



P O L A N D I N B R I E F

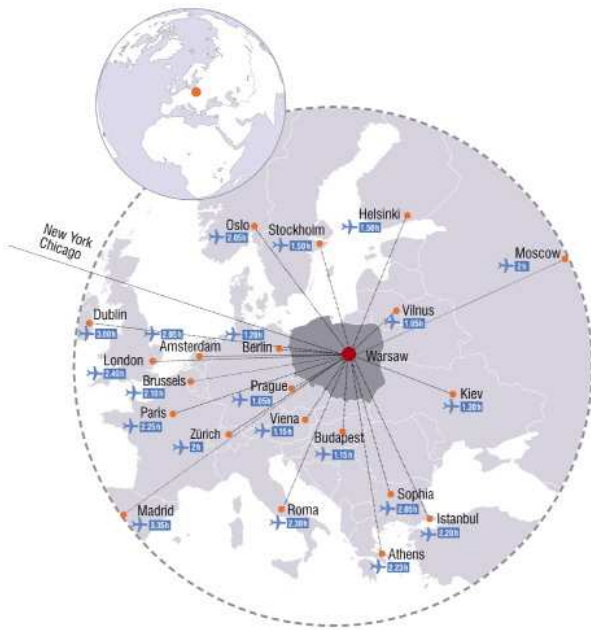


Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Department of Promotion  
tel. +48 22 523 99 75, fax +48 22 523 81 59  
www.poland.gov.pl, www.msiz.gov.pl  
ISBN 83-89175-00-2



[www.poland.gov.pl](http://www.poland.gov.pl)

**FLIGHT CONNECTIONS BETWEEN WARSAW AND OTHER CAPITALS**



**THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND**

- Area: 312 685 sq km
- Capital: Warszawa/Warsaw
- Neighbouring states: Germany, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Russia
- Official language: Polish
- Population: 38.6 million
- Time: Central European Time (GMT+1)
- Currency: zloty (1 Euro = 3.8 zloty, 1\$ = 2.7 zloty – August 2007)
- Inflation: 1% (2006)
- GDP 552 billion USD (purchasing power parity)
- GDP 338 billion USD (current prices)

**THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND**



**EMBLEM & FLAG**



**Poland**  
in Brief



C O N T E N T S

- Country and People
- Location
- Climate
- Nature
- Population
- History
- Political system
- Culture
- Kitchen
- Science and Education
- Economy
- Poland and the World



The Polish national emblem

**O**n June 4, 1989, Poland entered a new epoch. On that day, for the first time in the communist bloc, the democratic opposition won what was virtually a free election. Two months later a non-communist government was formed. The whole of Central and Eastern Europe started waking up from its historical torpor. The famous 'Autumn of Nations' saw

the fall of the Berlin Wall, a symbol of Europe's division into two opposing blocs, whose foundations had been shattered by the 'Solidarity' movement and its leader, Lech Wałęsa, who was awarded the Nobel Prize.

Having regained its independence and sovereignty, Poland started to develop fast. On his first visit to Poland for eleven years, Francis Fukuyama, the American philosopher, economist and political scientist commented: 'The transformation Poland has undergone during this period is a miracle, both economically and politically, which I shall probably never experience again in my lifetime'. Images characteristic of the 'Iron Curtain' epoch, queues for food and a depressing greyness in the street, have been consigned to oblivion. Poland has become a country of colourful shops, international labels, new technologies, and dynamic people. In restructuring their country, Poles have demonstrated their optimism and initiative, without losing any of the spontaneity, hospitality and romantic touch that have always won the appreciation of foreigners.

At the threshold of the 21st century, having lived through over a decade of transformation, the Poland of today subscribes to international law and security, and participates in the world market economy. In 1999, just a few years after the collapse of the 'Iron Curtain', Poland joined NATO and in May 2004 the European Union.

So, welcome to a country which has undergone such momentous changes in its very recent past.



Warsaw, the city centre

## Poland in Brief

### L O C A T I O N



Central Europe

**P**oland is situated in the middle of Europe, between the Baltic Sea and the Carpathian Mountains. The geometric centre of the continent lies in the vicinity of Warsaw: lines drawn between the capes of Nordkyn (Norway) and Matapan (Peloponnesos in Greece), and between the capes of Roca (Portugal) and the central Ural Mountains (Russia) intersect here. The land area of Poland, at over 312 000 square km (120 000 square miles), makes it the ninth largest country in Europe. In its present shape, established in 1945, Poland shares borders with Germany to the west; the Czech Republic and Slovakia to the south; Ukraine, Byelorussia and Lithuania to the east, and Russia (the Kaliningrad district) to the north.

Poland is mostly a lowland country, occupying the eastern part of the Central European Lowland, except for a horizontal strip of uplands and mountains in the south. The average altitude is 173 metres above sea-level.

Areas less than 300 metres above sea-level cover 91% of the total land area. The Baltic Sea, with its vast sandy beaches, dunes, spits and lakes, is a natural border in the north. Northern Poland is covered by lakes and glacial deposits (the Pomeranian Lake District and Mazurian Great Lakes), many of them thousands of years old. Most of the 9 000 Polish lakes are post-glacial, the biggest being Lake Śniardwy (113 sq. km.), and the deepest, Lake Hańcza (108.5 m).

The central region of the Central Polish Lowlands includes the Southern Wielkopolska Lowland, the Silesian Lowland and the Mazovian Lowland.

**Poland**  
in Brief



Countryside  
– The Mazovian  
region

The Mazurian  
Great Lakes



The south of Poland is made up of a strip of uplands and mountains in which the land surface is sculpted into a great variety of geological formations. A particularly picturesque landscape can be seen in the Cracow – Częstochowa Uplands (karstic lime formations, numerous monadnocks and over 400 caves), the Stolowe Mountains in the Karkonosze Mountains and the highest mountains – the Tatras. The highest point is Mt. Rysy in the High Tatras (2 499 m).

Poland's two longest rivers are the Vistula, flowing through Cracow and Warsaw – the former and present capitals of Poland – and the Oder in western Poland, both of them significant transport routes.

The whole territory of Poland lies within the Central European time zone (GMT + 1 hour).



Uplands in the south of Poland





The charm of Autumn

**P**oland lies in a moderate climate zone. For most of the year the weather is quite mild, much like in Brussels or Berlin, changing frequently and with seasons differing from one year to the next. In winter (December – March) the temperature is usually around 0° C (32 F), but often drops below –15° C ( 5 F). In summer (June–September) it is usually warm, often hot with temperatures above 30° C (86 F). Average yearly rainfall is ca. 600 mm; in the mountains it is over 1500 – 2000 mm.

The warmest regions are in the south and west (Cracow, Wrocław, Legnica ) and central Poland also stays hot and dry from May until August, resulting from warm air currents from western Europe. The coldest areas are in the north-east (the Mazurian Great Lakes, the cities of Suwalki and Białystok) affected by the arctic air from Russia and Scandinavia. Suwalki is the coldest point in Poland, with winter temperatures dropping to –30° C (–22 F).

Spring and summer are the best seasons for travelling, with mild temperatures and occasional rains. May and June are the hottest months.

Warm and dry, September and October offer tourists the special experience of a 'Golden Polish Autumn'. This is the best time for seeing the mountain slopes of southern Poland, overgrown with woods, and forests in the lowlands.

Polish winter, usually white and frosty, is also a beautiful period for traveling for all those who really like the winter months and are keen on winter sports .



The Lynx, the biggest wild cat in Europe

**M**any foreigners see Poland as a country of green and natural landscapes. And unlike the protected natural areas of many other European countries, they are open to the public. UNESCO's listing of Europe's cultural and natural heritage includes the Białowieża Forest, the last surviving example of the natural deciduous woods that used to cover the whole continent. The Biebrza Marshland is one of the largest and best preserved complexes of peat-bogs in Europe. The natural environment has also been preserved in the mountain areas, from the Sudeten Mountains to the less-populated Bieszczady Mountains.

Polish flora number over 2 000 species. One can find relics from another age, plants that used to be common in Europe.

**DID YOU KNOW THAT...**

**...THE POLES HAVE SAVED THE BISON FROM EXTINCTION. AT PRESENT OVER 800 OF THESE ANIMALS LIVE IN POLAND?**

These include the Tatra larkspur (a tertiary relic), the yellow rhododendron (Azalea

Pontica) and the dwarf birch tree.

