



NEWSLETTER

INDEPENDENCE DAY

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EDITORIAL

The National Independence Day is the most important Polish national holiday, or so the story goes. On 11 November 1918, after 123 years of captivity, we regained our independence.

After years of partitions, national uprisings, struggles and efforts in various fields, owing to our steadfastness, patriotism and heroism, we managed to regain our freedom. Józef Piłsudski, "First Marshal of Poland", played an enormous role in Poland's recovery of sovereignty. The date of 11 November was announced a national holiday in 1937. Since 1939 to 1989, celebration of the holiday was forbidden. After the collapse of the communist government, the holiday has become a red letter day.

Major celebrations, attended by Polish State authorities, are held in Warsaw at Piłsudski Square. Sharply at noon, the ceremonious change of guards takes place before the Tomb to the Unknown Soldier. Patriotic gatherings and parades are held all over Poland. Churches celebrate masses with the intentions of the Homeland. Since 1989 every year several thousands of volunteers have taken part in the Race of Independence to commemorate the day.

Sounds like an entry in an encyclopaedia? Well, it is because it is. The real picture of the day has been provided by our students, for whom 11 November is also a very important day.

In the spirit of anniversaries and jubilees (Linguaton is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year), we have asked our students to tell us what they think of the day and of us, Poles. You will find their opinions below. And while they seem as different as chalk and cheese, there is no doubt that the spirit of patriotism and a sense of Polishness permeates their views. Reading them in English is simply an added value which you – students of Linguaton – can now enjoy.

On behalf of all staff members,

Aneta Jawinewska

IN THIS ISSUE:

- ✘ Polish Pride – Katarzyna Radzik
- ✘ The Poles-Land – Łukasz Daniel
- ✘ Poland. What is that country like? Joanna Skawińska
- ✘ Independence Day in Poland – Katarzyna Butkiewicz
- ✘ Independence Day in Poland – Anna Mitrus
- ✘ The Independent Day as I See It – Magdalena Kostecka
- ✘ Why We don't Really Celebrate our Independence Day – Paweł Wójcik
- ✘ Enjoy! It's Our Independence Day – Wojciech Banaszek
- ✘ Towards a Happy Independence Day – Małgorzata Basak



Polish Pride – KATARZYNA RADZIK

There are basically five reasons to be proud of being Polish (except vodka, beautiful girls, and sausage...):

- First, it is difficult to find another country in Europe where the national holiday is celebrated in a similar way! When you take part in the only proper demonstration, you can meet three other equally unique and proper marches and get hit with a brick in the head (of course incidentally...)
- Second, we are a nation of individualists – there is almost nothing we can do together. Well, maybe wave flags at the stadium or swim there...
- Third, our story is truly amazing and those who fought for 'our freedom and yours' turned out to be traitors with definitely not-Polish roots...
- Forth, we are truly committed to history. We still have and use the roads Hitler built for us...
- Fifth, it is hard to find another country where the priest is so kind as to tell you from the pulpit who the most proper candidate you should vote for is...



Polish national flag



white eagle with a crown against the red background



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The Poles-Land – ŁUKASZ DANIEL

One of the greatest Polish artists used to sing „Autumn starts with the mimosas”. What can I say? Ah, the famous Polish “golden” autumn! September greets us with lazy rays of the sun falling on colourful leaves and **wisps of spider webs** in the air. October brings moody fog and **drizzle**, and gives us an opportunity to have a nice **mulled beer** with spices in the pub. An there is also November.

November usually does not start with rays of sunshine, nor does it offer us an opportunity to feast our eyes with the miracles of nature. This **infamous** month starts with All Saints’ Day – a holiday whose essence is to visit our late family members’ resting places and **ponder upon** the sense and fragility of life. Not that optimistic, is it? Of course, one needs a moment of pensiveness and recollection from time to time, but it should stop at some point. Unfortunately, in Poland, people do not know when to stop. The form of celebrating All Saints’ Day is the same as the one of celebrating the Independence Day (can we call it “celebrating” then?).

The Poles do not seem to be happy about the fact that they live in a land with rich history and traditions. They forget about good moments in the history of Poland, they ignore the fact that Poland is becoming more and more open to the world, and they seem to be incapable of finding happiness in life. What do celebrations of the Independence Day look like in Poland, you may ask. Here is the answer: officials bring candles and flowers on the graves of fallen Polish soldiers. Doesn’t is sound familiar?

Don’t get me wrong, not all Poles “celebrate” the Independence Day like that. There also those who are proud of being Poles and know that the history of Poland is not only paved with martyrdom, and that the country is going through changes. However, there are few of them, and I think that the status quo is not likely to change. As for now, the Polish are condemned to live in the country over which gates should be written “**Abandon all hope** ye who enter here”.



Poland. What is that country like?

