

ARDUOUS ROAD TO STATEHOOD AT THE END OF IMPERIAL RULE

SACRIFICE COOPERATION TRADITION

INDEPENDENCE INSTITUTIONS AND FATHERS OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC

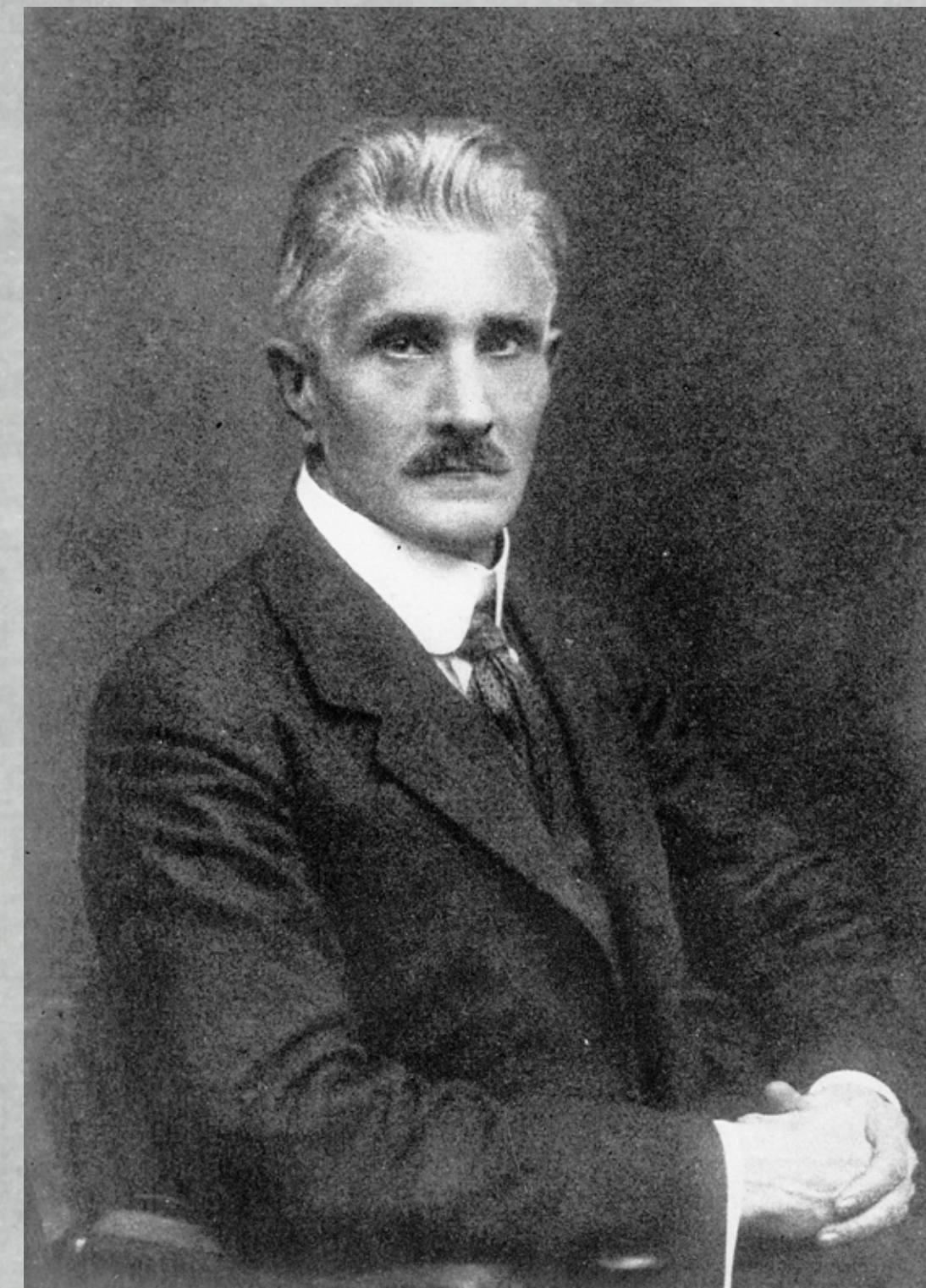
The World War I, which lasted four years, increasingly weakened the partitioners, which gave Polish politicians from different partitions the opportunity to create governmental institutions that would speed up the organization of the functioning of the reborn Homeland in the future. However, it was not until the end of hostilities in 1918 that the Republic officially reappeared on the map of Europe. At that time, the various local authorities subordinated themselves to the overarching Regency Council in Warsaw, which (in view of the country's still uncertain military situation) in November 1918 transferred all power to the Chief of State - Józef Piłsudski. He appointed the first government, and already in January 1919 parliamentary elections were held in the reborn Republic. Six men - statesmen, military men, politicians, diplomats, social activists, who are considered the Polish Fathers of Independence - were instrumental in bringing about these coveted events. They differed in almost everything, from their views through religion, origin, the partitioned country in which they grew up, the institutions to which they belonged, to their vision of the future Homeland. What united them, however, was the belief that a nation oppressed for 123 years was still strong enough to achieve and maintain its independence. In November 1918, Józef Piłsudski, Roman Dmowski, Ignacy Jan Paderewski, Wincenty Witos, Wojciech Korfanty and Ignacy Daszyński worked together for this legitimate goal.



