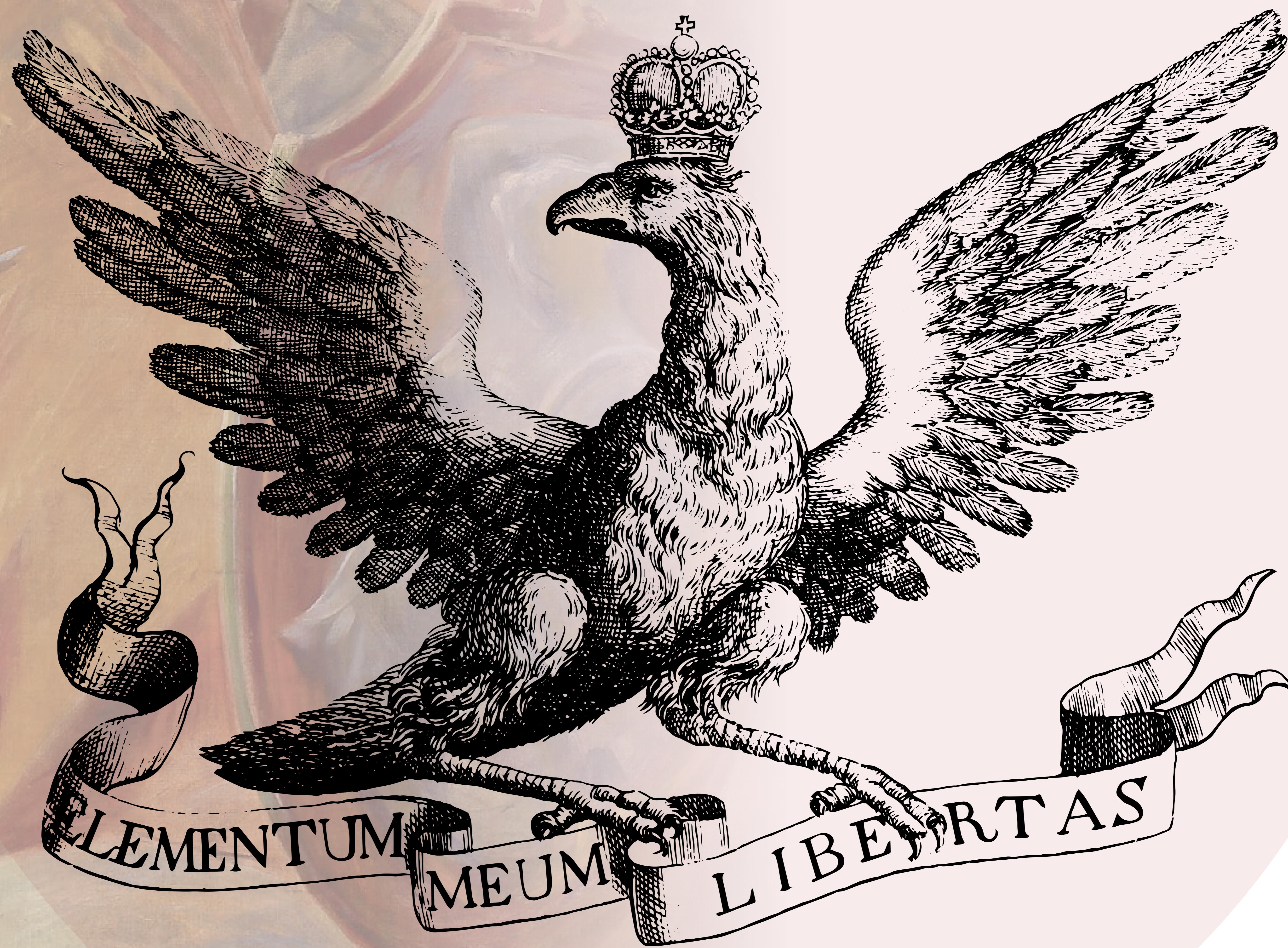


# POLISH NATIONAL SYMBOLS



The exhibition prepared by the National Education Office of Institute of National Remembrance, Bydgoszcz Branch.

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Jan Matejko, Kościuszko at Racławice, 1888 (public domain)

# NATIONAL SYMBOLS

**The national symbols of the Republic of Poland are: the emblem – the White Eagle, the colours – white and red, and the anthem – Dąbrowski's Mazurka.**

Provisions on symbols can be found on State seals and in the Polish Constitution and the Act on the emblem, colours and anthem of the Republic of Poland.

National symbols are legally protected, which means that it is the duty of every Pole, offices, institutions and organisations in Poland to treat them with the highest respect and veneration.

