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## ***The making of a Global Man:***

### **Who and what was Bronisław Piłsudski?**

#### **Witold Kowalski**

*Motto: He embraced the mores and customs of the Ainu so much that he found the mother for his children among them.*

On 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1906, when 39-year-old Bronisław Piłsudski was leaving the Yokohama port on a ship bound for Seattle in the USA, he was reflecting on the impressive knowledge the Japanese had about the country he identified himself with – the non-existing Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth which over a hundred years earlier was forcibly divided by her imperial neighbours and for 123 years altogether disappeared from the face of the Earth. Apparently, in 1906 Japanese schoolchildren were being taught about Poland as an example of what happens to a nation that cannot or would not defend itself against outside aggression.

Poland's lost statehood was the reference point of Bronisław Piłsudski's dreams and aspirations – as a young man he spoke Polish at home and his imagination was steeped in the glory of Poland's past achievements. But throughout his lifetime anyone who would like to describe himself as Polish was forced to accept German (Prussian or Austrian) or Russian citizenship. Bronisław's parents were both born in Samogitia, a province of Lithuania, which at the time of their birth was incorporated into the Russian Empire. The situation of their own parents in turn, was very much the same. Thus, if we were to view Piłsudski's nationality through today's, bureaucratically-set standards, both Bronisław himself as well as his close ancestors would be classified as Russian subjects, with some rider on the side noting that originally they came from a minority ethnic group.

In 1918, only a few months after Bronisław Piłsudski's death, the Polish state was re-born. Surely, Poland would quickly re-claim Bronisław as one of her own and view him as *an exemplary Polish patriot?* – No, this is not what happened. Ever since the re-birth of Polish nationhood, Bronisław Piłsudski has been a forgotten and marginalised figure. Today's Poland is a country where bureaucracy and the "least-effort principle" determines who is worthy of being preserved in the official nation's memory bank. And while he is (and has been – for over a century now) quite well known and respected in the world at large, inside the country the state is paying but a lip service to Bronisław – while the recognition of his surname is universal, his Christian name is known but to a handful of enthusiasts who fight to keep his memory afloat. Of his achievements people know nowt, nothing – it would take a very skilled, persistent (and above all – lucky) researcher to come across a passer-by in a busy street in Poland's capital, Warsaw, who would at all have heard about Bronisław Piłsudski.

This is a sad state of affairs and it bears an even sadder postscript: in today's formalised way that assigns a man to this nationality or another, Bronisław Piłsudski would not (owing to his parents and grandparents being Russian subjects) be granted Polish citizenship. So, perhaps, he would have a better claim to having been *a Russian*



*citizen, then?* – well, not quite, either. Yes, he did spend his youth within the borders of the Russian Empire but before Bronisław Piłsudski could reach the age of formally recognised maturity, he was imprisoned, sentenced to death and stripped of citizen's rights, even though, being underage, he was too young to claim these rights (or to be sentenced to death, for that matter). Granted, later on in his life, after many years of *katorga*, some of those lost citizen's rights were restored (he reached the status of a "peasant") but severe restrictions, regarding his freedom of movement and the area he was allowed to settle in, remained in place. By the time, the Russian Empire decided, for the first time ever, to bestow full citizenship on Piłsudski, he was already gone – in December 1905 Piłsudski travelled out of Russia for the last time. His formal connection with Russia, as an imperial subject, came to an end and he never crossed the Russian border back again.

Today, Russian attempts to reclaim Bronisław Piłsudski as one of their own have already begun in earnest. Only a few years ago one post-Soviet author described him as "vidnyi russkii uchenyi", i.e. *a known Russian scholar!* Such assessment would seem absurd to Bronisław himself, yet in today's world such is the power of taxonomic thinking, that – if such description was entered for use on Wikipedia or similar -pedia, there would probably be very little anyone could do to change that. To put things in perspective: the present writer's mother was born in the ancient Volhynian city of Luck in the year 1911 – well over 30 years before World War II forcibly introduced Soviet rule into Volhynia. However, throughout her life in communist Poland (i.e. post 1945), my mother had an entry in her ID Card, indicating her place of birth as – USSR, the Soviet Union! No amount of protesting would cause the Polish officialdom to change the offending entry, so for all statistical and legal purposes my mother was classified as an ex-Soviet subject with all the whimsical, yet terrifying, claims the mighty Soviet state could make upon such people.

In the present writer's earlier paper "Noblesse Oblige" (Sawada, Kazuhiko & Koichi Inoue (eds.), *A Critical Biography of Bronisław Piłsudski* 1, Saitama 2010) Bronisław Piłsudski's various lines of descent are discussed, among them a number of historically validated lineages descending from the founder of Ruthenian statehood – Ruryk. In popular belief such families commonly feature as "Russian" and thus another misconception could be formed that Piłsudski was Russian, not only by profession ("scholar") but also by ancestry. Not so! Firstly, Ruryk came from Scandinavian (Varang/Vareg) stock and ruled in Kiev over Ruthenian people who, in all likelihood, had not been the ancestors of today's Russians. Secondly, in the 20 odd generations that separate Ruryk and Bronisław Piłsudski, many of Ruryk's descendants were quickly Lithuanised and later Polonised – and Bronisław's ancestors come from the two latter groups. In this context, Bronisław Piłsudski's descent from Vasil Dmitriyevich (died 1425) the cruel first tsar of all-Russia is immaterial – by the time the Cruel's blood reached Bronisław's veins it was well diluted thanks to its passage through numerous generations of somewhat less sadistically inclined ancestors.

As a teenager young Piłsudski was fiercely anti-Russian. As a pupil at a Wilno gymnasium he looked upon his Russian colleagues as a separate breed of people. There was no overt hostility in this approach, just a conviction that he was different from them. Wilno was at that time the seat of a provincial governor-general which meant most of Bronisław's Russian school colleagues were sons of imperial government officials and they often behaved as if they were living in a conquered country (which, sadly, reflected the true state of affairs). The local by-laws forbade pupils like Bronisław to speak their mother-tongue among themselves at school. This by-law was later extended further – pupils were forbidden to speak Polish even when walking with friends or relatives in the street. This meant that, outside home, Bronisław could not converse, for instance, with his female cousins, for most of them did not attend regular schools and for this reason did not learn Russian at all. Several months later, a further tightening of the regulations was introduced: pupils were forbidden to visit friends and relatives altogether and between themselves they could exchange visits only until 8 pm.

