



POLISH IMMIGRANTS IN THE USA AND THEIR HOMELAND 1914-1923

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The movement to liberate Poland from the three empires that had partitioned it in the 18th century started in the United States in the 1880's, and, even though it was riddled with divisions, the various émigré groups did manage to unite during World War I to achieve their goal. Furthermore, American Poles continued to actively support the new Poland until 1923 by sending large sums of money to their resurrected state, by the return of about 100,000 Poles from the United States to their homeland, and by their investment in over 200 new enterprises. All these factors helped to put Poland on a better economic footing, and, therefore, American Poles contributed substantially to the liberation of their homeland during and immediately after World War I.

In the historical literature the question of the impact that diasporas had on social and political culture of homelands had been discussed many times. Also discussed was the role they played in the formation of many European states after World War I. The aim of this essay is to describe some areas on which the Polish-American communities (referred further to as Polonia) acted on behalf of the reconstruction of Poland after World War I.¹ When writing on this subject, historians have usually concentrated on the war years, ending their remarks in November 1918, when after 123 years, Poland regained independence. However, considering the nature of American Polonia's involvement in continental affairs, I will argue instead that the closing date for such discussion should be the year 1923.² Polonia's diplomatic activity has been described in great length,³ and this activity continued after the armistice, when the shape of Poland's borders were at issue. I argue that equally important to diplomatic and purely political activity, was the economic help that Polish-Ame-

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rican communities offered to devastated Polish lands. Last but not least, not only did American Polonia have some role in the reconstruction of independence and shaping of the Old Country, but this activity had a great importance for the fate of Polonia as well.

"FOURTH PART OF POLAND"

In the last quarter of the 19th Century the idea of Polish independence was carried to the USA by Polish political emigrants or refugees. A Central Polish Committee in New York, Polish Commune (Gmina Polska) in Chicago, and later other societies, declared the fight for the Homeland's liberation as the emigrants' goal.⁴ Particularly active in this respect was the Polish National Alliance (PNA, established in 1880). It accentuated "spiritual links with the Homeland" by celebrating anniversaries of national uprisings, propagating patriotic traditions, supporting the National Treasury created by Polish emigrants in Switzerland.⁵ A declaration – issued by the Second Diet of PNA (September 1881), and addressed to the American nation after president Garfield's assassination, is considered to be the first public statement "in the name of the Polish nation" presented in America. Traditionally, organizations had been underlining their links with Poland (the Fourth PNA's Diet in 1883 gave fraternal's honorary membership to some Polish artists and painters from Europe, for instance).⁶ The Polish ethnic press referred to Polish communities in America as the "Fourth Part of Poland," a population which should come back to Poland once it regains independence.⁷ Organizations and associations arranged patriotic meetings, celebrated anniversaries. Also created were paramilitary organizations, named after Polish heroes (e.g. Kościuszko Guard, Knights of King John III Sobieski etc.).

An immigrant from Scranton, Pa. wrote to his parents with pride: "In America [...] societies have Polish flags and Polish Armies in uniforms, armed, and with music, they prink and play Polish marches and make a Polish parade in town, because here it is allowed [...] An old man who saw the Polish army cried when seeing all this, since it is the same as at times of Polish kings".⁸ In May 1910 delegates representing many Polish ethnic organizations gathered in Washington, during the Polish National Congress. An issued resolution read: "We, Poles, have a right for independent, national existence and to pursue political independence for our Motherland we consider our sacred duty".⁹

It is estimated that before 1914 about 2,5 million people left Polish partitioned land for America. Migration contributed significantly to the rise of their national consciousness.

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People were broadening their knowledge about Poland, their nationality, interiorized national ideologies of Polish gentry, used symbols identical to the ones used in Poland. Ethnic press had always a large section on Old Country's history, and devoted a lot of space to European events, propagating nationalism, patriotism.¹⁰ Different organizations were competing "to rule the souls" of immigrants. Political elites, Polonia's leaders established a catalogue of ideas and disputed issues, to which peasant immigrants had to refer to, and within which they were functioning.¹¹ The regaining of Polish independence meant a heightened prestige for Polish ethnic groups in the US and strengthened their position in American society. This is why, during the war one could notice so much activity in Polish American communities.

WAR

Summarizing Polonia's activity during the war M. B. Biskupski reminded us recently: "Poles had no government and no army. Second, they were trifurcated among three governments – the partitioning powers. More accurately there were five possible centers of Polish political coalescence: Austrian, German and Russian Poland and two major emigrant communities: Western Europe (top-heavy, especially as the war progressed) [...] and North America [...] Third, there was no general Polish policy regarding the war, but rather several policies, the two most significant being contradictory".¹² Among Poles in Europe and in America this meant a political factionalism.¹³ In 1912 and 1914 among Poles crystallized major political camps. The first was the Committee of National Defence (CND). Struggling for Polish independence CND wanted to follow directives from the political coalition existing in Poland and Joseph Pilsudski. The second camp, later known as the Polish National Department (PND) acted jointly with the Polish National Democrats. Ideological conflicts, personal ambitions and antipathies caused conflicts between organizations. Generally one might say Polonia's right wing associated with the anti-German Polish National Democrats camp supporting the pro-Entente option. The left and the center (liberals, socialists, anticlerical intelligentsia) supported rather Pilsudskites and his anti-czarist policy (which in Europe forced them to collaborate with Austria). Newspapers offered easy platitudes and simple, often demagogic explanations. In the estimation of adversaries their opponents were either "filomoscovites", "puppets in German hands", "socialist bugs", or "parish activities from the camp of the boor". An immigrant, often lost in these disputes and often personal quarrels, became even more determined

to follow his local leader, a person whom he trusted. Let us look closer at the political scene.

Committee of National Defence

When the Balkan war erupted, in November 1912 in Austrian Poland, the Provisional Commission of Confederated Independence Parties (PCCIP) was created. This umbrella organization, grouped major political factions active in Austrian Poland. The Polish Military Fund was established to support independence struggles and Joseph Pilsudski troops to struggle against Russia. In the USA, in Pittsburgh, 16 December 1912, the Polish-American Left (Alliance of Polish Socialists - APS¹⁴) took initiative regarding the expected war, and established a Committee of National Defence (CND) "to support by all possible means the movement for an uprising against Russia, the greatest enemy of Poland, the embodiment of oppression, cultural imperialism, barbarity and ignorance".¹⁵ Major ethnic organizations joined, such as the Polish Falcons, PNA, Polish Roman Catholic Union (PRCU), Polish Women's Alliance.¹⁶

However, when in Poland National Democrats had abandoned the PCCIP to establish a competing camp, many organizations in America acted identically. In June 1913 PRCU first withdraw from CND, PNA left it in the summer of 1914.