JOANNA SKAWIŃSKA

Lots of foreigners consider Poland to be a poor communist state with wild bears **roaming the roads** and without shops like Tesco (a true story!). The further to the west, the worse the stereotypes appear to be. Poles do not speak foreign languages, never smile but complain a lot, abuse alcohol, etc.. Some of my German friends still cannot **distinguish** the Polish language from the Russian one. In the southern part of Spain citizens took me for a strawberry picker instead of an ordinary tourist.. And why? The reason was plain – Andalusia is the place famous for farm labourers from Eastern Europe.

Luckily, times are changing. Nowadays Poland seems to be a much more civilized country than ever before, at least in the eyes of foreigners. They appreciate diligence and ambition of Poles, and perceive them as well-educated, but somewhat **worse-off**. Poland is chosen more frequently as a travel destination. An interesting question is what Polish people think about themselves.

In my opinion, we are too critical about this beautiful country as a result of our history. Throughout the communist period in Poland we were divided, a fact **aptly defined** in the **US and THEM attitude**. The first term was used to define the Polish society that stood against the authorities (“them”).

We learnt how to be against everything. Is it really true? Things are seldom what they seem. Young Poles are proud of their country and display it abroad. We don’t have the inferiority complex simply because we come from Poland. We look for things we can be proud of. Do you remember these bears on the roads I’ve mentioned above? One of the “Polish bears”, adopted by the soldiers of the 22nd Artillery Supply Troops of the **Polish II Corps** in 1942 – called *Wojtek* - has lived in Edinburgh for nearly 20 years. Scottish people still remember that very **vividly**. Our bear **is bearing fruit**. Let’s not forget that.



- a wisp - kosmyk
- a spider web – pajęczyna
- drizzle – mżawka
- mulled beer – grzne piwo
- infamous – okryty złą sławą
- to ponder upon sth – rozmyślać o czymś
- to abandon – porzucić (np. nadzieję)
- roam the roads – włączyć się po drogach
- distinguish – rozróżniać
- worse-off – gorzej sytuowany, uboższy
- aptly defined – trafnie zdefiniowany
- vividly – żywotnie; to have a vivid memory of sth – mieć coś żywo w pamięci
- to bear fruit - przynosić owoce

US AND THEM ATTITUDE – podział na “nas” i “ich” (my i oni)



Independence Day in Poland – KATARZYNA BUTKIEWICZ

On 11 November the whole nation celebrated the 94th anniversary of Poland's independence. This day is also called the **National Independence Day**, which, in light of the events that followed hours later, seems rather la-di-da. Poor, **wretched** Poland. In 1918, after 123 years of suffering under **the yoke of bondage**, it could finally take a deep breath hoping '**the best is yet to come.**' By definition, the National Independence Day should be a joyful day fostering a unifying spirit among all citizens. To **commemorate** Poland's big day, there were four marches planned. One of them was organized by the President for the first time. The march was accompanied by sheer enthusiasm, cheering from all sides and the sound of national flags waving proudly in the November wind. Sounds 'normal'? Let us not exaggerate, for the facts looked quite different.

On the day before the state celebrations a new (yet old) leader of the Left announced during prime time that together with another leader **notorious** for his **dubious** statements in the mass media they had decided not to drink vodka the previous day. The reason, he explained, was great consideration for the people and **social unrest**. How thoughtful of them.

Then a completely different side of Poland **loomed into view**. The one with a dark face, distorted and dirt-stained. It all started when a bunch of masked **thugs** threw **bangers**, stones and empty bottles at the police who in return used shotguns and tear gas. The opposition immediately said it was **an entrapment** and the fault lay with the government for being unable **to suppress street riots**. There were **unrefined insults** hurled at the President and the Prime Minister. The opposition leader celebrating his own Independence Day in Cracow found out (to his amazement) that the Prime Minister had left the country again. In the case of the Prime Minister, it does not matter whether he is away on well-deserved holiday or goes to Kosovo to bolster up the spirits of the Polish troops. As long as his surname starts with 'T', he is the one to blame and there is no mistake about it.

Meanwhile, the city was exposed to danger.

Curiously enough, the oppositionist in question did not have the slightest intention of taking responsibility for the hooligans he had once introduced to politics. So why do we – the nation – have to be responsible for a bunch of governmental fools? Some priest stated **sonorously**: 'Poland is not entirely free and we all need to pray God for liberation.' For heaven's sake! The Lord must be sick and tired of us grumbling, honest. And now some **doublethink**. One of the activists stated that the President's march was all fake and declared his group the only **knights of freedom** who came together to fight for independence. Eh? He stunned the nation. What, Poland is not free and its sovereignty has to be regained? Try to be wise now! Maybe it would be sensible to get some **brainboxes** from outside Poland to say for us, since we cannot come to an agreement?