The first edicts protecting rare species (beaver, bison, aurochs) were issued by Polish rulers as early as the 11th century. The auroch is now extinct in Europe, but the population of bison, the largest surviving European mammal, has been successfully re-established in the Białowieża Forest. Another success story has been the rescue of the beaver. Twenty years ago only around 1 000 beavers lived in Poland. Today there are over 20 000. Wolves, bears and lynxes make their homes in the mountain forests; over a dozen lynxes inhabit the Kampinos Forest, a



Bison - in the wild in the Białowieża Forest



## Poland in Brief

Crocuses,  
spring  
flowers  
typical for  
mountain  
meadows



White Storks



### WHAT TO SEE AND

Poland is a paradise for the active tourist on the lookout for different ways to spend his or her holiday. Amateur cyclists will find many routes across the varied landscape. In the Cracow-Częstochowa upland the routes go through little hills with limestone rocks and the ruins of medieval castles. More relaxing are the bicycle routes running through the Mazurian Lake District and along the coast, through fields, little hills and woods.

Vast pine woods in the lowlands and uplands encourage tourists to take long walks. The most interesting walking routes are in the Bieszczady, Tatras and Karkonosze mountains. The atmosphere of pre-war Poland can be experienced in small towns, with some traces of Jewish culture surviving – synagogues, meat shops, graveyards and baths. In eastern Poland, remnants of Russian and Greek Orthodox culture can be found. In Grabarka, a sanctuary of the Orthodox Church on a legendary hill of penitents, votive crosses of various sizes have been placed for centuries. The Polish Tartars, brought to Poland by King Jan

national park in the vicinity of Warsaw. But, above all, Poland is a country beloved for its storks; one quarter of the world's population nests between the Oder and Bug rivers. Ornithologists estimate the number of storks in Poland at over 40 000.

Poland is one of the leading European countries in the field of protected natural areas. Plants and animals are under special protection in 23 national parks and 1 200 nature reserves. National parks and landscape reserves are all easily accessible for tourists. One of the most interesting natural reserves in Europe is considered to be the flood plains of the Biebrza River, inhabited by 253 bird species. For mile after mile, the marshes and lakes of

**DID YOU KNOW THAT...**

...1/4 OF THE WORLD'S WHITE STORK  
POPULATION LIVES IN POLAND  
- ABOUT 40 000 OF THEM?

the Biebrza offer shelter to rare species that are rarely encountered elsewhere in Europe.

The Słowiński National Park on the Baltic coast is known for its wandering dunes, up to 30 metres high, and for its shallow coastal lakes. The moving sand buries woods, marshes and even settlements, and at the same time reveals areas it had overrun many years earlier.

The Tatras form the highest mountain range of the Polish Carpathians, with the popular town of Zakopane at their feet and post-glacial pot-holes, caves, lakes and waterfalls. The wildlife includes chamois, ground hogs and bears.

**DO IN POLAND?**

Sobieski III in the 17th century, still live in the villages of Kruszyniany and Bohoniki, near the eastern frontier.

A network of fine horse-riding clubs attracts lovers of this sport, and, of course, Polish studs are world famous. Many rivers provide attractive and adventurous routes for canoeing, and the many lakes attract anglers with their plentiful fish. Marinas and a system of canals provide for yachting in the Mazurian Lake District and along the Baltic coast. The extraordinary openness of the Polish landscape attracts those who love bird watching and hunting.

A full range of hotels and good communication – mobile phone access now extends throughout most of Poland – are advantageous to planning active holidays in Poland.



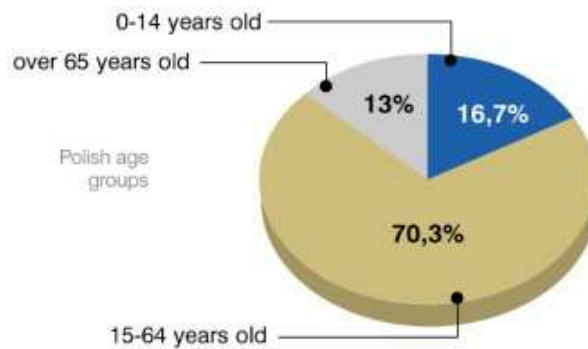


P O P U L A T I O N



Looking ahead

**T**he population of Poland is over 38.6 million people. Every twentieth citizen of Europe is a Pole. Measured by European standards, Polish society is young, well-educated, with a strong sense of initiative and creativity. Every tenth Pole is a university graduate and almost half of Poles are high school graduates. Within the last 10 years the number of students has tripled. Average life expectancy has risen in the last few years. As in the rest of Europe, population growth is low (0.3%). Young people tend to concentrate on studying and working, setting up their own companies and, increasingly frequently putting off marriage and having children. In the early 90s Polish women got married on average at the age of 22. Today the age is 24. The number of unmarried women is increasing (5% in the early 90s, around 20%





Students in the aula of the Warsaw Technical University



The Old Town Market Square in Warsaw.





Tourists on the Sopot Pier

today). The common family model is 2 + 2, although more and more couples have only one child. Economic development has meant an increase in migration to urban areas. Almost 24 million people (over 60% of the population) live in towns and cities. The most densely populated areas are the industrial agglomerations of Katowice (ca. 4 million), Warsaw (ca. 2.5 million), Gdańsk and Poznań (ca. 1.5 million each). The least populated areas are the agricultural regions in the east. Population density is 124 people per sq. km.

Poland is an almost totally mono-ethnic country. In the past it was populated by various religious and ethnic minorities. In the 16th century when Europe was a bloody battlefield of religious wars, Poland offered shelter to refugees of various religious

**DID YOU KNOW THAT...**

...THERE ARE 38.6 MILLION POLISH CITIZENS  
- EVERY TWENTIETH EUROPEAN  
CITIZEN LIVES IN POLAND?

denominations. In 1931, during the inter-war multinational Second Republic, Poles were estimated to constitute 64%, Ukrainians – 16%, Jews – 10%, Byelorussians – 6%, Germans – 2%, Lithuanians and Russians – 1%.

The turning point in the history of the country's multi-national character was the Second World War. As well as the Holocaust of Polish Jews, and the changing of frontiers during the war, there was post-war compulsory resettlement of entire ethnic groups, along with political emigration. These factors combined to erase Poland's



## Poland in Brief

multinational structure, and dramatically decrease the population. Before the Second World War Poland had a population of almost 35 million people, by 1945 the number was down to only 24 million.

During the inter-war period minorities constituted about 35% of the population; today they are estimated at 2-3% (ca. 1.2 million). The largest minority are Germans (ca. 450 000), followed by Ukrainians (ca. 350 000), Byelorussians (ca. 300 000), Lithuanians (25 000), Slovaks (25 000), and Jews (15 000). Other minorities include Gypsies, Greeks, Macedonians, Russians and Tartars.

The Polish language belongs to the western Slavic group of Indo-European languages, like Czech and Slovak. Over 90 percent of the population claims to be Roman Catholic, which remains very important and the most influential Church in Poland, though one will come across numerous Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches, Lutheran and Calvin congregations, synagogues and old mosques.

As a consequence of changes in the country's borders, and of political and economic emigration in the 19th and 20th centuries, millions of people of Polish origin

### DID YOU KNOW THAT...

...IN COMPARISON WITH THE REST OF EUROPE POLES ARE A YOUNG NATION? THE AVERAGE POLE IS LESS THAN 35 YEARS OLD?

live outside its present boundaries. The number is estimated at between 14 and 17

million. The largest concentration of the Polish diaspora is in the USA (around 9 million), followed by Canada, Lithuania, Ukraine, Byelorussia and Kazakhstan, Russia, Brazil, Argentina and Australia. There are also substantial numbers of Poles in Germany, Great Britain and France and other European countries. Many of them have found a role for themselves in their new countries, substantially contributing to their prosperity. In many places all over the world there are representatives of other nationalities who were once Polish ethnic minorities – especially Jews and Germans – who still treasure memories of their old country and remain familiar with Polish language and culture. Since the early 1990s, many Poles have returned to Poland from the former USSR, mainly from Kazakhstan.



Young Poles – the next generation

Young girls at Ballet School



## HOW ARE POLES PERCEIVED?

Foreigners tend to see Poles as open and direct people. Poles make new friends easily and are warm in their relations with strangers. The most important factor in life is the family, often multi-generational, where children live together with their parents and grandparents sharing one home. Their deep 'Slavonic soul' is very evident in their *jóie de vivre*, although melancholy is not an infrequent visitor to many Polish gatherings, where the stormy and often unjust national history is recalled. In spite of their recent discovery of the joys of a consumer society, a spirit of noble unselfishness remains. Poles are considered to be people of honour, as well as vulnerable to romantic impulses.

This 'hot-bloodedness', coupled with a sense of solidarity, makes them sympathetic to victims of injustice and misfortune, and always willing to help others in need. Debate is in their blood; their way of thinking is free and original, which is probably what makes them natural politicians. A sense of initiative and hospitality are considered to be inherent Polish characteristics.



