

Independence Day: Myth, Symbol, and the Creation of Modern Poland

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Published: 2012

Publisher: OUP Oxford

ISBN: 9780199658817

The 11th of November 1918, Polish Independence Day, is a curious anniversary whose commemoration has been only intermittently observed in the last century. In fact, the day -- and the several symbols that rightly or wrongly have become associated with it -- has a rather convoluted history, filled with tradition and myth, which deserves attention. Independence Day is more than just the history of a day, or the evolution of its celebration, but an explanation of what meaning has come to be associated with that date. It offers a re-reading of Polish history, not by a series of dates, but through a series of symbols whose combination allows the Poles to understand who they are by what they have been. Its focus is on the era 1914-2008, and the central actor is the charismatic Jozef Pilsudski. He came to represent a disposition regarding the meaning of Polish history which eventually penetrated virtually all of modern Polish society. The work is constructed by the analysis of memoirs, documents, coins, stamps, films, maps, monuments, and many other features making it a multi-disciplinary and multi-dimensional volume.

