

# National Security Bureau

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## Poland celebrated the Flag Day. Why 'White & Red'?

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**On May 2, Poland celebrated the Flag Day. The holiday was established in 2004. The Polish flag was hoisted on the Presidential Palace in the presence of National Security Bureau (BBN) head Pawel Soloch.**

The National Day of the Flag coinciding with the 2002-established Polish Diaspora Day also marks May 2, 1945, when Polish troops advanced into Berlin together with the Soviet Red Army. Soldiers of the Kosciuszko (see: NOTE) Division of 1st Polish Army hoisted the Polish flag on the city's Victory Column at the end of the Battle of Berlin.



Historically, the colours of Poland's national flag are derived from the colours of the coat of arms of the Kingdom of Poland and of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (see: NOTE 2), the White Eagle, which is Poland's emblem, and the Pursuer of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, a white knight riding a white horse, both on a red shield.



According to Polish law the national symbols, including the flag, have to be treated "with reverence and respect", which is the "right and obligation" of every Polish citizen and all state organs, institutions and organizations. "Public disrespect, destruction or intentional removal of the flag is considered a crime punishable by a fine, penal servitude or up to one year of imprisonment", states the law.



The current Polish flag was adopted on February 9, 1990. Its colors have been white and red since 1831 when the country first proclaimed independence from Russia, yet it was not until August 1, 1919 that the red over white flag was first officially adopted in fully independent Poland.

The white colour symbolizing peace on Poland's flag is on top as according to Polish heraldry more important is the colour of the emblem than the colour of its background.

The red colour is believed to symbolize the blood shed in the country's fight for independence.

Today, the Polish flag was raised at the Clock Tower of the Royal Castle and on the Presidential Palace in Warsaw on Tuesday as part of observances marking the Day of the National Flag falling on May 2.

The ceremony was attended by President Andrzej Duda and Defence Minister Antoni Macierewicz. Present were also Poland's First lady Agata Kornhauser-Duda, President's Office head Malgorzata Sadurska and army commanders.

The ceremony was preceded by a concert of a Polish army orchestra and followed by a military parade.

At noon at the Belvedere Palace the president laid a wreath at the Monument to Marshal Jozef Pilsudski (see: NOTE 3).

After regaining independence by Poland in 1918, Pilsudski became the Chief of State, the Commander-in-Chief and Marshal of Poland.

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*Source: PAP, own information*

NOTE 1: Tadeusz Kosciuszko (February 4 or 12, 1746 - October 15, 1817) was a Polish-Lithuanian military leader who was proclaimed a national hero in Poland, Lithuania, Belarus and the United States. Kosciuszko fought in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's struggles against Russia and Prussia, and on the American side in the American Revolutionary War. As Supreme Commander of the Polish National Armed Forces, he led the 1794 Kosciuszko Uprising after which Poland was ultimately partitioned by Russia, Prussia and Austria.

NOTE 2: Polish - Lithuanian Commonwealth was the XVI - XVIII century Polish-Lithuanian state composed of the Crown - Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, considered a precursor to modern democratic system such as federation, constitutional monarchy.

NOTE 3: This year will mark the 150th birthday of Jozef Pilsudski, a statesman and co-founder of Poland's independence. Pilsudski was born on December 5, 1867.

After regaining independence by Poland in 1918, Pilsudski became the Chief of State, the Commander-in-Chief and Marshal of Poland.

In May 1926, following a successful coup d'état he took over power in Poland. He was Poland's two-time PM, General Inspector of Armed Forces and minister for military affairs (1926-1935).

Jozef Pilsudski was a proponent of preemptive war against Hitler, to which a concept he numerously tried to convince the French side.

He died at Warsaw's Belweder Palace on May 12, 1935. His funeral became a national tribute with a series of masses, ceremonies and a funeral train touring Poland.

After a two-year display at St. Leonard's Crypt in Kraków's Wawel Cathedral, in 1937 Pilsudski's body rested in a tomb at the Cathedral's Crypt. Pilsudski's brain according to his last will was passed for study to Stefan Batory University, while his heart was laid in his mother's grave at Vilnius' Rasos (Rossa) Cemetery.

Pope Pius XI conducted a special ceremony in the Holy See on May, 18th. Also a commemoration was held at League of Nations seat in Geneva and condolences poured in Poland from world heads of state, including Britain's

King George V, Japan's Emperor Hirohito, France's Albert Lebrun and Pierre-Étienne Flandin, Austria's Wilhelm Miklas as well as Germany's Adolf Hitler, the Soviet Union's Joseph Stalin, Italy's Benito Mussolini and King Victor Emmanuel III.

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