

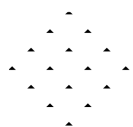
Manifest Towarzystwa Demokratycznego Polskiego - Tekst angielski

The rape of Poland only terminated the political existence of the state, without destroying the life of the nation. The constant efforts made since the Bar Confederation to recapture independence, the streams of blood shed for it in so many corners of the world, our current itinerancy, even the fierce relentlessness of Poland's murderers and the universal compassion shown [us] by the peoples of the world bear unwavering witness that the Polish nation is alive and that it is sure of its future. Poland feels unextinguished power within itself, its resurrection is demanded by the people, its oppressors are afraid: and what bears such marks of universality cannot be false. The voice of humanity has always been the voice of God.

Poland's great mission is not accomplished yet.

Ten centuries ago, Poland, having united many tribes, similar to one another in their genealogy, needs, languages and character, alone or within the narrow scope of a single estate preserved and nourished the Slavic democratic idea, obliterated and stamped out by foreign violence in other scions of this tribe; it shielded European civilisation and warded off with its own breast hordes of Tartars, Turks and Muscovites pressing to get into Europe. And when, on the one hand, human thought, emancipated in the West, declared war on the old order, while a new absolute power rose up in the North, in an effort to contain this autarchy Poland, perennial advocate of democratic ideas, the vanguard of European civilisation, faithful to its mission, was the first to fight, and in this fight she perished.

With its downfall, the sixty-million-strong Slavic family lost its only representative, the [Slavic] peoples its most loyal ally; having made an unholy pact on Poland's grave, absolutism strengthened its power; and the universal renewal of European societies had to be stopped and postponed.

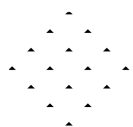


However, Poland's political existence did not cease to be a European need, and our cause is not only a domestic one, but a universal cause of humanity.

Although Europe abandoned Poland in its most difficult contingency, we will not keep accusing it of being cold-hearted because history demonstrates that our homeland was not brought down by alien violence, but by the fatal flaws of our own society.

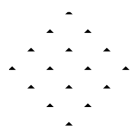
When the nation needed to expend the most effort to ward off invaders, its internal forces were already blighted by long-time anarchy. — For a long time the nobility had wielded power in Poland on the ruins of ancient communal self-rule; educating and developing itself, it had already for a long time encapsulated the whole life of the nation. The original national idea, confined to a small space, had to lose its mighty power. Once shared by all, liberty, equality, and fraternity became the exclusive privilege of a single estate; and the mass of the people driven away from political life, deprived of all rights, stripped of their property, themselves made into property inseparable from the land, could find no common purpose with the ruling estate. The interests of the nobility and the interests of the people were as opposite to each other as freedom to slavery and wealth to misery. This broken unity, national forces split in twain, produced a natural consequence – overall powerlessness. The privileged were not willing to abolish it by renouncing what they had appropriated and by doing conscientious justice to the oppressed. So, having no support in the enslaved and numbed masses, Poland was unable to repel its invaders.

All of her attempts to regain her lost independence show, on the one hand, the impotence of a self-contained estate and its stubbornness to preserve its spoils, and on the other hand, prove that a sense of liberties and a readiness to fight has not been extinguished in the masses as promises and hopes are being extended to them.



At Kosciuszko's call, announcing a better future for the oppressed, the masses rushed to arms. The fields of Raclawice and other memorable places testify to the courageous spirit of the Polish people. It was there that we saw the true advocates of sacrifice for the cause of the Motherland, who captured Muscovite cannons with scythes and spades. But the nobility's unconquerable loathing of social reforms paralysed and frustrated this most sublime undertaking.

The November Revolution, having higher ambitions, encountered the same obstacles and met the same end. Its bad timing, the huge enemy forces, military mistakes, the treason of a number of commanders, the unfriendliness and bad faith of the neighbouring powers, especially the lack of reinforcements from France and England – these are either secondary or inconsequential reasons for its failure. The main reason for the wastage of so much effort was quite simply the stoppage and pushback against a movement that represented a solemn manifestation of the national spirit, aware of its great mission in human history. The inheritors of superstitions and representatives of the once-ruling estate, saw at first glance that once their acquisitions were undermined they would be undone if the original direction of the revolution was not undercut. Therefore, cunningly taking the reins of government, they turned the revolutionary movement into a simple military campaign instead of stirring up the masses and striking with the nation's full force, they preferred to throw themselves into the arms of hypocritical cabinets, to beg for assistance from Poland's half-murderers, to make deals even with the enemy; they preferred to kill the cause of the Motherland rather than part with their treasures. Through these despicable and counter-revolutionary actions they undermined the nation's self-confidence, cooled its zeal, discouraged its courage. Descending once again into the grave, Poland saw among its sons both defenders and executioners; once again, it had been murdered not by the simple violence of invading hordes but by the egotism of the privileged.