When the war started in Europe and Pilsudski's troops indeed entered Russian Poland, CND activated its local committees. Funds were collected. During the years 1915-1917, CND was supporting Pilsudski by raising an average of \$70000 per year (vs. \$31000 when all fraternal were affiliated!).¹⁷ Despite CND's "ultra-American position" when in 1917 the USA entered the war, it was brought under the Espionage and Sedition Act (its political adversaries depicted it either as the leftist, bolshevik or Austrian-German junkers' agentur, or both), and lost its position.¹⁸ M. B. Biskupski argues, this meant the victory of the establishment over the "outsiders" (meaning more recent immigrants, supporting ideas transplanted from Europe, socialists, obviously ostracized by the middle class, members of the Polish National Catholic Church - PNCC). It was a triumph of those who controlled most of the press and fraternal groups, people such as Chicago banker Jan Smulski, or, say, Józef Sawicki, a judge from Cleveland.¹⁹

Relief actions

In the years 1914-1916 Polonia's activity was dominated by charity activities. While disagreeing with CND's pro-Legions agitation, many groups established their own funds to support the independence struggle. In PRCU's case it was the

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Polish National Council (PNC) which would coordinate efforts. Originally its actions were limited to relief and charity, to being "homeland's reserve".²⁰ In New York a Women's Committee with famous opera singer Marcelina Sembrich Kochanska was amassing money. It influenced the creation of the American Polish Relief Committee which collected significant sums of money (by May 1915 it had gathered \$180,000).

On 12 October 1914 the Central Polish Committee (later Central Polish Relief Committee CPRC) was created²¹ to organize and coordinate relief for Polish territories. It controlled funds of the organizations that joined (PNA, PRCU among them), and established links with a General Committee for Assistance to War Victims in Poland (GCA, formed by H. Sienkiewicz and I.J. Paderewski in January 1915 in Vevey, Switzerland). As early as November 1, 1914, CPRC addressed the American society, describing tragic living conditions in Poland and asking for food and material assistance.

The arrival in the US of I.J. Paderewski (as GCA's delegate) in Spring 1915 intensified relief actions. In the years 1915-1916 Paderewski counseled American Polonia to limit activity to fund raising. In a speech on 22 May 1915 he declared: "I am coming here [...] to ask you for help for women, the elderly, children, for support to widows and orphans, for grain for people deprived of any belongings, robbed farmers, for bread for a hungry throng of Polish workers".²² The General Committee in Switzerland became a central institution, coordinating works of local committees (most in America). Ethnic organizations and communities contributed funds to the GCA as well. PNCC's Third Synod already in 1914 decided "to collect among parishioners a minimal tax to be used to help our brothers in the Old Country".²³ In Leviston, Mass., textile workers sent to Lausanne \$146, their colleagues from Adams collected \$514,73 "to help our countrymen in the homeland".²⁴

In America the tragedy of the population of the Polish lands became an important public issue. Kochanska's Committee managed to increase interest in starving Poland among prominent American politicians, members of the establishment (such as John P. Morgan Jr., and Andrew Carnegie). The Rockefeller Foundation organized the import of grain from Russia to some parts of the German-occupied Kingdom of Poland. Delegates of Polish organizations tried to persuade American authorities to support relief actions. The Polish Falcons met with president Wilson in February 1915. Seeking an expansion of relief efforts, CPRC presented Wilson with a memorandum regarding help for victims of war in Poland. Herbert Hoover declared he could also run a relief operation

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for Poland. Similar to charitable actions directed to help innocent war victims in Belgium, the relief works organized for Poland started.²⁵ Following the US Senate's resolution (17 December 1915) Wilson proclaimed a day of help for Poland, 12 July 1916.²⁶ Until autumn 1916 the Polish lobby, guided by I.J. Paderewski and his wife Helen, achieved big political success in organizing help for Poland. The Paderewskis were the most dynamic relief workers in the USA. Among immigrants they created the National American Committee of the Polish Victims' Relief Fund, which collected food and clothing for the needy. Helen Paderewski patronized the activity of the Polish White Cross (an equivalent of the Red Cross). From October 12, 1914, to the end of December 1918 the CPRC sent to Vevey a sum of \$351138.²⁷ The success was political as well, because through its sufferings Poland received much international attention. Again, however, the British blockade prevented efforts to import food into Poland. Nonetheless, whatever reached Poland either through church or other channels was of great value for the devastated country and its population.²⁸

During the years 1916-1917 Paderewski decided that American Polonia should start struggling for Polish independence. Paderewski was vice-president of the Central Polish Agency in Switzerland, and honorary president of CPRC, and he bridged both organizations. Since August, a National Department (ND, PCRC's central organ), became the core of pro-Entente-oriented Polish politicians. When formed, the ND intensified this orientation's propaganda campaigns. Poland had to be free, independent and "whole". The political climate was more favorable, since the summer of 1916 – when the US government started to abandon the policy of neutrality, Paderewski was also popularizing the Polish political "Cause" in the American forum.

