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THE NAPOLEONIC EPOPEE OF POLISH SOLDIERS IN THE ART OF JULIUSZ KOSSAK¹

The dramatic history of Poland in late 18th and early 19th centuries, e.g. several partitions and devastating wars, was directly reflected in Polish painting, which became a moral and aesthetic respite for several generations of Poles, bringing them hope of national revival. The paintings by the masters of the Polish school of battle painting, imbued with national and patriotic ideas, drew primarily on the Napoleonic legend. The priority was invariably given to representatives of the artistic Kossak dynasty.

Its founder, an eminent watercolour painter and illustrator Juliusz Kossak (b. December 15 or, as other sources have it, October 29, 1824 in Nowy Wiśnicz, d. February 3, 1899 in Krakow), son of Michał Kossak and his wife Antonina née Sobolewska, was a scion of an old but impoverished aristocratic family with a black thrasher in their coat of arms. Juliusz Kossak grew up during the difficult period of the partition of Poland after the Congress of Vienna, which impacted his patriotism. Obeying his mother's wishes, he obtained a legal degree at the University of Lviv and even briefly worked as a plenipotentiary of the local nobility in the regions of Małopolska, Podolia and Volhynia. However, his passion for art prevailed. He received a thorough art education in Lviv, under J. Maszkowski (1844-1851), in Vienna (1852) under F. Waldmüller, in Warsaw under P. Michałowski (1852-1855), and then in Paris (1855-1860) and Munich (1862-1869, intermittently). In the Bavarian capital he studied with his compatriot, the future historical painter Józef Brandt, in the studio of the Bavarian master of the military genre Franz Adam.

In the Lviv area, Juliusz would visit the study of Count Kazimierz Dzieduszycki (1843-1847), and like him and his brother, his namesake, shared an interest in painting animals. He would watch the behaviour of horses in estates, primarily in Jarociny, with the biggest stud farm in Galicia of thoroughbred Arabian stallions. Practice in France cemented Kossak's acquaintance with H. (Horace) Verne, who influenced the aesthetic and historical interests of his Polish friend and colleague. At the Louvre Kossak would meticulously copy old paintings with battle scenes and in order to get more familiar with horse anatomy made sketches in cavalry barracks, squares and even in slaughterhouses!

Having obtained recommendations of renowned painters and with a burgeoning reputation, Juliusz returned to Warsaw in 1860 (or in February 1861), where he obtained the position of the chief illustrator and draughtsman, actually an art editor, of the weekly almanac *Tygodnik*

¹ I want to take this opportunity to thank my friend and colleague, Mr. D. Milewski, who helped me search the bibliography for this topic.

Ilustrowany. He was also talked into making illustrations for the directory “Drawings of Uniforms”, issued by the Supreme Military National Council during the Januar Uprising against the Russians in the years 1863-1864 (the publication showcased designs of garments for the insurgents, some of which were actually implemented). When the uprising was put down, the tsarist authorities banned the exhibition of Kossak’s works. In 1869 the artist moved to Krakow, administered by the Austrians. Moving into a small estate on the outskirts of town near Latarnia Square (renamed Kossak Square after Juliusz’s death), the artist set up there a famous salon of arts and letters. “Kossakówka”, as his home came to be known, often gathered Polish artists and intelligentsia, friends and acquaintances of the host. People like H. Sienkiewicz, S. Witkiewicz and J. Chelmoński discussed both artistic issues and matters related to Polish history and its current political situation.

Incessantly working in his chosen field, using simple pastel colours J. Kossak depicted lonely riders, horse fairs, country weddings, hunting rides, and heroes of medieval legends. He also made a number of oil portraits of representatives of famous Polish families of Fredro, Gniewosz, Tyszkiewicz, Lipski, and Morsztyn and designed commemorative medals for Krakow-based foundries. Showing his works at home and abroad (starting in 1854), the artist was also involved in charity projects. For example, he became head of the Committee for the Organization of the People’s Museum in Krakow, which earned him the respect of both his countrymen and foreigners. In 1880 he was awarded the Cross of Merit by Emperor Francis Joseph of the Austro-Hungarian Empire himself for his life achievements. In 1889 residents of Krakow celebrated the master’s 65th birthday and after he died, a number of posthumous exhibitions were held by local art societies in Warsaw and Krakow. Married to Zofia Gałczyńska, he had five children, including three sons, who followed in their father’s footsteps: Wojciech, Tadeusz and the younger Stefan. The son of Wojciech and grandson of Juliusz, Jerzy Kossak, also became a famous painter of battle scenes. In this way Juliusz Kossak became the forerunner of an entire family of artists of four generations!