Casimirus the Great (1310-1370), King of Poland

H I S T O R Y

**T**he emblem of Poland 'the eagle' has been present on the map of European political symbols for over a thousand years. The name of the country is derived from the tribe of Polans, inhabiting the country's present territory in the early Middle Ages. In the 10th and 11th centuries they united almost the entire areas of the basins of the Oder and Vistula rivers.



*A coin of King Boleslaus the Brave, the 11th c.*

The adoption of Christianity in 966 by Prince Mieszko I was a turning point in the country's early history. Poland came under the influence of Western European civilization, and adopted the Latin alphabet.

The young Polish state soon became an equal partner to its neighbours. In 1000, the German Emperor Otto III came to Gniezno, the country's capital, on a pilgrimage to St Wojciech's (Adalbert's) grave. The pilgrimage had political as well as religious significance. The Emperor's aspiration was to unite the entire Christian world, including Poland. Many historians recognise in his conception the origins of a united Europe, formulated a thousand years ago. A quarter of a century after that event, known as the Gniezno Assembly, Boleslaus the Brave became the first king of Poland (1025). Poland's rapid economic and cultural development was enhanced by the growth of towns located on German civic law and the settlement in Poland of religious orders. In the towns that had by then been founded – Cracow, Poznań, Gniezno, Toruń, Gdańsk and Wrocław – Gothic churches were erected, and trade and art flourished.

The Piast dynasty, the founders of the Polish state, ruled until the 14th century. King Casimir the Great, the last Piast, left Poland a powerful Central European country. The marriage of Jadwiga, queen of Poland, originally from Hungary, with the Lithuanian Prince Vladislaus Jagiello, started the Jagiellonian dynasty and, more significantly, resulted in the peaceful conversion to Christianity of the Lithuanian state. During the reign of Jadwiga (now a Catholic saint) Poland and its eastern neighbour, the Great Lithuanian Duchy, were



united. The union developed over the next two centuries in the form of a commonwealth of the two nations, a multinational political body. When the Polish-Lithuanian Union was concluded in 1569, this Commonwealth with its capital in Cracow was a major European power, the largest and one of the richest countries on the continent.

The Jagiellonian epoch was known as the Golden Age, a period of economic and cultural development. In 1364 the university of Cracow was founded, one of the first in Europe. The Royal Castle, or Wawel, was rebuilt in the Renaissance style, becoming one of the most magnificent residences in Europe. Art, science and literature, written in the vernacular, flourished. In the 14th century a unique political system, the noble democracy, evolved in Poland. This was remarkable consid-

**DID YOU KNOW THAT...**

...THE FIRST POLISH UNIVERSITY NOW CALLED THE JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY, WAS FOUNDED IN CRACOW IN 1364?

ering the climate in Europe at the time - Western Europe was ruled by absolutism,

Russia by despotism. The size of the nobility in Poland was relatively large, amounting to almost 10 per cent of the population. The nobility exerted considerable influence on the king and the country. As early as the 14th century, representatives of the gentry began meeting at local assemblies - seymik, and this was followed by the foundation of the parliament - Sejm. In 1505 the king accepted an act of 'nihil novi', 'nothing new' could be introduced without the gentry's prior approval.

In 1573 the monarchy became elective, all the nobility being summoned to take part in free elections. The powers of Polish kings corresponded to those of modern presidents. Before coronation, the king had to promise that he would observe the gentry's rights and privileges, including immunity and freedom of faith. This was a unique form of government in Europe. It resulted in Poland having a series of foreign monarchs, many of whom spoke no Polish. In the 16th century, during the religious wars in Europe, the ideology of 'golden freedom' and tolerance of differences in the multi-national state made Poland a refuge of religious tolerance, a place where various faiths co-existed peacefully - the Catholic Church, Protestant Church, Orthodox Church and Judaism.

**Poland**  
in Brief



The Behem  
Codex (top left)

Szczerbiec - the  
coronation sword  
of Polish kings  
after 1320 (top  
right)

Niedzica - the  
castle (left)

Wilanow Palace





The origins of democracy – the Sejm, the Polish Parliament active since 15th c.





A coffin portrait of a Polish nobleman, early 17th c.

In the 17th century the country's capital was moved from Cracow to Warsaw, as a consequence of changes in foreign policy priorities, shifting its focus from Central Europe to the east (Russia) and north (the Baltic Sea region). Ruled by the elected monarchs, Poland waged wars with Sweden and Turkey, which were to be critical to the future shape of Europe. In 1683 Polish King Jan Sobieski III conquered the Turks at the battle of Vienna, helping to halt the Turkish advance further into Europe.

The gentry developed an ideology of themselves as the 'Wall of Christianity', with Poland destined to protect the entire Christian civilization against the threat from the east. The gentry's role was to fulfil this mission. This ideology was a response to the growing power and

**DID YOU KNOW THAT...**

...IN THE 16TH-18TH C. POLAND WAS RENOWNED FOR ITS RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE AND AS A PLACE OF REFUGE?

military successes of Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Geopolitics is often seen as responsible for Poland's eventful history. The country's strategic location at the crossroads of an east-west route made Poland a country of merchants, travellers, missionaries and artists. On many occasions its territory became the battlefield for wars between its neighbours. "Few can doubt that Poland's geographic location can be blamed for its misfortunes. Trapped in the middle of the North European Lowland and deprived of natural borders it was fighting an unequal battle for survival", writes the British historian Norman Davies, in his renowned book 'God's Playground. A History of Poland'. Poland's position was weakened by the increasing influence of neighbouring powers



## Poland in Brief



King Jan Sobieski III (1629-1696)

and by the deterioration of the noble democracy which undermined effective government.

In the 18th century Poland ceased to be a European power, subjected to the expansive politics of bordering powers: Austria, Prussia and Russia. In

1772 these countries annexed some of Poland's territory – in the First Partition. Some of the noble deputies campaigned for reform of the country. On May 3rd, 1791 the Sejm enacted a constitution aimed at reforming and modernising the state in the spirit of the Enlightenment. This was the first constitution adopted in Europe, four months before the French constitution, and second only to the United States.

The reforms formulated in the Third of May Constitution were not introduced, however. In 1793 Russia and Prussia partitioned Poland for the second time, and two years later (then together with Austria) they divided up between themselves the entire Polish territory. For over 100 years Poland disappeared from the map of Europe.

However, the powers occupying Poland did not succeed in suppressing the Poles' spirit of freedom and the battle for independence never stopped. At the start Poles fought in alliance with Napoleon, then in a number of national uprisings (including the November Uprising of 1830-31 and the January Uprising of 1863-64). They were fighting for the principle of freedom for all nations. At the same time they never neglected their literature and art, which flourished in spite of

### DID YOU KNOW THAT...

...IN 1791 THE POLES ADOPTED A WRITTEN CONSTITUTION, THE FIRST IN EUROPE AND SECOND (AFTER THE USA) IN THE WORLD?

restrictions and bonds of servitude.

Poland re-entered the map of Europe as a

sovereign state in 1918, at the end of the First World War, which provided the opportunity to regain the independence so eagerly awaited by several generations of Poles. Soon after, however, Poland had to confront one of the two totalitarian systems of the 20th century, Soviet Russia. In 1920, at the battle of Radzymin (known also as the "Miracle on the

**Poland**  
in Brief



The Holy Icon of Our Lady of Jasna Góra, 1380 (top right)

A suit of armour of the Polish Hussars, 17th c. (top left)

The Polish Hussars 18th c. (left)

A gentry manor house, 18th c.





## Poland in Brief



The Piast  
dynasty Poland,  
12th c.



The Commonwealth  
of Two Nations  
16th c.



Poland in  
1918 - 1939

DEMART



Artur Grottger's painting  
"Farewell to an Insurgent" 1866

Vistula"), the Polish army stopped the westward advance of Soviet troops. The twenties and thirties were spent reuniting Poland as a country into a single unit, following more than a century of partition. This multi-national Poland - one third of the population comprised of ethnic minorities - remained faithful to the fundamental principles of democracy, becoming more and more distinct from the policies of its most powerful neighbours, Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany.

The Second World War began on September 1st, 1939. Poland was attacked by Germany, and the Nazi war machine was met with armed resistance. The Soviet Union invaded Polish territory on September 17th, 1939. Germany and the USSR divided Poland between themselves, introducing a systematic plan of exterminating Polish political, economic and intellectual elites. In the Nazi concentration camp of Oświęcim (Auschwitz-Birkenau), first serving as a camp for Poles and then transformed into one of Europe's biggest graveyards, about 1.5 million people were murdered, the majority of them Jewish. In Soviet-occupied territory thousands of Poles were resettled, transported to forced labour camps in remote regions of Russia. Thousands of Polish soldiers and policemen were murdered in Soviet camps such as Katyń.