Art. 28. Principles for Protecting of National Symbols

1. The emblem of the Republic of Poland is the image of a white eagle with a crown in a red field.
2. The colours of the Republic of Poland are white and red.
3. The anthem of the Republic of Poland is Dąbrowski's Mazurka.
4. The emblem, colours and the anthem of the Republic of Poland are protected by law.
5. Details concerning the emblem, colours and the anthem are specified by statute.

Constitution of the Republic of Poland of April 2, 1997.



## Dąbrowski's Mazurka

Poland has not yet perished,  
So long as we are alive.  
What foreign force took from us,  
We will with sabre retrieve.

March, March Dąbrowski,  
From Italy to Poland.  
Behind your command  
We will rejoin the nation.



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# EMBLEM

**"The emblem of the Republic of Poland is the image of a white eagle with a golden crown on its head turned to the right, with unfolded wings, with a beak and golden claws, placed in the red area of the shield"**

(Act on the National Emblem, Colours and Anthem of the Republic of Poland and on State Seals).



The emblem of the Republic of Poland

Denarius of Bolesław the Brave (A. Znamierowski, *Polish insignia, symbols and coats of arms*, p. 111)



Reverse of the majestic seal of Przemysł II, crowned in 1295. A gothic shield with an eagle in a crown is surrounded by a Latin inscription, which in translation reads: God Himself restored the victorious symbols of Poles (A. Znamierowski, *Polish insignia, symbols and coats of arms*, p.111)

The eagle has been considered the king of birds for millennia. It symbolised authority and power. Therefore, the rulers of Poland from the Piast dynasty placed the image of the eagle on seals, shields, banners and coins. The oldest surviving coin with a crowned eagle is the denarius of Bolesław the Brave, the first king of Poland.

The crowned eagle in the shield became the official coat of arms of the Polish state in the thirteenth century, during the reign of King Przemysł II.

## EMBLEM OR COAT OF ARMS?

According to heraldists, the White Eagle is the coat of arms, while the coat of arms placed in the red field is the coat of arms of the Republic of Poland. The provision in the current Act is therefore incorrect and should read: The coat of arms of Poland is a white eagle in a red field with a golden armament (claws and beak) and open crown.

For the first time an erroneous provision calling the coat of arms an emblem appeared in the Stalinist constitution of 1952 and was duplicated in the fundamental law of 1997. A mistake in the official nomenclature caused a discrepancy with the principles of heraldry, and therefore still raises discussions and voices calling for a correction of this situation.

Szczerbiec - coronation sword of Polish kings with a visible coat of arms of the Polish State (A. Znamierowski, *Polish insignia, symbols and coats of arms*, p.10)



Józef Chełmoński, *Prayer before the battle*, 1906, reproduction of the painting in the form of a postcard (public domain).



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# FROM THE PIAST EAGLE ...

Over the centuries the Polish coat of arms underwent some transformations. It resulted from changes in culture and art as well as political events.

During the reign of King Sigismund I the Old multi-field coats of arms were introduced. After the Union of Lublin and the establishment of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, a four-field coat of arms was established as the State coat of arms, in which the Polish White Eagle and the Lithuanian Pogoń, i.e. a knight on horseback, were placed alternately.

The coat of arms of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth with subsequent changes such as replacing the open crown cresting the emblem with a closed crown (meaning sovereignty) or adding a fifth (heart) field with the personal coat of arms of the currently reigning king, was the official symbol of the Commonwealth until the end of the 18th century.

From above: Piast eagle – reverse of the majestic seals of Władysław the Short and Casimir the Great (A. Znamierowski, *Polish insignia, symbols and coats of arms*, p.113)



Eagle with the monogram of Sigismund I the Old on the chest from the Sigismund Chapel at Wawel (public domain)



Coat of arms of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (public domain)



Coat of arms of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from the time of Stanisław August Poniatowski (public domain)



Polichromia z oratorium św. Jakuba Apostoła Opactwa Cystersów w Łądzie nad Wartą, fragment, ok. 1370 (domena publiczna)

# ... TO THE COAT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF BOTH NATIONS



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Jan Rosen, *Insurgents of 1863*, 1880 (National Museum in Krakow)

## The image of the eagle represented the continuity of the Polish State. Under its symbol, Poles fought the invaders.

From the end of the 18th century, when the partitioning powers - Russia, Prussia and Austria - led to the fall of the Polish Commonwealth, the image of the eagle represented the continuity of the Polish State. Under its symbol, Poles fought the invaders in subsequent national uprisings. The eagle was placed on the coats of arms of the November (1830–1831) and January (1863–1864) Uprisings, patriotic jewellery and postcards.

