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## Introduction

The Second World War destroyed the city of Warsaw. In summer 1939, it was a thriving metropolis, the “Paris of the East.” The expanding capital of a sovereign eastern European state, the Second Polish Republic, it formed the epicenter of Polish national and cultural life. By Christmas 1944 it was a mountain of rubble. Those who had built the first independent Polish state of the twentieth century and made Warsaw their home were dead, imprisoned, or exiled. They had lost their state, their city, and their home to Nazi German violence.

This book tells the story of a handful of politically conscious Poles and the world they lost under occupation, one of the most vicious in modern history.<sup>1</sup> It examines the intelligentsia of Warsaw and their behavior under Nazi occupation from 1939 to 1944. This elite group led responses to Nazi violence from which they were never safe. For more than five years Warsaw lived, as one Pole remembered, “under horrible terror,” as if “with a gun constantly to our heads.”<sup>2</sup> Despite enormous danger, the capital’s elite embarked on a dizzying array of initiatives to capture the Polish public’s loyalty, preserve their national heritage, keep themselves from going mad, and oust their hated occupiers. Some were disastrous failures and others remarkable successes. The Holocaust of Poland’s – and Europe’s – Jewish community unfolded simultaneously, eclipsing the persecution of the majority of non-Jewish Poles. Polish elite response to different occupation policies revealed crucial ethnic and religious fractures in the Polish national project. The final elite-led anti-occupation effort was a military uprising in summer 1944, which their occupiers crushed, razing the city that had been the center of Polish resistance since 1939.

Polish and German wartime behaviors drew on tradition. As Adolf Hitler’s Germany planned its invasion of Poland, a bold attempt to secure *Lebensraum* or racial “living space,” he worried that Warsaw’s intelligentsia – educators, doctors, lawyers, bureaucrats, journalists, priests, military officers, intellectuals,

<sup>1</sup> In contrast to the “good” American occupations of Germany and Japan after 1945, themselves contested. Susan L. Carruthers, *The Good Occupation: American Soldiers and the Hazards of Peace* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> PISM A.10.4.2 (I), “Wyciąg z raportu z Kraju z dnia 5. Marca 1940 r.,” [1].

and their ilk – would undermine Germany’s ability to control Poland in the long term. Warsaw, the largest city in the region, was key to Nazi German expansion and the extraction of Slavic labor and natural resources. The city’s intelligentsia had played an integral social, cultural, and political role in interwar Poland and in Polish national tradition for generations as the Germans well knew: they were state and nation builders. If any group could mount sustained opposition, they could. They therefore became the target of a preemptive Nazi genocide at the beginning of the Second World War.

Nazi policemen killed and imprisoned the intelligentsia during their 1939 invasion of Poland, but haphazardly. Nazi planners lost track of their targets or misunderstood them; the intelligentsia were a messy tangle of individuals who embraced the Polish national project, especially when it was under threat, rather than a discrete professional or political group. In response to their first botched attempts at elite subjugation, Nazi Germany installed a draconian occupation administration in Warsaw and began an anti-intelligentsia killing campaign that continued through 1939 and 1940. This campaign filled city prisons to overflowing: “excess” victims went to concentration camps. With death tolls hovering near 100,000, Nazi killings provoked sustained military, political, and cultural resistance. By 1941, the Nazis abandoned anti-intelligentsia campaigning in favor of an unsystematic hodgepodge of retaliatory terror and bloody reprisals – a counterinsurgency campaign – that continued until the Red Army drove them out.