Poland was the first target of World War Two. At the same time - in spite of its loss of sovereignty - it became an important ally of the anti-Nazi coalition. Poles joined battle against the enemy on all fronts. A Polish underground resistance movement grew to dimensions unmatched anywhere else.



## Poland in Brief

Armed action, espionage and sabotage, underground education, cultural life and publishing were accompanied by passive resistance and boycotts.

At the Yalta Conference, the agreement concluded by Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin, instead of guaranteeing Poland the sovereignty it deserved, relegated it to a state of Soviet dependence that was to last half a century. At the end of the Second World War the Russian Army liberated Poland from Nazi occupation, at the price of the imposition of political and economic ideas which were completely alien to Polish tradition.

The war caused radical changes to the country: its geography was transformed (the loss of the eastern territories was compensated for by expansion of the country into former German territories in the west); there was also the heritage of a terrible loss of life, estimated at 6 million (including 3 million Polish Jews); and utter physical devastation. Warsaw became a symbol of the war years. It was bombed by the Nazis in 1939, and then exposed to oppression and terror during the six years of occupation. The city was deprived of its inhabitants and of the Jewish quarter, destroyed after armed resistance against the final liquidation (the Ghetto Uprising of 1943). After the Warsaw Uprising in 1944, the city was almost erased from the face of the earth. The scale of destruction was so great that there was serious discussion about whether it made any sense to re-establish the capital there.

The People's Republic of Poland was made completely dependent on the USSR, like other countries which fell into the Soviet sphere of influence. Following a fixed election, the communists eliminated all opposition from political life. The Polish government had to reject a proposal to be involved in the Marshall Plan, leaving the Polish economy entirely reliant on the Soviet economy. The post-war restructuring of the Polish economy according to the Soviet model included the nationalisation of industry and central planning. Unlike other communist countries, Poland avoided the collectivisation of the land and complete liquidation of small private enterprises, trades and crafts. The communists did not succeed in subordinating the Catholic Church which became an oasis of free-



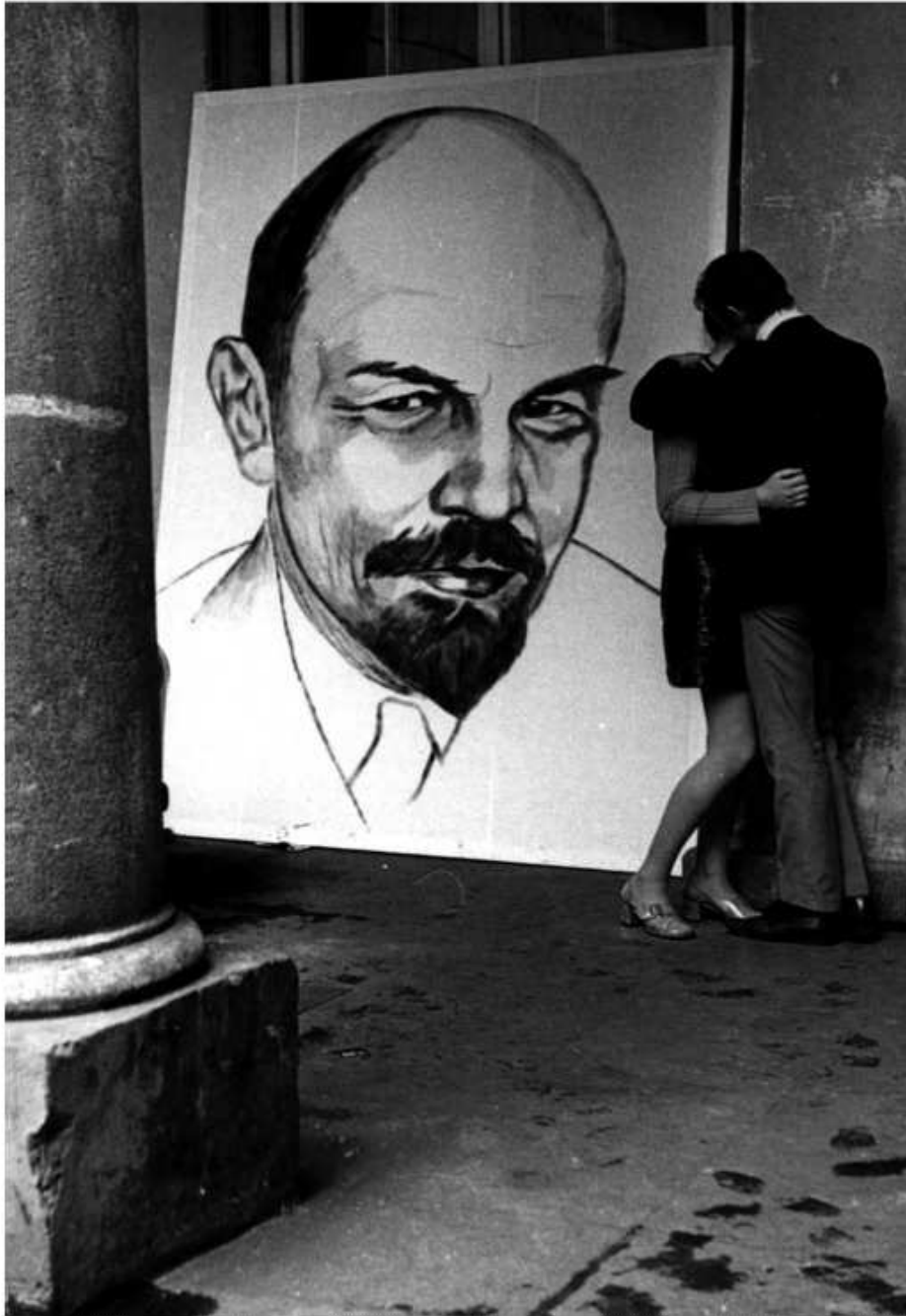
The Warsaw Uprising - 1944 r



The Potsdam Conference of the heads of states of the leading members of the anti-Nazi coalition (1945)

A socrealist sculpture (1949-1956), a fragment of the Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw





The reality of the communist times





An empty shop in the 1990's

dom and cultivation of spiritual bonds with Western civilisation. In spite of active censorship, political control over cultural and artistic life, and repression of the Church and opposition, Poland enjoyed considerable freedom in comparison with other countries of the communist bloc. However, lack of democratic rights, political isolation and economic crisis resulting from the inefficiency of the planned economy brought about waves of mass demonstrations and strikes. In June 1956, a workers protest started in Poznań. It was one of the factors, which facilitated the assumption of power by those communist party leaders who rejected the Stalinist methods of governance. However the change didn't last long. A decade later students and intellectuals demonstrated. In 1970, a workers' protest in Gdańsk broke out, suppressed violently and with bloodshed. During the protests in the 60s and 70s, the prisons were filled up and many students thrown out of universities.

The early 70s witnessed a turning point in the structures of the PZPR (Polish United Workers' Party). Its new policy was directed towards political liberalisation and economic modernisation. The importation of new technologies brought about a gigantic foreign debt. In the mid-seventies a pluralistic democratic opposition rose in Poland alongside the Catholic Church - a long-standing opponent of the totalitarian regime. The democratic opposition, operating illegally, espoused non-violent methods. A moral force, driving society's and many of its opinion-forming elites' resistance



The 'Solidarity' emblem

to the communist regime, was the election in 1978 of Cracow Cardinal Karol Wojtyła as Pope and his first visit to Poland as head of the Catholic Church.

In August 1980, strikes broke out again in Gdańsk and Szczecin as a result of the growing economic crisis. Lech Wałęsa, then 37, literally had to jump the fence back into the Gdańsk shipyard to join the striking workers, becoming the leader of the movement, supported by a group of intellectuals. This was one of the historical moments which will forever be connected with the beginning of the fall of the communist epoch, and the collapse of the 'communist bloc'. In September 1980 'Solidarity' was born, the first independent movement in the Soviet bloc, in the form of a trade union, though its members came from all social groups under the banner of

**DID YOU KNOW THAT...** peaceful change.

**...POLAND WAS THE FIRST COUNTRY OF THE COMMUNIST BLOC WHERE THE OLD SYSTEM COLLAPSED?**

'Solidarity' became a mass movement of almost 10 million mem-

bers, with every third Pole joining, including many party activists. It fast grew into a wider social movement demanding democratisation, the realisation of social demands and the abolition of censorship. But to maintain power and reduce the pressure from the Soviet Union, a military group assumed power in the Party, and in December 1981 martial law was introduced in Poland. The opposition leaders, including Lech Wałęsa, were sent to internment camps.

Increasing social discontent, powerful opposition, economic crisis and external political factors forced the government into gradual concessions. During the 1980s, partial political reforms were introduced on the democratic model, including a constitutional tribunal and office of Civil Rights Ombudsman (1985–1987).