In his still unpublished *Diary*, 17-year-old Bronisław describes Russians as “a Mongolian-Muscovite nation” that would sooner or later meet a sticky end. He recalls that his schoolmaster would shout at his charges: *You stuff yourselves with Russian bread, enjoy all the rights of a Russian citizen and yet you do not wish to speak Russian?!?*

Quite obviously the schoolmaster thought that being forbidden to speak their mother-tongue was equivalent to full Russian citizenship. It is a sentiment similar to that expressed by the post-Soviet author mentioned above. Yet, eating local bread (not a crumb of which could, with any truthfulness, be said to have been “Russian”) did not bestow Bronisław with Russian citizenship any more than having his writings translated into Russian made him a candidate for the title of a “known Russian scholar”.

Just like that other “known Russian scholar” of antiquity – Petya Goras. In its dealings with the outside world, Russian culture can be quite greedy and it likes to claim the accomplishments of others as its own. The present author has been in touch with quite a knowledgeable historian in Moscow who had in all seriousness made claims that one of Bronisław’s Piłsudski cousins in St. Petersburg was the original (Russian) inventor of the wireless! In the Soviet times, there was a joke going around in Moscow: Question: – *Who was the first vidnyi russkii uchenyi ever?* Answer: – *Petya Goras, of course!* (otherwise known as Pitagoras, the famous Greek philosopher of antiquity).

Once young Bronisław had learnt to distinguish between the ordinary people and the imperial structure webbing over them, his attitude towards Russians changed considerably. Already by the time he entered the St. Petersburg University in 1886, his (increasingly revolutionary, it has to be said) ideas had more to do with the welfare of ordinary Russians than with, say, restoration of Polish statehood (which was Bronisław’s earlier dream). In later years, during his time in Sakhalin or Vladivostok, he freely befriended many of his Russian fellow-sufferers. Even after he returned to Europe in 1906, Bronisław considered returning to Russia if a suitable research post to him was offered to him by the authorities. From his correspondence we know that before World War I such a post was indeed being prepared for him. One of the reasons he would not take up the offer was his lack of an official travel document, a (Russian) passport which he claimed to have lost during the passage from the USA to Europe in 1906.

But there were other reasons too. In general, his attitude towards tsarist officialdom reflected the age-old divide between the Polish and Russian way of life – whilst the latter were (historically speaking) prepared to accept as ruler any crazy tyrant like Vasyl the Cruel or Ivan the Terrible, Poles would not suffer even the slightest strengthening of central, kingly authority. This divide (which possibly started with voluntary detachment from the proto-Polish people of two tribes that about eleven hundred years ago moved east and established a new principality within the basin of the Oka River, which includes, *inter alia*, the river called Moscow) is the most fundamental issue that has always divided Polish and Russian understanding of what nationhood is all about. This divide still persists to this day. In his mature years Bronisław Piłsudski might not have stayed the uncompromising Polish patriot he was in his teenage years but this shift away from naïve nationalism could not, in any way, be interpreted as making him a Muscovite, or even a Muscovite “scholar”.

So, if he could not be said to have been Polish or Russian, *was perhaps Bronisław Piłsudski German?* This question is not as improbable as it seems. In my *Noblesse Oblige* I have indicated the numerous linages that brought German blood into Piłsudski veins. Indeed, over the past millennia there must have been hundreds of Bronisław’s ancestors who believed themselves to be German. We say he carried their “blood” but what we mean by that is not just genes but also the customs, the beliefs, the attitudes towards the order of things or towards other nations (like Poles, Russians or Lithuanians to name but a few). The closer a German family connection was to Bronisław’s lifetime the stronger the influence of Germanic mores on him would be.

It is known that Piłsudski descends from at least three different purely German families which intermarried with his Piłsudski or Billewicz ancestors at regular intervals during the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>

century. Then a positive deluge of German genes attacked them in about 1830 when two Butler sisters married into the Piłsudski clan. One of the sisters – Teodora, was to become Bronisław father's mother. The other – Elżbieta (Elizabeth), married Wojciech Michałowski of Suginty and in due course revealed herself as Bronisław's great-grandmother on his mother's side. Wojciech and Elżbieta had an only child – Helena, married to Antoni Billewicz. Helena died very young in 1846, of causes unknown, when her only child, Maria (Bronisław's mother) was 3 years old.

Butlers are a pan-European family, with strands residing in different countries like Ireland, England, Saxony (Germany), Kurland and Poland. Bronisław's ancestral Butler strand came to Lithuania via Livonia and (possibly) Saxony before that. There is little doubt that for most of their recorded history the Butler outlook on life was German and so was the language spoken at home. When, at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Wincenty Piłsudski went to court to claim an inheritance left by his late uncle, Benedict Butler, it transpired from documents produced at the trial that the deceased was a Lieutenant General in the Kurland army, married to a sister of that country's Chancellor. The official language in Kurland was German and so were the laws and customs of that country. Of course, by the time they joined their fate with Bronisław's family, the Butlers were being more and more integrated into the neighbouring society and eventually they would assume what is termed in German *die Polnische Wirtschaft* as their own.

Young Bronisław's *Diary* shows the extent of the Butler influence over his family life. In Wilno, Bronisław's household had almost daily visits from Granny Piłsudska or Granny Michałowska (actually – Bronisław's Great-Grandmother), Granddad Butler or Granny Billewicz. Let not their different surnames deceive you – in reality all four aforementioned relatives were siblings, born Butler (to make matters a little bit more complicated their mother was a Billewicz, though). Two further of those Butler siblings (there were 16 of them altogether!) lived in the countryside not far away from Wilno and they would stay in the Piłsudski apartment during their visits. As a teenager, Bronisław was if not in daily then in weekly or monthly contact with some 40 odd relatives, the great majority of whom (be it on his father's or his mother's side) were interrelated through the Butler connection.

