

Deklaracja Rządu Polskiego - Tekst angielski

Warsaw, 21st November 1918
To the Polish Nation!

Upon coming to power in the Republic [Republika] of Poland, we are aware of our obligation to expound our position to the nation, to indicate to it the paths along which we shall march towards the goals we have set for ourselves.

Common people is our background. Polish workers and peasants have given into our hands the power over the disenthralled parts of Poland. Therefore, we it is our desire to be a people's government that acts in defence of the interests of the multitudinous millions of the working people, paves new ways for their lives, and fulfils their will. We are a provisional government that has emerged at the moment of sudden urgency. We shall be wielding our power until a legislative Sejm is convened, pledging that it be wielded to the good and benefit of the people and the Polish State. We are determined to assemble the legislative Sejm, based upon common, equal, direct, secret, and proportional voting of all the citizens of either gender, with 21 years of their age having turned, at the beginning of the following year, establishing the day of election at the last Sunday of January. We shall commence our preparations to the act summarily, the electoral regulations to be announced by us within the coming days.

Whilst wielding a temporary rule, our will is to pave the way for those to come afterwards, so that an ever-more powerful and magnificent edifice of the Republic of Poland may be erected upon the substructure we have established. And there is where issues of enormous importance are accumulating for us to tackle, calling for resolution. We are not all together a unity yet. The population of Greater Poland and eastern Silesia is not yet under the rule of the Republic of Poland. The frontier of Poland has not yet embraced the Polish sea-coast. Alien banners are still waving over the cradle of the Polish State.



Bringing-about the final unification of all the lands populated by Polish people shall be one of our first tasks. We are embarking on the effort at an extremely tough moment. The war has come to a stop indeed, but its horrific effects will long obstruct in our land the way for any doing or proceeding striving for political and material rebuilding of Poland. Devastated by the turmoil of war and the horrible burdens of the occupation, haunted by the disaster of millions of the masses of prisoners-of-war chaotically avalanching through its territories on their return ways and of alien troops this country must experience the most thorough and careful healing of its severe wounds and dangerous malfunctions. Our willingness is to secure the conditions for a tranquil creative labour that is of benefit to the entire nation, to all the citizens of the Polish State, without regard for the religion or descent whatsoever. In the domain of civic equal rights, it has to be made certain that the most glorious tradition of the once-Commonwealth, with its confessional toleration and the most progressive arrangements, be not overtaken by any of the most enlightened countries of the West. Thence, we shall eradicate, with utmost emphasis, these legal restrictions of the individual factions of the populace that we have received inherited from the partitions, and shall prevent any and all dissensions and struggles stemming from religious and ethnic conflicts. Poland, as she is getting reborn at these moments of historical breakthrough, must keep pace with the universal parade of liberated peoples toward happiness, based upon a new, and deeply democratic, foundation. Almost a hundred-and-fifty years of bondage over, Poland has rejoined the family of independent nations. We want her to take a place within it, worthy of her great past and numerical force of her people. We shall spare no efforts so that the purification of our country of the residues of the long-standing yoke progress forward most expeditiously and most propitiously; so that the traces of Poland's fragmentation into provinces, every one of them living under separate conditions of labour, may disappear.