Early Nazi German persecution of the Warsaw intelligentsia failed and Poles concocted various ways to undermine the occupation and wrest back their state – and control over Polish society. Individuals who built the largest and most ambitious resistance projects are at the center of this argument: while many engaged in “passive resistance,” “internal exile,” or wait-and-see cooperation, turning a blind eye to Nazi violence against those outside the Polish national community, the focus is on those who took actions to inspire the wider population and undermine Nazi occupation.<sup>3</sup> In other words, the subject of this book is those individuals who continued the intelligentsia’s nation-building mission under occupation and the task is understanding how successful they were. Information networks, including underground publishing and couriering, and the “secret” schooling system were especially effective; Catholic religious activities and military resistance were vulnerable to the volatile international situation and rockier in their achievements. Initiatives dependent on international support could not be controlled from Warsaw. Political independence was one such

<sup>3</sup> Holocaust scholars have developed a fine-grained model for the defiance of people with little agency, including “sanctification of life,” and polemic, symbolic, and defensive resistance. Michael R. Marrus, “Jewish Resistance to the Holocaust,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 30 No. 1 (Jan. 1995), 88–90, 93.

project and thus unachievable; nation-building efforts, however, produced significant victories.<sup>4</sup>

This story involves a complex cast of characters, including some who will be familiar to English-language audiences and others whom they will encounter for the first time. Jan Karski, international courier and later professor at Georgetown University; Karol Wojtyła, later Pope John Paul II; and Władysław Sikorski, prime minister of the London exile government, appear alongside others unknown outside Poland, like Stefan Starzyński, the last mayor of Warsaw; Aleksander Kamiński, scout leader, insurgent, and underground publicist; Zofia Kossak, Catholic activist and Holocaust rescuer; Witold Pilecki, the army officer who snuck into Auschwitz, and Władysław Studnicki, the First World War collaborator who petitioned the Nazis to deputize him and ended up their prisoner. The intelligentsia who survived the 1939–40 killing campaigns were dynamic if frustrated people who fought against the constraints of occupation and attempted to build a better future for themselves and Poland, though they rarely agreed with one another about how to do it.

## 0.1 Nation-State Actors

The word “intelligentsia” is specific to eastern Europe and the development of civil society under the Russian Empire: Poles and Russians have intelligentsias and other nations generally do not.<sup>5</sup> The capital of the early modern Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, Warsaw, became the capital of the new independent Second Polish Republic in 1918, and it was the birthplace of the national intelligentsia during the partitions under Russian, Austrian, and Prussian (then German) imperial rule.<sup>6</sup> Beginning in 1795, the territory of the enormous Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth was occupied – “partitioned,” as it was described at the time – by its neighbors in a cooperative imperial

<sup>4</sup> Since, as David Edelstein has argued, military occupations’ viability often turns on their relationship to local nation building, the German rejection of this project provided the Warsaw intelligentsia with a potential tool to build popular consensus. David Edelstein, *Occupational Hazards: Success and Failure in Military Occupation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 4.

<sup>5</sup> Chad Bryant considers that a Czech intelligentsia emerged under Habsburg rule. Chad Bryant, *Prague in Black: Nazi Rule and Czech Nationalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 192–3. Thanks to Daniel Pratt for emphasizing this.

<sup>6</sup> Jerzy Jedlicki, *A Suburb of Europe: Nineteenth-Century Polish Approaches to Western Civilization* (Budapest: CEU Press, 1999); Janina Żurawicka, *Inteligencja warszawska w końcu XIX wieku* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1978), 12; Aleksander Gella, *Inteligencja polska* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo AKME, 2016); Longina Jakubowska, *Patrons of History: Nobility, Capital and Political Transitions in Poland* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Maciej Janowski and Magdalena Micińska, *History of the Intelligentsia* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2014).

expansion they thought permanent. Because there was no independent Polish state from 1795 to 1918 and the three partitioning powers were invested in maintaining that status quo, Polish political ambition was dangerous to them. Recognizing these strictures but also chafing under them, a mixture of elites – the intelligentsia – created and maintained national traditions and debated about how to re-empower their countrymen and regain independence.

