

# ARDUOUS ROAD TO STATEHOOD AT THE END OF IMPERIAL RULE

## THE CASE OF POLAND: SACRIFICE - COOPERATION - TRADITION

### NATIONAL ENSLAVEMENT - 123 YEARS OF PARTITION AS A TEST OF PATRIOTISM AND DEVOTION TO THE HOMELAND

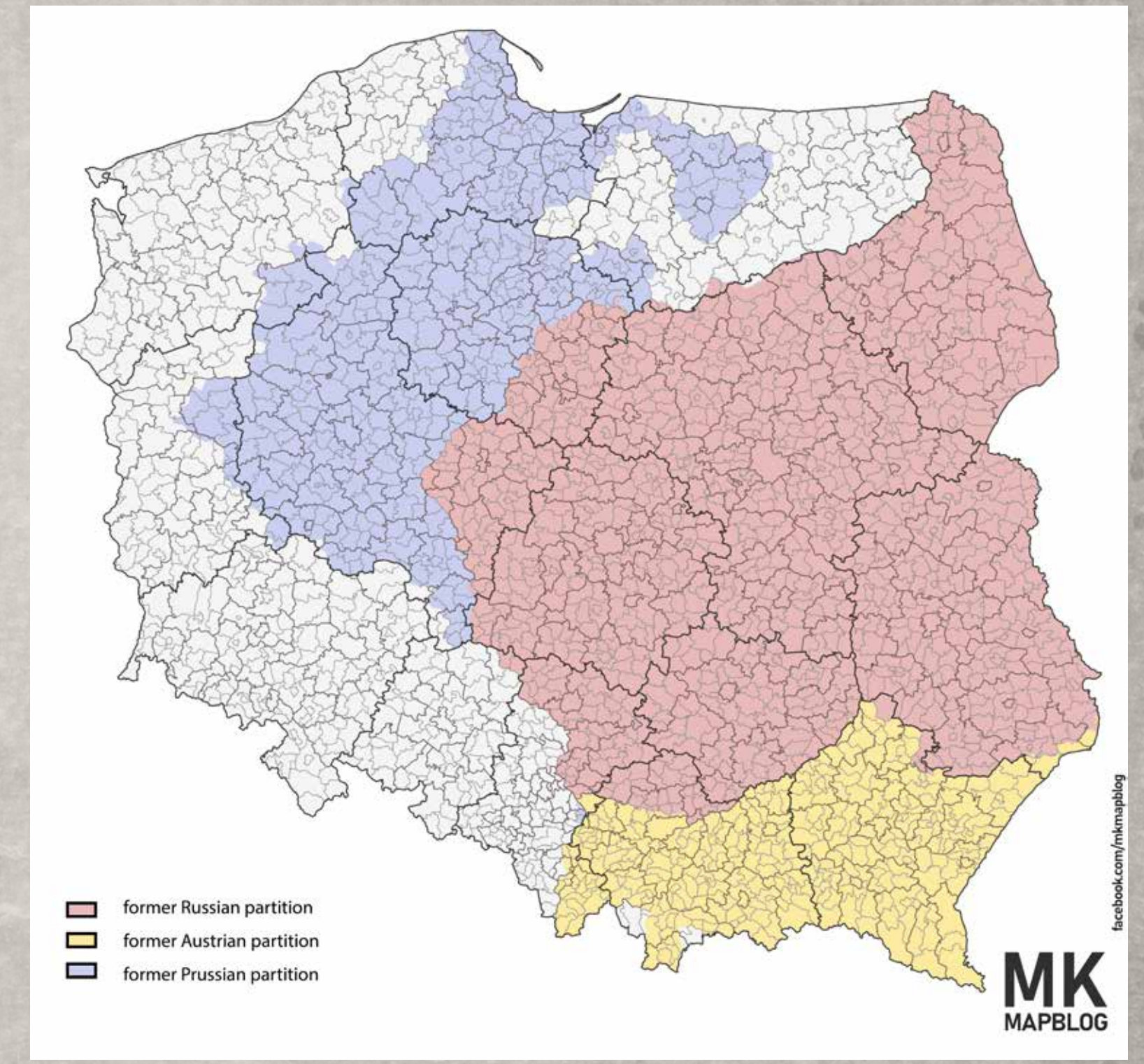
The progressive decay of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from the mid-17th century - under the influence of the selfish interests of a narrow aristocratic stratum and endless wars with neighboring states - led to the decline of Poland's importance on the international stage in the 18th century. Taking advantage of such a state of affairs in the three partitions, the Republic's neighbors - Prussia, Austria and Russia - divided its territory between them, with the result that the Polish nation was deprived of its own statehood for 123 years. Poles, however, did not reconcile themselves to the situation and, in the first place, undertook an armed struggle to regain independence - the November, Krakow and January uprisings broke out. The defeats of these insurrections led to bloody repression by the partitioners, who deprived captured insurgents of their property and dignity, forcibly conscripted them into the partitioning armies, locked them up in prisons, sentenced them to death or deportation to penal camps in distant Siberia. And the civilian population was subjected to intensive actions aimed at destroying Polish culture and replacing it with Germanic (in the Prussian partition) or Russian (in the Russian partition) culture. However, these actions, too, provoked resistance, exemplified by the attitude of the children of Września, who defended the Polish language, or the peasant Michał Drzymała, who opposed the partitioners' seizure of his ancestral land.