Political activity

Polish ethnic organizations were trying to reach president Wilson and other American politicians, and for this they produced various documents and petitions regarding Polish issues. Such was the memorandum of the Polish Falcons presented on 10 February 1915. The president, while still proclaiming American neutrality, promised that the Polish cause would be taken up in the eventual peace negotiations. How a neutral country could assure this was, of course, not clear. In another memorandum (4 July 1915) CND criticized Prussian and Russian policy in Polish territories, and in 1916 it presented other documents.²⁹ Some authors were trying to reach the American audience in English-language pamphlets.³⁰

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From 1915 on, however, when evaluating Polish issues, president Wilson relied instead on opinions and advice from ND's politicians. Jan Smulski, a leading ND figure, gained access to the White House. The popularity and position of Paderewski helped him to contact prominent American figures in the State Department, and the president's close advisor Edward M. House, who had been under the pianist's influence and charm since November 1915. E. Kusielewicz,³¹ J. Wedrowski³² and other researchers have stressed the importance of Paderewski's statements and memoranda presented to the administration in 1916 for establishing a climate generally favourable for Poland. Paderewski won Wilson for the "Polish Cause".³³ There was no direct link, however, with the president's statement in the Senate that "statesmen everywhere are agreed that there should be a united, independent, and autonomous Poland".³⁴ Paderewski's memorandum on the matter reached the president after the text of his Senate speech was already prepared. T. Radzik summarizes: "In general the United States' position, and - more importantly - president Wilson's one, was favourable for Poland's future and for Polish territorial postulates, and that caused Poles in America to build big hopes on the activity of American diplomacy. To which extent was the position of American diplomacy influenced by the pressure American Polonia made on president Wilson, is another matter. It does not seem that the activity of Polish politicians influenced importantly trends of American policy, similarly opinions of scholars from the Inquiry did not have impact on it. Paderewski's (and to some extent Roman Dmowski's) very spectacular activity in the USA, his personal contacts [...] raised expectations greater than the real results they brought [...] in Wilson's political conceptions the Polish cause was not a subject, but constituted just one element of his global vision of post-war order".³⁵ Not before America's entering the war could Poles hope for the realization of their political ambitions. America's war goals were presented to the public as an attempt to restore justice in Europe, and one of the biggest injustices ever made were the partitions of Poland.

Military efforts

Not long after the war had broken out, there were attempts in the US to organize some military actions (e.g. in 1915). In October 1916 some Polish volunteers were trained in Toronto. In March 1917 the Alliance of Polish Falcons with PNA's help, set up the Polish military college in Cambridge Springs, Pa. Next month (4 April 1917) Paderewski submitted an idea of creating in the USA a Polish Army (Kościuszko Army) of 100,000 soldiers. Its formation would "gain political

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leverage for himself with the Americans, and stimulate the creation of some exile government for the Poles," argues M.B. Biskupski.³⁶ In Europe the issue of Polish manpower was rised on both sides of the front line, when France, Germany and Austria faced growing difficulties. When the February Revolution toppled the tsarist regime, there no longer were any obstacles preventing France and England from taking political initiatives on the "Polish Cause". On 4 June 1917, president Raymond Poincaré issued a decree about the formation in France of an autonomous Polish Army (from Polish prisoners and volunteers from many countries). To represent Polish interests in the allied countries, in August 1917 the Polish National Committee (PNC) was constituted in Paris; the new Polish Army was subordinated to it as well. France, England, and later the US government recognized the PNC as "the official Polish organization" (10 November 1917). The core of Polish pro-Entente politics was definitely located in Europe.³⁷ The American PCRC supported these initiatives both financially and politically. When a Polish-French military mission with Waclaw Gasiorowski arrived in the USA, the recruitment to the Polish Army ("Blue Army") was backed by prominent and highly respected Poles, Paderewski among them. Starting October 6 immigrants who were not US citizens could enter the Army. The Polish Military Commission organized this recruitment, which continued after the armistice, and 22,395 volunteers joined the Army by 12 March 1919. This was the most spectacular and remembered American Polonia contribution during the war. Trained in a camp at Niagra-on-the-Lake, Ontario, the 20,720 soldiers left for European battlefields. The "Americans" made up almost one-third of the whole Polish force.³⁸ When in April 1919 the army was transferred from France to Poland, in two corps it counted 70,000 soldiers, very modernly equipped; it also had 7 airplane squads (the whole Polish army counted 170,000). The "Blue Army", writes military historian M. Zgórnjak, "significantly contributed to the rise and modernization of the military potential of the Second Republic". In 1919 it fought on the eastern front in Poland, participated in the preparations for war against Germany, and in January 1920 it entered Pomerania.³⁹

AFTER THE WAR

Political efforts

Equally important to the war effort was support given by Polish Americans to the Polish state after the armistice. Paderewski was the Polish representative during the peace conference; many organizations (including CND) tried to reach American authorities, and American delegates in the conference, and shape positively their attitudes toward Polish bor-

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ders.⁴⁰ Conflicts in Central-Eastern Europe after the war caused emigrants to act jointly. In the USA such was the result of the Polish-Soviet war. In August 1920, when the independence of the country was seriously jeopardized by the bolsheviks, Polish communities mobilized organizing meetings, protests, etc. In Cleveland speeches were given in Gray Armory Hall by people from such otherwise distant political camps as ND (Józef Sawicki), and CND (Stanislaw Dangel). Sawicki's words – "let us show solidarity [...] now in particular, when enemies want to ruin Poland" – met with everyone's enthusiasm.⁴¹

Charities

In the summer of 1918, during the Emigration Diet in Detroit, Paderewski bitterly said to the delegates: "What has the wealthy Polish emigration in America done? What has it offered [to Poland]? Little, very little, ruthlessly little, and shamelessly little... For charity it has given about \$120,000 ... each year, less than 12 cents per capita. When I think about it, I blush, I am ashamed for you, I have such right and there is a reason for it".⁴² Paderewski petitioned the collection of 10 million dollars to create the so-called National Fund. The idea was accepted and a national tax was established. It was estimated that everyone who earned \$1200 annually would contribute \$6 yearly to the fund. The sums were to be transferred to war victims in Poland. ND and Smulski received Washington's acceptance for the collection of funds to support Polish victims of the war, and indeed, the 10 Million Dollars Fund became the main source for material and political help for the "Polish Cause". Until February 1921 however, when the campaign finally ended, despite major efforts less than half of the goal was collected. The pro-Polish actions among Polonia started to become less popular.⁴³ As early as August 1918, some voices in Cleveland raised protests against payment of the so called national tax. In the beginning of 1919 some groups of the Alliance of Poles in America demanded that "the five cents tax for the national cause be banned".⁴⁴ The pastor of Cleveland's St. Stanislaus parish said: "You supported the government here by buying bonds because you were forced to. Nobody can force you to pay the [Polish] national tax".⁴⁵

The American government's decision to establish relief action for Europe, pressed Polonia to act as well: either by persuading the US administration that Poland should be included in its relief program, or organizing its own actions. During the first months after the war's end, due to the efforts of ND and Jan Smulski in particular, aid organized by American agencies and the Red Cross was directed to Poland as