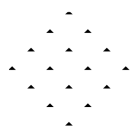


Meanwhile, the people's original flutter at the cry of the November Revolution portended the most glorious future. Unstopped, the movement would have produced inevitable consequences of its own: universal social emancipation, the sparking of a truly national war, and the unquestionable victory of the national cause. The people would have risen as one, clad its strong fist in iron, vanquished the invaders without any help from abroad, and Poland would have established its sovereign rule on universal fortune from the Oder and Carpathians to the Dnieper and Daugava, and from the Baltic to the Black Sea. For there is no power that a nation of twenty million, bound together by shared liberties, cannot defeat and prevail over.

The Polish people intuited this thought of salvation with its infallible instinct, while young minds were able to comprehend its full import. This very thought itself, rescued from the great debacle, went abroad with handful of émigrés, maturing in the enlightened West, in the future once again to develop in the homeland. It gave birth to the Polish Democratic Society.

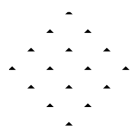
Having demonstrated the need for social reform, the Society, in accordance with its founding charter of 17 March 1832, decided to work in the spirit of democratic principles to regain the independence of the country and to bring emancipation to its people.

In order to achieve these aims, the circumstances at the time required it, first and foremost, to rectify public opinion, continually misled by the undoers of the home cause, to expose the incompetence and bad faith of those who, over the course of the ten-month struggle, had self-righteously clothed themselves in the majesty of the people and still want to be viewed as the spokespeople of the national cause abroad — to shed light on the aspirations of the November Revolution and the cause of its downfall, to remind Europe of the nation's still uncanceled rights, to protest against the treaties sanctioning the crime of Poland's partition, to present in a new light Poland's great civilizing mission, the real needs of the people and its unspent energy, to verbally explain, develop and spread among the exiles, in Poland and Europe, the truths that were constantly repeated during the struggle but could not be heard by the ranks of the army and the people because they were drowned out by the clangor of arms and the cunning voice of the leaders.



This work, despite numerous obstacles, has already been largely completed. It is difficult to gauge the extent to which the spread of democratic ideas has influenced the general condition of the Polish cause; however, within the small circle of émigrés we no longer see such persistent superstition as that which, by darkening our minds, thwarted past and recent attempts to recapture independence; the holdover of aristocratic misrule, faith in individuals, once tearing a single family of exiles into several warring factions, now gives way to faith in principles; the democratic lesson, increasingly better understood and put into practice thanks to the continual pondering of national history, has ceased to be synonymous with the preaching of anarchy and terrorism: it has gradually grown from a small embryo and destroyed the illusions that the aristocracy was using to shield its fatal intentions — a clear separation of two warring elements has finally occurred. The aristocracy, pushed away, beaten and recognised as an enemy of the national cause by the émigré community, has reached for diplomatic prevarication as its last resort, in order to prolong their prerogatives in the home country via what the gullible perceive as a patriotic effort; meanwhile, those who follow democratic principles, whose majority has gathered under the sole banner of their faith, intended to pay their debt to their homeland and to humanity in this, the surest, way.

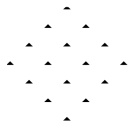
Thus, the Society, having removed the obstacles in its vicinity and ensured that its principles are recognised and prevalent among their émigré brethren, having gained the necessities for political activity: moral and material resources, having finally entrusted to an elected body those external activities which, by their very nature, cannot be undertaken and carried out by the entire community, feels today that it is able to work harder, more effectively and more directly to achieve its principal goal.



The Society, embarking upon these broader activities, convinced that an open, conscientious, unambiguous presentation of its concepts can be the most certain guarantee of the righteousness of its intentions and of the effectiveness of its future efforts, hereby decides to renew its political faith and to reveal its future prospects by [making] a public Act before Poland and Europe.