Map of the partitions of the First Republic carried out in 1772-1795 by three neighboring powers: Russia, Prussia (Germany) and Austria



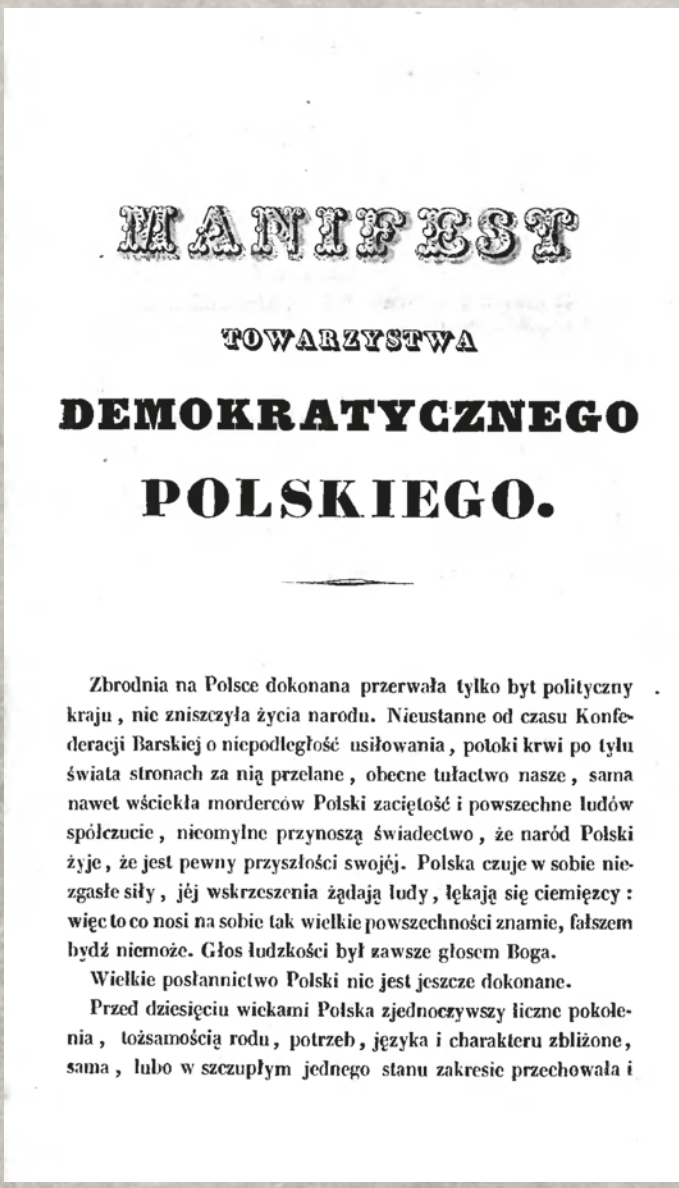
The allegory of the partition of Poland by three neighboring powers: Russia, Prussia (Germany) and Austria



Map of the partitions against the background of the borders of today's Poland

Passerby, tell your fellow soldiers  
That we fought valiantly and died without trepidation  
But with concern in our hearts for the fate of Poland,  
The fate of future generations - for your fate.

plaque in honor of Polish insurgents killed in 1831 during a battle with the army of the Russian partitioner



'Prussian deportations' - the unlawful expulsion of Poles from their ancestral land by the German partitioners



The wagon of Michał Drzymała - a Pole who, living in a wagon, passively resisted the Prussian ban on Polish people building houses in the German annexed territories



