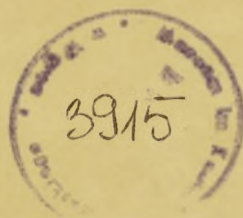


943.8  
P123p





943.8  
P123p

# POLAND

## PAST AND PRESENT

---



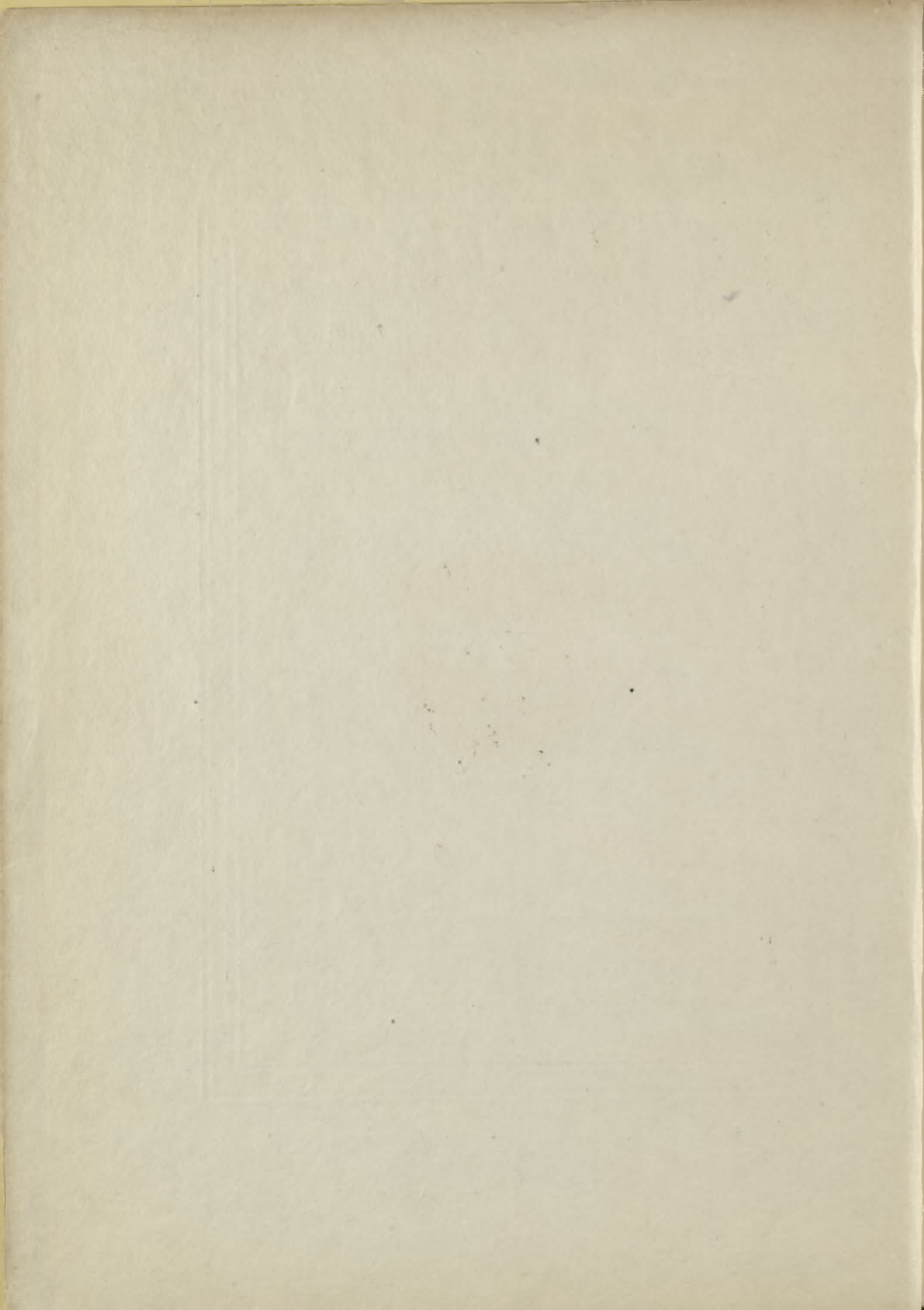
943.8  
P123p

---

*Address by*  
**I. J. PADEREWSKI**

136178

DONATED BY LODA and  
DR. EDWARD L. ROZANSKI



# ADDRESS

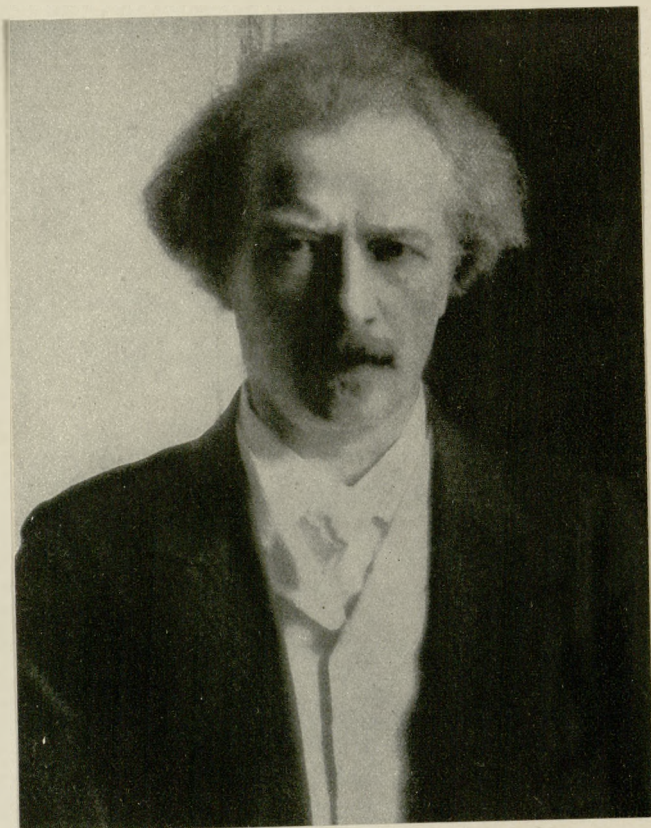
*by*

## I. J. PADEREWSKI

Delivered at the Polish Benefit  
Concert, Sunday Afternoon,  
February Fifth, 1916, at the  
Auditorium, Chicago, Illinois

943.8  
P123p





*J. J. Taderewski*

## ADDRESS BY I. J. PADEREWSKI

DELIVERED AT THE POLISH BENEFIT CONCERT, SUNDAY AFTERNOON,  
FEBRUARY 5th, 1916, AT THE AUDITORIUM, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

---

*Ladies and Gentlemen:*

I HAVE to speak about a country which is not yours, in a language which is not mine. Though deeply appreciating the privilege, the honor of addressing such a large and distinguished audience, I fully realize that my task is arduous in the extreme, the object of my address being unfamiliar to you, and my means of expression so very limited. But I sincerely hope and trust that the kindness and leniency of the listeners will make good for all the shortcomings of my defective oratory.

To quote, however briefly, all the noteworthy facts of ten eventful centuries which built the glorious monument of Poland's tragic history would be beyond my power and beyond your patience. I can only point out some features, some characteristics, and I must not indulge in a narrative length, as I have later on still another important duty to perform.

Far from pretending that the Polish nation