The intelligentsia were elites who identified as Polish, advocated on behalf of national causes, and maintained Polish culture under duress. In most cases, “intelligentsia” is synonymous with “elite,” but it denotes a self-conscious group motivated by a sense of national mission.<sup>7</sup> Jan Karski called it “the term under which we [Poles] designate the educated class as a whole.”<sup>8</sup> Jan Szczepański, sociologist of the Marxist intelligentsia, defined its early members as “those who took ideological leadership in the effort to regain independence, who maintained the cultural and social forces necessary to this purpose, who kept alive the national traditions, developed the nation’s values, [and] educated the new generations for the struggle for national goals.”<sup>9</sup> Kazimierz Brandys, a Polish *intelligent* himself and one of the objects of Szczepański’s scrutiny, remarked in the 1970s that those outside eastern Europe “do not understand the nature of a country in which a hundred years ago the cause of national liberation was actively carried on by no more than a few hundred people with programs that were none too clear and had no chance for success.”<sup>10</sup> To refer to someone as an *intelligent* meant that he – or she – felt bound to the national cause and the promotion of Polish statehood when it was absent, which it often was.

In Polish history, the growth of the intelligentsia was the product of two uncomfortable absences: that of sovereign statehood from 1795 to 1918, and that of early industrialization and its concomitant, a developing middle class.<sup>11</sup> An intelligentsia arose on Polish territory rather than a state bureaucracy or an educated bourgeoisie because there was no national state. Thus discussion of the intelligentsia is always already discussion of a Polish *Sonderweg* in European progress by which Polish national culture was built without the “normal” institutions supporting it in western Europe.<sup>12</sup> Historian Maciej Janowski pinpoints the group’s origins after Napoleonic defeat, with the term acquiring fixed meaning by the January Insurrection of

<sup>7</sup> Gella, *Inteligencja polska*, 91.

<sup>8</sup> Jan Karski, *Story of a Secret State: My Report to the World* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2013), 56.

<sup>9</sup> Jan Szczepański, “The Polish Intelligentsia: Past and Present,” *World Politics*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Apr., 1962): 408.

<sup>10</sup> Kazimierz Brandys, *A Warsaw Diary, 1978–1981* (New York: Random House, 1983), 147.

<sup>11</sup> Żurawicka, *Inteligencja warszawska w końcu XIX wieku.*, 12.

<sup>12</sup> Andrzej Walicki, “Poland between East and West: The Controversies over Self-Definition and Modernization in Partitioned Poland” (Cambridge: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1994).

1863, which provoked a generation of russification efforts in Warsaw.<sup>13</sup> Its formation was linked to the idea of armed insurrection to regain independence, whether with Napoleon's help or as the independent initiative of Warsaw insurgents, though there were always intelligentsia figures who rejected violence.<sup>14</sup>

Intelligentsia status turned on a nation-state mission, but members clustered in professions that came to be associated with the group. Teaching, from grammar school to university, was an intelligentsia vocation. Writers, poets, publicists, and "penmen" were included.<sup>15</sup> Lawyers and doctors often included themselves. Religious elites – especially Catholic clergy – had a role. Not all priests were intelligentsia (or wanted to be), but those who were had crucial authority. Physicians, scientists, industrialists, and engineers were a grey area: some were in, some out. Military officers were also elites, but they wore Russian, Austrian, and German uniforms until 1918 and contemporaries suspected their patriotism. After 1918 many opted in, and reserve officers – men with military training and civilian careers – were vital.

A nineteenth-century intelligentsia arose after the dispossession of the *szlachta*, the Polish gentry, by partitioning powers keen to reduce the economic influence of the old Commonwealth's wealthiest inhabitants.<sup>16</sup> Some *szlachta* and their descendants – especially those without significant holdings – made their way into partition-era bureaucracies.<sup>17</sup> These new bureaucrats, when they agitated for Polish causes, became intelligentsia. Intelligentsia clout, however, had no necessary relationship to wealth, and material resources ranged from significant means to utter pennilessness. They had, as Pierre Bourdieu would have it, cultural rather than financial capital.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup> An intelligentsia formed in the 1860s "with the obligation and privilege to act as the national avant-garde." Janowski, *Birth of the Intelligentsia*, 12. Bronisław Trentowski first used the term in 1844. Gella, *Inteligencja Polska*, 21; Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 251.