The Independence Day in Poland is no longer **a solemn celebration**. It has become a way to demonstrate and manifest ill feelings against one another and everything. The outcome of the day? 176 suspects taken to the police station, 22 injured police officers and an **unimaginable** amount of shame.

America has its great generals. Great Britain prides itself on its knights. What about Poland? Can it be praised for anything? Perhaps **Polish winged Hussars**? Not at all! Their wings are broken and in flames. Poland has **gnomes** and experts in automatic systems of navigation and aeronautical engineering but without any factual knowledge of it. Thank God the Prime Minister is still managing it somehow. Otherwise, it could have been the most explosive Independence Day the nation had ever **witnessed**. So this is how we do it in Poland. In the heart of Europe. In 2012.



- wretched – nieszczęsny, nizerny; **what wretched luck!** co za pech!
- the yoke of bondage – jarzmo niewoli; **we are in bondage to our past** fig jesteśmy niewolnikami własnej przeszłości
- the best is yet to come – najlepsze przed nami
- to commemorate – upamiętnić, uczcić
- notorious – notoryczny, cieszący się złą sławą
- dubious – wątpliwy
- social unrest – niepokoje społeczne
- loom into view – pojawić się, wyłonić się
- a thug – zbir, oprych
- a banger – petarda
- an entrapment – prowokacja policyjna
- to suppress street riots – zgnieść / rozpedzić zamieszki uliczne
- unrefined insults – niewyszukane epitety
- sonorously – donośnie, dźwięcznie
- doublethink – dwójmyślenie
- knights of freedom – rycerze wolności
- a brainbox – tęga głowa
- a solemn celebration – uroczyste obchody
- unimaginable – niewyobrażalny
- Polish winged Hussars – polska husaria
- a gnome - krasnal
- to witness – być świadkiem / zaświadczyć o czymś



Independence Day in Poland – ANNA MITRUS

It is very hard to describe the commemoration of the Independence Day in Poland **unambiguously**. The 11th of November is a very important day in Poland. We recall and celebrate the day in 1918 when Poland **regained** its **sovereignty** after 123 years of foreign rule. Everybody hopes that this exceptional day passes without any **incidents**.

This year the President of Poland decided to organize a national march, which was supposed to unite Poles. He invited all people regardless of their political orientation. Similarly to former years, many organizations organized separate marches in Warsaw. It was an organizational challenge for the police and for the local authorities. Thousands of police officers were deployed to protect the marchers. Few marches went ahead peacefully. One march, organized by Polish Patriots, the far **right-wing nationalists**, which was the last on this day, spoilt the celebration. There were marchers who were dressed in **balACLAVAS**. Soon clashes with the police broke out. The Police responded with **tear gas** and **rubber bullets**. Many marchers were **detained** and a few police officers were injured.

Alternative ceremonies were organized outside the capital. We had an opportunity to see some peaceful marches on TV. Gdansk was reported as the greatest example of peaceful festivities. Only one march was organised and all townspeople celebrated this day together **unmindful** of their political views. What a pity that TV broadcasting stations covered such examples so briefly, and were focused on covering negative examples from Warsaw. Only this **blameworthy** example of celebration was shown across Europe.

We can say that it was a typical Independence Day In Poland, which confirms how polarised our society is.



The Independent Day as I See It – MAGDA KOSTECKA

In my opinion, our Independence Day should definitely fall on the 11th of November. We have been celebrating this day as our Independence Day for the last 23 years. Given the time, a lot of Polish people have got used to this and respect it. Consequently, it should not be changed. Keep Christmas in December, May long weekend in May, the 11th of November and others public and non-public holidays when they are. **Fiddling** with the calendar is **a dead-end street**. Do not change the customs of millions of Poles.

There are many ways to celebrate this day. **The choice is ours**. To my mind, it depends on personal **convictions**. Nobody can be forced to take part actively in the celebration, for instance, in the form of participating in the March of Independence or at a public **assembly** in the main square in the city. Perhaps, there are Polish people who do not feel the necessity to treat this day as something special, and for them it is merely another day off. They prefer spending it the way want to, for example, stay at home with their family, spend leisure time with their friends or just do nothing or engage in some sport activities.

At this point, I would like to come up with two additional ideas concerning Independence Day celebrations. Firstly, having a running competition is a great idea, especially in Lublin. We already have an event named "The Lublin Marathon." It is divided into four ten-kilometre runs every other month. The second round is scheduled for 18 November, and the 40 kilometre run is scheduled for June 2013. Each ten kilometre run gathers approximately 500 runners. This is why the running competition called officially "The Independence Marathon" or "The Independence Running Competition". It is a perfect idea, particularly during a day off.

To keep the balance, the other proposal is intended for those who are not sports-oriented. Such people could see films on Polish history in local cinemas or visit museums free of charge. To my mind, it is an excellent opportunity to enable adults and children to get more familiar with the most essential facts from the history of their country.