Members of the Regency Council after taking the solemn oath



The March Constitution - the first basic law regulating the principles of a reborn Poland, passed in 1921



Ignacy Daszyński (1866-1936) - promoter of the idea of democracy and improvement of the situation of the working class



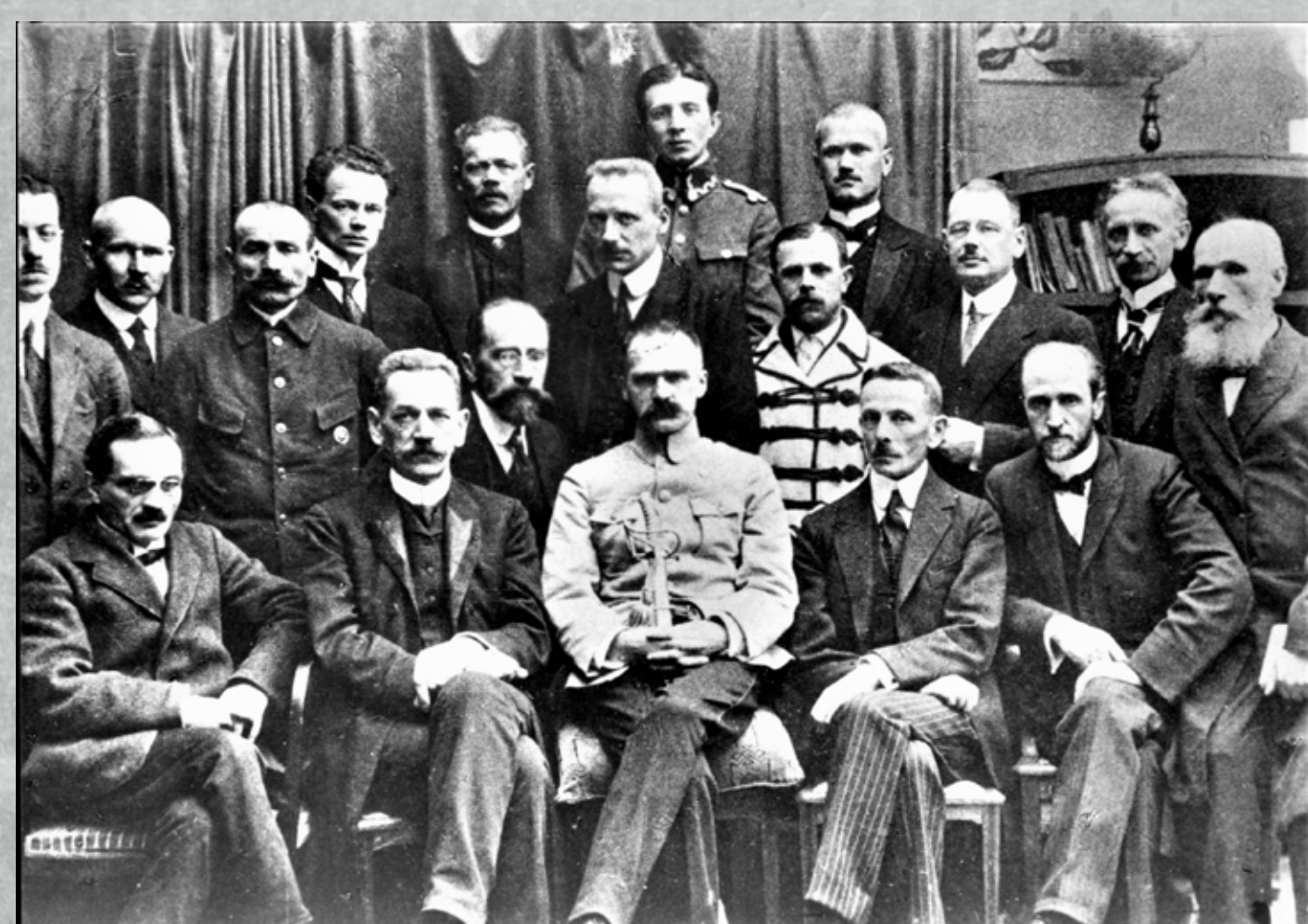
Wojciech Korfanty (1837-1939) - proponent of Christian values and guardian of the Polishness of the Germanized Silesian land