The Piłsudski's Wilno apartment was the biggest of all, so most of the relatives would tend to meet in their drawing room. After each visit Bronisław would have to chaperone this or another granny home where in turn he would be invited in, to spend another half hour sipping tea and listening to her gossip and admonishments. He tried to catch up on some sleep during these tea parties but to no avail – the pages of his *Diary* abound with his assorted grandmothers' "good advice". However much he might have disliked this advice (as teenagers all over the world tend to do if it comes from people much older than themselves), these frequent contacts must have had a profound impact on young Bronisław's life.

The Butler connection was very influential in Bronisław's parents' life too. In several administrative districts of the Russian Empire, where the Piłsudski as well as the Butlers owned their land estates, a local by-law was wickedly put in place, designated to cripple the economic power of Polish nobility. This by-law, known as the tsar's *Decree of 10<sup>th</sup> December 1865*, virtually prohibited Roman Catholic Christians from dealing on the property marketplace. In practice it meant that only line-inheritance of lands was allowed, whilst virtually no inherited land could be sold on the open market or parcelled off to small-scale buyers. When applied to Bronisław's family, the *Decree* only allowed them to own lands inherited along the Billewicz and the Butler lines. When, at the beginning of the 1880s, the Piłsudski family started experiencing cash-flow problems, the widowed Grandma Michałowska (died 1894) turned the ownership of her Suginty estate to Bronisław's mother, Maria. The estate covered an area of over 4 thousand hectares but the income it brought was not sufficient to cover the increasing costs of running the Piłsudski family.

But Bronisław's German connection does not end up with the Butler clan. When Bronisław came back to Europe in 1906 he took up residence in Kraków which was then the capital of Galicia – a

province of the Austrian Empire. Its ruler had used to bear the title of the Emperor of the Holy Empire of the German Nation and although most of the German states no longer answered to his call, it was nevertheless a German-run province where the chief official language was German and so was the administration and so were the laws of the land. After 1906, Piłsudski moved around the main cultural centres of Galicia – apart from Kraków it was Lwów and Zakopane. He also travelled extensively around Europe. In 1914, with the outbreak of World War I, Bronisław left Galicia for Switzerland. He carried an Austrian passport.

Did this passport make him an Austro-German? No more, we believe, than the previously-held Russian passport made him a Russian. Officialdom, however, has its own ways of classifying people and for all intents and purposes Bronisław was now no longer a Russian but an Austrian. Should anyone wish to check upon the names of Austrians living in Switzerland between 1914 and 1917 they are sure to come across Bronisław Piłsudski among the statistics.

But are we to believe such statistics? If not, if Bronisław Piłsudski could not with any (but bureaucratic) truthfulness be thought of as German, Russian or Polish – what was he then? *Maybe Bronisław Piłsudski was simply and plainly – Lithuanian?* After all, the province where he was born was called Lithuania; Wilno – the city of his youth – has been the capital of Lithuania since the time of its erection. His father would teach him that the Piłsudski clan descends from the early-mediaeval rulers of Lithuania... If only things were that simple! – Piłsudski family legends should be taken with a rather large pinch of salt; before 17<sup>th</sup> September 1939 very few Lithuanians lived in Wilno and while Bronisław's parents *knew* they were Lithuanian they *saw* themselves as Samogitians, i.e. coming just from a part of Lithuania which, in the Polish Commonwealth times, formed a separate Duchy. In the old days (15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century) there was the Grand Duchy of Lithuania which incorporated the lands that today belong to such countries as Poland, Ukraine, Latvia, Estonia, Belarus and the historically new state around Kowno and Wilno that is now called Lithuania. In the “old days” it was all different: there were no borders to begin with and there were “lands” (not countries) together making up Grand Lithuania, which in turn formed one big state with the Kingdom of Poland. Within this Commonwealth the Duchy of Samogitia had its own identity, its own administration and customs. Perhaps to “foreigners”, like Poles from the Crownlands, Bronisław's father would introduce himself as a “Lithuanian” (only, mind, to avoid tedious explanations), but in his own soul his stock was pure and simple – Samogitian.

Having been born in Zułów – a place far removed from Samogitia, sited on the cultural border dividing Lithuanians and White Russians (Byelorussians) Bronisław was possibly the first Piłsudski ever who did not see himself as Samogitian. But he did not see himself as Lithuanian, either. The Lithuanians were those who spoke their own (“*terribly difficult*” – Bronisław believed) language and belonged to a different social stratum. In his *Diary*, 17-year-old Bronisław notes that he asked one of his servants to teach him Lithuanian and made a vow to stay true to this wish.

Alas, he did not. But in seeing the necessity to learn the language spoken by the native population in at least a big part of his fatherland, Bronisław stepped into the shoes of his 16<sup>th</sup> century great...grandfather, Wojciech Billewicz, who was instrumental in printing the first ever book written in Lithuanian. Wojciech was a committed Christian Protestant and his faith required that its main tenets should be taught to believers in the vernacular, in Lithuanian.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century it was Wojciech Billewicz, and his father Jerzy, who used the link with the neighbouring East Prussia to bring the vernacular-written word to Wilno and beyond. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century it fell to their descendant, Bronisław Piłsudski, to use exactly the same route to move such books into his country. There was, however, one colossal difference: whereas his Billewicz forefathers did what they did freely and without hindrance, Bronisław had to smuggle these books across a well-guarded border between the two empires that in the meantime had devoured the Polish Commonwealth – Germany and Russia. In doing so Bronisław risked imprisonment, perhaps even

being exiled to Siberia, yet such was his adherence to the old family belief that social prestige can be enjoyed only after the fundamental needs of the local people had been addressed that he readily accepted these risks.

In arranging the smugglers' route (which run through his family estates not far away from the imperial border) Bronisław Piłsudski played the role of midwife to the fledgling Lithuanian nationalistic movement which eventually (some 40 odd years later) resulted in an independent state for Lithuanians. Bronisław himself did not desire the rising of an independent Lithuania disconnected from Poland, but he helped the nationalists out of deeply-felt conviction – he believed in a peoples' right to self-determination. The value of his co-operation with Lithuanian nationalists could be measured by the fact that around 1887, production of Lithuanian-language literature suddenly dried up and it took some considerable time for its supply to be restored. 1887 is the year Bronisław Piłsudski was arrested and forever removed from Lithuanian soil...