Lech Wałęsa speaks to the shipyard workers in August 1980



**Poland**  
in Brief



A poster from  
1989 election



The first non-communist  
prime minister  
- Tadeusz Mazowiecki  
- 1989 (left)



The 'Round Table'  
(1989)

In 1988, as a consequence of changes on the international scene (among them reforms undertaken by Gorbachov) and of events within the country (economic collapse and strikes), the government decided to start a dialogue with the opposition. In February 1989, for the first time in post-war Poland and in the history of the Soviet bloc, a meeting was held at the symbolically round table between representatives of the government and the democratic opposition. A coup d'état without bloodshed. At the 'Round Table', rules were formulated defining how the opposition was to function in the government.

In June 1989, non-fully democratic parliamentary elections were held in which the opposition took part, the majority of seats being guaranteed for the communists. In spite of this, a representative of the opposition, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, was elected Prime Minister and a 'Solidarity'-led government was formed. This was one element in a succession of rapid political changes in Central Europe which marked the demise of Soviet-based political systems. These changes brought about the fall of the Berlin wall, the collapse of the USSR, the end of the 'Cold War', and Poland's reunion with the democratic world.

In 1990 Mazowiecki's government introduced large-scale economic reforms proposed by Leszek Balcerowicz. The reforms were aimed at halting hyperinflation, liberalising the economy and privatisation. Soon the old political system collapsed. In January

**DID YOU KNOW THAT...**

**...IN 1999 POLAND JOINED NATO? AND IN 2004 THE EUROPEAN UNION?**

1990 the PZPR was disbanded. In December Lech Wałęsa won presidential elections. In the course of the next few years competing political parties emerged out of 'Solidarity'.

Following the dissolution of various communist treaties (the Warsaw Treaty and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, COMECON), Poland entered a path leading to integration with Western Europe and constructing new relations with its neighbours.

P O L I T I C A L  
S Y S T E M



The Polish Parliament (Sejm and Senat)

**P**oland is a democratic country: a republic with a pluralistic party system and a bicameral parliament. The basis of the political system reflects the values typical of a European law-based culture: national sovereignty and independence, state sovereignty, political pluralism and freedom of activity for political parties, a separation of powers, inalienable respect for human rights – which underpin the legal system – and freedom of the individual.

The supreme legal act is the Constitution, established by a national referendum in 1997. The system of government is based on a tri-partite separation of powers between the legislature, executive and judiciary. Constitutional rights and

G R E A T



Pope John Paul II

**JOHN PAUL II (KAROL WOJTYŁA 1920-2005)**

In 1978 Karol Wojtyła became the head of the Roman Catholic Church. He opened up the Church and initiated a dialogue with other denominations. The Pope remains a moral authority for many people around the world.

**LECH WAŁĘSA**

A legendary leader of the Solidarity movement. He led the strike in the Gdańsk Shipyards in 1980 which opened the path for peaceful changes in Central Europe. In 1983 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. 1990-1995 president of Poland.



President Lech Wałęsa

**ANDRZEJ WAJDA**

In 2000 awarded an Oscar for his film-making. Wajda is an outstanding director and co-founder of the Polish Film School. Two of Wajda's films were nominated for Oscars – 'The Promised Land' and 'Young Ladies of Wilk'.



Andrzej Wajda - film director

freedoms correspond to those of other European democracies and the European Convention of Human Rights. In 1987 the position of a Civil Rights Ombudsman was established, following the 1985 establishment of the Constitutional Tribunal, whose decisions are binding.

The bicameral parliament is elected every four years. The superior legislative body is the Supreme Chamber of Control. Executive power lies in the hands of the President and the Cabinet. The office of the President as head of state was restored in 1989. The incumbent president, Lech Kaczyński was elected in 2005. The country's foreign policy and internal affairs are in the hands of the government – the Cabinet, appointed by the Prime Minister. Prime Minister and other ministers are appointed by the President.

Independent judicial power is executed by courts and tribunals. In 1999 a new administrative structure was introduced.

## POLES

### **WISŁAWA SZYMBORSKA**

A distinguished Polish poet and master of conciseness in her synthetic approach to the spiritual perplexities of modern man. Her poems convey universal messages. In 1996 she won the Nobel Prize for literature.

### **CZESŁAW MIŁOSZ (1911–2004)**

An outstanding poet, prose writer and essayist. In his poetry he often combines contrasting means of expression, presenting moral and aesthetic universal values in confrontation with the historical experience of twentieth century man. In 1980 he was awarded a Nobel Prize for literature.

### **KRZYSZTOF PENDERECKI**

One of the world's most renowned composers, famous for his innovative approach. His outstanding works include 'The Black Mask' and 'Polish Requiem'.



Wisława Szymborska - poet



Czesław Miłosz - poet



Krzysztof Penderecki - composer



The Cloth Hall in the Old Market Square in Cracow

**T**he style and personality of Polish life have been shaped over a thousand years. National culture was born of influences of the Latin and the Byzantine worlds, and from a dialogue between ethnic minorities in Poland. The Poles have always welcomed foreign artists and been eager to follow what was happening in other countries. In the 19th and 20th centuries Poles' concentration on cultural development often took the place of political and economic activity. These factors contributed to the versatile character of Polish art, with all its complex nuances.

Dialogue and the interpenetration of cultures have been major characteristics of Polish tradition for centuries. Customs, manners and clothes have reflected the influences of the East and West. Traditional costumes worn by the gentry in the 16th and 17th centuries were inspired by rich Eastern ornamental styles, including Islamic influences. Polish cuisine and social mores are another reflection of these various influences.

Polish towns reflect the whole spectrum of European styles. Poland's eastern frontiers marked the boundary of the influences of Western architecture on the continent. History has not been kind to Poland's architectural monuments. However, a number of ancient edifices have survived: castles, churches and palaces, sometimes unique in the regional or European context. Some of them have been laboriously restored (the Royal Castle in Cracow), or completely reconstructed having been totally ruined in the last war (the Old Town and Royal





A fragment of Veit Stoss's altar, St Mary's Church in Cracow, 15th c.

"A King's Jester"  
- Jan Matejko  
(1862)



"Temptation of  
St. Anthony II"  
- Stanisław  
I. Witkiewicz  
(1921-1922)

"A Polish  
Hamlet"  
- Jacek  
Malczewski  
(1903)



"Abakan" – Magdalena Abakanowicz, the  
Kordegarda Gallery in Warsaw (1999)

Franciszek Starowieyski

Castle in Warsaw, the Old Town in Gdańsk and Wrocław). Kazimierz on the Vistula is an example of a well-preserved Medieval town. Cracow ranks among the best preserved Gothic and Renaissance urban complexes in Europe. Polish church architecture deserves special attention. Some interesting buildings were also constructed during the communist regime in the style of social realism. Recently, some remarkable examples of modern architecture have been built.

Polish art has always reflected world trends, while maintaining its unique character. Jan Matejko's famous school of historical painting produced monumental portrayals of momentous events in Polish history. Stanisław Witkiewicz was an ardent supporter of realism in Polish art, its main representative being Józef Chelmoński. The beginning of the 20th century Poland witnessed the birth of modern Polish art, engaged in formal experimentation. Its main representatives were Jacek Malczewski (symbolism), Stanisław Wyspiański, Józef Mehoffer and a group of Polish impressionists. Artists of the twentieth century avant-garde reflected various schools and trends. The art of Tadeusz Makowski was influenced by cubism; Władysław Strzemiński and Henryk Stażewski worked within the idiom of constructivism.

Among distinguished contemporary artists are Roman Opalka, Leon Tarasewicz, Jerzy Nowosielski, and of the younger generation, Mirosław Balka, Katarzyna Kozyra, Paweł Althamer and Artur Żmijewski. The most celebrated Polish sculptors include Xawery Dunikowski, Katarzyna Kobro, Alina Szapocznikow, Magdalena Abakanowicz and Igor Mitoraj. Since the inter-war years, Polish artistic and documentary photography has also held a worldwide recognition which it still commands. In the sixties the Polish Poster School was formed, with Henryk Tomaszewski and Waldemar Świerzy at its head.

The origins of Polish literature written in the vernacular instead of Latin date back to the 14th century. Poems, laments and epigrams written by Jan Kochanowski established him as a leading representative of European Renaissance literature. Baroque and Classicist literature was a factor uniting the multinational Poland together. Jan Potocki's



novel 'The Saragossa Manuscript' became a world classic. Wojciech Hass' film based on this novel, a favourite of Luis Bunuel, later became a cult film on university campuses. In the 19th century when Poland did not exist as an independent state, great Romantic literature flourished. Poets like Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki and Zygmunt Krasiński became spiritual leaders of a nation deprived of its sovereignty, prophesying its revival. Henryk Sienkiewicz (a Noble prize winner for 'Quo Vadis' in 1905) was a eulogist of the historical tradition.

