

Ernestyna Skurjat-Kozek

“Kosciuszko: Poland Will Yet Dance Again”

Dedicated to the Ngarigo people, traditional custodians of Mount Kosciuszko and the Monaro Land.

Prologue

Caption:Thaddeus Kosciuszko: 1746 to 1817

Great deeds make legends. Ages turn Legends into Eponyms.

For some people Kosciuszko is a mountain in Australia; or a beer; or a bridge in New York; or a Town in Mississippi; or a mound in Poland; or a Museum in Switzerland. What were the great deeds of the mortal man Kosciuszko? Through all his adult life he was ‘All in’, body and soul, to defeat oppression and win the blessing of liberty for All humankind. His fight for liberty in America and Europe turned him into a symbol of liberty for poets and writers around the world. Many great leaders of Kosciuszko’s time and after, some Legendary Figures themselves, articulated Kosciuszko’s Majestic Deeds and stand for equal rights. We have not the time for all, but we have the time for one. American Independence War General, Nathaniel Greene said:

Nothing could exceed his [Kosciuszko’s] zeal for the public service One in a world whom no pleasure could seduce, no labor fatigue and no anger deter. What besides greatly distinguished him was an unparalleled modesty and entire unconsciousness of having done anything extraordinary. Never making a claim or pretension for himself and never omitting to distinguish and commend the merits of others.

“Poland Will Yet Dance Again” is not a story about all of Kosciuszko’s life, it is a story of only a small part, the part when Kosciuszko the Man triumphed over Deepest Adversity and transitioned into Kosciuszko the Legend.

Caption: Maciejowice on the Vistula River, 9 October 1794. Kościuszko’s quarters. (Conversation between gen. Kosciuszko and his secretary Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz)

Kościuszko: *We’ve got to stop [general] Fersen’s divisions before he links up with General Suvorov’s forces. Fersen is trapped – we’re in front of him with the Vistula at his*

back; we've blown the bridge – the peasants are using it for firewood! To finish them off we only need Adam Poninski's division. He'll be here soon; God willing.

Niemcewicz: *Can we win? The Russian army is four times the size of ours.*

Kościuszko: *Remember America? For seven years I saw small farmers and shopkeepers battle professional British soldiers, the most powerful force in the world. The Americans won. Can you imagine what that meant to me, a Pole? It was inspiring. I saw what appeared impossible, a small but cohesive group of patriots, vastly outmanned and outgunned, triumph over a great empire? Yes - we can win. It doesn't matter who leads them - Moskals or anyone else - I've said it over and over again, if we Poles stick together as patriots, even if we only have scythes, we can and will throw off the yoke of foreign oppression.*

Caption. Russian Camp. General Fersen poring over maps:

Look, we know where that son-of-a-bitch Poniński's divisions are. Oh little brother, you don't have enough time to run and help Kościuszko. Our Cossacks caught your messenger – we tortured him and he spilled the beans. (rubbing his hands) Ha ha! The battle begins at dawn!

Caption: The first Russian cannon thundered on Friday 10 October at 4.45am ...

NARRATOR: Kościuszko had no choice; the call of battle had to be answered. Polish (cannons) troops led by Kościuszko himself, wreaked terrible carnage on the Muscovite ranks. When the cannon balls ran out, they fought with rifles and when the bullets ran out, Colonel Jan Krzycki sounded the scythe charge, 'Children, brave Cracovians! Follow me!

An instant later Krzycki is hit by a grenade; head blown off, he falls dead. A bullet tears through Ursyn Niemcewicz's right arm just above the elbow. The bone remains intact, but his nerves are torn. Blood spouts and his sword falls from his hand. An enemy soldier grabs his horse by the bridle. Ursyn is captured. The Cossacks rob him at first and then beat him with whips.

Caption. A chamber in the palace. Here the Polish prisoners are held: here the generals sit on bales of hay. And here, weighed down by greatcoats, Niemcewicz, consumed by fever, falls into morbid sleep.

Caption. BATTLEFIELD.