The range of genres and themes chosen by Kossak is indeed wide, and everywhere there are horses, which the artist inevitably introduced into any composition and was the first national painter to notice such factors as their type, genre, build, movement, character, age, and sex. Acutely sensitive to nature, the Polish artist painted standing, galloping, trotting, or walking horses. Kossak chose topics from the history of his fatherland (especially from the time of war fought by the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania and the liberation struggle of the late 18th and early 19th c.) as well as from Polish literature, in particular from H. Sienkiewicz’s *Trilogy* composed of *With Sword and Fire*, *Deluge* and *Pan Wolodyjowski* and from A. Mickiewicz’s epic poem *Pan Tadeusz*. Thus Kossak expressed a genuinely folk spirit of courage and unbridled imagination, especially in heroic war episodes: skirmishes, activities of small units, patrols, and mounted reconnaissance operations. Painted in a uniform graphic manner, his works soon became a unique primer of national history for all segments of Polish society, kindling the spark of patriotic spirit in it. The author of the biographies of all the Kossaks, Polish researcher K. Olszanski, saw him as a characteristic painter of “knights, battles and idyllic life of the nobility, an excellent illustrator of historical and genre scenes, one of the most devoted proponents of Polish character, its nostalgia and hopefulness”. Initially, J. Kossak’s preferred means of expression was the watercolour, in small and large formats. Yet he was becoming a predecessor of the Polish school of battle painting, an author of more than a dozen panoramic paintings, depicting mainly the Polish

cavalry, overcoming various invaders. Taking over the traditions initiated in Polish art by A. Orłowski, Kossak the Elder regained his style – “illustrative, accurate and flawless drawing, the story is characteristically detailed [...]. This painting, which could be described as neo-Sarmatism, addressed historical themes, although it did not interpret them in a stilted way. It generally steered clear of Romanticism, even though it was not deprived of certain romantic qualities. Historical vision was intertwined with style, as the artist chose not only great events, but also everyday scenes for the topics of his works [...]. However, in general, these themes hark back to the past and are complemented by ‘historical make-up’. More than historical and genre themes, Kossak preferred battle themes, which were not great skirmishes or picturesque episodes, either”².

Kossak the Elder’s favourite and inexhaustible theme was invariably the Napoleonic epopee of Polish soldiers, as the names of his canvases and drawings indicate. Let us mention, for example: *The Fate of Poles on San Domingo Island, Somosierra, 1808, Upon Capture of the Last Battery at Somosierra, At Somosierra. Polish Cheveau-leger – Lancer in Spain in 1808* (1891), *Reconnaissance in Spain* (1875), *General Dombrowski Heading his Legionnaires, Prince Józef Poniatowski with His Staff at Raszyn* (1884; with his son Wojciech), *Prince Józef Poniatowski in 1809* (1879), *Colonel Berek Joselewicz at Kock* (three variants of the same theme 1861, 1885 and 1893), *Tomasz Lubieński at a Skirmish with Austrian Lancers at Wagram* (1867), *Charge of Polish Cheveau-legers – Lancers Against Prussian Hussars at Peterswalde in 1813* (1883), *Death of Poniatowski in the Waters of the River Elster (19 October 1813), Skirmish* (a name of a number of variously composed paintings and drawings), *Aleksander Fredro with Cheveau-legers in a Skirmish with Bavarian Cuirassiers at Hanau* (30 October 1813), and *Szeptycki with Cheveau-legers Takes Prussians from Reims Prisoners* (1814). The connection between a number of them and H. Verne’s paintings is evident. Suffice it to examine e.g. the scenes depicting the capture by Polish light cavalry of Spanish positions in the Somosierra Gorge or the death of Prince Poniatowski near Leipzig. We can add also the way in which horses are depicted – thin-legged and violent, Eastern thoroughbreds, which Kossak studied more than once. However, one cannot accuse the Polish master of plagiarism, as he furnishes his own interpretation of the subject.

The 1891 scene, which the artist placed under the Spanish sky, takes place at Somosierra in November 1808. Set during a legendary battle, it presents two warring opponents during a remarkable struggle. A private of the Polish cheveau-legers regiment added in 1807 to the imperial guard, rides at top speed towards the viewer: a *konfederatka* cap with a quadrangular raspberry-coloured crown, trimmed with white braiding on the edges, with a white mark and a cord with a tassel, tied the uhlan way (the rank of the squadron duty officer, attacking in the Somosierra Gorge had moreover a white plume on the cap), on the forefront is a plate with brass “sun rays” and Napoleon’s monogram in the centre of a white semi-circle, a metal casing on the clasp under the chin, with the headgear shifted to the right ear, as was the custom of the day; a dark-blue jacket with a raspberry collar and straight flaps with a white braid; a white aiguillette on the right arm and a white epaulette on the left; marching breeches in navy blue, white gloves, light-grey coat slung over the right arm to soften the blows of the enemy’s weapon, a white belt with a brass buckle and a cartridge box on a

² Т. Добровольский, *История польской живописи*, Вроцлав-Варшава-Краков-Гданьск 1975, pp. 75-76; E. Wasilewska, A. Jurkiewicz-Zejdowska, *Wizja Wojska Polskiego w twórczości Kossaków*, [b.m.r], pp. 5-15.

sling; a light cavalry shabrack with rounded edges, navy blue with white lining and black leather belts of horse trappings. The mark of a chevau-leger should be tri-coloured, with a white Maltese cross on it; the gloves for everyday wear had no protecting pads and finally the colouring of the cap is like an officer's – blue with a white lining, while earlier it was raspberry. The bay colour of the horse is precisely that of the mounts of the 3rd squadron that was victorious at Somosierra³.