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well. ND contributed financially. After the war, the Polish White Cross, Women's Relief Section, various political and social organizations were transferring money to Poland. Bishop P. Rhode for example, supported Polish clergy in Poland. The Polish National Catholic Church in September established (or imposed) on its members a tax of 1 dollar a year which would help to organize material help for Poland. CND established a "Hungry Fund" etc.⁴⁶

Finally, of great importance was individual help. Since the beginning of mass migration to America, the flow of money back to Poland was the first effect of migration. Sums from abroad were spent on immediate needs; they stabilized small properties; had an impact on distribution of landholding; increased wages in the agriculture.⁴⁷ After WWI, when postal communication with Poland was reestablished, Polish emigrants, following tradition, were mailing money to their families and relatives in private letters. About 70% of money transfers went via American banks (first via private banks and agencies). However, these institutions were often not reliable.⁴⁸ In the middle of 1919, it was decided that Polish consulates in the USA would transfer sums of money for Polish emigrants: about \$26 million were transferred, 10% of the total. Finally, people were also bringing money when visiting the Old Country.⁴⁹ Since 1923, money orders could be used. For devastated Poland, the estimated 200 millions sent made a very significant contribution.⁵⁰

Return migration and the economic reconstruction of Poland

The rebirth of Poland forced people abroad to redefine themselves. An instruction issued for Polonia tax collectors said: Poland would need "healthy and honest Polish hands and heads for its reconstruction". The homeland called Poles from abroad to return.⁵¹ An obvious consequence of such (and similar) propaganda should have been returns.⁵²

Homesickness, strengthened by the communications break throughout the war, and patriotic propaganda helped assure that in the years 1919-1921 many people seriously thought about returning: "... among Polish migrants, the return to Poland is now the most favourable theme of debates and disputes," reported the press. Many people were confused: "now, after this war a man does not know what to do, many went home and they have already come back".⁵³ In reality, a small number – 100,000 persons – returned to Poland between 1919 and 1924: people wanted to see the Old Country, to help relatives, and to boast of one's success before former neighbors. These seem to have been among the most common reasons. People were also disposed to return by the decline in industrial production in the USA and

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recession which had been deepest in the years 1920-21, accompanied by a sharp decline in savings amassed by the immigrants.

Pre-war returns to Poland were, to use F. P. Cerase's terms for Italians those of conservatives, of failure or of retirement. After the war a concept of the "return of innovation" appeared as well, which was propagated by journalists and politicians, and ideologically based on the issue of Polish independence.⁵⁴ The Polish village lacked "knowledge, organizational skill". One should "collect and bring to Poland descriptions of the US economy". Agricultural courses, experimental farms, a professional agricultural press would be established, and the Alliance of Polish Farmers, created in the USA, would help returnees: "to reconstruct the country, to raise the productivity of Polish soil, to import new tools and cattle must be the first commendments of a Polish peasant in America".⁵⁵

Another, more often publicized type of return, was the one propagated in order to organize and/or construct Polish industry. Capital ought to be accumulated in the USA, and it would allow cooperatives and corporations to be created. Their activity would be transferred to Poland. Here also Poland was described as the backward country of poverty, destruction, and a lack of bread.⁵⁶ Lacking "industrial life" Poland needed "working people".⁵⁷ Among Polish migrants, a specific image of a future Poland was also beginning to crystallize: a free, democratic, and just country. It was assumed, moreover, that their country, destroyed by the war and deprived of industry, awaited the emigrants' initiative. Return to their homeland was viewed as almost a pioneer crusade of progress. Stanislaw Lubienski, who went back to Poland in 1923 wrote: "I limited myself to two problems: one was to propagate the idea of good organization of work, the so-called scientific management, as the things which one might have learned from America, and which here [in Poland] would bring material success and would help the Polish worker become more efficient and very useful." Patriotic watchwords called for the reconstruction of the home landscape, whereby simultaneously – it was reminded – for industrial developers Poland could be – it was said – "a promised land": "You will help Poland industrially, but you will not do wrong to yourself either." Patriotism of "organic work" watch-words were thus mixed with visions of amassing fortunes. People were reminded of legends of American millionaires' fortunes – "Try, and you might be one as well".⁵⁸ Such was the propaganda emanating from some political circles of Polish-Americans, from economic groups. Such was the picture presented by the contemporary ethnic press.⁵⁹

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Among 200 corporations and associations created as a result of such slogans, there were ship companies, construction and building firms, trade, export companies and associations, machine industry etc.⁶⁰ The biggest of them was probably the Polish Mechanics' Association in/from America.⁶¹

Many persons became convinced that the return to Poland might mean material success, a rescue of their savings.⁶² They partly yielded to the general mood of a pilgrimage to their native land, abandoned years before. What they had not realized was what it meant to return. It soon became evident, that the imagined Poland and the real one, were not one and the same. The history of return migration from America to Poland after World War I is a history of the sudden failure of a myth which had originated in and was created among the Polish communities in America. It was a dream of an affluent peasants' Poland, of a modernized, American-like country. Attempts to transplant innovations from America to the Old Country failed. In reality neither the returnees nor the inhabitants of Poland were prepared and able to fulfill such a task.⁶³ The great majority of them went bankrupt or disappeared. Schemes to help the homeland after independence met with moderate success at best.

EMIGRANTS FOR THEMSELVES

Post-war events also had another dimension, this one important for Polonia: political options dominant among Poles in America were very different from the ones rising to the top in Poland. In Poland, Joseph Pilsudski became the leading political figure; in the US his political friends lost, Paderewski and ND leaders during the war supported the National Democrats.⁶⁴ Poland and American Polonia "were out-of-synchronization. This incompatibility helps explain why Polonia so rapidly lost interest in Polish affairs after 1919," writes M.B. Biskupski.⁶⁵ Gen. Haller's soldiers returned from Poland "depressed, disillusioned". Other failed reemigrants returning from Poland described their various and usually bad experiences.⁶⁶

After the war, during the National Department diets, the slogan "Everything for Poland", and "Let us help Poland first of all" prevailed. But it was the ideology of ethnicity and the slogan "The Emigrants for themselves" which finally got accepted. Their interests were in concentrating on internal affairs in America, defending the Polish language and culture, participating in American political and social life. In 1919 during the Diet in Buffalo it was said: "a Polish worker in America has been and will be loyal to the United States".⁶⁷ In 1920 J. Sawicki characterized as demagogic the slogan: "We

