

# ***BRIEF TIME-LINE OF POLISH HISTORY***

***SLAV ORIGINS:*** There is a general consensus among historians that the Slavic tribes arrived in the area of the Odra (Oder) and Wisla (Vistula) river basins by about the sixth century. The Slavic tribes expanded into territories to the east, west and south and by 800 AD could be differentiated into three main geographical and linguistic divisions: the East Slavs who inhabited a large part of European Russia, the South Slavs who settled in the Balkan Peninsula, and the West Slavs who settled in what is now Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and East Germany. The various West Slavic tribes had different fates. The Lusatians and Veleti were absorbed by the expanding German state. The Czechs and Moravians joined together to form the nucleus of the Czech Kingdom and the Slovaks became part of the kingdom of Hungary. The Polanie, Wislanie, Pomorzanie and the Mazovians eventually joined together to form the Polish State.

***966 AD:*** Mieszko (Mieczysław I), the chief of the Polanie married Dobrava, the daughter of Boleslav I of Bohemia, and accepted Christianity for himself and his people. Gniezno, in what after the partitions would be the Province of Posen, was the first capital of the Polish State.

***1024 AD:*** Bolesław Chrobry was crowned as the first king of Poland and Poland's right as an independent kingdom was established.

***1138 - 1319 AD:*** Poland was divided by Bolesław Krzywousty among his sons. These years of dynastic struggle left Poland prey to foreign invaders: the Teutonic Order in the north and several devastating Tartar invasions from the east.

***1320 AD:*** Władysław I (Lokietek) was crowned as king of a reunited Kingdom of Poland.

***1333 - 1370 AD:*** Reign of Kazimierz Wielki (Casimir the Great). Poland became a major Central-European power. Polish territory is increased 2.5 times. The first Polish Legal Code was formed in 1346 and the University of Kraków was founded in 1364.

***1382 - 1434 AD:*** Jadwiga the last of the Piast dynasty, inherited the crown of Poland in 1382 and in 1386 married Jogaila, the pagan Grand-Duke of Lithuania, who was baptized as Władysław II Jagiełło and ruled Poland and Lithuania from 1386 until 1434. This marks the beginning of the Jagellonian dynasty. In 1410 the troops led by Jagiełło crushed the Teutonic Order in the battle of Grunwald (Tannenberg). This victory helped strengthen the bond between the Poles and the Lithuanians which led to the Treaty of Union at Horodio in 1413. This union of Poland and Lithuania basically lasted with modifications until the Third Partition in 1795.

***1466 AD:*** Victory over the Teutonic Order and the Peace of Toruń resulted in the partitioning of Prussia. Poland regained Pomerania and Gdansk.

***1490 - 1574 AD:*** Poland's "Golden Age." The dual realm of Poland/Lithuania stretched from the Baltic to the Black Sea and from the borders of Silesia to within 300 miles of Moscow. This

kingdom contained a rich mixture of peoples and beliefs: Poles in the West and center, Latvians, Lithuanians, and Estonians in the north; Lutheran Germans in Prussia and along the western frontier; Orthodox Ukrainians and Byelorussians and Moslem Tartars in the East; and Jews scattered throughout the realm. Renaissance learning flourished. This era saw important developments in the government of Poland: the law “*Nieminem Captivabimus*” (the Polish “*Habeas Corpus*”); the establishment of a Parliament with two houses (the Senate and the Sejm) in 1493; and the Statute of “*Nihil Novi*” in 1505 which decreed that nothing new could be decided without the consent of Parliament. The Union of Lublin in 1569 was a formal union of Poland and Lithuania in the “*Rzeczpospolita Polska*” (The Polish Commonwealth).

**1572 AD:** The death of Zygmunt August, King of Poland and Gran Duke of Lithuania, who had no children, marked the end of the Jagiellonian dynasty.

**1573 AD:** The Sejm guaranteed religious equality. Roman Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox Christians, Jews and Muslims were guaranteed the right to worship as they wished.