From above: the coat of arms of the Polish Commonwealth from the November Uprising [on the two-złoty coin] and the January Uprising [on the seal of the National Government] (A. Znamierowski, *Polish insignia, symbols and coats of arms*, p.127)



The eagle on the badges of flat caps and officers' gorgets became an element of military uniforms back in the 18th century, when the Polish national uniform was being shaped. It was used as a symbol of the Polish Army during the Duchy of Warsaw. Continuing this tradition, the Polish Legions, the Blue Army and the Polish Corps in Russia fought for the independence of Poland during World War I under the symbol of the Eagle.

Silver brooch from the January Uprising (Polish Army Museum)



Eagle of the Polish Legions (public domain)



Commemorative badge of the 1st Polish Corps (public domain)



Silver Cross (5th class) of the Order of Virtuti Militari. The order was established by Stanisław August Poniatowski in 1792 after the battle of Zieleniec. In 1919 it was given the name of the Military Order of Virtuti Militari. To this day, it is the highest Polish military decoration (public domain)



# THE SYMBOL OF THE WHITE EAGLE DURING THE PARTITIONS



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W  
1920 1940 1980

# EMBLEM IN THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

After regaining independence in 1918, by the Act of August 1, 1919 the official coat of arms of the Republic of Poland was the White Eagle with a crown in a red field. It resembled the Polish White Eagle from the reign of the last king of Poland, Stanisław August Poniatowski – it was a reference to the pre-partition tradition and thus an indication of the continuity of the Polish state. The eagle was placed in a modern French shield (rectangular, with a tongue at the bottom).

Specimen seal of the Republic introduced by the Act of August 1, 1919 (*Internet System of Legal Acts: isap.sejm.gov.pl*)



In 1927 a decision was made to change the design of the coat of arms of the Republic of Poland. The new design referred directly to the White Eagle from the reign of Stefan Batory.

The coat of arms of the Republic of Poland introduced by the Act of December 13, 1927 (*Internet System of Legal Acts: isap.sejm.gov.pl*)



After the end of World War II, the communist authorities dependent on Soviet Russia deprived the Polish eagle of its centuries-old attribute – the crown. For most Poles, this act symbolised the enslavement of the nation.



Coat of arms of the Polish People's Republic introduced by the decree of December 7, 1955 (*Internet System of Legal Acts: isap.sejm.gov.pl*)

At the same time, the Government In Exile of the Republic of Poland – the legitimate government that was a continuation of the authorities of the Second Polish Republic in the years 1940–1990 in London – used the coat of arms of 1927 (a change was introduced in 1956 – the crown was closed and crowned with a cross).

The coat of arms of the Republic of Poland introduced by the decree of the President In Exile of the Republic of Poland of November 11, 1956 (*Internet System of Legal Acts: isap.sejm.gov.pl*)

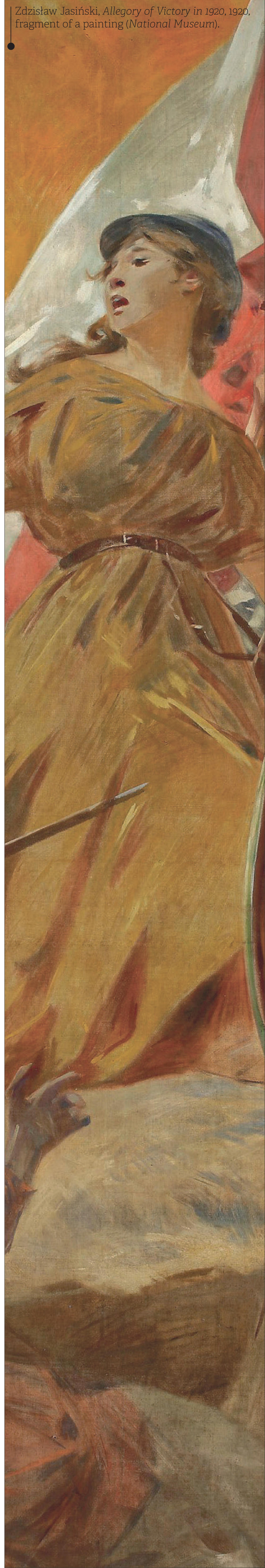


Only after the political changes in 1989 was the golden crown restored to the White Eagle. The new coat of arms, in force to this day, was introduced by the Act of February 9, 1990, using a slightly modified design from 1927 (including the removal of the golden border of the shield).

The coat of arms of the Republic of Poland introduced by the Act of February 9, 1990 (*Internet System of Legal Acts: isap.sejm.gov.pl*)



Zdzisław Jasiński, Allegory of Victory in 1920, 1920, fragment of a painting (National Museum).