For half a century, the peoples of Europe have been forging their new destiny and seeking new conditions of social life on the ruins of the old order. This endeavour manifests itself today across the entire mental and political landscape, in all the undertakings and movements of the peoples, even in the concessions of governments, which are incapable of effectively rebutting the demands of the emancipators. The most illustrious defenders of the previous order, its most fear-ridden and most daring demolishers, people at the highest and the lowest rungs of the social hierarchy, all foretell or demand democracy, that is the abolition of privileges, the rule of equality.

This equality, once a vital foundation of social order among the Slavs, subsequently developed and shaped by the entire mass of Poland's ruling estate, nowadays a light and a need of the age, so forcefully evoked and foreshadowing the total happiness of humanity, is the cardinal, unchanging guiding principle of our national Society, the emblem of its unity, the shared faith of all its members. For we are deeply convinced that a social order based on appropriation, in which a minority exploits the majority and reaps the benefits attached to social life while others are forced to bear only the burdens of life is the sole cause of our country's misfortune and of humanity's misery. As long as such an order, violating natural justice, continues to prevail, an internal struggle will go on between the oppressed and their oppressors, the masses doomed to backwardness, indigence and bondage and the small group of those who have seized all the benefits of society for themselves. The free and harmonious development of national forces cannot take place in the midst of such anarchy. Humankind has felt this. The law of equality, so far living only in the mind, must therefore be put into practice.



We draw our faith from this universal, infallible conscience of mankind, as we do from national thought.

All people, as sharing the same nature, have equal rights and equal duties: all are brethren, children of one father — God, all are members of one family — the human family.

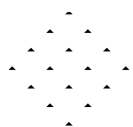
Everyone has the right to pursue their happiness, to satisfy all physical, mental and moral needs, to develop and improve all of their faculties, and, as they work and develop their abilities, to share equally in all the benefits of life in society.

It is also every person's duty to seek the happiness of others, to satisfy their needs and to help them develop their faculties, to limit their own interest by considering the happiness of others and of the community, and, as the benefits of life in society are received, to bear public burdens.

A privilege, by whatever name it is known, is a breach of general duty or an appropriation of some right, and is therefore a denial of equality, a violation of nature.

Without equality there is no freedom because where some cannot do what others are entitled to, there must be slavery on the one hand, and despotism on the other, in addition to anarchy in the whole society.

There is no fraternity without equality because where some people cast off their duties and transfer them to others, there must be selfishness on one hand, and mental and moral debasement on the other, as well as mutual hatred between the members of that society.

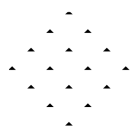


Human rights are rooted in man's individual nature, in freedom: social duty derives from brotherhood. There must be a harmony between rights and duties. It is the duty of the community to establish and maintain this harmony. Where the individual is everything and the community is nothing, anarchy reigns; but where the community absorbs individualism, there is of necessity despotism. Neither anarchy nor despotism are in the nature of societies. They are only two extremes.

The community faithful to its duties provides equal benefits to all its members and equal assistance to satisfy the physical, mental and moral needs of each: it makes the right to own land or any other property dependent solely on [one's] work; through public, streamlined and accessible education, through complete, unrestricted freedom to express one's thoughts, it develops the faculties of its members, it does not restrain [people] through intolerance and by persecuting freedom of conscience; it clears the path of free development and growth of national forces by removing the obstacles of egotism and backwardness, and it leads not only isolated parts of the nation but its entire mass on the track of continuous progress and improvement.

The community cannot effectively fulfil these duties when it has recourse to a form based on anti-social principles, on privilege: the consequence of each of these is inevitably the unequal distribution of the benefits and burdens of life in society; each [privilege], dividing people into rulers and subordinates, gives power, wealth and education to the former, and subjugation, poverty and backwardness to the latter. The fate and future of the community does not depend on the community itself, but on the ruling estate, the privileged few. Therefore, any form that violates the general principle of equality is contrary to nature, justice, and truth.

All for the people, by the people: this is the most general principle of democracy, embracing both its objective and its form. Everything for the people, for everyone, is the aim; everything by the people, by everyone, is the form.

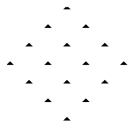


Within the framework of the equality-based form everyone shares in the common interest, therefore there are no divisions, and there is unity. This unity is manifest everywhere, it creates universal harmony and gives strength, while this strength makes it possible to fulfil the national mission among other societies. The full empowerment of the people in a democracy ceases to be a mere illusion. Every member has an equal share [of power] in the community. Not single atoms, but the nation as a whole is the legislator here; for in the conscience of the masses lies the surest guarantee that laws will embody eternal, infallible justice. The authority chosen by the people to enact them, if it ceases to be provident and suited to the needs and will of the people, may be removed by democratic means alone, without violent upheaval; only in it is it possible to bring to fruition all the [required] changes through continuous progress and ever broader development of national thought.