Meanwhile, on the battlefield, the situation worsens. Confusion reigns in the Polish ranks. Kościuszko tries to rally the men, but he is swept away by stampeding riders hurtling

through the muddy field. The Russians catch up. Kościuszko, his horse weak and slow, 3 better ones were lost in previous battles, has no chance of escape.

Give up – shouts Potopin. The Cossack gores Kosciuszko near the left hip – *Give up I say!*

Give up? I'd rather die, thinks Kościuszko.

He mouths his pistol, pulls the trigger, but it fails to fire. Potopin gores him once again; the horse rears up on its hind legs and throws the rider to the ground. Kościuszko straddles the horse but falls up to his armpits into a bog. Defenceless, he is slashed, his skull almost cracked by the Russian broadsword. A wounded Polish soldier shrieks out, *'Don't kill him, that's Kościuszko!'*

They didn't realise it was Kościuszko; he was not dressed like a general but wore a peasant coat instead.

Kościuszko lying like a living corpse, surrounded by the bodies of his compatriots; chests slashed open by bayonets, faces, still bearing expressions of fear and despair. The battlefield now transformed into a barren feeding ground for crows.

Caption. A palace chamber. Niemcewicz, semi-conscious, startles to his feet and listens; he and several generals huddle on the porch. The Moskals carry in a man gored in the hip with blood oozing from head wounds - *like a crown of thorns* ... Niemcewicz weeping, stumbles and collapses chest-first onto the bier.

Caption. A palace chamber. Towards morning Kościuszko rouses himself from lethargy, blindly glances around; a sob escapes his tortured lips .. (whispers)
Where am I? (surprised) You're wounded?

We're in a Russian prison —They shot me through the hand. It's nothing. I will look after you. I won't leave you.

Oh, I'm so relieved that in my trials and tribulations I can count on a friend like you. Has the uprising collapsed? What's to come?

Niemcewicz: *What's to come? Remember; within every defeat there is a seed to victory.*

Kościuszko: *Ah, but how long before this seed bears fruit?*

Niemcewicz: *Who knows, 124 springs perhaps?*

Kosciuszko – *Oh what a prophet you are!*

Russian Guards: *Quiet in there! No talking!*

Caption: 13 October, departure from Maciejowice.

Narrator: A mighty convoy proceeds. General Fersen in front – with a team of six horses and a looted carriage, then, in a smaller carriage, is Kościuszko, accompanied by a surgeon; a larger wagon seats Generals Sierakowski, Kniaziewicz and Kamienski, as well as Niemcewicz and Fisher; a throng of Polish prisoners forms the convoy tail.

Prisoners: *Where are the lands and houses, where is the happy life you promised us? Will we find it in Siberia?*

Wending along - hundreds of carts loaded with loot, as well as herds of cattle. Behind the carts two thousand Russian soldiers guard the prisoners ... and the loot.

Caption: 14 October, Korytnica

Narrator: Newcomers arrive from Warsaw. Lapierre, a black-skinned valet, called Domingo, Kościuszko's cook, Jean, as well as Niemcewicz's servant, Franciszek. Lapierre falls to his knees and displays a trunk and praises its contents.

(Speaks broken Polish) *Oh, General, Domingo has brought you the best things: snuff box, sheep's coat, frock coats, long dress, tail coat, nightgowns, 20 pairs of pants, 23 underpants, 5 big boots, 3 pairs of shoes, pillows, feather covers for winter, a map of Poland . . . and a carriage.*

Kościuszko: *Unbelievable! Domingo, you've thought of everything, even the silk and cotton stockings. This will last me a prison lifetime. But which prison?*

Caption. Baggage Search.

Fersen orders a baggage search. They are looking to confiscate written matter, probing in particular the belongings of the writer, Niemcewicz. Fersen rummages through the contents noting:

Sermons [speeches] of the Parliament. Oh ... a Targowica Bible, and publications criticising the Russian nation, cartoons lampooning Tsaritsa as a husband killer, and

caricatures of her!!! An elegy on the second partition of Poland and a letter to the Targowica traitors. (Fersen, enraged, screams out) Confiscate everything !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Caption: Puławy, 15 October 1794

Narrator: Fersen receives an order to join Suvorov's forces to help launch an attack on Warsaw. General Aleksey Khrushchev assumes control over the Polish convoy. Waving his baton around, he beckons to the nobles standing nearby to witness with their own eyes their captured leader. There was a rumour going around that the convoy was transporting a false leader and that the real one had escaped and was gathering a Polish army. Kościuszko felt humiliated by these charades. Niemcewicz expressed his contempt:

-Up till now I've seen humans behave like wild animals. This is the first time I've seen a beast behaving like a human ...