Judging by his general appearance, this Spaniard is one of the troops created by the provincial junta from volunteers and the remains of the regular army to resist the French invasion. A similar "uniform" was worn by the infantry Victoria regiment; the jackets, sewn from a local brown cloth, featured a red collar, round cuffs and straight flaps, but there were no folds at all and the breeches should be of the same fabric as the uniform (while in the painting we see white trousers and leggings) and black hats with round panels with a red mark and an oval brass plate. In line with Iberian men's fashion, a scarf of national colours is tied around the head – yellow with red stripes⁴.

Juliusz Kossak dedicated as many as three paintings to a companion of T. Kościuszko and active officer of the Napoleonic Wars, Berek Joselewicz. The first painting was made in 1861 (the other two in 1885 and 1893, equally perfect). A Jew by nationality and creed, Berek (Józef Berko vel Berk) Joselewicz was born on 17 September 1764 in Kretinga, Samogitia, and died on 5 May 1809 at Kock. He received primary education in the local cheder school, then was a successful horse trader and in 1788 married a Jew Ryfka, had son Josele and daughter Lea. Having received a blessing and recommendation from Bishop I.J. Massalski, Joselewicz left as a trader to Belgium and then to France, where he studied the local language and witnessed the onset of the revolution. A fervent Polish patriot, on receipt of equal civil rights along with the other Polish Jews "Berko" took active part in the uprising for the liberation of Poland in 1794. Having set up with J. Aronowicz a light cavalry Jewish regiment, he issued a patriotic proclamation in Yiddish and gathered 500 Jewish troops. Granted the right to respect their customs, including the wearing of traditional Jewish beard, on October 24 they bravely defended the Praga town outside Warsaw. There he was taken prisoner by the Russian army. Released with the other insurgents by Pavel I in 1796, Berek lived for a time in Lviv under the supervision of Austrian police, and on 15 September 1797 suggested to the Habsburg authorities that he might set up a Galicia Jewish Corps of 6,000-8,000 troops. However, on October 13 the Hofkriegsrat in Vienna turned down this proposal. Having left for Italy, in June 1798 Joselewicz entered the Polish Legions, agreeing to accept the modest title of a lieutenant (although he was a colonel of Kościuszko's army), which can be explained by the fact that not being a "pure-blood" Pole and nobleman, he could not count for more. Assigned by General Dąbrowski to the 2nd Legion of General J. Wielhorski, on 30 March 1799 Joselewicz was promoted to cavalry captain. He fought in south and north Italy and distinguished himself during the capture of Gaeta, and in the battles of Legnano, Trebia, Bosco, and Novi, where his unit was dispersed and he himself was wounded. Due to the reorganisation of the Italian legions in 1800, Berek transferred

³ A. Jouineau, *Officers and Soldiers of the French Imperial Guard 1804-1815*, vol. 3: *The Cavalry. Part Two*, Paris 2005. 17-19. Э. Райан, Л. Руссело, *Элитная кавалерия Наполеона. Гвардейская императорская кавалерия, 1804 – 1815*, Рига-Минск 2002, Fig. 68, 70.

⁴ P. Haythornthwaite, M. Chappel, *Uniforms of the Peninsular wars, 1807 – 1814*, London 1995, p. 125.

to the Danube Legion of General K.O. Kniaziewicz and under the command of General M. Sokolnicki heroically fought on 3 December 1800 at Hohenlinden, then at San-Christof and Salzburg. After the February 1801 peace treaty of Luneville, Berek served in Tuscany and in June 1802 retired in the rank of a captain. General A.E.C.J. Mortie's recommendations helped him to enter the following year, as captain-intendent, the 1st dragoon regiment of the Hanover Legion. Then, a member of Napoleon's Grand Armée, Berek took part in the 1805 campaign (Wiertingen and Austerlitz). Having heard about the proclamation of the Duchy of Warsaw, Joselewicz asked his commanders to let him return to his homeland and on 5 March 1807 was accepted in the rank of a squadron commander in the 5th regiment of mounted Jäger of Colonel K. Turno, with whom he fought at Tczew, Gdańsk, Guttstadt, Heilsberg, and Friedland, and after the conclusion of a peace treaty patrolled the border with Prussia and Russian on the Neman River.