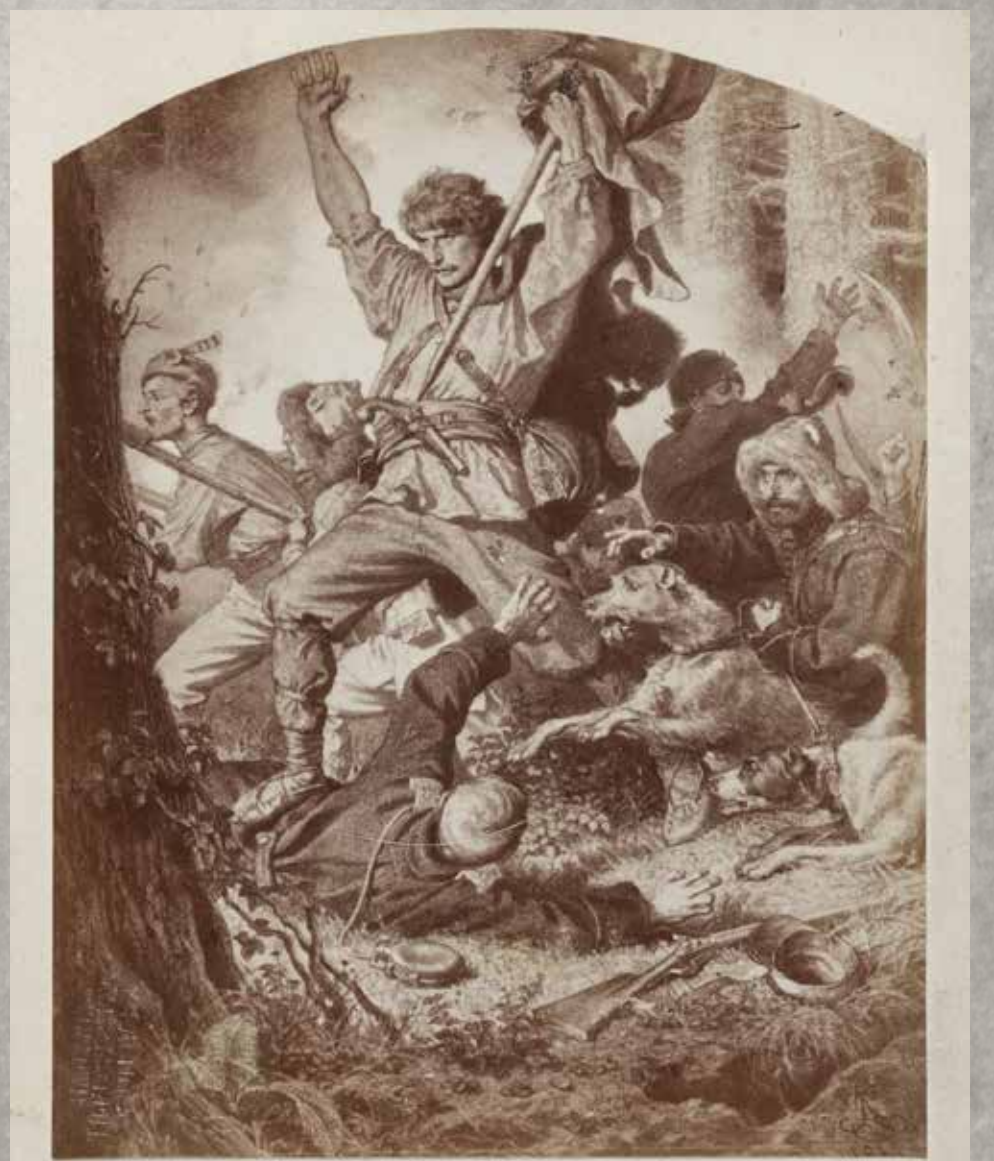
Polish insurgents, sentenced by the Russian partitioners, on their way to prison camps in remote Siberia



Obverse and reverse of the Russian ruble - money imposed by the partitioners on Polish lands around 1910.

[...] there were quite a number of people who lacked money and acquaintances, and they had to cover very considerable sections of this nightmarish journey [to the Siberian camps] by 'walking stage.' One had to leave one of the disgusting stage [stopover] dormitories before dawn and, disregarding the weather, walk all day to reach the next one [...]