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either go with the Polish government or against it." Sawicki countered, "one cannot talk about going with or against Polish government because it is not Poland here".⁶⁸ In 1921 PNA abandoned ND. Its leaders were convinced that the fate of Poland should not interest the Alliance any longer. Work in the USA now became most important.⁶⁹ In 1923 presiding at the IV Emigration Diet in Cleveland, Sawicki said that in 1918 "generously we all forgot about ourselves. We were altruists and patriots. Free Poland was our dream. Help given to Polish people our duty [...] It is now high time to think about ourselves. There is so much to do" in America.⁷⁰ PRCU decided in 1923 to sell immediately "bonds of Polish State Loan or to exchange them into American ones".⁷¹ PNA closed its Commission of National Fund replacing it with the Commission for Propagating Nationalization. Money from the national fund was used "to obtain here for us and our children a real equality of rights".⁷² In 1925 during an Emigration Congress J. W. Śliwinski said firmly "we must take care of our own businesses here in the country". Poles as American citizens should "participate in American life equally with other groups." These words were not a postulate: they characterized a current situation.⁷³

Remembering the words of M.B. Biskupski ("Not only were the Poles the least significant actor in the drama of regaining their own independence, but the role allowed them only appeared when the major belligerents themselves became increasingly objects rather than subjects in the war")⁷⁴ we should conclude that American Polonia's contribution to the independence of the country was significant. Taken separately neither diplomatic efforts, nor the recruits sent to the Army, nor even financial contributions would be too spectacular. Taken together, however, and understood in the circumstances, American Polonia's impact on and its help for the old country and its people between 1914-1923 were not and certainly could not be decisive, but they were nonetheless significant. And finally, it is apparent with historical hindsight that the war and postwar events were equally, if not more important for social and ideological changes within Polonia itself.⁷⁵

NOTES

¹ The complexity of the problem is stressed by Mieczysław B. Biskupski, "The Diplomacy of Polish Independence, 1914-1918," *The Polish Review* 35(1990), no 1, pp. 5-6; Mieczysław B. Biskupski, *American Polonia and the resurrection of Independent Poland, 1914-1919*, The Fiodorczyk Lecture, Polish Studies Center, Central Connecticut State University, 1989, p. 3

² Ewa Morawska, "Changing Images of the Old Country in the Development of Ethnic Identity among East European Immigrants,

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1880s-1930s: A Comparison of Jewish and Slavic Representations," *YIVO Annual of the Social Science*, 29(1994), pp. 291-298.

³ On the literature on the subject cf. M. B. Biskupski, "The Diplomacy," and *American Polonia*; Marian Zgórnjak, "Polonia amerykańska wobec problemu niepodległości w czasie I wojny światowej," in: *Polonia amerykańska. Przeszłość i współczesność*, H. Kubiak., E. Kusielewicz, T. Gromada eds, Wrocław-Warszawa 1988. F.

⁴ Stasik, "Gmina Zjednoczenia Emigracji Polskiej w Chicago (1866-1880)," *Zeszyty Naukowe Wydziału Humanistycznego Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego*, no 6, Historia (Gdańsk: 1977), p. 67.

⁵ Zgórnjak, "Polonia amerykańska," pp. 727-728; Lech Trzeciakowski, "Rola emigracji polskiej w walce o niepodległość," in: *Polonia wobec niepodległości Polski w czasie I wojny światowej*, H. Florkowska-Francić, M. Francić, H. Kubiak eds., Wrocław-Warszawa 1979, pp. 13-27; Florian Stasik, "W sprawie wkładu Polonii amerykańskiej w odzyskanie niepodległości," in: *Ibidem*, pp. 225-226; Morawska, "Changing Images," p. 285.

⁶ Stanisław Osada, *Historia Związku Narodowego Polskiego* (Chicago, 1956) Vol. 1, p. 205.

⁷ Krzysztof Groniowski, "'Czwarta Dzielnica': Zadania Polonii amerykańskiej wobec kraju (do 1918 r.)," *Przegląd Zachodni* 1983, no 1, pp. 28-29, 31; Krzysztof Groniowski, "Polonia Amerykańska a Narodowa Demokracja," *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 1972, no 1, p. 24.

⁸ Witold Kula, Nina Assorodobraj-Kula, Marcin Kula, eds. *Listy emigrantów z Brazylii i Stanów Zjednoczonych. 1890-1891* [Letters of Emigrants from Brazil and the United States 1890-1891] (Warszawa: LSW, 1973) [hereafter quoted Kula, Listy], p. 114.

⁹ Adam Olszewski, *Historia Związku Narodowego Polskiego* (Chicago, 1957), Vol. 2, p. 172. Quoted after Andrzej Brozek, *Polish-Americans, 1854-1939* (Warsaw: Interpress, 1985), translated by Wojciech Worsztynowicz, p. 135.

¹⁰ Morawska, "Changing Images," p. 283; Kula, *Listy emigrantów*, pp. 113-115.

¹¹ Hearing sophisticated, contradictory arguments regarding the political place and role of Diaspora, migrants often followed their local bosses, whom they trusted. Cf. Danuta Piatkowska-Kozlik, *Związek Socjalistów Polskich w Ameryce (1900-1914)* (Opole: Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna, 1992), *Studia i Monografie*, no 199, pp. 29-30.

¹² Biskupski, "War and the Diplomacy," p. 6.

¹³ This aspect is stressed by Jacek J. Wedrowski, *Stany Zjednoczone a odrodzenie Polski. Polityka Stanów Zjednoczonych wobec sprawy polskiej w latach 1916-1919* (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1980), p. 19; also Biskupski, *American Polonia*, p. 4-6.

¹⁴ Mary Cygan, *Political and Cultural Leadership in an Immigrant Community: Polish American Socialism, 1880-1950*, Ph. D. Diss. North-western University December 1989, Evanston, p. 18, 47.

¹⁵ *Konstytucja Komitetu Obrony Narodowej* (Chicago: KON, 1913), quoted after Mirosław Francić, *Komitet Obrony Narodowej w Ameryce 1912-1918* (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1983), p. 14.