Having repeatedly proved himself in combat as a valiant officer, Joselewicz climbed the ladder of the soldier's career and reached the rank of a colonel, obtained the title of the Knight of the Legion of Honour (1804) and of the Knight of the Virtuti Militari Order (8 March 1808). He once again distinguished himself during the Austrian-French War of 1809 at Raszyn but died soon afterwards on May 5 in a skirmish at Kock. Assigned to carry out reconnaissance in this place, he unexpectedly stumbled upon three hundred Austrian hussars (two squadrons); having crossed the Wieprz River, he assumed an uneven struggle. At first, the Polish cavalrymen dispersed their outnumbering enemy, but when the chase entered city streets, they lost their file, were scattered and dispersed. Rushing in front of his riflemen, Joselewicz and seven servicemen fell into the nearest yard, where they were trapped after the Austrians closed the gate. In the ensuing bloody confrontation seven Poles were wounded and so were nineteen "imperial" soldiers, but the intrepid "son of Israel" was fatally wounded in the head by Hungarian hussar Stefan Toth's sabre. According to another account, Berek's horse, tripping over a log, collapsed over the rider, and the Hungarians, going berserk, killed him, turning a deaf ear to his pleading for mercy. The Poles who survived the fight reported on this tragedy to their commander Colonel K. Turno, who on the following day sent a letter to the Austrian commander, where he wrote that the shameful behaviour of his hussars stripped them of their soldier's dignity and brought upon them irreparable shame. Berk was buried in the following way: the local rabbi, observing the old custom, had the coffin with the dead man placed on a cart and had him buried where the harnessed ox would stop. This took place at a distance of 1.5 kilometres from the town, where a century later the Russian authorities consented to the local Jewish community erecting a tombstone with the legend "Berek Joselewicz, born in 1764 in Kretinga, Lithuania. Colonel of the Polish Army, squadron commander of the 5th Regiment of Mounted Jäger of the Duchy of Warsaw, knight of the Cross of the Virtuti Militari Order, died in the Battle of Kock in 1809. His path to fame was a bloody one. In memory of the centennial of his death". The obituary published in *Monitor* newspaper of 19 June 1809 called the colonel "the first Polish Jew to show to his fellow Jews the path to fame and offered an example of heroic devotion in the service of the Fatherland". In recognition of her fallen husband's merits, on 5 July 1810 his widow obtained a salary of 1,800 zlotys⁵.

⁵ M. Kukiel, *Dzieje oręża polskiego w Epoce Napoleońskiej*, Poznań 1912 (reprint 1996), pp. 9, 80, 185; R. Morawski, H. Wielecki, *Wojsko Księstwa Warszawskiego. Kawaleria*, Warszawa 1992, p. 30.

F.W. Bulgarin, who later spoke with Polish officers, adds details about Berkowicz, another name for Joselewicz: “He settled down for the night with two squadrons, summoned all his compatriots and threw a feast, predicting no danger. Several squadrons of Hungarian hussars crossed the river, circled the place (that is, the town) and attacked the carefree Poles at night. Colonel Berek managed to gather a hundred of his Jäger and started a charge. They were fighting desperately on both sides and Berek was chopped up, so to speak, into pieces. The Jews buried him outside the town with honours and erected a high mound over his grave, which probably exists to date [...]. With extraordinary courage, Berek combined rare sincerity, disinterestedness and kindness [...]. Berek did not receive basic education but, having a natural mind, as they say, got polished among people and was in company like everyone else. Officers and soldiers respected and loved him. He firmly observed the Mosaic law regarding the main tenets of faith, but he ate everything, not picking what was improper or what was kosher. However, he did not eat the meat of animals forbidden by Moses”⁶.

Interestingly, apart from J. Kossak, the hero was also depicted by H. Pillati, who painted *The Death of Berek Joselewicz* (1867), currently on display in the National Museum in Warsaw.

The hero of Kock, whom Kossak the Elder foregrounded in his painting, is depicted with the crosses of the Legion of Honour and of the Virtuti Militari Order, in a small uniform of the 5th Regiment of Mounted Jäger, where he commanded a squadron. He is wearing a round fur *bermyca* cap with golden cords fashionably descending from top to bottom. However, Polish riflemen did not wear the fur *szlyk* with a tassel shown here, and the top of the headdress was draped in a cloth of adequate colour, with a large button, here orange (as is well-visible in the Polish cavalymen of an elite company, launching an assault in the background). Joselewicz wears a single-piece frock coat of dark green hue, with a row of golden buttons, an orange collar, an inset on the side and fold twists (in the 5th regiment the frock coat was dark green with orange inset and marks), with a gilt officer’s sling, a gold epaulette on the left shoulder and counter epaulette on the right one, in grey march breeches with a braid whose colour matched the short shoes, in white gloves with protecting pads on his person (outside the parade uniforms, they were usually short). The dark green shabrack of light cavalry has orange lining on the side, a dark green round valise and the saddle is covered in black ram’s hide. Holding the hilt of a sabre with a golden sling, taken over from the enemy, Joselewicz looks round fearfully; his magnificent bay Valahian horse, with white tufts on its hind legs and untrimmed tail, strikes its hoof impatiently. A dead hussar lies on the ground and in the distance one can make out riders redirecting their horses. Judging by the colours of the garments (the colour of the shakos is hard to identify, but it is most probably black, dark blue dolmans and breeches with a yellow embroidery, red shabrack with yellow lining), the riders probably came from the 1st Kaiser Franz Austrian regiment of hussars. Fighting Poles at Kock were the hussars of the 12th regiment of “the Duke of Palatinate”, also part of the 7th military corps of Archduke Ferdinand d’Este, active in the Duchy of Warsaw. Furthermore, major of the hussars Friedrich von Hoditz, the addressee