was made up of angels, I willingly admit that my compatriots, though exceptionally richly endowed, full of imagination, laborious, brave, chivalrous, kind-hearted, broad-minded, were and naturally still are extremely temperamental, excessively emotional, and consequently subject to passion, to errors. A great many mistakes have been committed. But there flows throughout our whole history a stream of humanity, of generosity, of tolerance, so broad, so powerful and so pure that it would be vain indeed to look for a similar one in the past of any other European country.

Ever since the beginning of her political existence, Poland has been a safe refuge for all oppressed people, a comfortable shelter for all persecuted religions and opinions. We kept our doors wide open to everyone. The persecuted Jews came to Poland from Germany in the eleventh century, and the first charter granting them the right of inhabiting Polish cities was issued by our King Ladislaus Herman from the city of Kalisch in 1096. Since then all nations, all confessions, were pouring into our country and all of them found in our midst lawful protection and free exercise of their creeds. Until the present war there were still in Poland, especially in southern Poland, many of those ancient Arian churches, many of those old Jewish temples erected as far back as



the thirteenth and even the twelfth century. There has never been, and I cannot emphasize it strongly enough, there has never been a race, a creed, or even a language persecuted under our Polish rule. According to some people's opinion, it may have been one of our political errors, but it is our pride, and I think nobody can deny it, that it is legitimate pride.

