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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**This is the first in a series of monthly statements issued by the Polish American Congress regarding the centennial year of Poland's Independence, November 11, 1917 – November 11, 2018.**

**Dr. Mark Pienkos, National Vice President for Public Relations, has assembled a team of eminent Polish American Political Scientists and Historians to alert readers as to the importance of Poland's contributions to the United States and the World.**

**Contributing Authors:**

**Dr. Patrice Patrice M. Dabrowski** is an historian with degrees from Harvard University (A.B., A.M. and PhD) and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy (M.A.L.D.). She has taught at Harvard, Brown, and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and recently completed a three-year stint at the Doktoratskolleg Galizien at the University of Vienna. Dabrowski is currently an Associate of the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute and editor of H-Poland. Dabrowski is the author of two books: *Poland: The First Thousand Years and Commemorations* and *The Shaping of Modern Poland*. In 2014, she was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland.

**Dr. John Radzilowski** is an historian with degrees from Arizona State University specializing in Modern U.S. History, Public History, Russia/East. Currently, Dr. Radzilowski is an Associate Professor of History at the University of Alaska Southeast. Among his many activities, Dr. Radzilowski is a fellow at the Piast Institute: A National Center for Polish and Polish-American Affairs and past president of the Polish American Cultural Institute of Minnesota. He is also a contributing editor for the *Encyclopedia of American Immigration* (second edition), plus the author or co-author of 13 books.

**Dr. Donald Pienkos** is Professor Emeritus (Political Science) at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He earned his Doctorate (in Russian and East European politics)

from the University of Wisconsin in Madison. His many publications include the histories of the Polish National Alliance (1984, 2007), the Polish Falcons (1987, 2012) and the Polish American Congress (1991). He is an associate editor of The Polish American Encyclopedia (2012). In 2010, he was awarded the Officers Cross of service by the President of Poland.

*November, 11, 2018 – A Century After –  
Celebrating Poland's Fourth of July*

**The Year 2018 is special for the Poland's people and for people of Polish heritage everywhere. It marks the one hundredth anniversary of Poland's rebirth as an independent state.**

**On November 11, 1918 General Jozef Pilsudski declared Poland's independence in Warsaw on the very day the German empire agreed to an armistice, or truce, with France, Britain and the United States. That truce was permanent and ending a Great War (today known as World War I) that had begun in 1914. In assuming authority, Pilsudski acted quickly to bring about the exit of the German forces in the country and to reunite the lands of Poland that for 123 years had been divided and ruled by the Russian, Austro-Hungarian and German empires and which had suffered greatly as a battleground in the fighting between the three empires.**

**But proclaiming independence was only the start. It would require more than two years of fighting for Poland to secure stable borders that would embrace nearly all of the Polish population into a state that became the Second Polish Republic.**

**Countless thousands of heroic individuals played a part in bringing about Poland's liberation from foreign domination. Five individuals deserve special mention here for their leadership in achieving a goal that seemed beyond reach before 1914. First was Pilsudski, a charismatic political activist of great foresight who realized that Poland's chances for freedom depended on the defeat of all three of Poland's occupiers in the conflict - which in fact is what happened. A self-taught military leader as well, it was Pilsudski who organized a highly disciplined legion to lead the fight for freedom when the time came.**

**Then there was Roman Dmowski, leader of the nationalist movement, who from 1914 was in France as head of a Polish national committee working to persuade the British and French governments to support an independent Poland once the war was won. Dmowski's ally here was the renowned concert pianist Ignacy Paderewski who devoted himself to persuading President Woodrow Wilson to support Polish independence, an effort that was realized when Wilson - after 1917 the leader of America's entry into the war as an ally of Britain and France - made Polish independence one of this country's war aims in his celebrated "Fourteen Points" message to Congress on January 8, 1918. It was also Paderewski who proposed that the Polish community in America organize a "Kosciuszko Army" to fight under Polish colors for Polish independence alongside the allies. Such a force, known as**

**the "Blue Army" was indeed organized and took part in the fighting in France in 1918 and later in Poland under General Jozef Haller. (Of the thousands from America who served, more than 1,500 came from Milwaukee.)**

**Paderewski also worked with the leaders of the Polish organizations in America to rally the 4 million member Polonia in voicing its support for the independence cause to our country's leaders. With John Smulski of Chicago, his effort was highlighted by the calling together of a national congress of Poles in America in September 1918 in Detroit. This congress, a forerunner of the Polish American Congress, pledged its commitment to an independent Poland and its people's well-being once the war was over.**

**On November 11, 1918, just weeks after the Congress adjourned, Pilsudski proclaimed an independent Poland. The dream of generations of patriots who had fought for a free Poland in 1794, during the time of Napoleon, in 1830, and 1863 - was realized. The Poland of today, the Third Polish Republic is a true successor to what the patriots of 1918 and their predecessors had worked for.**

**In short, there is much to celebrate in November 2018! Happy Birthday Poland!**