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¹⁶ Francić, *Komitet*, pp. 25-26, 14.

¹⁷ Norbert Barlicki, *Aleksander Debski. Życie i działalność 1857-1935* (Warszawa 1935), pp. 136-138. Witold Ścibor-Rylski and a dozen of other people went to Europe to fight Pilsudski's Legions. Francić, *Komitet*, p. 220.

¹⁸ Francić, *Komitet*, pp. 181-182, 191, 194-97; demonstrating the solidarity with the American efforts KON promoted Liberty Loans, War Savings, Stamps etc.; Cygan, *Political and Cultural*, 112-113.

¹⁹ M. B. Biskupski, "Bishop Hodur, the Pisudskites, and Polonia Politics of the Eve of World War I: Documents and Commentray," *PNCC Studies*, 7(1986), pp. 39-52. It was not necessarily the victory of the majority over the minority, cf. M. Cygan. op. cit.

²⁰ Osada, *Jak siekształtowała polska dusza wychodźstwa w Ameryce* (Pittsburgh, 1930), pp. 87-88.

²¹ Louis J. Zake, "The National Department and the Polish American Community 1916-1923," *Polish American Studies*, 38 (Autumn, 1981), pp. 18-25.

²² *Polonia Stanów Zjednoczonych Ameryki 1910-1918. Wybór dokumentów*, Marian M. Drozdowski, E. Kusielewicz eds., Warszawa: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1989), p. 134.

²³ *Synods of the Polish National Catholic Church 1904-1958*, compiled and edited by Casimir J. Grotnik (Boulder-New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 123-124.

²⁴ *Piast* 23 May 1915, no 21, p. 12-13, 25 July 1915, no 30, p. 7.

²⁵ Marian M. Drozdowski, "Działalność Polonii amerykańskiej w walce o niepodległość Polski w latach 1910-1918," in: *Polonia wobec*, p. 72; Biskupski, "War and the Diplomacy," p. 8. Artur Waldo, *Sokolstwo. Przednia straż narodu. Dzieje idei i organizacji w Ameryce*, (Pittsburgh: Sokół Polski, 1956), Vol. IV p. 251; *Czyn zbrojny wychodźstwa polskiego w Ameryce. Zbiór dokumentów i materiałów historycznych* (Chicago, 1957), pp. 263-265, 269-70. It was the British continental blockade, which made help enormously difficult Drozdowski, p. 74.

²⁶ *Wici*, no 67, 28 December 1915, p. 1.

²⁷ Tadeusz Radzik, *Spoleczno-ekonomiczne aspekty stosunku Polonii amerykańskiej do Polski po I wojnie światowej* (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1989), pp. 12-13.

²⁸ Part of it was reaching war victims through the Relief Committee for the War Victims administered by bishop A. Sapieha in Cracow. Some were transferred through the American consulate in Warsaw - Drozdowski, "Działalność Polonii," p. 72; Zgórnjak, "Polonia amerykańska," pp. 733-734.

²⁹ Groniowski, "Czwarta," pp. 38-39; about this subject cf. also Irena Spustek, "Działalność Polonii amerykańskiej w sprawie polskiej na przełomie lat 1916-1917. Nieznane memorialy polskie do władz amerykańskich," in *Wychodźstwo a kraj. Studia historyczne*, K. Groniowski, W. Stankiewicz eds. (Warszawa 1983, pp. 221-222, 226-7.

³⁰ Cf. eg. Artur Hausner, *The Independence of Poland as a Problem of Policy for the Culture and the Democracy of Europe and of the World*, (Chi-

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cago 1915); Feliks Mlynarski, *The Problems of the Coming Peace*, (New York 1916).

³¹ E. Kusielewicz, "Paderewski and Wilson's Speech to the Senate, January 22, 1917," *Polish American Studies*, 13(1956, no 3-4), p. 68.

³² Wdrowski, *Stany*, p. 48-50 M.B.

³³ Biskupski, "Paderewski as Leader of American Polonia, 1914-1918", *Polish American Studies* (vol. XLVIII, no 1, 1986). T. Radzik, *Polonia amerykańska wobec Polski 1918-1939* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Polonia, 1990), pp. 26-27. Wdrowski, *Stany*, p. 23; Edward R. Kantowicz, *Polish American Politics in Chicago, 1888-1940* (Chicago-London: 1975), p. 112.

³⁴ Quoted after Biskupski, "War and the Diplomacy," p. 9.

³⁵ Radzik, *Polonia amerykańska*, s. 28. Such opinion seems to be shared by M. Zgórnjak, "Polonia amerykańska," s. 735; J. Wdrowski, *Stany*, p. 88. oraz M.B. Biskupski, "Recreating Central Europe: The United States 'Inquiry' into the Future of Poland in 1918," *The International History Review*, 12(1990), no 2, pp. 249-279.

³⁶ Biskupski, "War and the Diplomacy," p. 12.

³⁷ Zgórnjak, "Polonia amerykańska," p. 738-9 Brozek, *Polonia*, pp. 144-146. Wdrowski, *Stany*, pp. 68-78.

³⁸ See Joseph Hapak, "The Polish Military Commission, 1917-1919," *Polish American Studies*, 38 (2, Autumn, 1981), 26-37; Joseph T. Hapak, "Selective Service and Polish Army Recruitment During World War I," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 10 (1991, no 4). pp. 38-60. Zygmunt Zielinski, "Wkład Polonii amerykańskiej w tworzenie polskiej siły zbrojnej w czasie I wojny światowej," *Dzieje Najnowsze*, 21 (1989, no 1), p. 26.

³⁹ Zgórnjak, "Polonia amerykańska," p. 743; P. Lossowski, *Miedzy wojna a pokojem. Niemieckie zamysły wojenne na wschodzie w obliczu Traktatu Wersalskiego, marzec-czerwiec 1919 roku* (Warszawa, 1976), pp. 172-177.

⁴⁰ Andrzej Brozek, "Polonia w Stanach Zjednoczonych a kwestia zachodnich granic odrodzonej Polski (1916-1921)," in *Polonia wobec niepodległości*, pp. 89-113. T. Radzik, *Polonia*, pp. 19-25, 90-113.

⁴¹ *Wiadomoci Codzienne*, 16 August 1920, p. 1.