Poland's greatest misfortune was her geographical situation. At the extreme European end, with no natural boundary between her and the turbulent East, Poland was predestined to be always the first to receive the shocks of Tartar, Mongolian and Turkish invasions. And there were many of these invasions. From the beginning of the thirteenth century, five hundred years of our existence were filled with these terrific shocks.

It was in defence of Christianity that our youthful King, Ladislaus III, twenty years old, implored by John Palaeologue, Byzantine emperor, went to his rescue and lost his life in the battle of Varna, in 1444.

It was again in the defense of Christianity, of civilization, that our King, John Sobieski, by saving Vienna in 1683, inflicted a decisive, crushing blow upon the aggressive power of the Ottoman Empire. Polish blood saved Christianity, Polish bravery

saved Western Europe from an inevitable invasion, from inevitable destruction.

Oh, happy Western European countries! They could more or less normally attend to their affairs, develop their trade, their industries, gather riches; they could devote themselves to science, to art, enjoy luxuries of life, because between them and the real danger, constantly menacing, there stood a permanent wall, protecting their prosperity; and that permanent wall was made of Polish noblemen's chests.

After centuries of continuous compulsory warring, which was almost exclusively done by noblemen, by volunteers, when exhausted Poland tried to recuperate, to recover strength, to re-organize herself; it was too late.

All the remarkable reforms inaugurated by our wonderfully gifted last king, Stanislaus Poniatowski, were practically introduced in spite of the Russian, Prussian and Austrian regular troops already occupying our territory. Nevertheless, within a few years, a complete, most humane, judicial reform took place. A perfect scholar system, with a ministry for public education, the first ministry of its kind in the whole civilized world, was established. A small permanent army, alas, much too late, was started. A gradual emancipation of peasants, an abolition of



serfdom, had begun. Some of these reforms preceded by twenty-five years the analogical reforms of the great French revolution. The majority of them were many years in advance of the neighboring countries, which naturally regarded them as a direct menace to their old-fashioned feudal institutions. All these reforms could but precipitate our downfall. The first partition occurred in 1772, shortly after these reforms had been introduced; the second and third partitions followed very closely our memorable constitution of 1791. Thus the greatest crime of modern history was perpetrated. Poland had fallen.

Official and officious historians of nations and governments, not precisely disinterested in the case, have been and still are writing profusely about Poland's inability to govern herself, about our dissensions, about our anarchy. This distinctly immoral work of poisoning public opinion has been done for so long, so thoroughly and so effectively, that even a few of our own writers, brought up in Poland, but in foreign language and in foreign spirit, adopted the monstrous idea that our country's downfall was solely due to the people's own fault.

Dissensions, anarchy, inability of governing ourselves! How do these things look in the

light of positive historical facts? Our Statute of Wislica, established in 1347, was chronologically the first complete code of Christian Europe. In 1413, Poland concluded a political union with Lithuania. This act of free union proclaiming for the first time in history the brotherhood of nations, this act of union confirmed by a document of sublime, almost evangelical beauty, this act of free union of two different races, which lasted undisturbed till the very end of our independence, is one of the most glorious achievements not only of Poland, but of humanity.

Already in the fifteenth century a self-governing country, Poland became, in 1573, a regular republic, with kings elected for life, as presidents. In 1430, consequently 259 years before the Habeas Corpus of England, and 359 years before the declaration of Human Rights in France, Poland established her famous law: "Neminem captivabimus, nisi iure victum.", which, translated into English, means, "Nobody should be detained unless legally convicted."

Our broad, liberal constitution of 1791 preceded by 57 years the constitution of Germany and of Austria, and by 114 years the so-called constitution of Russia. And all these momentous reforms, all these radical changes, unlike other countries, were accom-



plished without revolution, without any bloodshed, without the loss of one single human life; by unanimous vote, in a quiet, most peaceful, most dignified way. Does it prove our dissensions; does it prove our anarchy; does it prove our inability of governing ourselves?

