District Court.

**11 August 1914:** The Russian authorities left Piotrków. Around 6 p.m., a German reconnaissance unit appeared in the city.

**12 August 1914:** *Kronika Piotrkowska* reported on the passage of a German reconnaissance unit through Piotrków.

**13 August 1914:** German troops of the 1st Landwehr Division, commanded by General Wilhelm von Kluck, entered Piotrków.

**18 August 1914:** At 5:30 a.m., Oberleutnant Graf zu Stolberg-Wernigerode assumed command of the city on behalf of Emperor Wilhelm; the civil guard was disarmed.

**19 August 1914:** The German occupation authorities declared martial law in the city.

**21 August 1914:** *Kronika Piotrkowska* informed residents that the Citizens' Committee had received permission from the occupation authorities to open schools in Piotrków on 1 September.

**23 August 1914:** Count zu Stolberg reviewed a unit of 'death hussars' in Tribunal Square, which he then led into battle against the Cossacks in the Rokitno forests.

**26 August 1914:** Upon hearing of Count zu Stolberg's death, the German army left Piotrków in the morning; the Cossacks entered the city.

**2 September 1914:** The Citizens' Committee dissolved the Citizens' Militia at the request of the Russian authorities; the police resumed responsibility for public safety.

**11 September 1914:** Despite the introduction of martial law, private schools in Piotrków resumed teaching, while municipal schools remained closed at the request of the Russian authorities.

**3 October 1914:** German troops entered Piotrków for a second time.

**12 October 1914:** Stefan Boguszewski, Commissioner of the Polish National Organisation, announced the recruitment of volunteers for the Polish Army.

**14 October 1914:** A campaign to promote the idea of the Legions included a patriotic rally at the Czary cinema.

**19 October 1914:** A squadron of the Polish Legions' lancers, commanded by Captain Władysław Belina Prażmowski, arrived in Piotrków for a brief stay.

**30 October 1914:** German troops evacuating Piotrków destroyed the station and facilities of the Warsaw–Vienna railway.

**2 November 1914:** Russian forces reoccupied Piotrków, driving out the Germans from almost the entire Piotrków Governorate.

**14 December 1914:** Austro-Hungarian troops entered Piotrków, beginning a four-year occupation of the city.

### 1915

**4 January 1915:** The Third Congress of the Polish Scouting Organisation opened in Piotrków.

**17 January 1915:** The first issue of *Chwila Obecna* (The Present Moment), the official publication of the Piotrków Citizens' Committee, was published.

**6 February 1915:** Jan Sikorski submitted the statutes of the Polish Scouting Organisation to the Supreme National Committee.

**14 February 1915:** The State Printing House, managed by the Military Department of the Supreme National Committee, began operations at 71 Bykowska Street (now Wojska Polskiego Street).

**15 March 1915:** The Central Committee of the Polish National Confederation was established in Piotrków, bringing together various political organisations and preparing the celebrations of the 124th anniversary of the Constitution of 3 May.

**21 February 1915:** The first issue of Piotrków's *Wiadomości Polskie* (Polish News), the organ of the Supreme National Committee, was published.

**21 February 1915:** A cross commemorating the insurgents executed in 1863 was erected in the new cemetery in Piotrków; the event became a patriotic demonstration.

**11 April 1915:** A large patriotic demonstration was held to mark the anniversary of the Battle of Raławice.

**2 May 1915:** *Dziennik Narodowy* (National Daily), initially associated with the Supreme National Committee, began publication.

**3 May 1915:** The first celebrations of Constitution Day in the Kingdom of Poland since 1792 took place.

**27 May 1915:** The first convention of the Polish Scouting Organisation opened in Piotrków, adopting the statute developed by Jan Sikorski.

**28 May 1915:** The convention elected the Supreme Command, with Jan Sikorski becoming its first commander.

**29 May 1915:** The Austrian CK District Command dissolved the Piotrków Citizens' Committee, placing its members under police supervision.

**3 June 1915:** The Military Department of the Supreme National Committee organised a ceremonial citizens' meeting in the salon of lawyer Apolinary Zaremba on Sieradzka Street.

**14 July 1915:** In Łochyńsk, a delegation from Piotrków handed over the battle standard of the 4th Infantry Regiment of the Polish Legions to its commander, Colonel Bolesław Roja.

**15 July 1915:** After a farewell service and ceremonial parade in Błonia Park in Piotrków, the 4th Infantry Regiment of the Legions set off for the front.

**14 September 1915:** The 6th Infantry Regiment of the Legions, organised in Rozprza under Major Witold Rylski, set off for the front from Piotrków railway station.

**1 November 1915:** On the initiative of the Central School Office in Piotrków, a convention of

elementary school teachers was held, developing the concept of a universal school.

**18 November 1915:** It was announced that a Legions museum would be established in Piotrków to document independence activities; a decision was also made on the need to create a Legions archive.

**28 November 1915:** Despite the ongoing war, an exhibition of the collections of the Local History Museum opened in the refectory of the former Bernardine monastery; it remained on display until September 1918.