The great hour, for which the entire Polish nation has waited with longing, is already striking. Peace is approaching, and with it the realization of the Polish people's never-to-be-forgotten aspirations for complete independence. In this hour, the will of the Polish people is clear, firm and unanimous. Feeling this will and grounding this call on it, we stand on the foundation of the general principles of peace, proclaimed by the President of the United States and now accepted by the whole world as the basis for arranging a new coexistence of nations. With regard to Poland, these principles lead to the creation of an independent state, encompassing all Polish lands with access to the sea, with political and economic independence, as well as territorial inviolability, which will be guaranteed by international treaties. [...] POLES! Our fate is now largely in our hands. Let us prove ourselves worthy of those mighty hopes that our fathers nourished for a century amidst oppression and misery. Let all that may divide us mutually fall silent, and let one great voice resound: Poland united, independent!

Manifesto to the Polish Nation of the Regency Council - the first government of the Republic, reborn at the end of World War I, October 7, 1918

He who exterminates nations is as if he ripped the strings from the harp of the world. What good is it for anyone to have a harp with only one string? It is not to exterminate, but to develop nations. And they can be developed by freedom, independence and respect for their distinctiveness.

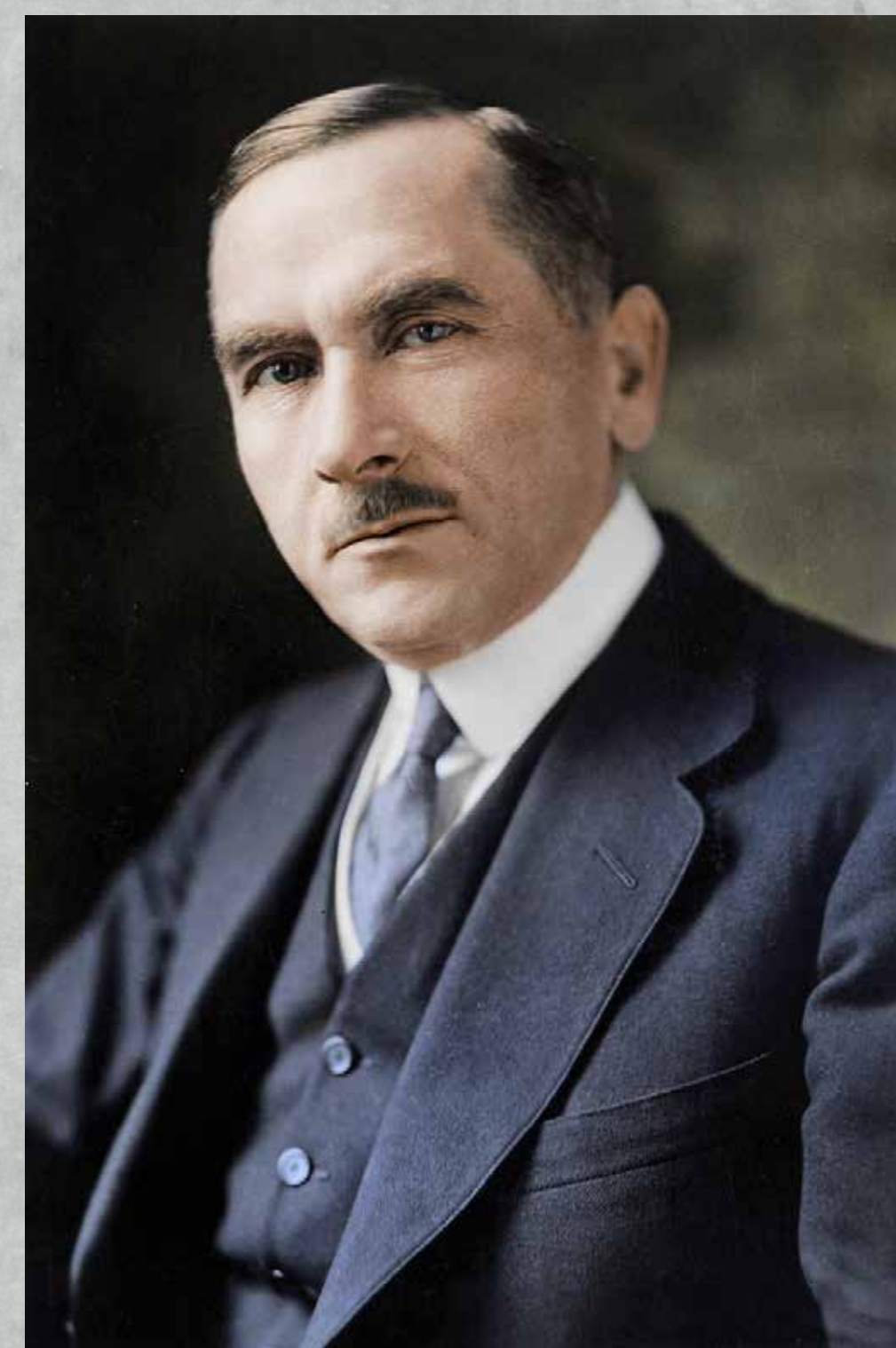
Ignacy Daszyński



First government of the Second Polish Republic headed by Prime Minister Jędrzej Moraczewski



Inaugural meeting of the Parliament of the reborn Second Republic, February 10, 1919



Roman Dmowski (1864-1939) - proponent of defending pre-partition Polish traditions



Józef Piłsudski (1867-1935) - Chief of State, socialist, representative of the party supporting social reforms and workers' rights

We are different, we come from different parts of Poland, we have different interests, but we are united by one goal. This goal is the Homeland, for which we want to live and work.