⁶ Ф.В. Булгарин, *Воспоминания*, Москва 2001, pp. 746-747.

of Kazimierz Turno's letter, served precisely in the 12th Croatian-Slavonic Grenz Regiment of Hussars, where black shakos were worn⁷.

In 1867 Juliusz Kossak made a watercolour dedicated to the Battle of Wagram of July 1809, where Polish chevau-legers made a name for themselves. The prehistory of the event is as follows. Engaged in battle only on its second day, July 6, when the cavalry of the guard of General Guyau came to the aid of Macdonald's troops, four squadrons of Poles (ca. 300 men) commanded by Krasieński, armed only with sabres and rifles, clashed with the Austrian uhlans of Prince of Schwarzenberg (many of whom were exiles from the former Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania, in fact Galician Ruthenians), equipped with lances. Having acquired the enemy's weapons, numerous chevau-legers mastered their use, repelling the imperial Risza dragons together with the upcoming mounted Jäger of the guard. The Poles took 150 prisoners of war, including Prince Auersperg, and captured two cannons. Their own losses were three officers and ten soldiers killed and eighty wounded, including eight officers (according to other sources, two officers were killed and eleven wounded), and thus once again confirmed their heroic reputation. The most valiant of them were Captains Łubieński, Jaroszewski (wounded twice), Stokowski (also wounded), squadron commander Koziatulski (who made a name for himself at Somosierra), and finally Colonel Krasieński himself, on a par with the others.

J. Kossak's watercolour depicts precisely Tomasz Andrzej Adam Łubieński (b. 24 December 1784 in Szczytniki, d. 27 August 1870 in Warsaw) – a count and baron of the Empire (13 February 1811), brigadier general of the French Army (15 March 1814), a division general of the Polish Army (1 June 1831). His parents were Poland's Minister of Justice F. Łubieński and poet and playwright T.T. Łubieńska. Having been taught at home, in 1792 Tomasz was enrolled in the nobility corps (Académie du Corps de Cadets de sa Majestie et de la Republique de Pologne), and two years later left it in the rank of an ensign. As of 1801, the young nobleman continued his education in Vienna and Warsaw, where he made friends with Prince J. Poniatowski and W.K. Krasieński, his future commander. Having enrolled in the guard of honour, recruited from among famous Polish youth, Łubieński met Napoleon entering Warsaw. He later took part in the 1807 campaign (at Pułtusk he even served in the capacity of the emperor's adjutant). On July 27, he was awarded the Order of the Legion of Honour and earlier, in June, appointed head of the squadron of Polish chevau-legers of the Imperial Guard. He left for France with the first squadron (125 horses). Łubieński crossed the Pyrenees with the Imperial Guard in 1808 and distinguished himself at Somosierra. In January 1809, he commanded the escort of the emperor during his return to Paris. In recognition

⁷ R. Morawski, H. Wielecki, *Wojsko Księstwa...*, pp. 31, 63, 65; P. Haythornthwaite, *Austrian Army of the Napoleonic Wars (2) Cavalry*, London 1986, pp. 22-24, 33-35.

for his valour and rigorous performance of duties in the Spanish and Danube campaigns (in particular during the battles of Essling and Wagram), the brave Pole was awarded the distinctions of an Officer of the Legion of Honour (5 April 1809) and a Knight of the Virtuti Militari Order (1810), as well as the title of Baron of the Empire with a pension of 4,000 francs, later increased to 6,000. As he was of a different mind than General Krasiński, in early 1811 Łubieński left for the regiment facility in Sedan, where on June 18 he received the rank of a colonel and assumed command over the 2nd Regiment of Vistula Uhlans, renamed later the 8th regiment of cheveu-legers – lancers. With his soldiers, within the 2nd Corps of the Grande Armée commanded by Marshal C.N. Oudinot, Łubieński fought bravely in 1812 in Russia, at Polock, Borisov and in particular during crossing the Berezina River (where his lancers came across a life-saving ford). He distinguished himself in battle in 1813, too, at Lutzen, Wurschen, Bautzen, Dresden, Kulm, Leipzig and Hanau. Reaching the territory of France, on 19 January 1814 he commanded the joint forces of the 7th and 8th regiments of cheveu-legers – lancers, with whom he fought at Champaubert, Vauchamps and Reims. Having resigned from service in the French Army on 1 June 1814, in the rank of General Major Łubieński transferred to the Army of the Kingdom of Poland, where he was granted the Order of St. Stanislaus of 2nd class. Unwilling to consent with the lawlessness of the Governor of the Kingdom of Poland, Grand Duke Konstantin Pavlovich, in 1816 he tendered his resignation.