To conclude, there are many ways of celebrating the Independence Day. It is up to you to decide how you wish to celebrate it. It is worth to make **a reasoned and informed decision**.



Marshal Józef Piłsudski
unambiguous – jednoznaczny

to regain – odzyskać

sovereignty – suwerenność

incident – incydent, zdarzenie
(negatywne)

right-wing – prawicowy

balACLAVA – kominiarka

tear gas – gaz łzawiący

rubber bullets – gumowe kule

detain – zatrzymać (ale jeszcze
nie aresztować)

unmindful of sth – nie bacząc
na coś

blameworthy – naganny



to fiddle – majsterkować,
majstrować

a dead-end street – droga do
nikąd; ślepa droga

a conviction – przekonanie

an assembly – zgromadzenie

a reasoned decision –
rozsądna decyzja

an informed decision –
przemyślana decyzja (na
podstawie zgromadzonych
informacji)



Why We don't Really Celebrate our Independence Day – PAWEŁ WÓJCIK

The answer to the topic question is obvious for me. There are several main reasons for this state of affairs:

Firstly, Children in Polish schools are not taught to be proud of the Polish history – Polish victories, Polish scientists, and Polish inventions. We are a very complex society. Under such conditions, it is very difficult for young people in Poland to take pride in their fatherland.

Secondly, the Polish society is sick and tired of the “world of politics” – with its unfulfilled promises, infighting and politicians accusing each other. Thus, we feel tired as the Polish nation, we feel that we cannot rule ourselves and politics is a “dirty swamp”. In such a situation, we are ashamed when we realize how badly Poland is ruled by our officials.

Finally, our mass media promote substitute topics instead of a debate about real Polish problems. Newspapers and TV channels “feed” us with a kind of tasteless mush which discourages us from thinking in a free and objective way. Being “fed” in such a way, we forget our traditions and history – it is very tricky and useful for a group of people who really control us – mindless citizens are an easy target.

To sum up – we do not really feel INDEPENDENT!



Enjoy! It's Our Independence Day – WOJTEK BANASZEK



The Independence Day in Poland is celebrated much differently than the Independence Day in other countries. It is not a joyful day with fireworks and people celebrating it in their own way. The day is celebrated mostly by officials. Houses, buildings, buses and trams are embellished with Polish flags. The radio plays mostly Polish music and television is full of films connected with Polish history. Poetry, patriotic music and memories – that is what the Poles are mostly focused on when 11 November comes. Apart from this, all patriotic monuments are decorated with flowers. It is hard to call the Polish National Independence Day a happy day, since it is the time of contemplation and remembrance of the past.

My way of celebrating the Polish National Independence Day was spending time with my family. When the weather is good (seldom in November), we stroll in the neighbourhood or go to Naleczow or Kazimierz. Then we go to dinner. If it is rainy and cold, we eat dinner with all the family at home and do nothing – just converse together and watch TV.

My family and I hate any kind of parades and political meetings. That is why we spend this day at home. We are very domestic.

This year I was really happy to have some free time for myself. I took advantage of the fabulous weather and spent the time riding a bicycle with my friends. I always do some sports activities when I only have time. Sometimes we do these sports with the whole family, but this time it was too cold for my wife and my 2 year old son.



Towards a Happy Independence Day – MAŁGORZATA BASAK

It was a second year in a row that the Independence Day celebration in the downtown of Warsaw turned into violence. Last year the media reported that there had been no such an event in the Polish history that would come close to those riots in Warsaw. It seems that Poland haven't learned the lesson as the situation repeated again.

The Polish constitution of 1997 guarantees its citizens the freedom of assembly in the context of the right to protest, the right to come together [to assemble] and collectively express, promote, pursue and defend common interests. However, some hate-filled extremists take advantage of these rights and deliberately provoke anger and violence during these events.

Recent years have showed that the occasions to celebrate a national holiday have turned into a chance for right-wing extremists to try their luck with the police - symbolising the Polish state. The demonstrators bear a close of resemblance to their far-right predecessors from the past, who inspired many peoples into bloody street revolts and battles/skirmishes.

Our generation has been raised in a certain pattern of emotional sentiment and sadness, continually analysing the dramatic and tragic history of Poland, which makes us difficult to remove/throw off the burden of the past and to focus on the present. The Polish have been pushed into this way of thinking and it has been ruling us over the past decades.

Undoubtedly, the Independence Day should be a special one when people reflect on what it really means to be a citizen of this country. In my view, it should be a national holiday, as in many other countries, commemorating the past, honouring the victims and veterans, but also looking towards the future.

I hope that Poles will learn the lesson and the next Independence Day will be entirely joyful and peaceful. Perhaps the existing marches and parades should be replaced with concerts and open air festivals to make the Polish society united for at least one day.