Speaking in considerable shorthand, the modern state of Lithuania has arisen from the first books published by the Billewicz and, later, from the books smuggled from East Prussia via the Billewicz lands now owned by Bronisław. One would have thought that the memory of Bronisław Piłsudski would today be if not venerated than at least acknowledged across the Lithuanian land. Well, as they say, that will be the day... Far from being venerated Bronisław Piłsudski is a non-person in Lithuania. His name is seldom mentioned there. In 1990, when the present author (ably aided by a handful of friendly Lithuanians) managed to produce a few factual articles promoting Bronisław in the Wilno press, the hope was that it would open a floodgate of interest to embrace the forgotten hero. In the event, the only thing that opened were the present author's arms.

In Switzerland, during the First World War Bronisław Piłsudski became a member of a Polish/Lithuanian Committee, designed to further mutual understanding (characteristically, Polish was the medium in which the two sides "understood" each other). Bronisław's was the soothing influence – he was the one that kept the dialogue going and would not allow emotions on either side to destroy it. And yet, although Bronisław Piłsudski was born of "indigenous" parents and within the borders of today's Lithuania, if he were to apply for a Lithuanian passport today, he would most likely not get it and the Wilno authorities would insist on petty chicanes like changing the spelling of his name. Why is the Lithuanian psyche still closed to the sound of the name "Piłsudski"? – We simply do not know. But we know the answer to another question: *Can we with any truthfulness claim that Bronisław Piłsudski was a Lithuanian?* – No, not in this world we can.

So, the puzzle remains unresolved: measured by the seemingly exacting standards that the contemporary state uses to categorise its populace, Bronisław Piłsudski eludes all efforts to classify him. He was not German, although at some stage in his life he travelled with an Austrian passport. He was born in Lithuania but did not identify with those who spoke the native language of his fatherland. The Lithuanians would reject him unless he changed his name and I suspect the Polish authorities would come up with exactly the same desire, although based on an entirely different set of principles. The Russians? – well, the Russians would be more than happy for him to wear their cap, re-issue him with a duplicate of his lost passport and make him a "*vidnyi uchenyi*", provided he stopped weaving his "*Polish intrigue*". Alas, as Russia has known since time immemorial, this "intrigue" is at the heart of Polish national identity and Poles will never give up "weaving" it. Thus, Bronisław's answer to those who wished to classify him as Russian (scholar or not) would have to be "No" – quite simply and despite the old Russian belief that "*kuritsa ne ptitsa, Pol'sha ne zagranitsa*" ("as much as a chicken is not a true bird, Poland is not an independent nation") the Russian taste for tyranny and the Polish desire for freedom cannot be reconciled.

## **The genial Piłsudski**

Between 1882 and 1885, from 15- to 19-years-old, Bronisław Piłsudski kept a *Diary*. This *Diary* is a priceless source of knowledge of his family life during that period. The *Diary* entries were written by a growing-up young man whose view of the world was changing almost daily; so the notes in the *Diary* differ a lot in length, topic and profundity of thought. All in all they paint a vivid picture of his inner thoughts and of complications surrounding his personal and family life. We have already relied on this *Diary* when discussing the exceptionally frequent intermingling (by today's standards, anyway) with his numerous relatives he enjoyed in his Wilno youth.

The *Diary* is such a rich source of profound knowledge regarding young Bronisław and the whole of his family circle that one cannot stop wondering as to why it has not yet been published. Specifically – why it has not been published in Poland, since Polish is the language in which the *Diary* was written? Ten years ago in the ancient Polish city of Kraków, the present author had the honour to unveil a commemorative bronze relief dedicated to Bronisław Piłsudski. At a scholarly seminar that followed the ceremony, he made a plea to the powers that be, that the *Diary* be made available in print without further delay. Well, that was ten years ago, and we are still awaiting the officialdom's response; the time has come to pose the question: is the present state of Poland ready to acknowledge Bronisław Piłsudski or to just continue pussyfooting around him? Just like the Lithuanians do.

Luckily, Poland was not the only country where the present author tried to publicise the existence of Bronisław Piłsudski's *Diary*. In 1990s he sent the entire photocopied text of the *Diary* to the Sakhalin institute devoted to the preservation of Piłsudski's memory and work. As a result the first part of the *Diary* (Year 1882) was published in Russian, accompanied by the present author's editorial comments (see: *Izvestiya Instituta naslediya Bronislava Piłsudskogo*, No. 3, Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk 1999). The recent years have seen further extracts from the *Diary* being translated and published in Russian. True to her undiminished appetite, Russia, it seems, is making a strong and sustained bid to claim Bronisław Piłsudski for herself.

As we have learned above, no amount of superficial analysis moving along crude classification lines so loved by today's bureaucrats would allow us to make a fully learned judgment as to Bronisław Piłsudski's real nationality, class status, citizenship, political adherence or professional standing. He was simply not the kind of man that would easily succumb to such classifications. Therefore, let us give up this futile attempt at categorizing and look upon him from another point of view, much closer to his real persona. Let's look at him in terms of his genetic make-up, with special attention to his family circumstances. And such information can readily be gained (or perhaps deduced) from the pages of the *Diary*.

As we have hinted at it already, Bronisław's parents – Józef Piłsudski and Maria Billewicz – were very closely related to each other. Their main line of connection was provided by the two Butler sisters and the sisters' mother, Małgorzata Billewicz. But it did not end there, as Józef Piłsudski's paternal grandmother was also a Billewicz, Anna. In plain words, Bronisław's parents entered a somewhat incestuous marriage. Most world societies strongly disapprove of such close liaisons. So did the Roman Catholic Church for most of its history, but in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Lithuania due to anti-Catholic fiscal and economic measures enforced by the (Christian) Orthodox tsarist regime, nearly-incestuous marriages were quite common and approved by Roman ecclesiastical authorities, as they provided Catholic nobility with a degree of legal protection against expropriation by the Russian regime (this matter is discussed in some more detail in my *Price of Conscience*, Saitama 2009).