⁴² *Przemówienia i sprawozdania ze Sejmu Polskiego Wychodźstwa w Ameryce odbytego w dniach 26-30 lipca 1918* (Chicago, 1918), pp. 85-86.

⁴³ Radzik, *Spoleczno-ekonomiczne*, pp. 15, 27-33. The last big effort of PND and its Women's Relief Section took place in March and April 1920. The action was called "the Easter Gift", and its aim was mainly to help children. Out of a planned \$250000 a sum of \$227296 was collected.

⁴⁴ Alliance of Poles in America, Meetings of the Executive Committee, 23 March 1919, p. 99, 26 August 1917, p. 63, 69, Vol. 3, APA Collection, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland (WRHS); Protocols from the Executive Committee meetings of the Polish Union in America, 8 October 1923, Union of Poles in America Papers, WRHS.

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⁴⁵ *Miesięcznik Parafii Św. Stanisława B.M. w Cleveland, Ohio*, 1(1918), no 5, n.p.

⁴⁶ Radzik, *Spoleczno-ekonomiczne*, pp. 13-25, 33-55.

⁴⁷ This aspect is discussed in Adam Walaszek, "Preserving or Transforming Role? Migrants and Polish Territories in the Era of the Mass Migration" in *Cultural Transfer: Continental European Migration and Transcontinental Migration to North America. A Comparative Perspective*, ed. Daniel S. Mattern (Cambridge U. Press, Cambridge).

⁴⁸ On that cf. A. Walaszek, "Miedzy Nowym Jorkiem a Gdanskim. Re-emigracja ze Stanów Zjednoczonych do Polski w latach 1910-1923," *Przegląd Polonijny*, 1979, no 3.

⁴⁹ Not without fear ("when we went from America, you know, each of us had money on him. The whole road we were so tired, not sleeping during nights, we were afraid the money would be stolen"-Voivodeship Archive in Cracow, Sad Okregowy Karny Krakowski, file 33, pp. 712-713, W. Tomacki to unknown in the USA, 15 VII 1922. Money was also often stolen from the letters cf. Archive of New Files (Warsaw), Polish Embassy in Washington Collection, no 540, pp. 54-55, and no 551, p. 1.

⁵⁰ Adam Walaszek, "Działaność przekazowo-pieniezna polskich konsulatów w Stanach Zjednoczonych w latach 1919-1922," *Studia Historyczne* 1981, no 3, pp. 409-421; Adam Walaszek, *Reemigracja ze Stanów Zjednoczonych do Polski po I wojnie światowej (1919-1924)*, Kraków 1983, p. 55; Mieczysław Szawleski, *Wychodźstwo*, p. 433. Osada, *Jak sie kształtowała*, p. 170; Radzik, *Spoleczno-ekonomiczne*, p. 132.

⁵¹ Quoted after Hieronim Kubiak, "Polozenie społeczne i ewolucja świadomości narodowej ludności polskiej w USA w latach 1900-1918," in *Polonia wobec niepodległości Polski*, p. 58.

⁵² Mark Wyman, *Round Trip to America. The Immigrants Return to Europe, 1880-1930* (Ithaca-London: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 109-110.

⁵³ *Wiadomości Codzienne*, 19 May 1922, p. 2; A. S. Świątkowski to his wife 11 June 1923, Kniola Travel Bureau Collection, Serie I, Cont.3, fold. 23, WRHS. In the USA the return movement was expected with big fear. It was expected that after the war about 300-400000 Italians, 100-150000 Greeks, 400-700000 Poles, Czechs, Jews, Russians, 300-400000 Skandinavians (mainly Finns), 150-200000 Hungarians would return and that this would cause great economic difficulties R. Hartt, "Emigration from America," *Outlook*, 29 January 1919, pp. 186-187; mss, January 1919, Records of the War Labor Policies Abroad, Industrial and Social Branch, National Archives, Washington D.C.; "Trend of Events," *Cleveland Citizen*, 2 August 1919, p. 1; Walaszek, *Reemigracja*, p. 49-50.

⁵⁴ Francesco P. Cerase, "Expectations and Reality: A Case Study of Return Migration from the United States to Southern Italy," *International Migration Review*, 8(1979), no 2, pp. 245-261; Idem, "A Study of Italian Migrants Returning from the USA," *International Migration Review*, 1(1967), pp. 67-74; Walaszek, *Reemigracja*, p. 82-93.

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⁵⁵ *Wiadomości Codzienne*, 4 January 1919, p. 2, 13 February 1919, p. 2, 15 April 1919, p. 2.

⁵⁶ *Wiadomości Codzienne*, 16 December 1920, p. 2, 2 December 1920, p. 2, 13 November 1920, 10 July 1922, p. 2; Walaszek, *Reemigracja*, p. 54-58.

⁵⁷ *Wiadomości Codzienne*, 26 March 1920, p. 2, 9 April 1920, p. 2, 22 July 1920, p. 2, 26 March 1920, p. 2, 15 July 1920, p. 1. 90% of Polish lands suffered severely during World War I. Destroyed was 1.8 million buildings, 20% of agricultural lands were not under cultivation, cf. Marian M. Drozdowski, "Gospodarka Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej," in *Polska Odrodzona 1918-1939. Państwo, społeczeństwo, kultura*, Jan Tomicki ed. (Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1982), pp. 408-409.

⁵⁸ Cf. *Wiadomości Codzienne* 26 March 1920, p. 2, 9 April 1920, p. 2, 22 July 1920, p. 2; Osada, *Jak kształtowała się*, p. 173; Palatyniec, 1921, no 1-2, p. 3; Walaszek, *Reemigracja*, pp. 82-93. Szawleski, *Wychodźstwo polskie w Stanach Zjednoczonych Ameryki* (Lwów-Warszawa 1924), p. 414.

⁵⁹ St. Lubiński to W. Gasiorowskiego, Gdynia, 24 I 1935, Ossolineum Library, Wrocław, Manuscript Division, 15288/III, p. 245.

⁶⁰ A list of them is given in my *Reemigracja*, pp. Cf. also Adam Walaszek, "Polska Żegluga Morska i inne spółki okretowe Polonii amerykańskiej po I wojnie światowej," *Przegląd Polonijny*, 5(1979), no 4.