<sup>14</sup> Slavic insurgency should not be assumed: as John Connelly's argues, only Poles and Serbs had substantive armed insurrection traditions. See John Connelly, *From Peoples into Nations: A History of Eastern Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 130–154.

<sup>15</sup> Writers have a privileged position here, for the same reason Poshek Fu centers them in his study of Japanese-occupied Shanghai, since they were "thinking individuals with a conscious grasp of their historical situation." Poshek Fu, *Passivity, Resistance, and Collaboration: Intellectual Choices in Occupied Shanghai, 1937–1945* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1993), xii.

<sup>16</sup> Jakubowska notes the gentry retained a monopoly on "the historic role of defining Polish identity." Jakubowska, *Patrons of History*, 6.

<sup>17</sup> Aleksander Matejko, "Status Incongruence in the Polish Intelligentsia," *Social Research*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (Winter 1966): 611–638, 612.

<sup>18</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 260. Thanks to Mattie Fitch for noting this.

Much of the intelligentsia was Roman Catholic but religious orthodoxy was optional, however much this rankled the Catholic Church.<sup>19</sup> A strain of Polish nationalist thinking understood Polishness and Catholicism as intertwined and defined nationality religiously.<sup>20</sup> The crucial question was the relationship to Judaism (or Jewishness): could someone “of Mosaic faith” be welcome in the Polish nation? Among its intelligentsia leadership? The answer was yes and no. Intellectual historian Jerzy Jedlicki notes that “assimilated Jews were welcomed by the Polish educated classes” who embraced civic nationalism. Unassimilated Jews were another matter: one of the defining characteristics of Polish territory was the presence of religious Jews in towns and cities, including Warsaw, many of whom spoke Polish as a second language if at all. Their “welcome” changed when some Polish nationalists came to see Jews as competitors for territory and political influence rather than co-victims of partitioning oppression after 1918. The co-victimhood debate would have many afterlives: antisemitism and the assertion that Jews were not or never could be Polish – ethnic nationalism – constituted a formidable strand of intelligentsia thinking at the dawn of the twentieth century.<sup>21</sup>

Education was a marker of intelligentsia status. However, tertiary schooling was not always available to Poles, and the partitioning powers associated students (rightly) with radical patriotic politics. Universities were pawns of the partitioning powers, who appreciated their influence and used them to control the behavior – and the production of – Polish elites. This meant that an educated Pole had a more complicated CV than his western European peers. Warsaw University became the maternity ward of the capital’s intelligentsia after its 1816 founding, but its output waxed and waned. Russian Tsar Alexander I opened it to train staff for his imperial outpost. Faculty and students thanked him by participating in the November Uprising of 1830 against his rule, and he closed it. Another tsarist thaw reopened it, and the university threw itself into the January Uprising of 1863.<sup>22</sup> During the 1905 Revolutions, students joined workers on the barricades, to St. Petersburg’s

<sup>19</sup> Pope Gregory XVI’s encyclical *Cum Primum* (On Civil Disobedience) in 1832 condemned uprising; Archbishop Zygmunt Feliński was anti-insurrection. Brian Porter-Szücs, *Faith and Fatherland: Catholicism, Modernity, and Poland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 160–161.

<sup>20</sup> Porter-Szücs, *Faith and Fatherland*, 328–359.

<sup>21</sup> Jerzy Jedlicki, “Resisting the Wave: Intellectuals against Antisemitism in the Last Years of the ‘Polish Kingdom,’” *Antisemitism and Its Opponents in Modern Poland* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 61; Samuel D. Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History? Rediscovering A Hidden Archive from the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), 50.