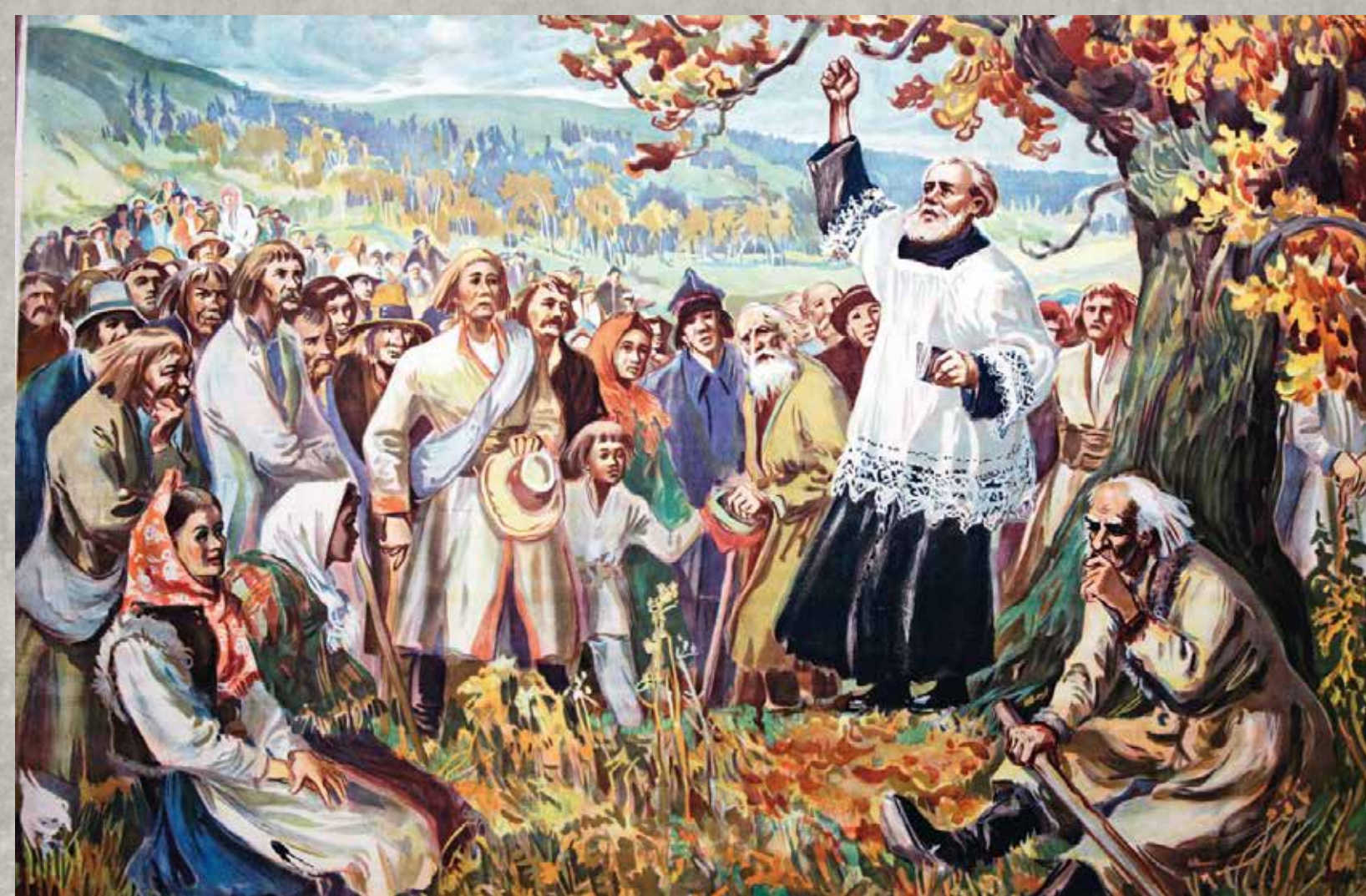
excerpt from the memoirs of a Pole - a January insurgent sentenced to deportation to Siberia



'Battle' - allegory of the deaths of Poles fighting the invaders during the January Uprising organized in 1863-1864



Members of the insurgent, anti-Russian National Government executed by the partitioners on August 5, 1864



Fr. Piotr Ściegienny - an independence activist, active in the 1840s in the Russian partition and imprisoned for his operations in the Citadel - a famous prison erected in Warsaw by the Russians as a place of execution for Polish patriots

Citadel!!! How many cruel memories this word awakens in the heart of a Pole, how much it painful echoes in the soul of a Varsovian. (...) Citadel!... Thousands of victims moved through its castle-like gates, (...) No moan, no cries of despair, but full of them was all of Warsaw, all of Poland, listening with ears The whole of Warsaw, all of Poland, listening with ears of the soul, longing to those insensible walls, behind which her best sons suffered and died. Warsaw Citadel. Images and Memories, Warsaw 1916