Łubieński was one of the founders of the Bank of Poland, in 1820 a deputy to the Sejm, between 1825 and 1828 – a district justice of the peace, in 1829 a senator-castellan. During the November Uprising, he was nominated Deputy Mayor of Warsaw and on 7 December 1830 General Józef Chłopicki appointed him head of the management of Post Offices and Police. Between 21 December 1830 and 7 January 1831, he was Minister of the Interior. Łubieński's war qualifications turned out to be very timely: On 10 February 1831, he became the head of the 2nd Cavalry Corps (33 squadrons, 16 cannons), with which he fought near Wawer, Grochów and Ostrołęka. On 1 June 1831, General Jan Zygmunt Skrzynecki, the Commander-in-Chief, appointed Łubieński Division General and nominated him head of the insurgent army staff. At the end of August, Łubieński defended Warsaw and after its fall he resigned on September 28 and left for Russia. On November 24 he had an audience with Tsar Nikolai I in Moscow. In 1832, as part of the Polish delegation, Łubieński was in St. Petersburg, earning an improvement in the living conditions of Polish prisoners and exiles. The last position he held, from the 1840s onwards, was that of director of the Warsaw-Vienna railway construction. Already at the end of his life, in 1858, Łubieński was appointed by the government of the French Emperor Napoleon III as Commander of the Legion of Honour. It was a somewhat belated sign of appreciation of the old veteran.

On 12 December 1805 Łubieński married Konstancja Ossolińska (1783-1868), who gave birth to his son Napoleon Leon.

The imagination of Kossak the Elder immerses the viewer into the whirl of battle. Łubieński is shown in the centre of the field, strewn with bodies of fallen and wounded soldiers. Mounted on a standing horse, like his soldiers he is wearing a full official uniform: a raspberry *konfederatka* cap with a feathered plume, a uniform and breeches. All the soldiers have silver or white (lower ranks) epaulettes, aiguillette, cords, braids, and ribbons. Łubieński fights with the Austrian cavalymen of the 2nd Uhlans Regiment of Count Szwarczenberg; they are also dressed in an uhlan uniform (dark green "caps" and uniforms, light grey trousers,

yellow-black pompoms, belts and silk pennons on the lances). In reality, the colourful halves of the silk pennons are arranged differently than in the painting: the top is black and the bottom is yellow. Besides, the painting depicts shabracks with pointed rear angles. The Austrians try to stab to death the brave Polish officer, yet chevau-legers come to his aid, surround the enemy and turn their own lances against them. After the Battle of Wagram Count Krasieński asked the emperor to leave in his regiment the traditional Polish lance, and Wachtmeister W. Roman (a hero of Somosierra, where he commanded the first attack and was wounded, and in 1811 was a captain in the 2nd Regiment of Vistula Lancers), demonstrated his virtuoso use of the lance, at a single moment dislodging from saddles three dragoons of the guard. Napoleon replied to Krasieński then: "If they wield the lance so expertly, let them continue doing it"⁸.

Another work by Kossak the Elder (from 1883, even if one unconfirmed source offers the date 1882) to be addressed here is dedicated to a magnificent attack of Polish chevau-legers – lancers of Napoleon's imperial guard in the Battle of Peterswalde on 16 or 17 September 1813. Two companies (other records indicate two squadrons) of the 1st Polish Regiment of Chevau-legers – Lancers of the Guard, a total of 200 men headed by Z. Fredro as the commander of the squadron, part of the detached corps of General Lefevre-Denuett, fighting guerrillas on the transportation routes of the Grand Armée, set up an ambush and by a speedy attack on the enemy rear lines defeated as many as five (!) squadrons of Prussian hussars. In this fight the commander of the Prussians Colonel F.B.I. von Blücher, the only son of the famous general (later field marshal), was struck with a lance by Wachtmeister Mierzejewski and was taken captive, which his father bitterly commented on in a letter. Some records indicate that Seweryn Fredro had the honour of taking the younger Blücher captive, while others point to Captain Jankowski, appointed the Grand Officer of the Legion of Honour by Napoleon. It cannot be ruled out, however, that this event is mistaken for another one, when on May 22 at the Battle of Lobau in Saxony, commanding the first squadron of the chevau-legers of the guard, Jankowski defeated Russian dragoons and abducted their commander Duke Trubetskoy. Davidov, in the cavalry party of Count von Tilman, a Saxon in the Russian Army, gives the following account: "our unit was then composed of 4 Cossacks regiments, 7 Prussian and Hungarian hussars squadrons, Austrian dragoons and had two cannons. [...] At noon on September 9, we were attacked once again. This was when I noticed that General Tilman was unfit as a commander of a separate section of the army. [...] The matter started at Altenburg. Our line stretched from Altenburg to Köterich; covered by 8 cannons, the enemy advanced in large numbers onto Altendorf. Early on we started to retreat behind the village of Miukern, with a stone bridge across the River Plejs, already crossed by 2 cannons and 5 squadrons. However, when I entered the bridge together with my two regiments of Cossacks and two squadrons of Hungarians, Polish lancers advanced on Orlov [M.F., colonel – O.S.]. Tilman ordered me to return and support him. In panic, Orlov retreated towards the bridge and disconcerted my regiments, which I had problems rearranging. The lancers stopped, waiting for reinforcements. I advanced and shattered the front squadrons, yet being surrounded by