<sup>22</sup> “The great majority of educated people were engaged in the resistance movement, though obviously to varying degree.” Stefan Kieniewicz, *Trzy powstania narodowe: kościuszkowe, listopadowe, styczniowe*. (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1994), 354–357; 387–391; Connelly, *From Peoples into Nations*, 85–89.

fury. In 1914, students filled Piłsudski's Legions and fought the Russian army. In 1918, as the flagship university of a newly independent state, Warsaw University flourished. In 1939, the Nazis closed it, and the faculty reassembled it, underground.

## 0.2 Competing Visions

A distinct Polish elite with a national independence mission emerged from more than a century of partition, progress, and insurrection. The failure of the last substantial attempt, the January Insurrection of 1863, defined the Warsaw intelligentsia's future. For some, the romantics, the only way to gain independence was in arms – either on Polish lands or abroad.<sup>23</sup> For others, particularly victims of brutal Russian repression, insurrection squandered human capital and national resources. They adopted Enlightenment ideals, emphasizing education, developing infrastructure, and promoting everything from public health to women's emancipation. Such 'Warsaw Positivists' favored gradual "organic work" over rebellion.<sup>24</sup> Most elites were not pure romantics or positivists, but tempered idealism with pragmatism, as they would again during the Second World War.

Two men born just after the January Uprising embodied the divide between the positivist and romantic paradigms of intelligentsia nation building, inspiring the elites who would suffer under Nazi occupation. The elder was Roman Dmowski (1864–1939), born outside Warsaw in 1864 and an *intelligent* courtesy of his Warsaw University studies and lifelong political agitation. The younger was Józef Piłsudski (1867–1935), born to an impoverished gentry family in what is now Lithuania to a January Uprising veteran. Piłsudski was not much of a student, but he was a fanatical patriot from his youth.<sup>25</sup> The two men traveled in the same circles and were even friends in the 1890s, but their hopes for the future ran afoul of one another. They articulated the main strands of Polish national thinking, the conflict between which would define a century.<sup>26</sup> In rough outline, Piłsudski was a romantic and insurrectionary; Dmowski a pragmatist who thought violence foolish. Piłsudski thought the main impediment to future Polish independence was Russia; Dmowski thought Germany. Both were nominally Catholic, and Dmowski drew the

<sup>23</sup> Soldiers campaigned under the slogan "for your freedom and ours." Brian Porter-Szücs, *Poland in the Modern World: Beyond Martyrdom* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 26.

<sup>24</sup> Magdalena Micińska, *At the Crossroads: 1865–1918. A History of the Polish Intelligentsia*, Part 3 (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 2014), 89–106; Connelly, *From Peoples into Nations*, 278–279.

<sup>25</sup> Andrzej Garlicki, *Józef Piłsudski, 1867–1935* (Brookfield: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1995), 2–4, 28, 40.

<sup>26</sup> Andrzej Paczkowski, *The Spring Will Be Ours: Poland and the Poles from Occupation to Freedom* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1995), 25.



Church into his camp.<sup>27</sup> Piłsudski joined the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) and pushed it in a nationalist direction; Dmowski founded the National Democratic Party (ND), or *Endecja*. Piłsudski imagined a large, federal state including Poles, Ukrainians, Germans, and Jews; Dmowski wanted an ethnically homogenous Poland and became a rabid antisemite.<sup>28</sup> Piłsudski was a civic nationalist, Dmowski an ethnic one. Both assumed the intelligentsia – their people – would lead any future sovereign Poland.

Each made allies. Dmowski spent time abroad; Piłsudski spent time in prison, including in the Tenth Pavilion of Warsaw's Citadel and in Siberian exile.<sup>29</sup> Both were overtaken by workers' rebellions launched outside Warsaw's All Saints Church on Grzybowski Square in November 1904 and continued into 1905.<sup>30</sup> In this moment, intelligentsia-led political movements were confronted with the specter of mass politics and forced to respond to urban crowds. Dmowski's *Endecja* weathered the moment better. After creating a trade union, *Endecja* cracked down on strikers, compromising with industry. When 1905 did not provide the base for an all-Polish uprising, Piłsudski revealed himself to be more nationalist than socialist. His Polish Socialist Party split between those committed to proletarian struggle and those committed to independence.