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Jan Matejko, Constitution of May 3, 1791, 1891 (public domain)

**White is the colour of the emblem, i.e. the White Eagle, red is the colour of the shield's field. The national colours are therefore of heraldic origin.**

The colours of the Republic of Poland are white and red.

They come from the colours of the coat of arms of the Kingdom of Poland: white is the colour of the emblem, i.e. the White Eagle, red is the colour of the shield's field. The national colours are therefore of heraldic origin.

White and red were used on royal and state banners since the early Middle Ages. All flags were drawn up according to two rules - the State coat of arms was placed on them and the colours mentioned above were used.

It is worth emphasising that from the earliest times, red was reserved for rulers, knights and magnates - crimson robes as a synonym of power, wealth and dignity could only be worn by privileged people. White was in turn used in the form of rosettes on the hats of the Polish Army during the reign of August II the Strong. Red and white bows (rosettes) appeared in the reign of Stanisław August Poniatowski, the last king of Poland.

Ensign with the banner of King Sigismund III Vasa, fragment of the so-called Stockholm Roll, 17th century (public domain)



# WHITE RED NATIONAL COLOURS



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The entry of the Polish Army into Nowe, January 25, 1920 (Mayor of Nowe)

## Officially, white and red were recognised as the Polish national colours during the November Uprising.

The resolution on this matter, at the request of the MP Walenty Zwierkowski, was passed on February 7, 1831 by the Parliament of the Kingdom of Poland. It reads: „The national cockade will have the colours of the coat of arms of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, that is, white and red”. Importantly this resolution referred not to the colours of the flag, but to the military cockade, which defined the nationality of the soldiers.

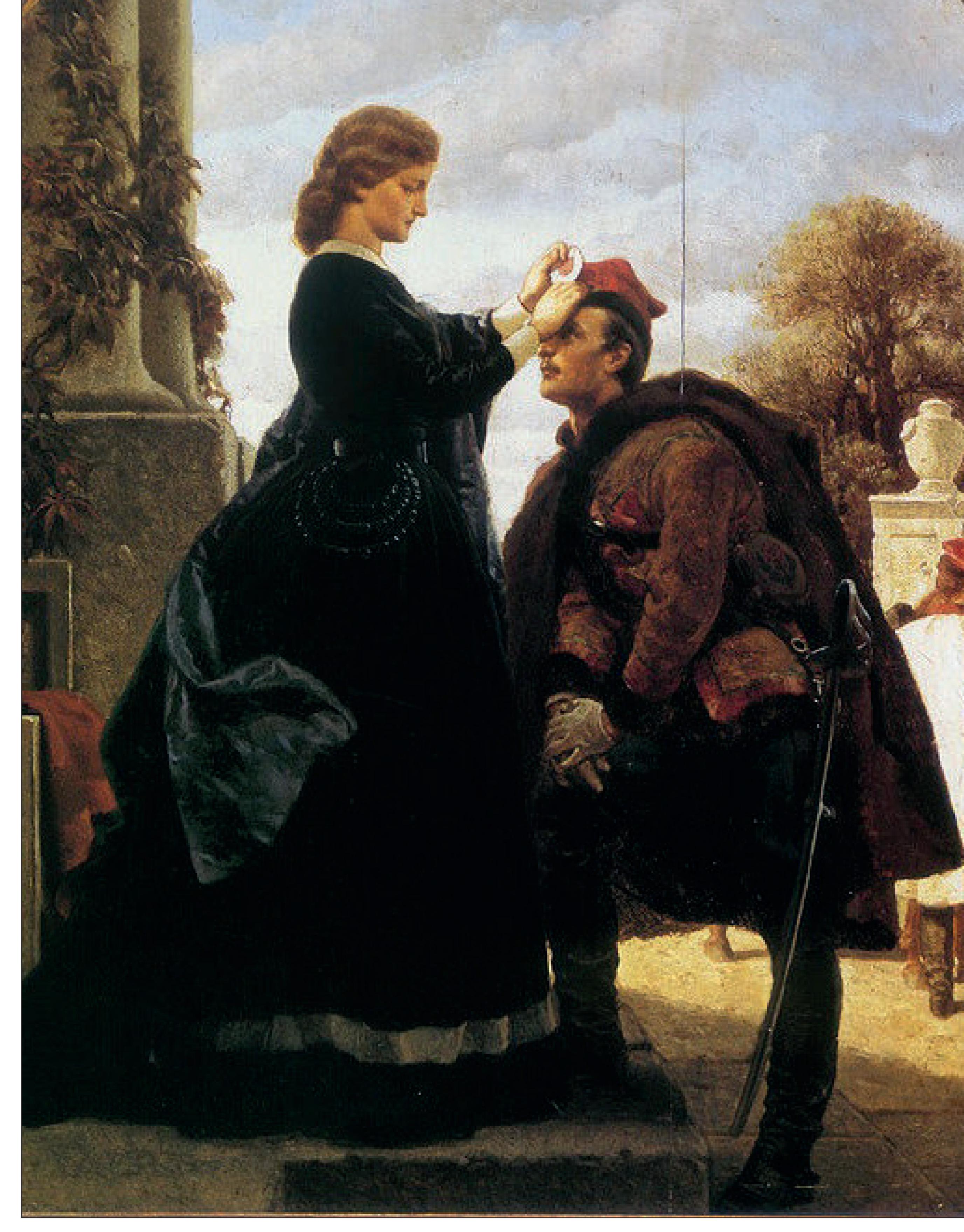
From then on, these colours accompanied Poles in the fight for independence - participants of subsequent national uprisings and patriotic demonstrations wore white and red cockades, ribbons and bands.