In the first half of the 20th century many outstanding literary works sprang from multi-cultural dialogue and avant-garde experimentation. A special role in this was played by the tradition of Kresy ('Borderlands'), the eastern regions of Poland with two major centres, in Vilnius and Lviv. In these regions Jewish tradition and the mystic movement of Chassidism developed. Kresy were a cultural melting pot of over a dozen nationalities, an area where multi-national and multi-cultural art flourished. The works of Bruno Schulz, Bolesław Leśmian, Józef Czechowicz were written there. In the south of Poland, Zakopane was the birthplace of the avant-garde works of Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz ('Witkacy').

After the Second World War many Polish writers found themselves abroad, with some concentrated around the Paris-based 'Kultura', a publication run by Jerzy Giedroyc. The

#### WHAT TO READ AND SEE IN ORDER

The best known history of Poland in English, in Poland or anywhere else, is Norman Davies' 'God's Playground. A History of Poland'. Another book by the same author, 'The Heart of Europe. A Short History of Poland', focuses on the 20th century history of the country. Other good sources of information are: 'Poland' by James Michener, a dramatised Polish history, and 'The Polish Way' by Adam Zamoyski. A history of Poland in the context of Central European is 'The Price of Freedom' by Piotr Stefan Wandycz; and if you want to understand the phenomenon of the Solidarity movement, you should refer to 'The Polish Revolution: Solidarity 1980-82' by Timothy Garton Ash.

A good way to come to terms with Polish literature is to begin with the classics - both older and contemporary, including 'Quo vadis' by Henryk Sienkiewicz, the science fiction of Stanisław Lem, the reportage of Ryszard Kapuściński and Hanna Krall and the dramas and shorter works by Sławomir Mrożek. You might then move on to the contemporary poetry of Nobel Prize winners



In the library

group of emigrée writers included Witold Gombrowicz, Gustaw Herling Grudziński, Czesław Miłosz, Sławomir Mrożek, Zbigniew Herbert, Tadeusz Różewicz, Czesław Miłosz (Nobel Winner in 1980), Wisława Szymborska (Nobel Winner in 1996) belong to the group of the most outstanding 20th century Polish poets, novelists and playwrights, which also includes Witold Gombrowicz, Sławomir Mrożek, Stanisław Lem (science fiction), Hanna Krall's reportage, which focuses mainly on the war-time Jewish experience, and Ryszard Kapuściński's books have been translated into many languages. It is difficult to grasp fully the detailed tradition of Polish romanticism and its consequences for Polish literature

#### TO UNDERSTAND THE POLES?

Wisława Szymborska and Czesław Miłosz, or the masters of twentieth century experimental drama and prose Stanisław Wyspiański, Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, Witold Gombrowicz and Bruno Schulz. A film version of 'The Promised Land' by Stanisław Reymont, another Nobel Prize winner, is one of the best films directed by Andrzej Wajda. Other films by Wajda to be recommended are 'Ashes and Diamonds', 'Birch Wood', 'The Wedding' and 'Man of Marble'.

The Jewish world of pre-war Poland is the subject of novels in yiddish by Isaac Bashevis Singer. Steven Spielberg's 'Schindler's List' was based on Thomas Kenneally's 'Schindler's Ark'. Universal questions about the condition of human life in the modern world are asked in Krzysztof Kieślowski's films, 'Decalogue' or 'Amateur', providing a good introduction to the atmosphere of communist Poland. Kieślowski was the director of 'three colors' ('Blue', 'White' and 'Red'), where Polish themes play a very important role.



Tomasz Stańko - jazz musician



A fragment of the monument to Fryderyk Chopin in Warsaw

without a thorough knowledge of Polish history. The music of Frederic Chopin, inspired by Polish tradition and folklore, conveys the quintessence of romanticism. Since 1927, the Chopin International Piano Competition has been held every five years in Warsaw, one of the most prestigious piano competitions in the world. Traditional Polish music inspired composers like Karol Szymanowski, Mieczysław Karłowicz, Witold Lutosławski, Wojciech Kilar, Henryk Mikolaj Górecki and Krzysztof Penderecki – all of whom rank among the world's most celebrated composers. Polish jazz, with its special national flavour has fans and followers in many countries, its main figures being Krzysztof Komeda, Michał Urbaniak, Adam Makowicz, Urszula Dudziak and Tomasz Stańko.

Successful composers of film music include Zbigniew Preisner, Jan A.P. Kaczmarek (Oscar Winner 2005) and Wojciech Kilar.

Graduates of the famous Łódź Film School include many celebrated directors, among them Roman Polański ('Knife in the Water', 'Rosemary's Baby', 'Frantic', 'The Pianist') and Krzysztof Zanussi, a leading director of the cinema of moral anxiety of the 70s.

Andrzej Wajda's films offer an insightful analysis of what is universal in the Polish experience – the struggle to maintain



## Poland in Brief

human dignity under circumstances which hardly allow it. His major films, listed above in 'What to read and see in order to understand Poles?', defined the identity of many generations in Poland. In 2000 Wajda was awarded an Oscar for his contribution to cinema.

In the 90s Krzysztof Kieślowski's films, such as 'Decalogue', 'The Double Life of Veronica', 'Three colours', won great popularity. Other Polish film director such as Agnieszka Holland and cameraman Janusz Kamiński also work in Hollywood. Polish animated cinema has a long tradition, deriving its inspiration from Polish graphic art – for example Jan Lenica, Zbigniew Rybczyński (awarded an Oscar in 1983), Walerian Borowczyk, Tomasz Bagiński (Oscar nomination in 2003).

Polish avant-garde theatre is world-famous, with Jerzy Grotowski as its most innovative and creative representative. One of the most original twentieth century theatre figures was Tadeusz Kantor, painter, theatre theoretician, stage designer, playwright, his ideas finding their culmination in the theatre of death and his most recognised production 'The Dead Class'. Poland offers a variety of cultural experiences. Those interested in high culture will enjoy the renowned music festivals (Wrocław Cantans, Warsaw Autumn). Polish museums display remarkable art collections – masterpieces including Leonardo da Vinci's 'Lady with Ermine' (The Family Czartoryski's Museum in Cracow); Vit Stoss's carved wooden altar

### POLAND ON THE UNESCO LIST



The UNESCO World Heritage List mentions ten entries situated in Poland. The first to be included was the city of Cracow, a splendidly preserved medieval urban complex. Next are three other urban complexes, significant for Polish culture and history: Warsaw, Toruń and Zamość. Looking at the entirely reconstructed Old Town in Warsaw it is hard to believe that during the last war it was completely obliterated and restored with great attention to detail. Toruń, the city of Nicolaus Copernicus, is renowned for its over 300 historic monuments inscribed in the history of European art. The Market Square and surroundings have not changed for 700 years. Zamość founded in the 16th century by Magnate Jan Zamoyski as the capital of his huge latifundium. The Białowieża Forest, one of the oldest and largest forest complexes still preserved in Europe, and the Wieliczka





Tadeusz Kantor  
- theatre director,  
theoretician,  
playwright  
(1915-1990)/  
the Royal Castle  
in Cracow

(Saint Mary's Church in Cracow) and 'The Last Judgement' by Hans Memmling (The National Museum in Gdańsk). Ethnographic museums and old village museums (skansens) also hold attractive collections. The panorama of Polish culture is completed by local festivals often influenced by catholic or other religions' calendars.

As a part of European culture Polish culture remains in active interaction with the world's cultural trends. Polish writers, poets, painters, directors, etc. are recognized in many countries and are often honored with many prizes. They are fine examples that Poland has always been part not only of European but also of world culture.

## OF THE WORLD HERITAGE

salt mines are next on the list. The last one was founded in the 14th century. Salt chambers are located from 64 to 135 metres below ground. The size of the Teutonic Knights' castle in Malbork impresses visitors. The Teutonic Knights' Order established their sovereign state in the northern territories of Poland in the 13th century. Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, a sanctuary of the Virgin Mary, was built to imitate the Way of the Cross in Jerusalem. Two Lutheran Churches for Peace, in Jawor and Świdnica near Wałbrzych, the only such historical buildings of their kind in the world, were recently inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list. The two 17th century churches are the largest timber-framed churches in Poland, their interiors being decorated with polychrome paintings depicting Old and New Testament scenes and Silesian landscapes. **Another object is the museum of the former Nazi death camp in Oświęcim – Auschwitz-Birkenau. During the Second World War over 1.5 million people, 90% of them Jewish, were exterminated there by the Nazis.**



Pierogi (a kind of dumpling)

**F**rom time immemorial the Poles have loved drinking and eating. 'Don't trust people who eat little. They are either ill-natured or jealous people', says the an old Polish aphorism. Typical Polish cuisine is very diverse. As a starter, you usually get a plate of Polish pork-butcher's products and meat. The most famous are sausages of various types. Every region has its specialty, the best being dry Cracow sausage and hunter's sausage smoked in juniper wood. Polish cuisine is renowned for it delicious ham, but other meat products also deserve your careful attention, like saiceson, pate and kaszanka (black pudding).

