



**01.01.1905**

**Revolution in Russia and on Polish territory**

**T**he 1905-06 events on Polish territories are closely linked to the events in Russia. Fatigued with the obsolete system of governance, hard living conditions and the protracted yet unsuccessful war with Japan, Russian workers decided to show their discontent and demand reforms. On 9 (22) January 1905, a peaceful demonstration was staged in Petersburg. It attracted around 100,000 people who wanted to hand in a petition with their list of demands to the tsar. However, as he opted for the pacification of the protest using the army, around a thousand protesters died and the day was later named 'bloody Sunday.' The bloodshed led to protests and strikes in many Russian towns. In order to stop workers from protesting, Tsar Nicholas II promised the establishment of a Russian parliament, the State Duma. Intended as an advisory and not legislative body from the very start, the Duma awoke hope for further reforms and a system change. Pressed by successive workers' protests, the tsar indeed made further concessions and in May 1905 proclaimed a manifesto promising to grant Russian citizens 'immovable civil liberties' and the Duma some limited legislative powers. He also appointed Russia's first-ever prime minister Sergei Witte.



**F**urther unrest, strike actions and riots across Russian towns finally led to enhanced repression by the tsarist army, suppression of protests and liquidation of the Duma in June 1907. The protests by Russian workers motivated pro-independence milieus on Polish territories. Despite the already much visible differences between the circles of National Democracy and the PPS, it was considered that the Russian revolution should be used to fight for independence. In Warsaw, the PPS (Polish Socialist Party) declared a general strike, enthusiastically supported by school youth. The demands included Polish-language education, use of Polish in offices as well as the establishment of associations and trade unions. Workers staged mass protests in Łódź, brutally put down by military and police forces. In Warsaw, a PPS member worker Stefan Okrzeja assaulted a Russian police post for which he was convicted and executed.



**A**s the tsar was making concessions in Russia, he also announced a Duma election in Poland, as well as allowing the establishment of private Polish schools, yet soon the Russian authorities intensified acts of repression for the protests and strikes. Martial law was introduced in the Kingdom of Poland. The two principal political parties reacted differently yet again: the PPS called for total boycott of the Russian authorities and armed action against the partitioning powers, while National Democracy sought to win concessions from the tsar by means of

..... negotiations and talks. The ND put its candidates into the Duma and then set up  
..... a Polish Circle in the parliament. In Łódź, there were even open skirmishes  
..... between supporters of both parties, yet neither reached the intended goal. The  
..... tsar did not plan to grant autonomy to the Poles and his concessions served only  
..... to calm down the situation and extinguish the strikes.

**A**lthough defeated, the revolution on Polish territories did bring some notable changes in the lives of the Poles. Polish schools and cultural associations were allowed, actively promoted by the Polish Educational Society. The Society for Educational Courses offering university-level education became legal. Also permitted were trade unions, keenly set up by the now-legal political parties based on the workers' movement: the PPS and the SDKPiL (Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania). Also Polish orphanages and libraries appeared.

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**References:**

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