Caption: 17 October, a tavern in Zaslav.

Narrator: Khrushchev encourages Niemcewicz to agree to a meeting with Princess Janushova Sangushkova. The Princess believes that if she can wheedle the Poles into betraying their country it will curry favour with Khrushchev and the Russians won't plunder her [estates] .

Princess Sanguszkowa: *Redeem yourselves your Graces. Identify the ringleaders, and rest assured the generosity of the all-powerful Empress will have no bounds.*

Niemcewicz: *Our revolution has no secrets, we know the instigator: it's the Tsarina herself! Partitioning Poland! Misery, rape and oppression; patriots backed us and neither the threat of death nor imprisonment can force me to reveal their names.*

The Princess replies: *I bid you farewell. I regret that your Grace is so stubborn.*

Caption: 10 December 1794, via Carskie Siolo

Narrator: At first the prisoners are kept in the tavern for several hours, later they are locked in the carriages. To avoid attention, the bells are removed from the shafts. The convoy slips into Petersburg through a labyrinth of darkened streets. These moments are filled with terror. Around nine in the evening furtive characters cloaked with disguises arrive. Powerful mitts lift Kościuszko under the armpits and carry him toward the NEVA River; floe to floe the breaking ice creaks. They seat Kosciuszko in a covered boat, the oars crackle; avoiding the ice, the boat recedes from the bank.

Niemcewicz, filled with dread, is in the other boat:
What fate awaits me? Will they dump me into the icy gulf?

Caption: 10 December 1794, Peter and Paul Fortress

Narrator: They enter a large gate and climb an illuminated staircase. Kościuszko is carried up the stairs to a small office, where he can rest. . Niemcewicz and Fisher, hair unkempt and shabbily dressed in wolf skins, are left to the glances of curious onlookers. After half an hour, an individual draped in medals arrives. It's Samojułow, the public prosecutor, the Tsarina's favourite.

'What role did you play for Kościuszko?' [Kostyushko] he asks.

'The role of friend and volunteer officer,' replies Niemcewicz, his hand in a sling, adding. 'I apologise for my dishevelled state, Your Excellency.'

'This is not the time for niceties', retorts Samojułow in rage. He orders the two to be taken away.

Samojułow himself goes to see Kościuszko, who probingly inquires
'Where are my companions?'

'Calm down, they're settling into their little chambers,' (Samojułow replies with irony).

Narrator: No not in chambers, they are in the dungeon ... tomorrow they will discover that the Tsarina has condemned them to life imprisonment. Kościuszko's frail health induces the Tsarina to permit him two rooms in the house of the fortress governor. She plans to interrogate the prisoners immediately. The greedy, despotic Tsarina, ruthless about Poland, wants to eliminate all conspiratorial elements from the country; she wants to unmask the leaders of the insurrection and track down their connections in France and Prussia. She seeks evidence against the Czartoryskis, as an excuse to confiscate their estates. She instructs Samojułow about the answers she demands.

What did Kościuszko talk about with the Princess and Prince Czartoryski in Sieniawa?

Did he receive moral and material support from them?

Is it true that the Princess promised him her daughter's hand in marriage if he won the uprising?

How much money did he get from Madame Kossakowska?

What relations did Kościuszko, Potocki and Kołłątaj have with the Royal Saxon court? Did the Royal Court know an insurrection was planned?

Caption: 12 December, confessions

Narrator: Samojułow demands written confessions. The ailing General wrote for a week – with difficulty and disgust; but he wrote with courage. He admitted planning a treaty with Turkey against Russia... These words, full of dignity and courage, stood in the face of criminals who are just waiting for a nod from Samojułow. Considering his unhealed wounds, this further revealed his strength of character.