In the south of Poland, oscypek, a really typical Polish cheese made from sheep milk in the mountains, is a very common snack. Bread is itself a Polish specialty, especially dark rye bread.

The most ancient Polish dish which cannot be found in any other country is żur, a thick sour soup served with half a hard boiled egg and pieces of sausage. In old Polish cuisine light soups, polewka, were very popular. Even today you can be served a light stock soup in some places. Another speciality is borsch, made from red beetroots and served with small dumplings filled with meat.

A summer specialty is a cold soup, chłodnik, made from sour milk and vegetables. A main course of poultry, fish,



A cold beetroot soup

meat or venison is served with potatoes, buckwheat and delicious Polish pasta – kluski. It comes with fresh vegetable salads and pickled vegetables – cucumbers, cabbage etc. Bigos, considered to be one of the most typical Polish dishes, is served either as a side dish or main course. Bigos is made from sauerkraut, different kinds of meat, dried fruit and mushrooms, and red wine. Polish cuisine also offers dishes marked with foreign influence, especially Jewish.

Polish cuisine is also renowned for its delicious cakes. Toruń is the home of gingerbread. Other typical cakes are poppy seed cake and pascha – homemade cheese cake with sweetened dried fruits and nuts. Warsaw is famous for its doughnuts filled with rosehip jam – the best come from the confectioner Blikle, on Nowy Świat street.

Among popular alcoholic drinks the most special are fruit vodkas – rowan berry vodka or cherry vodka, or bitter vodkas which are good appetizers. However, the most successful is traditional pure vodka of different kinds. Beer is also becoming very popular, next to many soft drinks. To a bottle of Żubrówka vodka, to achieve its unique flavour fully, is added a blade of grass from the Białowieża Forest, and one can drink it mixed with apple juice. Flakes of gold can be found in traditional Gdańsk's Goldwasser vodka. Kosher vodka also has a rich and long tradition.



S C I E N C E  
A N D  
E D U C A T I O N



'Nicolaus Copernicus'  
-by Jan Matejko 1872

**P**oles are reputed to be romantic, and romantics often look to the sky. This is probably why Poland is famous for its astronomers. Nicolaus Copernicus was among the most distinguished of all astronomers. He formulated a revolutionary theory of the heliocentric structure of our planetary system. Aleksander Wolszczan, a contemporary scientist following in Copernicus's footsteps, discovered other planetary systems outside our solar system.

The traditions of Polish science date back to the Middle Ages. In 1364 the first Polish university was founded, the second in Central Europe after Prague. This was the Cracow Academy, now called the Jagiellonian University.

In the 19th century Poland contributed to the development of science. In 1883 two Poles, Zygmunt Wróblewski and Karol

**DID YOU KNOW THAT...**

...POLISH MATHEMATICIANS BROKE THE SECRET OF THE ENIGMA CODE, A CODING MACHINE USED BY NAZI GERMANY?

Olszewski, liquefied oxygen and nitrogen from the air. Maria Curie-Skłodowska won two

Nobel Prizes, in 1903 in the field of physics, and in 1911 for chemistry. She was a co-founder of radiology and discoverer of polonium and radium. A pioneer of the oil industry in Europe, Ignacy Łukasiewicz, was the inventor of the oil lamp. The group of renowned Polish archeologists includes Kazimierz Michałowski, discoverer of the Faras frescoes in Egypt.

Breaking of the secret Enigma code, a German communication system, was the great achievement of a group of Polish mathematicians and cryptologists, graduates of the



Aleksander Wolszczan – astronomer



Poznań University, Marian Rejewski, Jerzy Różycki and Henryk Zygalski. In 1932 they started working for the Central Headquarters Code Office and after four months they broke the Enigma secret and were regularly deciphering secret messages sent by the Germans. Their research resulted in production of over a dozen copies of Enigma by the AVA Company in Warsaw in 1933.

The Warsaw-Lviv School of Philosophy, a group of outstanding logicians and mathematicians with Kazimierz Twardowski at its centre, influenced works in their respective disciplines.

Many Polish scientists also lived outside Poland. One of them was the anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski. In 1914–18 he carried out research in New Guinea and the Trobrianda Islands (in the Solomon Sea). Malinowski elaborated a functional

**DID YOU KNOW THAT...**

...POLAND IS THE HOME OF TWO LIVING NOBEL PRIZE WINNERS: LECH WAŁĘSA AND WISŁAWA SZYMBORSKA?

method used in the study of culture. Paweł Edmund Strzelecki

carried out research in Australia. Polish scientists, who were sent into exile to Siberia by the Russians in the 19th century, contributed to the discovery of natural resources. Benedykt Dybowski described the fauna of Lake Baykal, Aleksander Czekanowski worked on the geology of Siberia, Jan Czerski researched the mountain chains of the area beyond Lake Baykal. Polish emigrants also included renowned engineers and constructors: Ernest Malinowski, Ralph Modjewski and others.

Universities, academies and high schools have tripled in number since 1990 with over 1.5 million students. Polish science is particularly successful in genetics, molecular biology and the humanities (Józef Rotblat, Leszek Kołakowski, Zygmunt Bauman).

**POLISH**



Ski-jumper Adam Małysz is the most popular Polish sportsman. The successes of this modest young man from the little town of Wisła have made him one of the most famous Poles in Europe. He is World Champion for a second year in the row. Robert Korzeniowski became a quadruple Olympic champion in the walking race. Otylia Jędrzejczak won European gold and became



Inauguration of the academic year at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow



A biotechnical laboratory

## SPORTSMEN

Olimpic champions in Athens in 200 m swimming distance. In 2004 she was granted the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Award for the best Polish sportsman. Sport fans remember well the 70s Polish football team (recently the national football team qualified to the 2002 World Cup), the athletes Irena Szewińska and Władysław Kozakiewicz, boxers and volleyball team.





The last day in the old seat of the Stock Exchange





Inside the Stock Exchange - the new one.

In recent years the Polish economy has become recognized as an unqualified success story. In 1989 the country discarded the socialist system and started building a freemarket democracy. The economic transformations were launched in 1990 with the "shock therapy" authored by the then deputy premier and finance minister Leszek Balcerowicz. Free-market mechanisms were liberated, resulting in rapid economic improvement. In 1991 the stock exchange resumed its operations in Warsaw. The Nineties also brought large-scale privatization of state enterprises, helping boost efficiency and output in many industries. Poles quickly found their footing in the new realities. Many established their own businesses, attaining domestic and international success.

Today, Poland is a model of successful economic transformations and boasts a high growth rate. In 2006 the GDP amounted to 338 billion US dollars, though with adjustment for purchasing power parity (PPP) that went up to 552 billion US dollars. GDP increased by 5.8%, with inflation at just 1%-one of the best results in all of the European Union. Per capita income (PPP adjusted) equaled 14400 US dollars, as compared to 6125 US dollars in 1992.

**DID YOU KNOW THAT...**

**...FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN POLAND AMOUNTED TO 84 MILLION USD AT THE END OF 2004? EU COUNTRIES PLAY THE LEADING ROLE?**



Exports, which totaled almost 110 billion US dollars in 2006, have been the main driving force of the economy. Almost 80% were delivered to EU countries. The steady growth of export volume is coupled with structural changes. Once dominated by raw materials, primarily coal, today Polish exports are increasingly composed of highly processed goods. These include cars and car parts, machinery and electronics, furniture, non-precious metals and metal products. The shift in structure reflects Poland's rising competitiveness in international markets. At the same time, the service sector is gaining in importance and has excellent prospects.

The Polish economy is also energized by EU structural funds, which have enhanced the labour market situation.

The macroeconomic conditions are very favourable, providing a conducive environment for stable growth of companies. That has been recognized by foreign entrepreneurs, increasingly willing to invest their money in Poland. In 2006 direct foreign investments amounted to 14 billion US dollars. The cumulated value of direct foreign investments neared 90 billion US dollars by the end of 2005. Poland's human resources are a major

**DID YOU KNOW THAT...**

...FROM 1991 THE ANNUAL RATE OF ECONOMIC GROWTH IS ESTIMATED AT SEVERAL PERCENT THE GOVERNMENT PLANS TO KEEP IT AT 5% LEVEL?

asset: half the population - or about 20 million - is below 35. The labour force

is highly skilled, many people know foreign languages and 2 million attend colleges or universities. Poles are among the best-educated nations in Europe; we have 427 institutions of higher education. Foreign businessmen appreciate the qualifications and commitment of their Polish employees. Another factor attracting investors is Poland's strategic location in the heart of Europe and the size of its consumer market. Poland is the largest market in Central Europe, eighth-largest on the continent and thirtieth in the world. Furthermore, investors are offered various incentives, with preferential conditions guaranteed in 14 special economic zones.