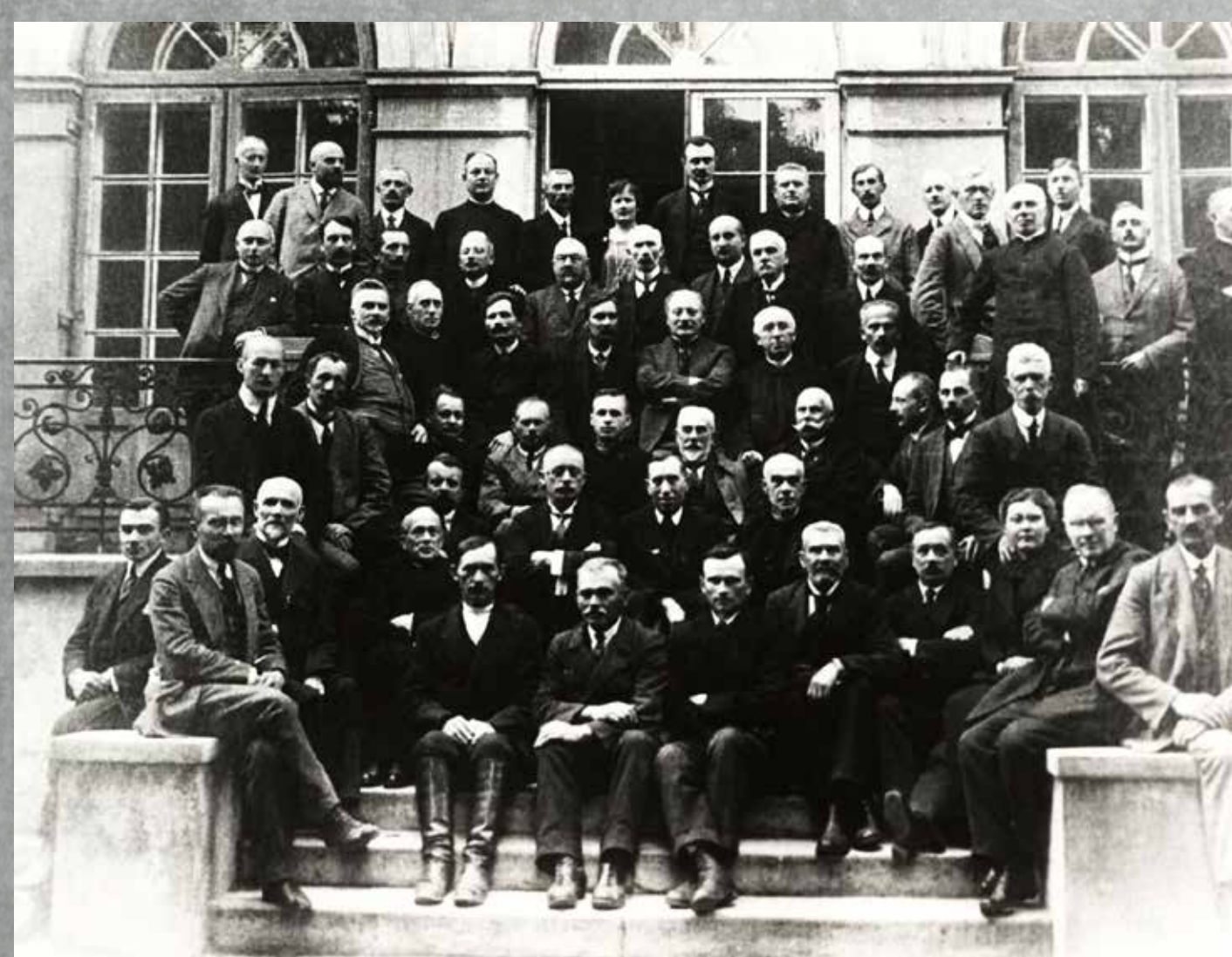
Roman Dmowski

Your Majesties, we do not want an inch of German land. We demand only, in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 13 of [U.S. President] Wilson's program, a Poland of our own, one, composed of the lands of the three partitions, with guaranteed access to the sea, that is, with its own coast, inhabited by an undeniably Polish population. [...] we do not want a single German county, but demand Polish counties of Upper Silesia, Middle Silesia, Poznań, Polish West Prussia and Polish counties of East Prussia.

Wojciech Korfanty, speech in the Reichstag, October 25, 1918.

You have to save the Homeland, you have to give it all - property, blood and life, because this sacrifice will pay off a hundredfold when we save the country from enslavement and disgrace.