**1574 - 1795 AD:** The Royal Republic of Poland began after the death of the last king of the Jagiellonian dynasty, Zygmunt August in 1572. During this period the kings of Poland were all elected. Only four of the eleven kings of this period were native Poles.

**1575-1586 AD:** The reign of Stefan Batory saw reforms in the army and in taxation and a military victory over Ivan the Terrible of Moscow.

**1596 AD:** The Polish capital was moved from Kraków to Warsaw.

**1609 - 1660 AD:** Poland was involved in a series of wars and was invaded by the Swedes, Turks, Muscovites and Cossacks in such large numbers that the country was almost drowned by enemy forces. This period came to be known as “*Potop*” (“*Deluge*”). The population of the Commonwealth of Poland was reduced from about 10 million to 6 million due to the wars, famine and plague.

**1674 - 1696 AD:** During the reign of Jan III Sobieski the Royal Republic was a major player in central Europe for the last time. One high point of his reign was the victory over the Turks at the siege of Vienna in 1683. This victory put an end to the Ottoman threat to take control of Europe from the east.

**1772 AD:** The First Partition of Poland in which Russia, Prussia and Austria seized Polish territory.

**1791 AD:** Reforms after the First Partition culminated in the Constitution of the Third of May, the second written constitution that outlines the responsibilities of government. (The United States Constitution was the first.) This is the Constitution which is still celebrated on Polish Constitution Day.

**1793 AD:** In the Second Partition, Russia and Prussia took over half of the territory still under

Polish control in order to keep the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from reforming itself and resisting intervention in internal and international affairs by its neighbors.

**1795 AD:** In the Third Partition, Russia, Prussia and Austria divided what remained of Poland. The last king of Poland, Stanisław August Poniatowski, was forced to abdicate. With his abdication on November 25, 1795 Poland ceased to exist as a political entity and did not reappear on the map of Europe until after World War I.

**1806 – 1815 AD.:** During the Napoleonic Wars Polish patriots placed their hopes for the restoration of an independent Poland in Napoleon.

**1815 AD:** Following Napoleons defeat at Waterloo and his final exile the Congress of Vienna redrew the boundaries of Europe. The boundaries of Polish territory seized in the Partitions was changed, The Russian controlled “Congress Kingdom of Poland” (Kongresowe Królestwo Polskie) was formed. In the Prussian Partition the Grand Duchy of Posen (German: Großherzogtum Posen; Polish: Wielkie Księstwo Poznańskie) was created, After 1848 it was re-titled as the Province of Posen (German: Provinz Posen; Polish: Prowincja Poznańska). The Austrian Partition continued to be known as Galicia.

**1830 - 1870 AD:** Uprisings in 1830-1831, 1846, 1848 and 1863 did not free Poland and resulted in the emigration of Polish nobles and intellectuals. Oppressive policies in German Poland (the Province of Posen) and in Russian Poland set the stage for the great peasant emigration.

**1870 - 1914 AD:** Due to poverty, lack of opportunities for employment and oppressive government policies the great peasant emigration from Poland took place. Four to six million Poles, principally from the peasant class, left Poland for the United States.

**1918 - 1919 AD:** Poland regained independence at the end of World War I. The Treaty of Versailles gave Poland western Prussia, thus regaining access to the Baltic Sea.

**1939 - 1945 AD:** On September 1, 1939 Hitler’s troops invaded Poland. On September 17, 1939, the Soviet Union invaded eastern Poland. In June of 1941 Germany attacked the Soviet Union. Poland remained under Nazi control for the next three years. In February 1945 at the Yalta Conference, Russia, Great Britain, and the United States agreed to leave Poland under Soviet control as part of the Russian sphere of influence.

**1945 - 1989 AD:** During the “Cold War” period, Communist Poland remained a satellite of the Soviet Union. In 1989 Solidarity was re-established and in November of 1990 the first fully free presidential election in post-war Poland took place.

**1997 AD:** Poland’s National Assembly adopted a new Constitution.

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