Caption: 19 December. The next confession. Narrator: Samojułow demands to know what Kościuszko was doing in Paris a year ago. Kosciuszko almost chokes. He wasn't going to divulge the most secret negotiations with Robespierre on the matter of France's assistance for the Uprising! The only person privy to these secret negotiations was Peter Maleshevski.

At this point Samojułow shows Kosciuszko a handwritten note. *Maleshevski betrayed us?!* Kościuszko's faith in people wavers. He breaks down. [Russian Inspector] Titov wrote in his report: '*... Situation is serious. I fear for Kościuszko's life*'.

Caption: In the dungeon ...

Narrator: For the first few days Niemcewicz was guarded by a corporal and four soldiers. With long, fur-lined coats wrapped around their bodies, they slept on the floor, surrounding him and keeping their weapons close by. Samojułow, the interrogator, arrives. He advises the prisoner to speak honestly and in return, he will be freed and given honours and status. The alternative? Torture! Samojułow demands written confessions – in one night! Niemcewicz can only write with his left hand; his right is in a sling.

Caption 12: Christmas Eve, 1794.

Narrator: Kościuszko spends Christmas Eve in torment. The only newspapers, made available to him, were those with reports about the massacre of Praga, a suburb of Warsaw, and the crushing of the Uprising.

The voice of a woman can be heard – a poem by Konopnicka set to music.

*The sun disappeared in a bloody sea, a bayonet glistened, knives flashed.
Suvorov's naked sword flared the signal for the massacre of Praga.*

*The fierce mob charges, showing no mercy for greying old folk:
Tearing apart live children in front of their mothers and fathers,
in every home corpses lie, splattering thresholds with their fresh blood*

*No language has words to portray the burning agony,
No one can find the courage to relate Praga's carnage!*

Ashes, smoke and blood bedaubed murderous infamy,

Trampling on corpses, Suvorov enters Warsaw, bloody!

Suvorov! Lifelong - your blood stained hands will ne'er be cleansed

Your sobriquet? No Paladin not, you perfidious pig.

Music....

(Now The voice of Prince Kleofas Oginski can be heard:)

'Among circles of friends, within family gatherings, in the whole of Poland, a lament is repeated, 'Kosciuszko has perished. Several sick people succumbed to a shocking fever, others went mad. You could meet people on the street wringing their hands, banging their heads against a wall, and repeating, despairingly, 'Kosciuszko has perished, the inference being "Poland is no more"...

(Inspector) Titov wrote in his report: 'Mr Kościuszko sits in one spot from morning till night, in pained thought.'

On New Year's Eve Kościuszko suffered from such a bad headache that he passed out. When he came to, he had to answer the next lot of questions posed by the Tsarina.

He showed cleverness and a deeply thought out strategy. Even Samojłow was pleasantly surprised:-

Kościuszko isn't as stupid as I previously thought.

Caption: 13 January 1795, new tenants.

Narrator: At midnight Niemcewicz heard the rattle of a carriage. Trunks and bundles were being carried into the cellsThe next day it was revealed that more leaders of the Uprising had been arrested after the insurrection had been crushed. Andrzej Kapostas

was put behind Niemcewicz's cell. Frail, he suffered epileptic fits; always mournful, he howled dreadfully in his cell. Kiliński the bootmaker, in a cell further on, was constantly complaining about the lack of women and continually cursed the Tsarina, who, it was well known, was famous for her unsatisfied lust. On festive days he dressed in ceremonial attire: a floor-length, tight robe, over which he wore a long vest and a belt studded with gold – and, under the gaze of the surprised [Moskals] torturers, he strode pompously ... to the toilet.

Niemcewicz suffered badly from loneliness. To ease his need of companionship he was given a grey cat. It didn't help. His beard grew longer and longer. He lost weight, grew weaker, suffered from stomach disorders and dizziness..

Caption: 18 January 1795, Kościuszko's illness.

Narrator: As Titov wrote,

'he is sick of life and wants to use hunger to emaciate himself, he is very weak, his insides have shrunk, and he might die soon'.

His condition worsens on 31 May; tortured by terrible colic pains, the sick man moans in delirium.