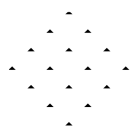


One of the very first tasks that we pose for ourselves is to enter into and maintain, on a promptest basis possible, amicable relationships with all the states. Our representatives shall visit, among other places, the capital-cities of the superpowers of the coalition to whose victory Poland owes, to a remarkable measure, her rebirth as a state and from whom she is expecting protuberant assistance when it comes to ultimately establishing the borders of Poland. We shall always have our eye on the issue of protection of the frontier of the Polish State, which would ensure it the opportunity of comprehensive development and complete independency, [also while] preparing the material which would justify our postulates at the peace conference and upon the final rearrangement of the relations between the nations of Europe. An end put to the war has nowise removed the necessity to form a national army. While not forejudging the resolutions of a constituent assembly, what we have to do is embark, with all hastiness, to the formation of a strong and resilient army for the protection of the borders of the State and of all the achievements of the people, against all and any external perils. We shall devote to this particular task, so difficult as it is, given the heterogeneous military material presently at our disposal, a considerable portion of labour and effort, and we do believe that the armed forces of the Republic of Poland shall respond to the expectations reposed in them. Poland, great in terms of not only the territory but with the full rights of her populace, powerful with internal fusion of her enlightened people – conscious of their rights, now enjoying liberty, released from oppression and exploitation: such is the paramount objective for all our attitudes toward the neighbours. Our desire is to base our actions not upon violence or acquisitive strivings, but rather, upon leniently taking the shared interests into consideration; upon a conciliatory and voluntary settlement of disputable questions; upon reciprocity that is binding not only for us but for our neighbours as well. It is not our intent to magnify inexorable struggle out of transitory clashes over borderlines, believing that the peoples of each of Lithuania, Byelorussia, Ukraine, Czechia, Slovak lands, Hungary, and Germany will find a way out and determine the coexistence of free and equal nations.



With all our powers shall we endeavour to invent this road of accord, without doing harm to ourselves or anyone else. The issue of liberating the Polish Lwów from foreign violence, the issue of rescue for that heroic handful of young people who have undertaken a task in excess of their capacity, lies heavily on our hearts. Hence, with all the energy will we accelerate the already initiated military action that is supposed to release Lwów from oppression¹, and prepare the ground for a compromissory resolution as to the disputable matters within the area shared by Polish and Ukrainian residents of Galicia. As we consider prompt commencement of the building of our administration to be one of the tasks of highest urgency, we have never closed our eyes to the severe difficulties we have to overcome in this field. The point is not only about selecting honest, broadminded, energetic and persistent people: it is also about these people enjoying complete and unquestionable trust across the strata of the people. For the time being, for practical reasons, the principle of having officials appointed has to be preserved; in the future system of the Republic, once finally established, the said principle will give way to a limitless principle of eligibility. Nevertheless, the voice coming from the interested grassroots stratum has already now to be taken into account to a largest extent possible. The issue of communal, municipal, and district [powiat] self-government is urgent. The impulsive movement that strives for rendering these institutions democratic – a movement that is pretty natural and understandable – carries a potential of disarray; thus, whilst not prejudging the form of the final local self-government, which is for the Sejm to resolve, we shall endeavour right now to install in this area temporary general norms, based upon the basics [sic] of the five-points-principled voting, irrespective of gender. We shall support further development, across cities and countryside, of the people's militia which would ensure security and order to the populace, and obedience in delivering the instructions of our administrative authorities.

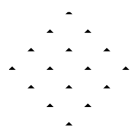
¹ The Polish-Ukrainian struggle over Lwów broke out after the West Ukrainian People's Republic was proclaimed, from early November onwards. 21st Nov. saw Polish military troops commanded by Lt.-Col. Michał Karaszewicz-Tokarzewski come to the rescue of the fighting Polish dwellers of Lwów, including youth fighters, and eventually repelled the Ukrainians from the city.