The widespread disapproval with which humankind treats inbreeding has arisen out of observable facts – the resultant offspring is somewhat different from the norm. This universally accepted truth is today confirmed by science: in genetic terms close kinship between parents does bring some very important meanings to their offspring. Because the genetic pool from which such couples feed the



genes to their children is much smaller than usual and much more condensed, it very strongly exaggerates “good” as well as “bad” genetic combinations that might become dominant and be passed on to descendants. And it is these combinations that allow the person carrying them to succeed or to fail in life. “Good” genetic combinations may be nice to have but usually bring no positive effect to the person who carries them – if one was born into, say, a rat-catcher caste in India, it matters very little that one has been endowed by both parents with an exceptionally beautiful singing voice. Chances that such a “good” combination will bring its bearer a singing career are very, very small for very few people in India wish to hear a rat-catcher sing. “Bad” genetic combinations, however, matter a lot – if a parent is a carrier of a gene causing, say, deafness, his children may or may not be deaf. If, on the other hand, such a gene is carried by both parents their children will be deaf by genetic *fiat*. A deaf rat-catcher’s child may find coping with life altogether too much to bear.

In families where parents are closely related to each other the exaggerated effect this relationship has on their children is often over-emphasised while we tend to forget the adverse effect such pairing could also have on the parents themselves. The existence of Genetic Sexual Attraction (GSA, in short) is a phenomenon which was discovered only in recent decades (after observations made on siblings offered for adoption early in their lives and only getting in touch with each other again many years later, as adults). Without going into too much detail it can be said that the GSA principle suggests that a sizeable proportion of people carrying very similar genetic clusters (like those endowing close relatives, for instance) find each other immensely attractive and it is only the everyday pressure of the incest taboo that puts a check on such often subconsciously-felt desires towards. Where the taboo is slack, GSA pairings appear. Another side of the GSA phenomenon is the propensity of people forming such pairings to display not just similar but exactly the same responses to all sorts of situations that fate may throw at them. It is all very well when a pair of twins dress, speak or sing in exactly the same manner. However, it is a completely different matter when the same pair of twins is confronted with dangerous or disadvantageous situations and their spontaneous responses still remains in unison, whereas a discussion of options and a varied response would be a far more appropriate reaction. As a pair, Bronisław’s parents displayed both sides of this phenomenon – they succumbed to the GSA syndrome and they suffered from unison response to danger.

So, again – there is a reward, but, more importantly, there is a genetic price to pay for such closely-knit parenthood as Bronisław parents’. Using a very crude measure of “success” it could be claimed that out of their 12 children Bronisław, Józef and Jan (in 1930’s in Poland he was for a time Finance Minister, later Chairman of the Central Bank and later still Deputy Speaker of the Senate) turned out to be exceptional people, well endowed with genes to succeed. But some other Bronisław’s siblings were not so successful – two of his sisters and one of his brothers could be said to have been psychologically and sociologically disturbed and led very miserable, uncomfortable lives as a result. Another two siblings – the youngest twins, Teodora and Piotr, died in mysterious circumstances before they reached the age of three. Also – even the seemingly “successful” children had to lead hard and stressful lives, from the very beginning filled with nearly insurmountable obstacles; and we are not talking here about the usual random distribution of luck that accompanies every human fate but of genetically strengthened character features that often made life such a misery for Bronisław. Like for instance his (quite visible throughout Bronisław’s life) enormous propensity to “do something good for other people” (with the meaning of “good” undergoing frequent changes) – this feature of character Bronisław inherited from his father, with a possible “enforcing” contribution from his mother’s genes as well. People endowed with this feature are often colloquially described as having been “born with a propeller up their backside”. However, the (over-) drive to do something useful is at intervals intertwined with periods of complete inertia when a person does not seem able to take any action at all. Such periods of apathy can be quite dangerous not just to the bearer of this predisposition but also, and very specifically, to people who had entrusted the “do-gooder” with their livelihood – Bronisław’s

Ainu companion, Chuhsamma and their two children were the undoubted victims of his sinusoidal personality. Such behavioural patterns are often genetically-led and both his parents and Bronisław himself seem to have suffered from this “propeller predisposition” and the *up’n’down* reactions to stress.

Many instances of vicious mood-swings are recorded in Bronisław Piłsudski’s *Diary*. Alas, the *Diary* also reflects several vivid descriptions of the Genetic Sexual Attraction syndrome in action and this was one of the reasons, the *Diary* did not appear in print in the 1930s. But today, 130 odd years since it was written, surely the time has come for this immensely important historical document to be made available to the general public.

Now let’s turn our attention to the very special pair of Bronisław Piłsudski’s relatives – to his parents. In the spring of 1883 Bronisław’s parents were in their prime and it would take a brave soothsayer to foretell them an impending calamity. The mother, at 40, was the owner of several country estates (combined acreage over 15 thousand hectares) and had 12 children – the last two (twins) only a few months old. The father, 50, a man of wit and charm, composer of much admired small musical pieces, was a highly educated gentleman-farmer and general manager of his wife’s estates. Seemingly, nothing could stand across the path of the family’s stable and continued prosperity. Yet, it was exactly then that the disaster struck.

Firstly, Bronisław started having serious doubts as to whether the educational authorities in Wilno would let him advance to a higher school grade – without such a pass he would not be allowed to continue his education in the gymnasium or at university level. (Unbeknown to Bronisław, the local educational authority was planning to promote another gymnasium in Wilno; they wished to slim down pupil numbers at Bronisław’s school and simultaneously needed pupils to fill up the classrooms at the other establishment. Obviously, his school grades suffered as a result, helped to a great extent by teachers who looked to Polish, rather than Russian pupils to become the fodder they would feed into the system at the new school).

Secondly, the spring of 1883 brought another extension to his life – his interest in women had suddenly shot up. Bronisław’s head begun being preoccupied with thoughts of this or another girl he had met the day before and how with some cunning planning he could get a glance at her in the street that evening. He would often acknowledge the need to reserve more time for studies but his romantic, hormone-led interests were constantly gaining the upper hand.

Thirdly, at the same time, his overall family situation had taken a sudden turn for the worse. The anti-Catholic measures enforced by the tsar’s *1865 Decree* meant constant struggle to keep the cash flowing – and in 1883 the Piłsudski family started losing this battle; the banks would not lend them money anymore and demanded settlement of a loan installment; the prospect of enforced bankruptcy looked them in the eye. Simultaneously, the country estates which were run by a variety of administrators, master brewers, tenants and subtenants stopped bringing sufficient cash to support a household numbering not just the parents and their 12 children but also about a dozen domestic servants. Numerous court actions against dishonest administrators, with claims amounting to thousands of roubles, were in the pipeline but this did not bring in any money just yet. True, on some days, whole wagon trains would arrive from the nearest country estate at Zułów, bringing in supplies of meat, vegetables and other farm products. At such juncture, Bronisław’s mother had to send off large parcels of meat to various relatives and acquaintances (the doctor’s family would get the choicest cuts), so that it would not go bad (there were no proper fridges or freezers in those days, of course). This was a haphazard and barter-type economy; meat (whilst abundant) was not cash and it could not help the family pay-off their dues at the bank.