## 1916

**7 January 1916:** The National Committee was established in Piotrków, created as the first by the Union of Independence Parties of the Kingdom of Poland.

**8 January 1916:** At its 12th Congress held in Piotrków, the Revolutionary Faction of the Polish Socialist Party expressed opposition to further recruitment to the Polish Legions, in accordance with Józef Piłsudski's guidelines.

**6 August 1916:** In the former Bernardine gardens, the so-called 'The Shield of the Legions', was ceremoniously unveiled, probably the first monument of its kind in the Kingdom of Poland dedicated to the deeds of the Legions.

**17 September 1916:** The League of Polish Statehood organised a meeting of the landed gentry in Piotrków, attended by the Mayor of Warsaw, Zygmunt Chmielewski; the meeting voted in favour of recruitment to the Legions.

**6 November 1916:** The Piotrków National Committee organised a large demonstration to mark the creation of the Kingdom of Poland under the Act of 5 November issued by the German and Austrian emperors. Approximately 10,000 people participated.

**7 December 1916:** The first elections to the Piotrków City Council were held; the council comprised 50 councillors.

**15 December 1916:** The Piotrków City Council opened the Józef Poniatowski City Park, designed by engineer Józef Skrobinek, to the public.

## 1917

**4 January 1917:** The City Council was officially constituted, and lawyer Kazimierz Rudnicki was elected mayor.

**9 January 1917:** A general meeting of the Piotrków branch of the Polish Tourist Society was held.

Despite the war, the 165-member association continued its statutory activities, cooperating with the authorities of the Supreme National Committee and initiating and participating in cultural and historical events.

**27 January 1917:** The transfer of the Recruitment Office of the Military Department of the Supreme National Committee from Piotrków to Warsaw began.

**15 February 1917:** The inaugural meeting of the first Polish City Council of Piotrków in many years was held in the Hall of the Association of Craftsmen and Traders.

**6 April 1917:** Issue No. 12 of Głos Piotrkowski published an address from the city of Piotrków to Brigadier Józef Piłsudski in Warsaw, signed by 40 social institutions in the city.

**19 April 1917:** At a meeting of the National Committee, it was decided to organise the National Independence Party in Piotrków, with the cooperation of Stanisław Thugut.

**9 June 1917:** At the 13th Congress of the Polish Socialist Party Revolutionary Faction in Piotrków, a slogan was proposed to place the Legions under Polish command and to unite all Polish lands.

**17 June 1917:** The Piotrków National Committee organised a rally in connection with the upcoming elections to the National Councils.

**15 July 1917:** A ceremonial meeting of the County National Council was held in Piotrków, during which the first official demand for the unification of Polish lands and the creation of an independent Polish state was passed.

**3 September 1917:** Bolesław Nowicki assumed office as president of Piotrków.

**10 September 1917:** The State Court began its activities, initially based in the Orthodox parish building at Kaliska Street (now 16 Słowackiego Street).

**15 October 1917:** The so-called 'Kościuszko March' was organised in Piotrków to mark the 100th anniversary of the national hero's death. The square in front of the former Bernardine church was named after Kościuszko, the Oak of Freedom was planted in the city park, and a commemorative obelisk was unveiled.

## 1918

**16 February 1918:** Following solemn services held in all churches in Piotrków 'for the prosperity of the homeland,' a patriotic demonstration attended by thousands of people took place.

**25 July 1918:** A convention of delegates from teachers' associations representing the three still unconnected partitions began in Piotrków.

**27 July 1918:** At the conclusion of the convention, the delegates adopted a concept for the future model of education in an independent Poland, which was implemented as early as 1919.

**3 September 1918:** With the consent of the Austrian occupation authorities, the Committee for the Reconstruction of Piotrków Castle took over the historic building and issued a patriotic proclamation to the Polish people.

**2 November 1918:** News of the takeover of Polish power in Krakow reached Piotrków. Polish Legions' soldiers stationed in the city, commanded by Captain Ruciński, swore allegiance to their homeland in a ceremony held on Kościuszki Square. On the same day, the inhabitants of Piotrków began disarming the remaining Austrian troops stationed in the city.

**3 November 1918:** A patriotic ceremony was organised in Błonie Park, during which soldiers of the Austrian 100th Cieszyn Infantry Regiment stationed in the city swore allegiance to the Polish authorities.

**5 November 1918:** Colonel Mach, the commander of the Austrian occupation authorities, was removed from the city.

**10 November 1918:** A political rally was convened in the Czary cinema hall. Its disruption prompted the appearance of armed militias of political parties on the streets. The threat of fratricidal fighting was brought under control by General Tadeusz Wiktor, Colonel Jan Rządkowski, and Dr Jan Dunikowski, the Polish Government's delegate for the Piotrków district.

**11 November 1918:** Poland's official restoration of independence was announced. The city came under the authority of the City Council and the Board, headed by Mayor Bolesław Nowicki.





KRAJOWY  
PLAN  
ODBUDOWY



Rzeczpospolita  
Polska

Sfinansowane przez  
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