**Poland**  
in Brief



Warsaw University  
Library, computer  
room (left)

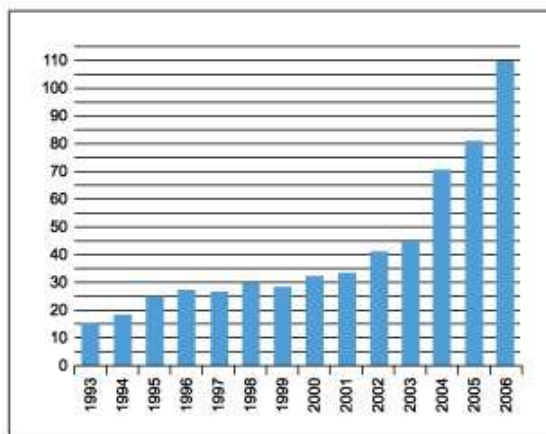
Świętokrzyski  
Bridge, Warsaw  
(below centre)

A Shopping  
Centre  
in Warsaw  
(below)

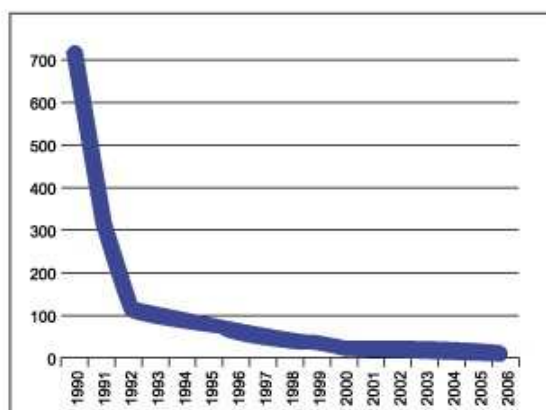




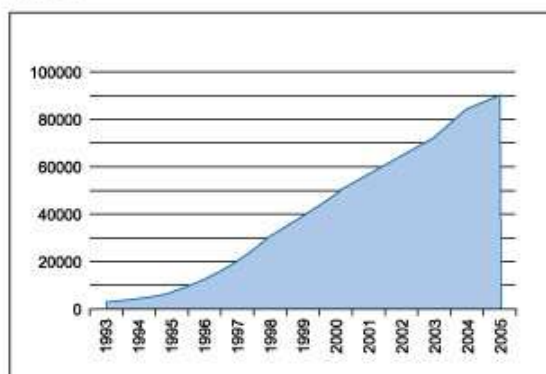
## Poland in Brief



Exports in billion USD \$



Inflation



Foreign direct investment in Poland in million USD (Source:PAIIZ)

Poland is evolving into a European hub of services and R&D. More and more international corporations are establishing their R&D facilities in Poland; thirty of them are already in operation. Investors pick Poland because of the availability of highly-skilled staff, impressive local research potential and supportive attitude of the authorities.

Poland's economy has entered a path of stable growth. The positive tendencies and results over the past several years let Poles look to the future with optimism.

**DID YOU KNOW THAT...**

**...THE EU IS POLAND'S MOST IMPORTANT ECONOMIC PARTNER? THE TRADE BALANCE REMAINS HIGH?**



P O L A N D   A N D  
T H E   W O R L D



NATO manoeuvres in Drawsko Pomorskie

**S**ince its return to the community of democratic countries, Poland has joined the campaign to build European and world security. The beginning of a new political era in Central and Eastern Europe marked by the disbanding of the 'Iron Curtain' in 1989 has offered new opportunities for a range of international relations.

What happened, just nineteen years after the historic 'Solidarity' strike in the Gdańsk shipyards, is beyond the imagination and dreams of people who took part in it. In 1999, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic joined NATO, thus becoming a part of the Euro-Atlantic system of defence and in May 2004 together with other nine European countries became a mem-

**DID YOU KNOW THAT...**

...THE NUMBER OF ATM BANKING MACHINES PER PERSON IS ABOVE THE EUROPEAN AVERAGE THERE ARE OVER 60,000 OF THEM IN POLAND?

ber of the European Union.

Poland contributes to the building of the inter-

national order as a member of the United Nations, Council of Europe, OECD, WTO, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe, and CBSS.

The Polish peacekeeping forces, along with related organisations and associations, are actively present all over the world. The Polish army took part in the programme of 'Partnership for Peace'. Tadeusz Mazowiecki went on a special United Nations mission to Bosnia. Poland is an active member of the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe. Poland elaborated and financed a programme of



A pro-EU festival in Warsaw - held every May



## VISIT

Poland is not expensive or difficult to reach. Warsaw is not too far away from other European cities: about a two hour flight from London or Paris, not much more than an hour to Vienna, Frankfurt or Berlin. International roads and good railway connections make it easy to get to Poland from Germany, the Czech Republic or Russia. With the largest population and land area in Central Europe, Poland can serve as a perfect introduction to other Slavonic countries. Seeking tourist attractions, cultural events, well preserved nature or just good



local democracy development in Serbia and Montenegro. In its economic and political stability, Poland has become a model of the transformations that have taken place in this part of Europe. Following an historic reconciliation with Germany, Poland now co-operates with Germany and France within the framework of the Weimar Triangle. Lithuania and Ukraine are Poland's strategic partners. Its co-operation with Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia is carried out within the framework of the Visegrad Group.

Poland has been co-operating with the structures of the European Union with considerable success – joint projects are undertaken also at local levels. This is accompanied by the sort of co-operation between regions that is necessary in realising the dream of a united Europe.

**DID YOU KNOW THAT...**

...POLAND IS THE BIGGEST COUNTRY IN CENTRAL EUROPE AND ONE OF THE FASTEST DEVELOPING MARKETS IN THE REGION?

## POLAND!

companionship, all tourist are always welcomed in our country. It is not only easy to get here but also to get through Poland. Summer schools of the Polish language are organized in many countries by Polish diplomatic and cultural institutions, which also provide you with information on visas to Poland, special events taking place and on courses of study available here.

More detailed information on Poland and Poles can be obtained at Polish institutions abroad, Polish centres and on the internet: [www.poland.gov.pl](http://www.poland.gov.pl)

## THE MOST INTERESTING FESTIVALS IN POLAND

- The Chopin International Piano Competition in Warsaw (the next one – 2010)
- The Lent Mystery in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, Easter Week
- The International Book Fair, Warsaw, [www.arspolona.com.pl](http://www.arspolona.com.pl)
- The International Festival of Orthodox Church Music, the Holy Trinity Orthodox Church in Hajnówka, [www.festiwal.cerkiew.pl](http://www.festiwal.cerkiew.pl)
- Concerts of Chopin's music, Łazienki Park in Warsaw, every Sunday from May to September
- Malta, the International Theatre Festival, Poznań, [www.malta-festival.pl](http://www.malta-festival.pl)
- The Mozart Festival, [www.wok.pol.pl](http://www.wok.pol.pl)
- The International Festival of Organ Music, the Oliwa Cathedral, Gdańsk, [www.filharmonia.gda.pl](http://www.filharmonia.gda.pl)
- The Festival of Jewish Culture, Cracow, [www.jewishfestival.pl](http://www.jewishfestival.pl)
- The International Festival of Street Theatre, Cracow, August
- The International Festival of the Mountain Region Folklore in Zakopane, [www.zakopane.pl](http://www.zakopane.pl)
- "Wratslavia Cantans" International Music Festival, Wrocław, [www.wratslavia.art.pl](http://www.wratslavia.art.pl)
- Archeological Picnic in Biskupin, September
- Warsaw Autumn, Festival of Contemporary Music, Warsaw, September
- International Poster Biennial, Warsaw, June
- Dominican Fair, Gdańsk, August
- Warsaw Summer Jazz Days, [www.adamiakjazz.pl](http://www.adamiakjazz.pl)
- The Dialogue of Four Cultures Festival, Łódź, August, [www.4kultury.pl](http://www.4kultury.pl)

## WEBSITES

- [www.poland.gov.pl](http://www.poland.gov.pl)
- [www.msz.gov.pl](http://www.msz.gov.pl) – The Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- [www.poland-tourism.pl](http://www.poland-tourism.pl)
- [www.culture.pl](http://www.culture.pl)
- [www.solidarity.gov.pl](http://www.solidarity.gov.pl)