On August 1, 1919, after regaining independence, the Legislative Parliament of the Republic of Poland upheld the provisions of the November Uprising and passed the Act on national emblems and colours, under which white and red were recognised as the colours of the Republic of Poland. It was then decided that the flag would consist of two longitudinal, parallel stripes – white at the top, red at the bottom, in a 5:8 aspect ratio. These provisions are valid to this day.

At first the red of the flag was crimson; in 1927 it was changed to light red (vermilion). Currently the shade is slightly darker than vermillion.

Flag Day of the Republic of Poland is a national holiday celebrated on May 2.

Artur Grottger, Farewell to an insurgent, 1866, fragment of a painting (public domain)



Patriotic postcard with the White Eagle, 1917 (National Library)



Street demonstration in Gdańsk, May 1, 1982 (IPN Archive, Gdańsk Branch)



# WHITE AND RED COLOURS THROUGH THE CENTURIES



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PWS-A planes during the May 3 Parade in Krakow, 1932 (NAC)

**There are many forms of displaying the national colours - a flag, an aviation checkerboard, a pennant of the President of the Republic of Poland, an ensign, roundels, streamers.**

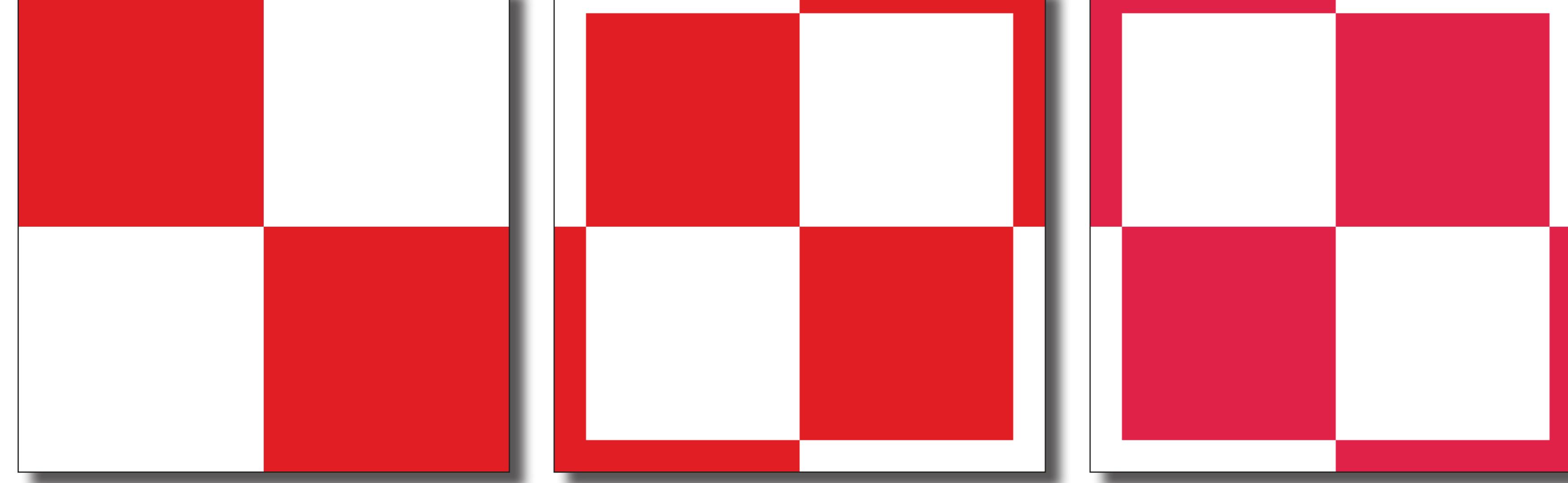
The flag is displayed during state and school ceremonies and on the occasion of national holidays, and also hung on buildings housing offices.