The Warsaw intelligentsia entered the twentieth century dedicated to independence, but with no consensus on what kind, where, or for whom. The international situation overtook those questions when two partitioning powers – Austria and Germany – went to war against the third, Russia, in 1914. Piłsudski raised an army, forming Polish Legions to fight Russia. Almost 21,000 men volunteered by 1917 – more than 30% students – but the Central Powers found Piłsudski and his recruits intractable. The stalwart revolutionary, Piłsudski was the example *par excellence* of the “Pandora's box opened by the national mobilization at the war's start.”<sup>31</sup> Piłsudski's Legions became a Polish Auxiliary Corps in 1916, but shrank in 1917 when their commander refused to swear loyalty to the German Kaiser, Wilhelm II. The stunt got Piłsudski imprisoned in Saxony to wait out the First World War.<sup>32</sup>

Dmowski, horrified by Piłsudski's anti-Russian rebellion, spent the conflict in western Europe, negotiating.<sup>33</sup> Aided by his friend the pianist Ignacy Jan

<sup>27</sup> Neither was pious, though both used religion. Porter-Szücs, *Faith and Fatherland*, 181.

<sup>28</sup> Walicki, “Poland between East and West,” 46–55; Feliks Gross, “Tolerance and Intolerance in Poland: The Two Political Traditions,” *The Polish Review* Vol. 20, No. 1 (1975), 65–69.

<sup>29</sup> Garlicki, *Piłsudski*, 33–34.

<sup>30</sup> Robert E. Blobaum, *Rewolucja: Russian Poland, 1904–1907* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 41, 190–210.

<sup>31</sup> Alexander Watson, *Ring of Steel: Germany and Austria-Hungary in World War I* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 97–99.

<sup>32</sup> Garlicki, *Piłsudski*, 85–87.

<sup>33</sup> Jesse Kauffman, *Elusive Alliance: The German Occupation of Poland in World War I* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 84–85.



Paderewski (1860–1941), Dmowski gave lectures, shook hands, and promoted his vision for Poland among Britons, Americans, and the French.<sup>34</sup> In August 1917 his efforts created the Polish National Committee (Polski Komitet Narodowy), a skeleton government. Neither man mastered the war-time situation, but Dmowski's influence got him invited to the Paris Peace Conference and meant that it was his signature – not Piłsudski's – on the Treaty of Versailles.

Warsaw beheld two of her floundering imperial masters as First World War occupiers: first the Russians, then the Germans. Russia retreated in July 1915. Departing Russians looted the city, ingratiating themselves with no one. A brutal German occupation then exploited Varsovians.<sup>35</sup> Hans Hartwig von Beseler, the Imperial German General Governor, ruled Warsaw with a “mix of condescension and fondness.” Beseler was no Polonophile but he granted whatever self-governance spared him personnel and did not interfere with the German war effort. He reopened Warsaw University, supported Piłsudski's Legions, and formed a provisional Regency Council. Germany, however, lost the war and none of its concessions to Poland materialized, while all the wartime hardships did.<sup>36</sup>

Russia fell into revolution after February 1917, and in March 1918 the Peace of Brest-Litovsk pulled it from the war and out of Polish territory.<sup>37</sup> By October 1918, the Central Powers were also on their last legs. At the beginning of November, Austria signed an armistice with the Triple Entente and collapsed. On November 8, 1918, Germany released Piłsudski. On November 11, 1918, it signed an armistice with the victorious Entente in western Europe. The same day, Warsaw's Regency Council put Piłsudski in command of Polish soldiers, and he declared an independent Polish state. Dmowski was in Paris. Germany, Austria, and Russia were in shambles; Warsaw was in worse shape. Poland was back.