⁸ M. Kukiel, *Dzieje oręża...*, p. 198; T. Korzon, *Dzieje wojen i wojskowości w Polsce*, vol. 3, Kraków 1912, p. 334; F.G. Hourtoulle, *Wagram. The Apogee of the Empire*, Paris 2002, p. 64; P. Haythornthwaite, *Austrian Army...*, pp. 35-36; A. Pigéard, *Napoleon et les Troupes Polonaises 1797 – 1815*, Paris 1999, p. 22; Э. Райан, Л. Руссело, *Элитная кавалерия...*, Fig. 68, 71, 73.

other squadrons, I was forced to hurriedly ford the river in one place and swim across it in another”⁹.

In the centre of the painting we see a fight between a Polish and a Prussian officers on horseback. The former, on a small horse, wearing the official uniform of Polish chevau-legers – lancers, i.e.: a raspberry cap (*konfederatka*) with a gold-coated metal sheet, a “half-sun” with a silver cord and white feathered plume, a dark-blue jacket with raspberry collar, flaps and twisted folds, trimmed with a zigzag silver braid, a silver aiguillette on the right shoulder and an epaulette on the left one; a silver-coated bandoleer with a cartridge belt, breeches of dark-blue cloth with a raspberry stripe and a silver projection; a shabrack of facing colour, with the letter “N” on the front and the sign of the eagle in the rear corner embroidered with a silver thread, and a broad braid on the side and a raspberry border, a round raspberry valise with a silver cladding. There’s no half-shabrack for the saddle, imitation leopard hide. Curbing his excited white horse, the elegant Polish rider raised a weapon in his hand, covered with a white glove with a guard, ready to cross sabres with the enemy. The chevau-leger capturing the Prussian’s collar is dressed like his commander, yet all the silver elements are changed to white ones. In addition, his white coat is rolled across the left shoulder and his marching breeches feature a single row raspberry stripe and buttons of white metal along the leg. If this is to be Wachtmeister Mierzejewski, the epaulette and aiguillette in the painting should swap places and be in two colours, silver and raspberry (at a ratio of 1/3 to 2/3). Each forearm should additionally feature two silvered chevrons of non-commissioned officers. The raspberry and white pennons on the lances, fluttering at the front of the attacking chevau-legers indicate the lancers enter the first line¹⁰.

On this tempestuous stage, so to speak, the first role (of a Polish officer) is played by a man with a very eventful biography. Seweryn Fredro (6 December 1785 – 30 April 1845), in 1813 commander of a squadron of the 1st Regiment of Guard Chevau-legers – Lancers, was a nobleman of Bończa coat of arms. At the age of 21, on 21 November 1806 he entered the army as second lieutenant of the 2nd Infantry Regiment of the Army of the Duchy of Warsaw. Promoted to the rank of a lieutenant on 1 March 1807, on 7 April that year he transferred to serve in the regiment of Polish light cavalymen of the Imperial Guard. There, on 2 March 1808, he became captain and on 17 February 1811 the commander of a squadron. Fredro took part in numerous battles and skirmishes, starting with the Polish campaign of 1807 and concluding at the French campaign of 1814. He distinguished himself on 14 July 1808 at Medina del Rioseco and on December 30 that year he was wounded at Avignano. He fought at Essling, Wagram, Mogilev, Smolensk, Borodino, Borovsk, Maloyaroslavets, Horodno, Chervone, Berezina, Peterswalde, Leipzig, Hanau, Saint Dizier, Brienne, La Rothiere, Champaubert, Mormant, Vauchamps, Montereau, Troyes, Berry-au Bac, Craonne, Laon, Reims, Fère-Champenoise, Arcis-sur-Aube, Vitry, and Paris. He came home after Napoleon’s first abdication. Having received his resignation in 1815 as a colonel in the army of the Kingdom of Poland, the hero of the Napoleonic campaigns was long retired, but in 1829 he

⁹ M. Kukiel, *Dzieje oręża...*, pp. 410, 412; T. Korzon, *Dzieje wojen...*, vol. 3, pp. 335, 402-403; Денис Давыдов, *1812 – 1813. Неизвестные записки*, Публ. А. Вальковича, „Наше наследие” 1991, no. 1, p. 33; М.М. Куриев, М.В. Пономарев, *Век Наполеона: люди и судьбы*, Москва 1997, p. 140; Э. Райан, Л. Руссело, *Элитная кавалерия...*, p. 18.