Societies organised in this fashion can fully fulfil their special missions in the harmonious pursuit of a common, universal goal. There is only one way to achieve this goal: continuous and coordinated improvement on the physical, mental and moral level. This improvement, dependent on the free and harmonious development of all national forces, cannot occur unless the whole mass of the members of the community pursues it; and the whole mass cannot improve itself unless all people perform their duties and exercise their rights, and if the universal principle of equality is violated by privilege.

Equality, therefore, encompasses all the conditions of individual and communal happiness: without it, neither the individual, nor the community, nor humanity can pursue their mission.

Equality puts into practice two great, powerful feelings: fraternity and liberty. The love of mankind has an enchanting power; this power increases every day. Liberty is also an inexhaustible force, sweeping up ever wider masses. Joining forces, the love of mankind and liberty shall bring down the old world of privilege: love and liberty themselves shall jointly build a new world of equality.



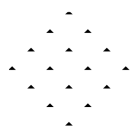
This is how we understand the principles that humanity strives to achieve today. It is on them that we found the future revival of the Polish community, and it is in their spirit that we are working to regain [Poland's] independent existence.

So an independent and democratic Poland — this is the aim of our Society.

Not a single atom, not a single fraction of [our] great nation, but Poland as a whole, within its pre-partition frontiers, is able to maintain itself in existence, to fulfil its mission. The nation has already torn up the treaties confining its alleged independence to small areas in the eyes of the world with its last uprising. Poland cannot be bound by the agreements made by the perpetrators or accomplices in the crime against it: it did not enter into any arrangements with its murderers, and it has been a constant, living, bleeding protest against the conditions imposed on its existence.

A reborn, independent Poland will be democratic. All, without any distinction of religion or background, will partake of mental, political and social emancipation in it; a new order based on the principles of equality, extending to ownership, work, industry, upbringing and all manner of social relations, will replace the misrule that is called law by the appropriators [of privilege]. A reborn Poland cannot be an aristocratic republic. Power will return to the people; the once ruling estate shall be dissolved definitively, it shall go down among the people, become the people; all will be equal, all will be free, all will be children of one Motherland.

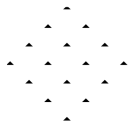
Only an independent and democratic Poland is capable of fulfilling its great mission, of breaking up the covenant of absolutism, of stopping its destructive influence on Western civilization, of spreading the democratic idea among the Slavs, today subjugated, uniting them through this idea, and by its virtues, by the purity and strength of its spirit, of ushering in the universal emancipation of European peoples.



In order to regain an independent existence, Poland holds enormous forces in her bosom, which no high-minded and sincere voice has yet called up. It is an almost untouched power, terrible both to the internal and external foes. Through it, Poland shall rise up.

The people of Poland, stripped of all their rights, crushed by backwardness, indigence and slavery, are still cultivating the land wrested from them centuries ago in a bloody sweat for someone else's benefit; until today, in the old provinces seized by Moscow, they are sold along with the land as property attached to the land. The suffering and humiliated people there cry out for justice. The internal oppressors have been deaf to this voice. During the last struggle for independence, abusing the holy name of the love of Motherland, they wanted to feed the people, tormented by physical scarcity, with the very sound of the words, [inciting them] to shed their blood for the Motherland, which had for so many centuries rewarded their work with contempt, humiliation and misery; they called [on the people] to rise up and destroy the invaders — they! who themselves were the invaders of their rights. This is why only a frail echo responded to their hypocritical calls — and so we fell!

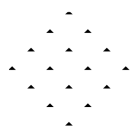
If this terrifying lesson, learned at the price of bloody sacrifices, is not to be lost, if the new uprising is not to be a sad repetition of the old ones, the first battle cry should be the emancipation of the people, the return of the land snatched from them into their unconditional ownership, the reinstatement of rights, allowing everyone to benefit from independence, regardless of their religion or background. — Only this measure of conscionable, sincere, unambiguous justice can foster a feeling of true self-sacrifice in the oppressed masses and engender the great conviction that a twenty-million strong nation is able to bring down and destroy a European coalition, just as republican France did in recent times. — Hardly any nation has ever rivalled the Poles in their love of their native land; none has surpassed it in sacrifices. If in the last uprising, over the course of a ten-month struggle against us, the most powerful enemy of humankind could boast of no victory, even amid so many mistakes, betrayals and infirmities among our commanders, what will his armed throngs be to the united national forces called up by love of their homeland and eternal justice.