The issue of food provisioning to the populace, of delivering to it the indispensable foodstuffs at a cheap price, shall be considered by us one of our major obligations. We will base the conveniences in delivering the foods upon the society's self-governmental organisations. In our fight against the food usury, which renders the primary commodities endeared, we shall act relentlessly, never shrinking from disenfranchising the guilty ones. Arrangement for a sound foundation for the development of agriculture, activating the industry in a most extensive manner and ensuring it a normal and tranquil development, in order to provide an opportunity to work for all the labour forces in this country, and ensuring prosperity to the broadest masses of people – shall also be a task of importance to us. As far as treasury and financial matters are concerned, we shall carry-out a standardisation of the taxation system across the provinces of the Commonwealth [Rzeczpospolita], along with a reform of the taxation system in the spirit of fair distribution of tax burdens, toward encumbrance, in particular, through a stronger enforcement of performances to the benefit of the State from the moneyed classes, and of war profits. Prior to the Sejm proceeding its project of social reforms, in conformance to the spirit of the time and ensuing from the breakthrough being experienced these days, which brings the interests of the working classes to the fore – before we prove able to announce the bills designed by us in this spirit, relating to coerced expropriation of the larger landed proprietorship and giving it into the hands of the working people under the State's control, nationalisation of mines, salterns, oil industry, transportation roads, and other branches of industry, wherever this may be done at once; participation of workers in the administering of nationalised industrial establishments, labour law and labour protection, insurance against joblessness, ailment and senescence, confiscations of properties formed during the war out of criminal speculation in basic necessities – we shall forthwith introduce complete equal rights amongst the citizens regardless of their denomination or nationality, freedom of conscience, speech, publications, assemblies, parades, association, trade unions and strikes, as well as eight-hour working day across the branches of industry, craftsmanship, and trade.



We shall abolish all the titles, save for academic ones; we shall take initiative and collaboration for establishing a working branch-office for economic and professional affairs, which would operate in strict agreement with public labour protection bodies. Before we develop the public [central-level] and communal employment-agency institutions, we will extend our care to the workers returning from emigration and those remaining outside the country, and to the prisoners-of-war coming back from their bondage. At last, we shall undertake public works that would offer an earnings opportunity to broad working masses. We shall take over the domains and donation-entailed-estates to henceforth become property of the Republic of Poland. We leave for the constituent assembly to resolve the fate of governmental properties. Considering that the forests ought to be State-owned, we shall propose the relevant bill to the constituent assembly. We deem it appropriate to render the felling conditional upon the Government's consent. With respect to the management of the judiciary, there are some great tasks for the Government to undertake, which primarily includes extension of the network of Polish State courts-of-law to those areas which have already been, by means of facts, annexed to the Congress Kingdom, as well as to those which will still be included within the State of Poland. In parallel, we are being faced with the task of standardising the laws within the Polish lands in their entirety and democratising of the form of judicial institutions. One of the major tasks will be to create a common, secular and free-of-any-charge school that would be accessible, on an equal basis, to everybody, regardless of their financial status. Abilities are meant to be the only determinant with respect to the privilege of getting educated. We shall raise among the people the civic spirit and the sense of responsibility for the fortune of the State, which is their own State. It will be part of our endeavour to seek-out for the national culture those numerous talents who, resulting from inaccessibility of higher-level education to broad strata of the people have so far been wasted. We believe that from the bosom of this people individuals of dauntless will, deep affection and hardenable persistency will be born – to lead the Polish Republic up to the summit of culture and glory.



It is our intention to extend a provident care to the attainments of the national culture and instantly set about retrieving the works of art, libraries and archives carried away from Poland by the alien governments. The benefits and science and arts are to be available to everybody, and to realise this particular goal shall we make the first steps in the nearest future.

Such are, in the most general outline, the intentions of the interim government of the Republic of Poland. Their fulfilment is primarily dependent upon the support we can obtain from this country. Hence, we call upon the Polish people, in their generality, to offer a most considerable aid to our endeavours, to subordinate all the separate class- or party-related interests to the one great and common cause of rebuilding of an independent Homeland and liberation of the working people. Jędrzej Moraczewski¹,
President of the Ministers

Translated © by Tristan Korecki

¹ Jędrzej Moraczewski (1870–1944), associated with the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), was a member of the Polish Legions and co-leader of the Polish Military Organisation. He was Minister of the Post and Communication with the Government led by his predecessor Ignacy Daszyński. Moraczewski headed the Provisional Government of the Polish Republic, formed by Józef Piłsudski (November 18, 1918). Later he served as Minister of Public Labour (1925–9).