For romantics, 1918 was the end of a century-long insurrection in which the final rebellion crowned partition intelligentsia conspiracies with success. This story was simple and bloody. Approximately every generation, Warsaw intelligentsia rebelled against foreign domination, usually gunning hardest for the

<sup>34</sup> Connelly, *Peoples into Nations*, 332.

<sup>35</sup> Material conditions for non-Jewish Varsovians were worse in 1915–18 than 1939–44. Robert Blobaum, *A Minor Apocalypse: Warsaw during the First World War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017), 52, 10.

<sup>36</sup> German conservatives thought he pandered to Poles, and Polish nationalists thought he swindled them. He inspired Władysław Studnicki. The Germans, notably, were not exactly planning an independent Poland. Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front: Culture, National Identity and German Occupation in World War I* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 125, 196–198; Kauffman, *Elusive Alliance*, 44, 59, 84–85, quotation 36; Watson, *Ring of Steel*, 393.

<sup>37</sup> Connelly, *Peoples into Nations*, 327–330; Laura Engelstein, *Russia in Flames: War, Revolution, Civil War, 1914–1921* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 491, 494.

Russians. Each rebellion failed. But in 1918, due to the agglomeration of effort *and* the political-military collapse of *all three* of the empires partitioning the Commonwealth, a newly independent Poland re-emerged, blinking, onto the European map.

### 0.3 Intelligentsia in Power: 1918–1939

Thus the Polish intelligentsia took the helm of a modern state in 1918. Piłsudski, who was popular with the masses but had a revolutionary's unorthodox approach to politics, held the reins of government. He staffed the state with Legionnaires and fellow socialist agitators.<sup>38</sup> Much of society filled out similarly, with elites choosing peers to begin the work of state-making. This is not to accuse the Second Polish Republic of nepotism, but to draw attention to its newness. The consequences of an absence of nineteenth-century statehood cannot be underestimated. The newly instated elite worked feverishly to inspire aristocrats, the peasantry, workers, and minorities with their political visions.<sup>39</sup> To the Warsaw intelligentsia the Second Polish Republic was the fulfillment of their dreams, but to Ukrainians and Germans it was an oppressive imperial state.<sup>40</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the intelligentsia disagreed on how to run Poland. How did their national mission democratize itself? What role would Piłsudski, “the George Washington of Poland,” play?<sup>41</sup> State-builders were unsure, since among them numbered those who upheld a civic concept of Polishness that embraced Jews, Catholics, Ukrainians, Belarussians, and “ethnic” Poles who wished to live *po polsku* – *à la* Piłsudski.<sup>42</sup> There were also those in power who defined Polishness in ethno-linguistic or religious terms (excluding non-Catholics, but sometimes including converts) – *à la* Dmowski. This camp was “disassimilationist” and treated minorities differently than “true Poles.”<sup>43</sup> The

<sup>38</sup> Timothy Snyder, *Sketches from A Secret War: A Polish Artist's Mission to Liberate Soviet Ukraine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 23–24.

<sup>39</sup> The Polishness of peasants and workers should not be assumed. Padraic Kenney claims “one could not speak of a single Polish working class in 1918 because regional identity was more powerful than national identity.” Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945–1950* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 12.

<sup>40</sup> Janusz Żarnowski, *Listopad 1918* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Interpress, 1982), 151–157; Winson Chu, *The German Minority in Interwar Poland* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 63–113.

<sup>41</sup> USHMM RG-50.030.0769, Accession Number (AN): 2014.238.1, “Oral History Interview with Julian Kulski,” 24:45–24:55.

<sup>42</sup> Paul Brykczynski calls this the “defeat of the civic nation.” *Primed for Violence: Murder, Antisemitism and Democratic Politics in Interwar Poland* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2016), 131.

<sup>43</sup> Rogers Brubaker proposed the assimilationist–disassimilationist model noting that “ethnicity” is itself “deeply ambiguous.” Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge: Harvard