

# **For Independence. Year 1914 – Institute of National Remembrance’s exhibition**

**“For Independence. Year 1914”**

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**August 6th-October 12th, 2017**

**the Great Courtyard**

Institute of National Remembrance’s open-air exhibition entitled “For Independence. Year 1914” commemorating the military operations of the Polish Legions in the First World War shall open in the Great Courtyard of the Royal Castle in Warsaw – Museum on August 6, 2017. This day marks the 103rd anniversary of the First Cadre Company marching from Oleandry near Cracow. The presentation fits the celebration of the Józef Piłsudski Year, which was announced in accord with a resolution made by the Polish Sejm to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth. The ceremony will be accompanied by a performance of the Representative Orchestra of the Polish Army, who will play a set of Polish Legions’ tunes, and a presentation given by the Historical Reenactment Group of the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment of the First Brigade of the Polish Legions.

The co-author of the exhibition, Jerzy Kirszak, PhD, wrote:

On August 6, 1914, the First Cadre Company, which was the first regular detachment of the Polish Army since the January Uprising, marched out of Cracow. The following years brought such historical changes as the joyous November of 1918, triumphant August of 1920, tragic September of 1939, hypocritical February of 1945 (which resulted in the almost half a century of subjugation of Central and Eastern Europe) and the hopeful June of 1989.

A nation with nearly 1000 years of tradition of statehood and 150 years’ experience of partitions and struggle for independence should, for the sake of its future, look for hints in the great moments of its past. One such event was the military action undertaken by Józef Piłsudski in 1914 and its consequences.

Józef Piłsudski, who did not want “the Polish sabre to be missing from the scales of fate balancing over our heads, scales on which swords have been thrown”, transformed the Polish cause into an European issue. Since he had predicted that the first of the three partitioning empires to drop out of the game would be the Tsarist Russia – which would be defeated by the Central Powers, i.e. Austria Hungary and Germany, which would later fall to the Anglo-French (or Anglo-Franco-American) coalition – he had indicated the direction that his soldiers would have to take.

Initially, due to the indifference of the majority of the public and lack of understanding of his idea, he could only count on a handful of his riflemen. This army laid unlimited trust in him and believed that he would lead them to a successful struggle for independence for the whole of Poland, which had been divided by its rapacious neighbours. The riflemen who became the legionnaires would turn out to be the spark that would cause an uprising. Their effort and struggle led to the gradual extension of pro-independence activities, which, along with the end of the

Great War that Piłsudski had predicted, gave Poland its freedom.

Kazimierz Sosnkowski, inseparable from Piłsudski, co-author and co-executor as well as his deputy, wrote the following passage characterising the soldiers of the Polish Legions: "This was a collection of fervent, noble young men animated by a limitless love of ideals, which is rarely found in history, ready for any sacrifice, selfless, devoid of any thought of honour, rank, remuneration, personal career. It was a joyful army, eager to sing, full of liveliness as seen on Kossak's canvases".

The exhibition has been prepared by the Public Education Office of the Wrocław branch of the Institute of National Remembrance in 2014. The presentation of the exhibition at the Royal Castle will be accompanied by educational classes for school groups carried out by the Institute of National Remembrance from September 12th to October 12th. They will involve a historical and artistic workshop titled "Poster for Independence" (if interested, please contact: tel. **22 581 86 75**, e-mail: [Pawel.Rokicki@ipn.gov.pl](mailto:Pawel.Rokicki@ipn.gov.pl)).

**Admission free**