To make the matters worse, when things went wrong and the time came for some drastic decisions to be made (like firing the non-paying country-estate tenants, for instance) serious differences

appeared in what Bronisław's mother wanted and what his father thought was prudent to do. Amidst this quarrelling, their cash flow dried up to a trickle, Bronisław's further education future was left unresolved (the situation obviously begged for a well-placed bribe to be offered to a senior school administrator). In short – some pretty fundamental issues regarding their family wellbeing were amassing and awaited resolution.

It is not as if the impending disaster was the doing of Bronisław's parents (although in the *Diary* he firmly puts the blame on his father alone). As we have said earlier: the ill-famed *Decree of 10<sup>th</sup> December 1865* was construed in such a way as to stop Roman Catholic nobility from realizing full lending potential of their inherited lands whilst virtually precluding them from owning non-inherited lands. In practical terms this meant that from time to time Catholic landowners would experience, through the diabolical logic with which the *Decree* was construed, considerable cash-flow problems. Today, with credit on demand, virtual money, derivatives being traded all over the place and special measures designed to prevent unnecessary bankruptcies, it is difficult to imagine a family-run enterprise, where its market value exceeds many times over its borrowed debt, experiencing real cash-flow problems. In 1884, however, in a small part of Russia where Roman Catholics held the land, a cash-flow bottleneck meant that the Piłsudski family enterprise was faced with one alternative only: pay up or go bankrupt.

The way Bronisław's parents reacted against the calamitous web of catastrophes that had befallen them was quite astonishing: the two not too old, hitherto strong and healthy people had both simultaneously developed a mysterious and very painful leg complaint which caused them to sigh with pain and stay in bed – more or less around the clock. Bronisław's *Diary* does not specify which leg (left or right) or which part of a leg it was that developed pain in each of his parents, nevertheless it paints a most astonishing and sad picture: for months on end his father and his mother would stay day and night in bed, seemingly in constant leg-pain, unable to concentrate their minds on important family matters. They were being attended by servants, elder children and up to three different doctors. From time to time one of the parents would take a “medicinal” bath, assisted by up to three helpers who would carry him or her in and out of the tub. The parents would not leave their beds even for hygienic reasons; when they wished to speak to Bronisław, he would be called to their side. Whether the parents conferred at all with each other is difficult to assess from the *Diary*; quite possibly they shouted to each other or sent messengers across the corridor dividing their separate bedrooms.

The attending doctors were totally baffled as to the cause of their illness. They could not come up with any reasonable explanation for deterioration of their health. The official verdict – that it was a “nervous disease”, amounted to tacit admission that the doctors could not find any physical cause at all. In today's parlance, “nervous disease” would translate as “neurosis” or a psychosomatic complaint, i.e. an illness of the body caused solely by the psychological state of the sufferer. To put it in simplest terms: when a patient reaches a point when his psyche is unable to cope with everyday life, his or her body develops actual physical symptoms as a manifestation of the underlying disease of the “soul”.

In other words: when Bronisław's parents subconsciously concluded that they could not find a way out of the conundrum life had laid out in front of them, they sounded a cry for help, in the guise of their “leg illness”. The trouble was that the people who heard the cry, those who surrounded them – members of the interrelated Piłsudski/Billewicz/Butler clan – had very likely been predisposed by their similar genetic make-up to respond in such situations in a way very similar to that of the Piłsudski couple. Indeed, one of the Butler sisters – grandmother Teodora, had (simultaneously with Maria and Józef) developed sudden blindness in both eyes and for a period of several months she could not see anything at all. This blindness disappeared only after her son (Bronisław's father) recovered from his own mystery illness.

The Piłsudski family situation was not helped by the very people whose job it was to deal with illnesses of the body – the medical doctors. Medical profession is primarily about diagnostic

procedures – firstly, a disease is recognised and named; secondly, a cure taken from the medical pool of knowledge is offered to the patient. However, having not been able to discern the primary cause of Bronisław parents' disease through the use of their professional knowledge, the doctors did not have a clue as to how to treat it. When one of the doctors would insist that the patient should stay in bed no matter what, the other was adamant that walking and fresh air was the called for cure. However, a few weeks later they would exchange their tunes: the doctor who had wanted the mother to stay bedridden now advised her to walk as much as possible whilst the other doctor now believed the patient should not leave the bed at all.

Amidst this bedlam Bronisław's educational problems were not properly resolved and he had not only to repeat the previous year's courses but to enter a different school at that. To be fair, his manly desires were addressed – he was advised by mother to “do it” with servant girls at country estates. Alas, the economic affairs of these estates were left neglected, at the whim of administrators. The date of the bank-loan pay-off had come and gone without any reaction from Bronisław's parents. The bankruptcy proceedings seemed inevitable and they were eventually postponed only because a neighbour, whose lands bordered one of the Piłsudski's country estates, came to Wilno especially to arrange for them new terms with the bank; Bronisław's parents stayed in bed throughout the negotiations.

And then came Thursday, 29<sup>th</sup> September 1883. On that day Wilno witnessed a sad and pathetic spectacle: the Piłsudski family was moving to a new residence. At ten o'clock in the morning a detachment of Russian soldiers carried the mother across town on an army field stretcher provided by one of her attendant doctors who held a position within the Army Medical Corps (within a year this doctor would become her son-in-law). Four hours later the same route was followed by the father's stretcher. “*I have noticed*” – writes Bronisław in his *Diary* – “*that in the presence of others daddy is playing up, sighing and holding his leg much more often than usual [...] mum is not terminally ill either*”. Bronisław felt humiliated by the whole “moving spectacle”.