On 14 June, the Tsarina instructs her court physician, Dr Rogerson,

'It's not in the royal interest to have Kościuszko die. Do something so he lives a little longer.'

Rogerson examines Kościuszko and declares him to be in a very dangerous condition. The General is moved from the Fort to the Marble Palace, where he is waited upon by servants bedecked in gala outfits, who drive him around on an armchair with wheels. Kościuszko, lays on a long chair sofa for long periods, his face anguished and his head bandaged. He is tortured by thoughts of his companions languishing in the Siberian tundra.

Lapierre appears carrying a tray. On it are a tureen and a stack of books.

'General ... some warm broth; it will massage your heart and tummy ... No? Oh, sure I will be happy to read some cool French romances to you.'

Kosciuszko: - *Dear Domingo. Why don't you read about Paris, while I draw the fields of my Siechnowicze estate?'*

Immersed in pain, Kosciuszko tries to find relief in woodcraft, making beautiful snuffboxes, goblets, boxes for sweets, tobacco tins, chess pieces and vases.

Caption: 10 October 1795. The first anniversary of the defeat at Maciejowice

(The voice of Hugo Kołłątaj can be heard)

*Bless the knight, who through his own undoing,
Defended you and didn't allow you to die in shame.
Poland has died, but he protected her from dishonour.*

A fragment of a song "Kosciuszko Ballad" by Lech Makowiecki

Caption: August 1796, the Swedish fiancé

Narrator: The young king of Sweden, Gustav IV, arrives at court. Catherine has dreamt up a plan to marry off her niece to him. She believes the marriage can solve a lot of difficult political problems. Catherine likes Gustav, a charming and witty eighteen year old, but thirteen year old Alexandra likes him even more: it was love at first sight. In the fervour of negotiations, the question of religion is 'forgotten'. The date of the engagement is set for 11 September. Before the evening festivities, in the presence of the Tsarina and all her family, Gustav begins reading the engagement document. Suddenly, he is taken aback at the sight of the clause, which gives the future queen of his Lutheran nation, the right to retain her Orthodox faith. He hurls the document to the ground.

'I've been trapped! My hand will not sign this.'

The Tsarina kindly tries to sway him, *'You asked for Alexandra's hand knowing she was Orthodox, it surely means you accept her religion and therefore she doesn't need to change it.'*

'There is no way that Sweden will have an Orthodox queen,' shouted Gustav.

The Tsarina looked at him coldly and left the room.

"A little king, of a little country. Who does he think he is, sulking here? He's insulted the crown.'

After this, Catherine suffers a mild stroke, her first.

Gustav and his entourage return to Stockholm. As they pass the fort, Vyborg, he thinks about what had happened at this spot just six years ago. During the Swedish-Russo war,

his father, King Gustav III, fought a great sea battle here, hoping to take St Petersburg, and remove greedy Catherine from power. He lost the battle.

The young king returned to Stockholm, without inkling, it was he who contributed to the Tsarina's downfall.

Meanwhile, the monotony of prison life in the fortress continued. Days passed unchanged. You could easily think nothing would ever happen here till the end of time. However...

Caption: 16 November 1796, the fall

Narrator: As usual, the Empress spent the night in bed with Platon Zubov. In the morning she drank two cups of coffee, joked with her wardrobe mistress, after which she disappeared. Around eight, her ministers gathered. They waited an hour. Zotov, the butler thought that the Empress was taking a stroll in the Winter Garden; he looked for her among the jasmine and orange trees. Finally, he opened the door of the toilet and screamed in terror. The ministers ran to him.

'Oh my God! What a sight!', Niemcewicz wrote afterwards in his memoirs.

'The monarch of half the world lays there unconscious; Catherine, in all her refinement, reposes in regal excrement. Her hitched-up skirt exposes her vast throne sitting posterior to one and all.'

Dr Rogerson arrives within the hour and diagnoses a stroke. Tsarevitch Paul hastily returns from Gatzyn. He immediately destroys the document in which Catherine nominated her grandson, Alexander, as her successor. Next day, at 9 pm, she passes away; within two hours, the son she hated is sworn in as Tsar Paul I.