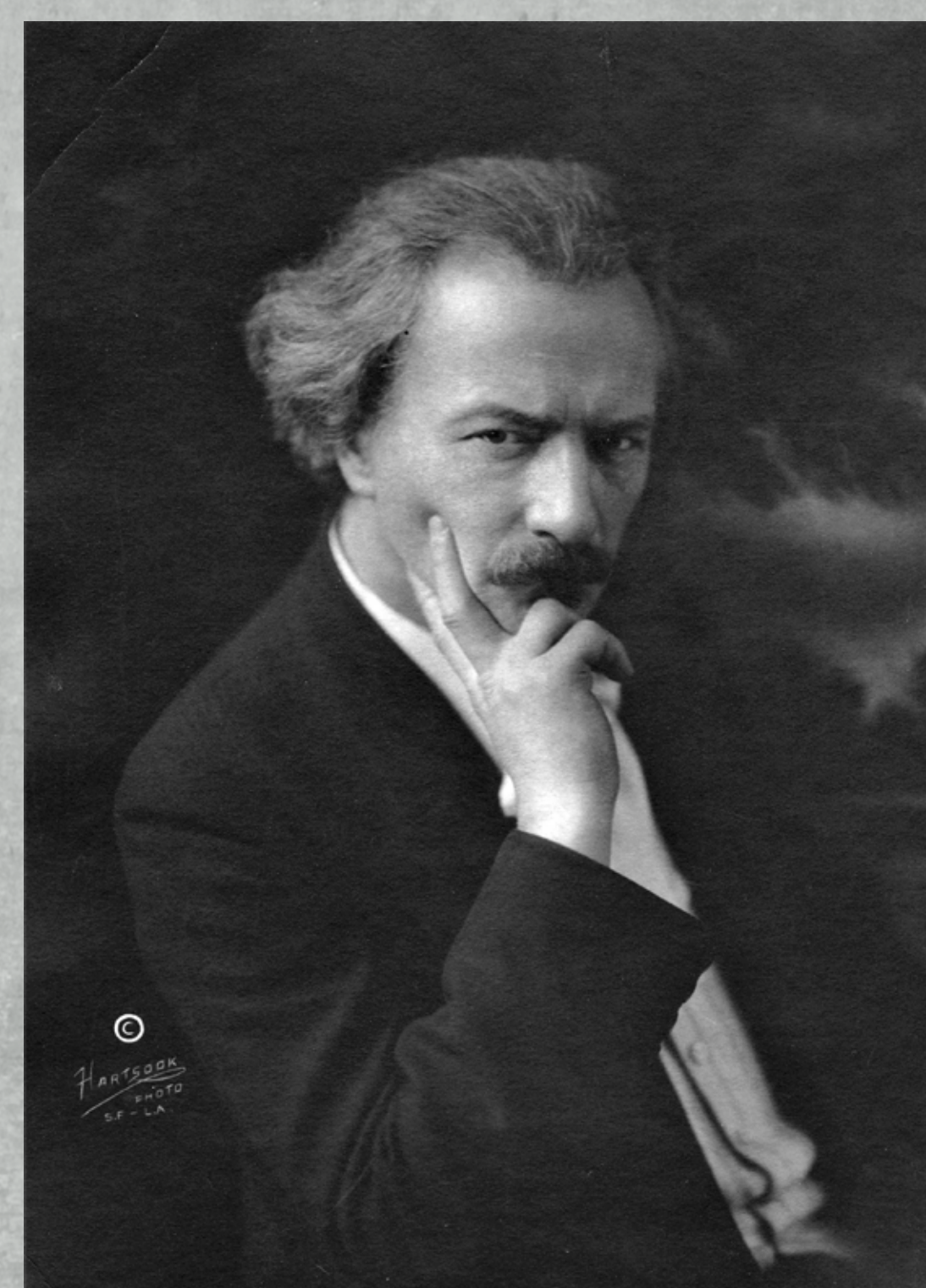
Wincenty Witos



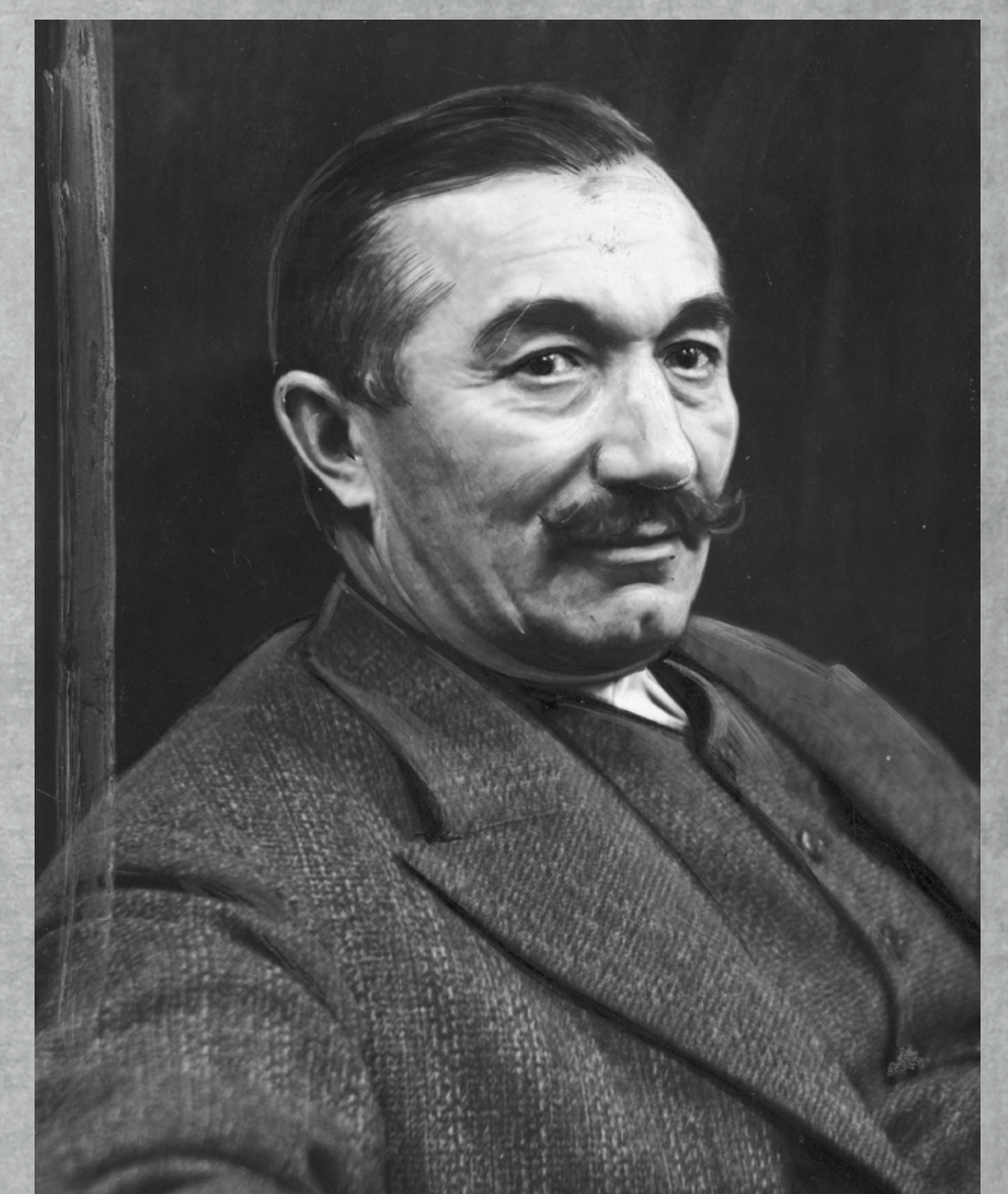
Deputies from the People's National Union, circa 1919



Deputies from the Union of Polish Socialist Deputies, 1919



Ignacy Jan Paderewski (1860-1941) - world-famous pianist and diplomat who promoted Poland's independence on the international arena



Wincenty Witos (1874-1945) - activist of the people's movement and defender of the rights of rural residents