What we have here is the downside of genetic inbreeding played out on a very visible stage. Three people, including the two lead actors, simultaneously develop a unison complaint that prevents them from acting out their primary roles altogether. The panic sets in throughout the cast. Yet, as the Americans would say: the show (life) must go on. There is little doubt that whatever illness Bronisław's parents were suffering from it completely paralyzed their will and made them considerably lose contact with reality. This illness was a consequence of an in-bred marriage – when calamity struck the parents' innate genetic mechanism regulating response to danger turned out to be exactly the same in father as in mother; when triggered, it caused them simultaneously to dive for the cover of bed and into “leg”-illness. Had they come from two separate genetic pools their respective reactions would have likely differed one from another to the effect that at least one of them could come up with a fighting answer to danger and thus give the family a sporting chance to avert the misfortune.

Two months after the infamous move across the town, Bronisław's father found courage to leave bed and go outside. “*He was back in 5 minutes*” – notes Bronisław in his *Diary*. Eventually, father started walking again but mother's illness continued and took a turn for the worse. A wound opened on her leg, causing her even more pain. After the three local doctors could not come up with a diagnosis, a doctor from far away Warsaw (some 400 kilometres from Wilno) was called in. His fee was 500 roubles, which compares with 550 roubles that was the yearly rent the Piłsudski family paid for their apartment in 1882 (taking a ball-park figure of 21 thousand pounds sterling for a similar apartment in today's London and assuming that a flat in Wilno would command half of that amount, we can estimate that the doctor's visit cost a cool \$15000 in today's money!). On 5<sup>th</sup> November 1883 the medical procedure took place in the Piłsudski living room. It lasted 20 minutes (at \$750 a minute), the Warsaw consultant being assisted by two local doctors (at another \$37.5 a minute each) and one of Bronisław's grandmothers who held four candles to light up the operating area. We do not know which

out of six women Bronisław addressed as “granny” the candleholder was. Most likely, it was Granny Michałowska (Bronisław mother’s grandmother) who provided the lighting. Her temporarily blind sister, Granny Piłsudska (died 1886), sat in the kitchen and prayed throughout the proceedings.

At least five other people were present in the room or watched the operation from the doorway. This tells us that the affected part of the leg was the foot – anything above this area would in those days be considered indecent and no observers would be allowed in the “operating theatre”. In the end the operation did not amount to much: an incision was made, a few drains put in and that was that. Obviously, on the physical side, the famous consultant could not find much wrong with the patient. The next day he left for Warsaw, having first diagnosed the source of pain as “*arthritic*” in nature caused by “*ulcers pressing on the nerves*”. After the operation the mother’s fever should have soon disappeared but it did not. Her pain increased, her wound kept becoming septic; she developed even higher and more frequent fever. The baffled doctors came up with the idea that she should drink a bottle of strong vodka a day to keep the pain away. The mother, quite wisely, agreed to drink only half of the prescribed amount but even this considerable daily intake of alcohol did not seem to alleviate the pain. Very soon the doctors turned to the only medicine known at that time to conquer pain – morphine, which they would inject straight into the patient’s veins. In his *Diary* Bronisław notes that on an almost daily basis he would be dispatched to “go and fetch the doctor”. Of course, every time the reason given for calling the doctor was the same: more pain. But in reality his mother was demanding another injection; the doctor was being called to administer more drug. Today’s name for morphine is “heroin” and it is known throughout the world as one of the most addictive, mood-changing narcotics ever produced. Uncontrolled abuse of heroin almost inevitably destroys all the addicts’ family relationships and finally destroys addicts themselves.

There is little doubt that in 1880s doctors did not know yet how to work out the proper method for administering morphine and it would be fair to say that they did no more to control the dosage than did the patient they attended. Bronisław’s mother (who was known to having been taking morphine as early as March 1883) very likely soon developed full dependency on the drug. This must have been associated with vicious mood swings, frequent loss of contact with reality and increasingly recurring cravings for more drug. When we remember that this dependency was accompanied by a lack of exercise and constant staying in bed, we would not be surprised to learn that her health steadily declined. Eventually, she became a human wreck, only from time to time carried outside to breathe some fresh air. In a *Diary* entry dated Saturday, 28<sup>th</sup> July 1884 Bronisław notes: “*After early dinner we brought mother out into the garden. [The doctor] insisted upon it but mother got worse and nervous, began feeling cold, so right after 5 pm we carried her back in*”.

At the beginning of September 1884 Maria Piłsudska died, at the age of 41. There is strong circumstantial evidence that the ultimate cause of death was suicide. In Christian eyes suicide is a grave and unforgivable sin, as it denies God his most fundamental prerogative, as the sole giver and also the sole taker of life. The local clergy in Wilno refused to attend Maria at death and to administer the last rites; suicide is about the only instance when a Catholic priest can refrain from visiting a dying person. It would be unthinkable for a priest to refuse Maria last rites had she died of natural causes. Maria’s local church was the Wilno cathedral but, since a person committing suicide cannot be buried at a sacred site (the local cemetery), Bronisław mother’s body had to be taken away from Wilno to the family Suginty country estate – in those days it meant some two-day journey by horse-driven hearse. At Suginty Maria Piłsudska had held the entitlements of the Lord of the Manor, including patronage of the family chapel – no local vicar could refuse her burial there and indeed she was laid to rest next to the chapel together with her two youngest children who died at about the same time.

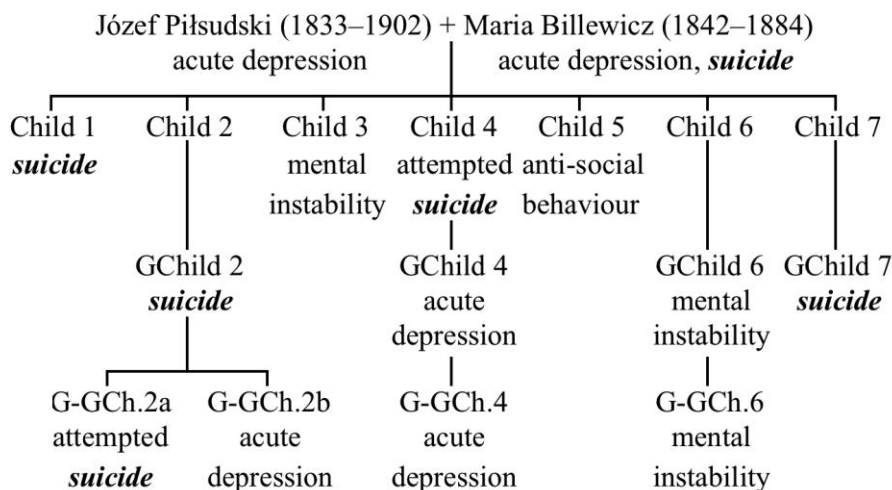
Maria’s suicide brings back the memory of her mother, Helena Michałowska who also died at a comparably young age. No documentary evidence regarding Helena’s life and death is at present known to exist. At least one source, however, claims that she died of “consumption” – it may or may