To consolidate its regained independence on democratic principles, Poland also has national elements in its womb. The democratic idea, spilled first within the whole nation, then developed and perfected in the aristocratic estate, can easily be replanted among the people which, despite long-time captivity and oppression has still preserved intact traces of old-time communal self-rule. The suffering people among us are not like the suffering people of Western Europe; they have not been tainted by the corruption and egotism of the privileged classes; the simplicity of the old virtues, righteousness and sacrifice, religious feelings, pure and gentle customs are still in them. On such uncontaminated and still fresh ground, the ancient national tree of equality shall thrive, cultivated by the conscionable hand of brotherhood and freedom.

So in Poland all the conditions for regaining an independent and democratic existence are fulfilled. She is able to rise up on her own, to cast off the invaders, to break free of the internal yoke and to consolidate her existence based on enduring democratic principles.

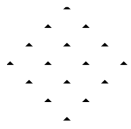
But apart from its own forces, Poland has natural allies. Even during the bloody struggle against the enemy, Europe received its every victory with cries of joy and adoration; and we, representatives of the misfortunes and hopes of the subjugated nation, found hearts poured out to us and a shelter in universal sympathy. Peoples have allied themselves with the immortal spirit of Poland, and on the same grave on which fiendish absolutism made its pact, they clasped brotherly hands. Our enemy has become their enemy, and their enemies our enemies. Therefore, we, convinced that the national hatreds stoked in the past have now faded completely, believe in the sincere cooperation of peoples, based on universal brotherhood and the shared need for emancipation.



Cabinet agreements will not bring Poland back, while monarchic wars will not bring justice to the people. However, our Motherland is so dear to us, its wounds pain us so much, that we will not neglect to take advantage of any favourable event or circumstance. Therefore, we will embrace all that can prove useful in the advancement of our cause, anything that can facilitate or bring us closer to achieving our goal.

This is a conscientious, honest, unambiguous exposition of our principles, goals and means. — We will devote our whole lives to bring them to fruition. — We have sworn before our Homeland and humanity not to rest until Poland regains her independence and reestablishes her existence on democratic principles. — We shall realise this solemn commitment made with youthful enthusiasm with manly perseverance. We are not discouraged by the magnitude of the task, we shall not be daunted by adversity, for the justice we call for, the truth we proclaim, has an almighty power.

Whoever, like us, believes in the holiness of our goals, in the conscientiousness of our principles and the effectiveness of our means — whose heart beats purely for the Homeland and for mankind, let him come and join his efforts with ours. We shall not shake hands with those who believe otherwise, as we can make no compromises when it comes to our conscience. We shall not sacrifice our political faith for the sake of outward unity, nor will we purchase momentary consensus with half-measures. Yes, it is our calling and firm resolve to crush any compacts based on contrary principles, vying for power; we shall not recognise the former Parliament, even if it could raise itself up again from its remnants in whatever form as the leader of the home cause, as it is the representative of privilege and the bane of the November Revolution. Keeping aloof from side undertakings having nothing to do with the rebirth of the Motherland, we shall work through the Society for Poland's sake — [and] through Poland for humanity's sake.



To conclude, we declare that we are far from wanting to bring murder and conflagration on our country. Not with the sword of the Archangel, but with the book of our native history in hand — we will demonstrate to the oppressed that neither the laws of God, nor several centuries of human violence obligate them to tolerate indigence and slavery that offends their human dignity; on the other hand, by arousing feelings of eternal justice and evoking historical memories, we shall not cease calling upon the heirs of the aristocratic appropriations and superstitions for the sake of their own interest, for the sake of today's education, and especially for the magical name of love of Homeland, to return the rights they have snatched away from the people. We do not know whether the watchword of Poland's liberation shall be the feeling of justice in some, or the impatience and disappointment of others. If, however, the much needed change of social order and consequent independence prove unattainable without violent upheaval; if the people have to be a harsh judge of the past, avengers of the harm done to themselves and executors of the irreversible verdicts of time,—we shall not sacrifice the happiness of twenty million for the sake of a handful of privileged, and the shed blood of brothers shall fall only on the heads of those who, blinded, put their own selfishness ahead of the common good and the liberation of the Motherland.