Polish military planes are marked with the national colours with a white and red checkerboard painted on them. This symbol was used for the first time on an airplane as the personal emblem of the pilot Lieutenant Stefan Stec. In November 1918 he flew to Warsaw from besieged Lvov (now Lviv).

Another form of displaying the national colours are roundels and streamers. As for the arrangement of colours in the national roundel, there are discrepancies between the law and the principles of heraldry. According to the order of the Minister of National Defence of 2014, the roundel comprises two parts: the central white and the red ring surrounding it. According to heraldists and iconographic sources from the period of partitions, the arrangement should be reversed.

Aircraft checkerboards used successively in the years: 1918–1919, 1919–1993, from 1993 (A. Znamierowski, *Polish insignia, symbols and coats of arms*, p.163)

The arrangement of the colours of the checkerboard fields, used since 1993, is contrary to tradition – initially, the arrangement of the fields on the checkerboard reflected the colours of the shields of the coat of arms of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.



The aspect ratio of Poland must be 5:8



Pennant of the President of the Republic of Poland



The civil and State flag of Poland is used by diplomatic representatives, civil airports, port masters' offices and on sea-going ships



War flag of the Republic of Poland

# FLAG, AIRCRAFT CHECKERBOARD, ROUNDEL ...



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Charles Michel Guibert d'Anelle, Varsovie. Épisode en 1831 (The Dying Soldier of Liberty), 1849 (public domain)

### Dąbrowski's Mazurka

Poland has not yet perished,  
So long as we are alive.

What foreign force took from us,  
We will with sabre retrieve.

March, March Dąbrowski,  
From Italy to Poland.  
Behind your command  
We will rejoin the nation.

We'll cross the Vistula,  
we'll cross the Warta,

We will be Polish.

Bonaparte has set us  
the example,  
Of how we should prevail.

March, March...

Like Czarniecki to Poznan  
After the Swedish conquest,  
For to rescue our homeland  
We'll return across the sea.

March, March...

Already a father there  
Says in tears to his Basia  
Listen well, our boys are said  
To be beating tarabans.

March, March...

Józef Wybicki's manuscript contains six stanzas, whilst according to the Ordinance of the Minister of Religious Denominations and Public Education of 1926, the anthem consists of only four (1, 2, 3 and 5). The others (4 and 6) read as follows:

German, Muscovite will not  
settle down,  
When we draw the broadsword,  
"Concord" will be the  
watchword of all  
And the homeland ours.

March, March...

Then all exclaim in unison:  
„Enough of this bondage  
We have Raclawice scythes,  
Kosciuszko, God willing.”

# ANTHEM

**An anthem is a solemn, uplifting patriotic song, important for every nation.**

The Polish national anthem is entitled Dąbrowski's Mazurka. It was written by Józef Wybicki in 1797 in the Italian town of Reggio nell'Emilia near Bologna. It was there that, on the initiative of General Jan Henryk Dąbrowski, Legions were formed to fight for the freedom of Poland alongside Napoleon.

The hope for independence was expressed in the first words of the anthem: „Poland has not yet perished, so long as we are alive”...