not be true. There is a further mystery surrounding Maria father’s attitude towards his only child (he abandoned her) and the way in which Maria inherited her main country estate, the 8000 hectares Zułów. Pre-war historians claimed that this estate was supposedly inherited from the Michałowski link; in fact it was not quite the case. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was “fashionable” to attribute young people’s death to “consumption”, as in a Christian country suicide was a taboo subject and could not be mentioned publicly. It is worth noting that at least one source describes Maria’s own death as attributable to “tuberculosis of the hip” – as we have seen from the circumstances of her leg operation in November 1883, it was highly unlikely that the hip (a most indecent area of the body in those days) was at all touched during that operation.

If not tuberculosis, could Maria Piłsudska’s death have been attributable to her drug addiction? Such an explanation may be an oversimplification. Heroin addicts in general may be keen to destroy everyone around them but not to end their own lives; they are not noted for their suicidal tendencies – they had rather try to hang on to life at all costs. A more fitting explanation would lie in Maria’s genetic make-up; it is known that some people seem to be somehow predisposed to suicide, however preposterous such an idea may seem. To examine this idea, we have to go back to genetic inbreeding characteristics appearing within the combined Piłsudski/Billewicz/Butler clan. Maria mother’s death may have been caused by “consumption” but it also could have been a result of suicide – another leading cause of death among young people during the “romantic era”. If that was the case, a propensity towards suicide might have been hidden within the genetic make-up of both the mother and her daughter – Helena, as well Maria. Furthermore, if Maria was a carrier of the “suicide” gene, it is quite likely that her genetically very close relative uncle-cum-husband would have been carrying it too and the likelihood of this gene appearing (in a considerably strengthened form) among their children and grandchildren would be greatly increased – this is another manifestation of the “bad” side effect of inbreeding.

As a general rule, depression, mental instability and suicide often appear in human society hand in hand. It may be that these characteristics are carried by different combinations of the same gene clusters. The table below shows the distribution of suicidal and mood-swinging tendencies among the descendants of Maria Billewicz and Józef Piłsudski. The table is not exhaustive. Information regarding many of the descendants is not at present accessible and therefore has not been included in the table. For some other descendants the available information is insufficient to form even a learned guess. The table has been arranged in such a way as not to point to anyone in particular among those descendants. For this reason their gender and other identifiable features have not been included. Please note that the table pertains to only 7 of the couple’s children although it is known that exactly 10 of them reached

Table: Suicidal and mood-swinging tendencies



maturity. All together Maria and Józef Piłsudski are known to have had 43 children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, 40 of whom reached adulthood.

What can be read from the above data is clearly this: Maria Billewicz and Józef Piłsudski produced an offspring that with uncommonly great frequency displayed mental-depressive moods and suicidal tendencies. All seven lines of descent display disturbing characteristics; 14 out of 17 people included in the analysis have had serious difficulties in coping with life while four of them gave up the struggle altogether and are known to have died as a result of suicide (the descendant referred to as G-GCh.2a only survived two suicide attempts because of advancements in medical knowledge. A hundred or so years ago these attempts would have succeeded. The present author has secured full permission to publicise this information from the person concerned).

The attentive student of Bronisław Piłsudski's journey through life will remember my previous essay of 20 years ago ("Buronisuwafu Piusutsuki no henreki..." [B. Piłsudski's pilgrimage...], in *Polonica* 4 (Tokyo 1993), 38–53; or the English-language original: "The European Calendarium...", in *Linguistic and Oriental Studies... 2* (Poznań 1995), 7–19) in which I disclosed the circumstances of Bronisław Piłsudski's suicidal death in the waters of the river Seine in Paris, France, in May 1918. There has been much speculation as to what exactly drove him to such end. The family-history analysis offered above now gives us a best-fit explanation for his behaviour: it was Bronisław Piłsudski's genetic make-up that predisposed him to die in this way and, sadly, he fulfilled his destiny. At death, Bronisław Piłsudski followed exactly the path his mother had gone through some 31 years earlier: he turned to doctors for an injection to "end the world" and, just like his mother, had his illness misdiagnosed and belittled. When the professional help was not forthcoming he ended "the world", himself. After Bronisław's body was recovered from river Seine his friends and admirers arranged for a grand funeral at the Paris Cathedral; this service got called off once the news of his mode of death reached the ecclesiastical authorities. Instead of a stately funeral, his body was taken to a Montmorency cemetery outside Paris and buried there without much ado.

In 1991 the secretary to the person who at this moment holds the office of the President of Poland telephoned the present author asking if he would like the Polish state to officially move Bronisław Piłsudski's remains from Montmorency for a reburial in Warsaw. I replied: "No, there is no need for that". And indeed there was none. During his lifetime, Bronisław Piłsudski displayed a personality that stayed beyond any attempts to classify him within one particular group at the exclusion of all other. He was a free spirit, a bird that would cross one border after another without bothering with formalities. Often hungry, at times passportless, forever penniless, with one worn-out suit and one thin coat to serve him come sunshine, come snow he would travel to England and back to Galicia, then a few months in France and a dash across Belgium. Switzerland and France again... He was no more Lithuanian than he was Polish, he was no more Russian than he was German, and he was no more European than he was Asian. Warsaw was no more the capital of the country of his dreams than Wilno, Kraków, Lwów or indeed – Ai, in Sakhalin, or Paris, France.

Quite simply, Bronisław Piłsudski was a *Global Man*. Let's not allow anyone disturb him. R.I.P. – rest in peace.

*with my lasting breath  
awash in waters of the world  
– children of the Grave*

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