Poland fell because her neighbors were greedy, unscrupulous and strong! Poland fell because she was generous, humane and weak! Poland fell, to tell you the truth, because she had no permanent army to defend her possessions. But, do not think that Poland fell alone! With the Polish republic fell also the honor of three monarchies. With our independence fell also the apathetic conscience of civilized Europe. They will not rise, they will not cleanse themselves, until our freedom is restored again.

For the greatest part of her history Poland has been either invaded or defending European frontiers. Considering such abnormal circumstances, it is really astonishing how intense, how important has been her intellectual and artistic life. Besides many great warriors, many distinguished statesmen, many brilliant orators, Poland produced scientists, mathematicians, musicians, artists, poets, authors, navigators, discoverers, philosophers, some of whom acquired

world wide fame. Our old University of Cracow, founded in 1364, before the University of Vienna, before that of Leipzig, 300 years before that of Berlin, and over 400 years before that of Petrograd, our old University of Cracow was already attracting, in the fifteenth century, a great many students from Germany, Hungary, Denmark, Sweden, and even from Italy. The great mathematician and astronomer, Albert Brudzewski, was the principal magnet of the celebrated academy; and our Nicholas Copernicus, the greatest astronomer of all times, was his most illustrious pupil.

There were many distinguished poets in old Poland, who expressed themselves in Latin or in the Polish language. Personally, I esteem that the most remarkable achievements of Poland's creative, versatile genius are to be found in her school of music in the 16th and in the 17th centuries. Composers were numerous, all marvelously gifted, some of them contemporaries of Palestrina not at all inferior to him. The compositions by Gorczycki, by Szamotulski, Gomolka, by Zielenski, are still to be classed among the masterpieces of sacred music of all times.

But the most amazing proof of the extraordinary vitality of our race is the revival of Polish literature, especially poetry, after the last war for independence in 1831. In



many countries, as history so graphically demonstrates, the highest development of literature, of poetry, of art, occurred when the climax of political and economical prosperity was reached. In modern Poland we see just the opposite. After a disastrous, crushing defeat of 1831, those who were not caught, executed, or sent to Siberia, fled in great numbers, thousands of them to the Western countries, mostly to France. And there, on strange soil, almost out of the ranks of defeated heroes, dozens of poets came forward, dozens of inspired poets arose, and raised their voices to sing the greatness and immortal glory of the fallen country, to express, in the language of unsurpassable beauty, their unshaken hope, their unwavering faith in a better future; to clamor desperately—to clamor not for a petty revenge, but for universal justice. Any nation could envy Poland for her poets. Mickiewicz stands alone. Krasinski and Slowacki are equal to any poet; inferior to none. Outside of Poland very few only know their master works. Those lofty thoughts, those mighty images, those prophetic visions, those pure and noble aspirations are cast into Polish words; and who would care now, who would take the trouble to learn the language of a country that has no army, no navy, no finance, no trade, no railways of her own? But it was given to a Polish poet to reveal

the genius of our race, to express in an accessible way our pain and joy, our doubt and faith, our loss and hope; it was given to a Polish poet to carry far into the wide world the immortal message of beauty from his mother country, to reach every land, almost every home, almost every heart. This poet was Chopin, and you know him well.

The vivid sources of the nation's genius, are far from drying up. In recent years Poland produced many gifted poets, remarkable scientists, distinguished, eminent historians, great novelists—the most illustrious of them being, of course, Henryk Sienkiewicz. We have admirable painters, most talented sculptors; we have celebrated singers; we have renowned musicians. Many a Polish woman distinguished herself in poetry, in art, in science, even on the battlefield. The name of Madame Curie Sklodowska acquired universal fame. Everybody more or less acquainted with music in this country knows and admires Madame Sembrich. And, last but not least, let us not forget the great, incomparable artist, the beautiful and noble woman whose name is so closely associated with the history of dramatic art in America, who lived and died in this country, Madame Modjeska.