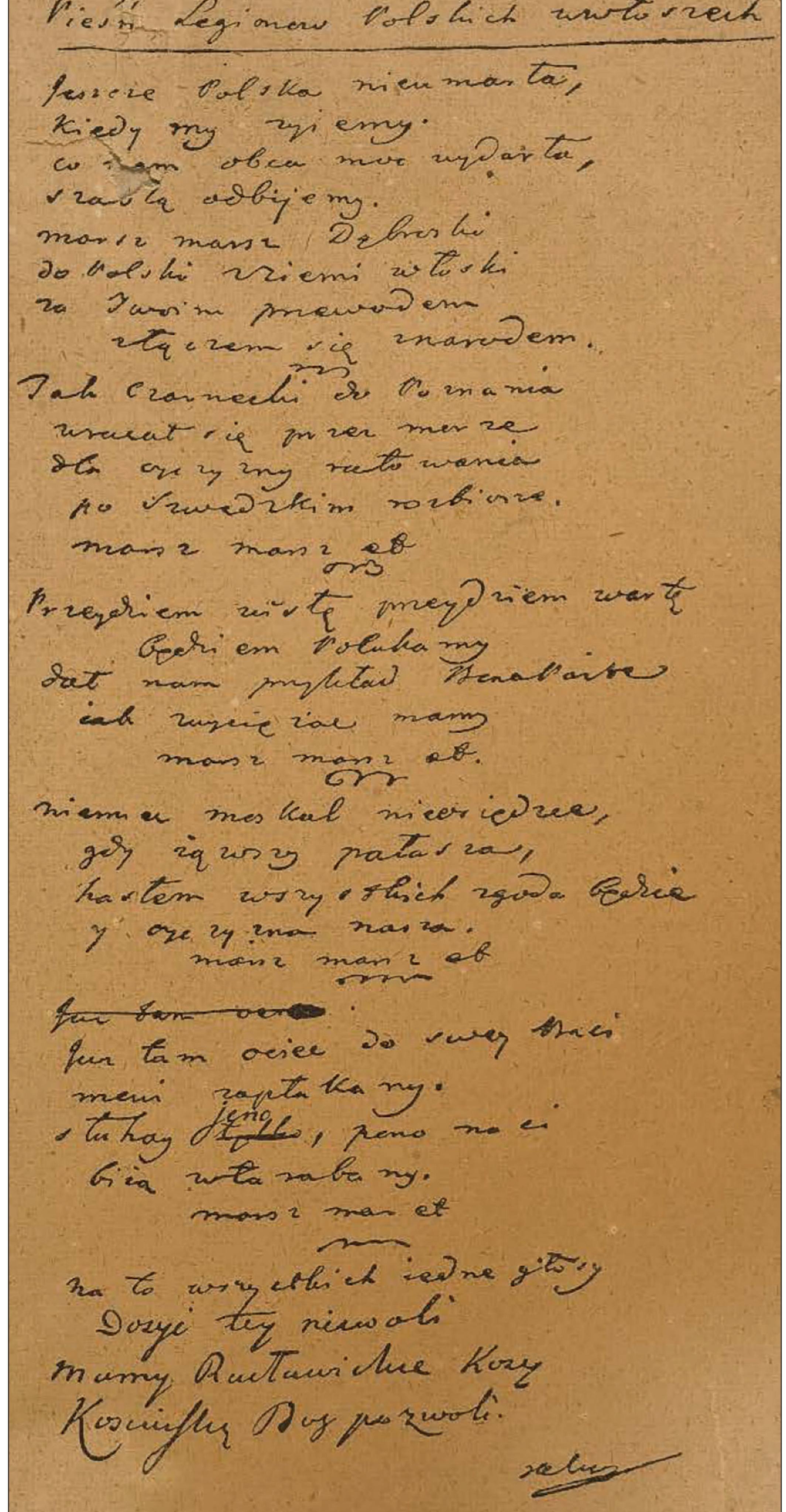
The song to the melody of the mazurka was sent to the remaining part of Poland through emissaries – it was sung during the Napoleonic War and the November and January Uprisings.

There are discrepancies as to the authorship of the Polish anthem melody – some historians believe that it was composed by Michał Kleofas Ogiński, whilst others that it is a popular folk melody, the author of which remains unknown.

Portrait of Józef Wybicki (public domain)



Manuscript of the words of the Songs of the Polish Legions in Italy (public domain)