⁶¹ Adam Walaszek, "Stowarzyszenie Mechaników Polskich w Ameryce. 1919-1945," *Przegląd Polonijny*, 12(1986, no 2), pp. 25-36. Similar actions took place among the other nationals: Slovak businessmen joined in founding a million dollar company, the Czechoslovak Commercial Corporation Jan Pankuch, *Dejiny Clevelandzkých a Lakewoodských Slovakov* (Cleveland: Pankuch Printing, 1930), p. 163-164.

⁶² Cf. Walaszek, *Reemigracja*, chapter 1 and 4. Comp. Walaszek, "Stowarzyszenie Mechaników," pp. 25-36; Walaszek, "Polska Żegluga," pp. 25-36; Walaszek, "Działalność przekazowo-pieniężna," pp. 409-420.

⁶³ Adam Walaszek, "'How was it possible to see it all in such rosy colors?' Return Migrants from the United States in Poland, 1919-1924," *Polish American Studies*, 1992, no 2; Kula, *Listy emigrantów*, pp. 110-112; Radzik, *Spoleczno-ekonomiczne*, pp. 146-155.

⁶⁴ When describing post-war situations T. Radzik stresses some other interesting aspects: "significant differences appeared regarding Polonia's attitudes toward western and eastern Polish borders. Without any doubts the question of links between the Motherland and western lands, particularly with the Upper Silesia and Gdask, rised greater interests, greater activity and generosity, then the problem of Polish Eastern lands belonging to Poland." Political influences of the National Democracy among Polish-Americans could explain such a phenomenon (traditionally as the main Polish enemy ND perceived Germans) – Radzik, *Polonia*, pp. 113-115. Anti-German sentiments among Polish Americans were already strong in 1914, when news about German occupation of Russian Poland reached the US. Polonia's sentiments strongly favored the rather pro-Entente option cf. Brozek, *Polonia*, p. 90; Francić, *Komitet*, p. 74.

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⁶⁵ Biskupski, *American Polonia*, p. 8.

⁶⁶ *Przyjaciel Ludu*, 2 December 1923, p. 9; Walaszek, *Reemigracja*, pp. 128-148, 53-64; Piatkowska, *Zwiazek*, p. 146; Walaszek, "How was it possible," *passim*.

⁶⁷ *Protokół urzędowy z obrad Drugiego Sejmu Wychodźstwa Polskiego w Buffalo odbytego w dniach od 10 do 13 listopada 1919* (Chicago 1921), p. 21; *Ratujmy przede wszystkim Polskę*, leaflet, Walkiewicz Collection, Polish Museum and Archive, Polish Roman Catholic Union in America, Chicago.

⁶⁸ Rezolucja Zjazdu Rady Nadzorczej Wydziału Narodowego Polskiego, 17 XI 1920, leaflet, AMW, no. 1012, pp. 94-95.

⁶⁹ Olszewski, *Historia*, Vol. 3, pp. 362-363; *Urzędowy protokół Sejmu XXIII Związku Narodowego Polskiego odbytego w dniach 26 września - 1 października 1921 w Toledo, Ohio* (Chicago 1922), p. 165.

⁷⁰ *Protokół Sejmu IV Wychodźstwa Polskiego w Ameryce, odbytego w dniach 16, 17, 18 kwietnia 1923 w Cleveland, Ohio* (Chicago 1923), pp. 3-4, 44-54.

⁷¹ Union of Poles in America, Meetings of the Executive Board, 8 October 1923, WRHS.

⁷² *Urzędowy Protokół Sejmu XXIV Związku Narodowego Polskiego, odbytego w dniach 25-go do 30-go sierpnia 1924 w Lulu Temple w mieście Philadelphia, Pa.* (Chicago 1925), pp. 3-25.

⁷³ *Kongres Wychodźstwa Polskiego w Ameryce. Odezwy, mowy, referaty, rezolucje, uchwały oraz urzędowy protokół odbyty w dniach 21-23 V 1925 w Detroit, Mich.* (Chicago 1925), p. 16.

⁷⁴ Biskupski, "War and the Diplomacy," p. 6.

⁷⁵ Zgórnjak, "Polonia," p. 744; Radzik, *Polonia amerykańska*, pp. 113-115; Kubiak, "Polozenie," pp. 60-61.

Poljski iseljenici u SAD-u i njihova domovina 1914.-1923.

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Pokret oslobađanja Poljske od triju carstava koja su je podijelila u XVIII. stoljeću počeo je u Sjedinjenim Državama osamdesetih godina XIX. stoljeća i iako je bio razdiran podjelama, različite iseljeničke skupine uspjele su se ujediniti u vrijeme Prvoga svjetskog rata kako bi ostvarile svoj cilj. Štoviše, američki Poljaci su nastavili djelatno podržavati novu Poljsku do 1923., slanjem velikih novčanih iznosa svojoj uskrnuljoj državi, vraćanjem 100.000 Poljaka iz SAD-a u domovinu te ulaganjem u više od 200 novih poduzeća. Svi ti čimbenici pomogli su postaviti Poljsku na čvršće privredno postolje, pa su tako američki Poljaci puno pridonijeli oslobađanju svoje domovine u vrijeme i odmah nakon Prvoga svjetskog rata.

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Polnische Auswanderer in den USA und ihre Heimat in den Jahren 1914–1923

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Die Befreiungsbewegung zur Erlösung Polens von der Fremdherrschaft dreier Kaiserreiche, die das Land im 18. Jahrhundert dreigeteilt hatten, nahm in den 80er Jahren des 19. Jahrhunderts in den USA ihren Anfang. Trotz innerer Zerwürfnisse gelang es den verschiedenen Einwanderergruppen, während des Ersten Weltkriegs geeint aufzutreten, um ihr Ziel zu verwirklichen. Überdies führen die amerikanischen Polen bis zum Jahre 1923 fort, das neue Polen aktiv zu unterstützen, indem sie große Geldbeträge an den neugegründeten Staat überwiesen, 100.000 polnische Einwanderer repatriierten und in die Neugründung von über 200 Unternehmen investierten. All dies verhalf dem polnischen Staat zur Festigung seiner wirtschaftlichen Grundlagen, und man kann sagen, daß die amerikanischen Polen in der Zeit des Ersten Weltkriegs sowie kurz danach einen großen Beitrag zur Befreiung ihres Landes geleistet haben.