What is Poland now? At the present mo-



ment Poland is to a degree only a memory. It is a vast desert, an immense ruin, a colossal cemetery. Posen, the ancient, Danzig, the wealthy, Cracow, the beautiful, are still there. Warsaw, Lemberg, Lublin and Vilno, according to newspaper reports, have been but little damaged. Only precious works of art, most valuable documents, books and manuscripts, all the priceless proofs of our ancient, thousand years old culture, have been confiscated, as the operation is diplomatically called when it is performed by an overwhelming collective force.

Several large cities have been spared, preserved, for the comfort of our uninvited guests. But, on the tremendous battle front, extending from the Baltic Sea to the southern slopes of the Carpathian Mountains, the whole of Russian, almost the whole of Austrian, and even a portion of Prussian Poland, have been totally ruined. Three hundred towns, two thousand churches, twenty thousand villages are no more. An area equal in size to the states of Illinois, Pennsylvania, New York and Maine together has been laid waste. For, what could remain of a country where in many districts those huge armies of millions of men were moving continuously forwards and backwards for eighteen months? Eighteen months of continuous fighting; eighteen months of incessant danger; eighteen months

of uninterrupted anguish and pain, imposed upon an entirely innocent nation! Millions of homeless peasants, of unemployed workmen, of humble Jewish shopkeepers, have been driven into the open. Millions of bereaved parents, of breadless, helpless widows and orphans are still wandering about in the desolated land, hiding in woods or in hollows, happy if they find an abandoned trench and in that trench, next to the body of a fallen fighter, some decaying remnants of soldier's food. Out of the armies of 2,500,000 men, 2,500,000 soldiers, native born, Polish speaking soldiers, 600,000 in Prussia, 600,000 in Austria, and 1,300,000 in Russia, of all these armies not one-fourth remains. Compelled to fight brother against brother, always in the first row, always falling the first, without profit and without glory, three-fourths of our youth, the nation's very hope and love, have been killed or wounded, and the fate of the remainder is already sealed. How many civilians, noncombatants, perished in this calamity, nobody could state precisely. The country, the granary of Europe, as it used to be called in ancient times, is totally wrecked. The material losses are far in excess of ten billion dollars. Millions of horses, millions of cattle have been taken or slaughtered. Two consecutive crops have been confiscated,—excuse me for



using that word again,—or burned. What is left for the people? *Not even the children—all the little ones under seven years of age are gone.* Several large districts already died out completely of cold, exposure, of hunger. Our entire nation is threatened with extinction through starvation. And, if the help does not come promptly, if the generosity of the only great people who could lend us assistance fails to respond, there will soon be nothing left, nothing but foreign warriors on Polish soil.

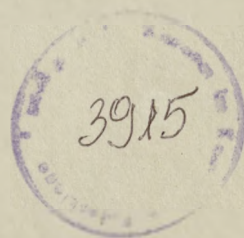
Those who were looking for some sensational statement, who expected me to make some drastic reports of cruelties, of atrocities, will be, of course, disappointed. I will accuse nobody; I will make no complaints against any of the belligerents. We have been treated according to the logic of war, which is in itself a cruelty, an atrocity nowadays multiplied by science.

I am performing a difficult, painful, even humiliating, but sacred duty. I am endeavoring to arouse some interest in the fate of my people, who in this war suffered most of all. Faithful to Poland's tradition, true to the spirit of our ancestors, I am not seeking assistance for those of my blood only or of my religion, but for all, without any distinction of race, of creed, or of opinion,

for all who are sharing in common my country's unspeakable misfortune.

My errand is not of hatred, but of love. I do not intend to excite passion but to awake compassion. If I have succeeded, pray speak about Poland to your kind, good friends. Tell them that far away from your prosperous, opulent, happy country there are great people in great poverty, in great need, suffering beyond the limits of human endurance. Tell them that these very people in the days of your need sent you Kosciuszko, offered you Pulaski, and not for the pleasure of fighting the English, but for the noble joy of contributing to the glorious conquest of human liberty. Some one may be convinced by your arguments, touched by your words, moved by your voice; some one may try to help us. God will bless him as he will bless you.









Sigm ZNP  
w Kalifornien 1991

DONATED BY ODA and  
DR. EDWARD C. ROJANSKI

ER





Address by I.J. Paderewski wydany w Nowym Jorku,  
1916 r., dar L. i E. Różańskich z Chicago dla Muzeum im.  
K. Pułaskiego w Warce