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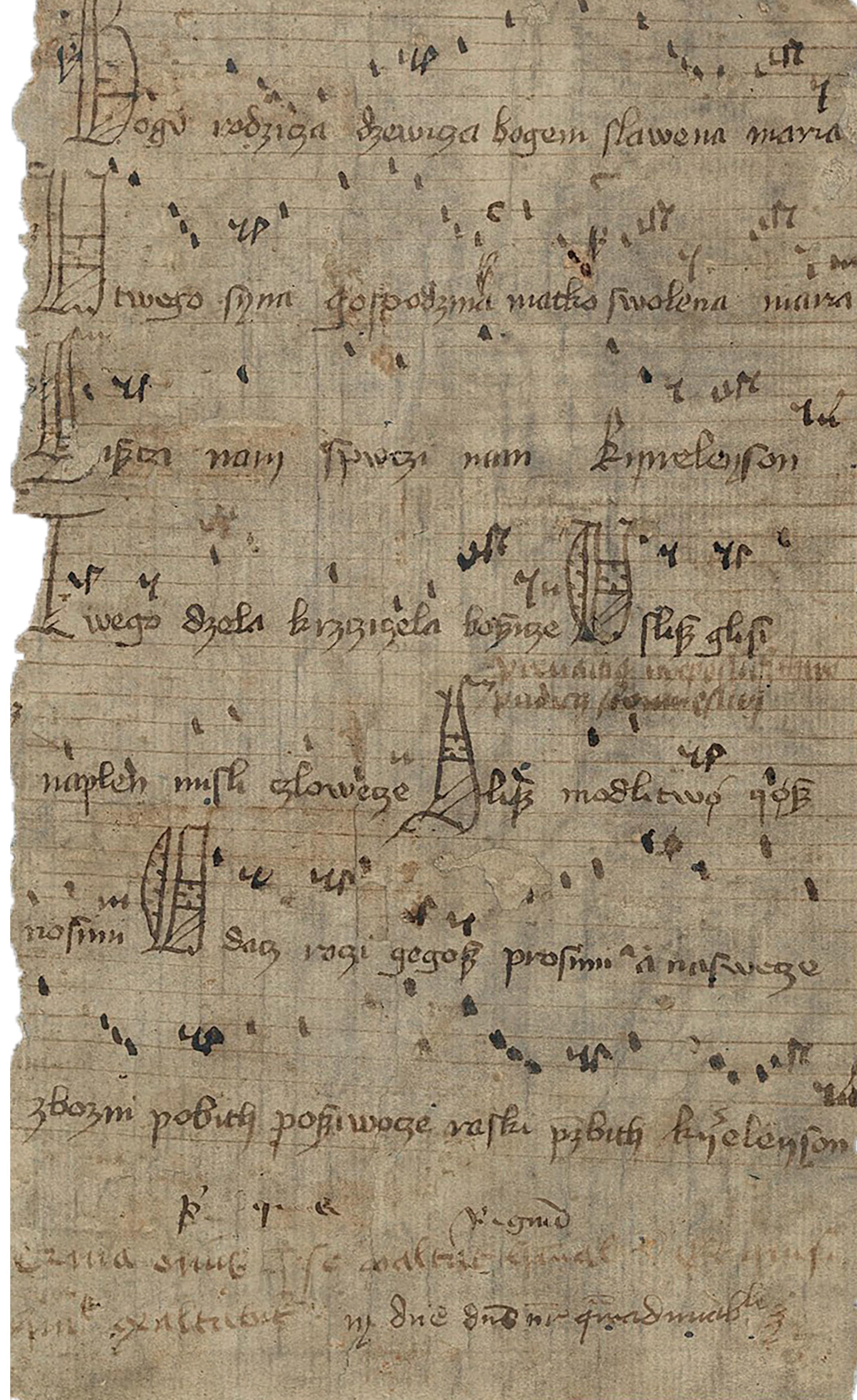
Celebration of the National Day of May 3, raising the national flag on the mast and singing the Polish Anthem (Grzegorz Jakubowski, Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland)

A song of great importance to the Polish nation for centuries was *The Mother of God*, sung by knights, among others during the Battle of Grunwald in 1410.

After independence several songs were considered when the choice of the national anthem was discussed. For this role competed the song *God, Who Poland*, written in 1816 in honour of the Russian Tsar Alexander I. The Poles added new stanzas and changed the words of the refrain „Save our king for us, Lord!” to „Give us our homeland, Lord.” In the changed version, the song was banned by the Russians and was sung, among others by the January insurgents. At the beginning of the 20th century, Maria Konopnicka wrote *Rota*. The song composed by Feliks Nowowiejski quickly became one of the most popular national songs. After regaining independence, the following were also considered as the national anthem: *Warszawianka*, *Chorał* (“With Smoke Fire ...”) or *We, the First Brigade* ... The most important for Poles, however, was the Song of the Polish Legions in Italy, known today as the *Dąbrowski's Mazurka*.

**Dąbrowski's Mazurka was officially recognised as the national anthem in February 1927 and has remained so to this day.**

Manuscript with the text of *The Mother of God* (public domain)



Poland - Yugoslavia football match at the Polish Army Stadium. Marshal Joseph Pilsudski in Warsaw, 1938 (NAC)



Patriotic Songbook, underground publishing house, 1981 (IPN Archive)



# ANTHEM AND NATIONAL SONGS



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# RESPECT THE NATIONAL SYMBOLS

## TO THE ANTHEM!

When performing or playing the national anthem, it is important to maintain a proper attitude as well as to be serious and calm.

Those present during the public performance or the playing of the anthem should stand in an attitude of respect (attention).

Men in civilian clothes take off their hats.

People in uniforms including headgear, who are not in an organised group, pay their respects by saluting.

The flagship posts pay their respects by lowering the banner when performing or playing the anthem.

## PRINCIPLES OF DISPLAYING NATIONAL COLOURS:

The flag must be clean and clearly legible.

In the territory of the Republic of Poland, the State flag of the Republic of Poland always takes precedence over all other flags.

The flag must never touch the floor, ground, pavement or water.

The flag cannot be used as a table setting or packaging.

No inscriptions or drawings are allowed on the flag.

Based on: *White-Red*, ed. A. Znamierowski, Warsaw, 2018 and *The Polish Flag and Anthem*, Ministry of Interior and Administration, 2018.

Independence Day, November 11, ceremonial Changing of the Guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, raising the national flag to the mast and singing the Polish Anthem (Jakub Szymczuk, Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland)



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