¹⁰ A. Jouineau, *Officers and soldiers...*, vol. 3, pp. 17-18, 20-26, 33; Э. Райан, Л. Руссело, *Элитная кавалерия...*, Fig. 73, 78, 90.

was elected to the Galician Parliament. During the almost ten-year epopee, Seweryn Fredro was awarded several distinctions: Knight's Cross of the Legion of Honour (13 December 1809), Grand Officer of the Legion of Honour (16 August 1813), Knight of the Polish Virtuti Militari Order (10 November 1810), and Knight of the Imperial Order of Unification (1813).

Let us return to Kossak's painting. Some of the Prussian "black hussars" are already fallen onto the ground; others return their horses, escaping the deadly lances of Polish cavalymen, and very few others, among them Blücher Jr. on a black horse, his back to the viewer, still defend themselves with sabres. All wear caps in dark covers (a common practice in Prussian armies), black dolmans with white cords and grey marching breeches, buttoned up, shabracks of their uniform colour with a white "zigzag" hem. The dark hues in many details correspond to the uniform of the 1st and 2nd regiment of Leib Hussars, where Col. Franz Bernhard Joachim von Blücher served according to Polish records. However, according to other sources, in 1813 he commanded the 1st Silesian (formerly Upper Silesian) hussar regiment (4th Regiment of Hussars from 1815), wearing brown pelisses and dolmans with yellow collars, cuffs, frogging, and buttons (in line with the colour of the Silesian Province; all the accessories of officers were golden). Besides, cloth shabracks started to be used by the Prussian army only in 1815; they were preceded by rounded saddlecloths made of black ram's hide, adorned with red "wolves' teeth"¹¹.

The Polish battle scene painter managed to graphically and precisely render the heat of battle, the tactics of the cavalry, the colours, build and conduct of horses (one of them bucks, having thrown off the rider), the diverse types of poses, and depict a particular Austrian setting, as witnessed by the characteristic buildings outlines. According to the Polish art historian T. Dobrowolski, "Kossak's painting offers a wide panorama of old Polish lifestyle, has an epic character, only that this 'epopee' consists of works of small form, devoid of pathos. Such forms appeared, perhaps, as an indispensable antidote against the *grandes machines* of Neoclassicism, late Romanticism and Academism. The strong point of these forms was the atmosphere of truth, a composition of a picturesque text devoid of pretentiousness, a clear picture of the 'noble nation', and the quintessence of Polish identity. Kossak's painting had its political sense, perhaps intentional. Drawing on artistic traditions, not only did it extol the glory of Polish arms, but also the nobility. In this aspect, Kossak's work was one-sided and 'class-oriented'. Therefore, it cannot be judged from the point of view of aesthetic value alone"¹².

Indeed, Juliusz Kossak was not always objective in conveying historical facts, being biased by class and national stereotypes. He often operated within the current of the "Napoleonic legend", extremely popular in Polish society. However, it should be acknowledged that the artist, to the extent of his strength and talent, based on the principle of historicism, was able to recreate in detail the figures of his compatriots who fought for their homeland under the banners of France and the Duchy of Warsaw. He was succeeded in this by his brilliant son, Wojciech Kossak, a great Polish battle scene painter, whose paintings focused on the theme of Napoleonic wars even more forcefully.

¹¹ P. Hofschroer, *Prussian Cavalry of The Napoleonic Wars (2) 1807 – 1815*, London 1985, pp. 23-24, 33; Knotel & Sieg, *Farbiges Handbuch der Uniformkunde*, Munchen, Herbig 2000 (Reprint 1937), pp. 34-35, Abb. 14e.

¹² Т. Добровольский, *История...*, pp. 76-77.

Napoleonic Epopee of Polish Soldiers in the Art of Juliusz Kossak Summary

The article addresses the oeuvre devoted to the Napoleonic Wars by eminent Polish battle painter and illustrator of the 2nd half of the 19th century, Juliusz Kossak (the founder of a dynasty of artists). Many of the artist's pictures and watercolours show Polish soldiers, participants of the Epopee. They reflected not only the work and research of the master and his vision of the past, but also the patriotic idea of the revival of Poland and its nation.

Keywords: Juliusz Kossak, military art, military uniform, Napoleonic Wars

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