Caption: 26 November 1796, Kościuszko is set free

Narrator: In a spirit of reconciliation, surrounded by the General's entourage and accompanied by Tsarevitch Alexander, Tsar Paul visits Kościuszko at the Marble Palace.

'General I've come to restore your freedom ... It is my very first edict.'

Kościuszko, confused, sat in stunned silence. Tsar Paul sat next to him on the sofa and spoke with great gentleness.

'I always grieved over Your Grace's fate, but during my mother's rule I couldn't do anything to help. I know you were severely persecuted; under her rule all worthy people were persecuted. I was the first in line.'

(Kosciuszko): *'Your Majesty, it's not my own fate I grieve about, but the fate of my homeland.'*

(Tsar): *Your Grace, forget about your homeland (...)*

(Kosciuszko): *I'd rather I was forgotten, but my homeland free. A lot of nations have fallen. Yes, but none of these resemble the fall of Poland. (Pauses, then exultantly) The last Uprising presented extraordinary proof of Polish patriotism and virtue, if only your Imperial Majesty could have witnessed it!*

*I know what efforts were made to give your Imperial Majesty false impressions of our nation. They were not true! What happened? Righteous and widespread discontent energised fervour to better the fate of our homeland, to get out from under oppression and disarray, and this was called a **rebellion**? Our citizens were herded into underground prisons!*

Tsar Paul I turned to his generals saying, *'Look at that – such passion!*

(Kosciuszko): *'Forgive me Your Majesty; I might've spoken out too forcefully...'*

(Tsar Paul I): *'No, no, you spoke straight to my heart. But now, please don't think of anything else except your health. I've already given orders that Your Grace should not want for anything. If you have any demand, speak up bravely and tell me openly as you would to a friend, because I am your true friend and I would like you to be the same to me. As proof of my friendship accept this sword from me.'*

(Kosciuszko): *'Your Majesty, what do I need this sword for when I have no homeland to defend? ... (after a while) But I have a foster homeland. With your permission I would like to travel to America.'*

(Tsar Paul I): *'You have it, General, my permission, as well as a promise of all possible assistance for the long journey. Good health and love me,'* said the Tsar, kissing Kościuszko on the forehead and squeezing his hands.

He spoke to the Tsarevitch and the Generals in praise of Kościuszko, *'This is a worthy and rare person. I do not see a fool in him. He is a courageous leader of a fallen nation, wronged by fate and my mother.'*

[Poles] Targowica traitors, sycophants at the Tsar's court, felt threatened. What would their fate be if the new Tsar showered the Polish patriots with graces? During dinner with Tsar Paul, the Marshall of the royal court, Wielhorski, and Chamberlain Ilinski began plotting.

26 November 1795 continued

Tsar: -'How can we sweeten Kosciuszko's remaining years?'

'Your Majesty, we need to shower him with gifts. To begin with, give him a thousand souls and twelve thousand silver roubles ... If he accepts them, (he snickers) he will lose a lot of respect and popularity in his nation.'

Kościuszko is ailing, he's incapable of leading, let him go to the other end of the earth. The others must not be freed. Niemcewicz- no! Ignacy Potocki – absolutely not! Thousands of exiles – no! Otherwise there's the danger of another Uprising.

The Tsar wanted to prevail:

'But I want to resolve the Polish problem amicably.'

'Perhaps make Kościuszko and the others take an oath of loyalty to the Emperor!'

'Good thinking! This will cut down Kościuszko's credibility in the nation!'

In the evening Wielhorski appears at Kościuszko's place:

'Here's a proposition. If you swear an oath of allegiance, the Tsar will set free twelve thousand [Polish] soldiers imprisoned during the Uprising.'

Kościuszko is determined to consult with Marshall Ignacy Potocki.

'Is the Tsar being two-faced? I thought he was being genuine with me. On the one hand he's offering freedom and on the other he's making me pay for it.'

'I'll give my right arm that this oath is the wicked idea of the Targowica Traitors. It's too bad. There's no time for negotiations. Take the oath. You'll save thousands of our people from doom! Just think! Your sacrifice might signify the return of twelve thousand pairs of hands to our country, it will lift our ruined homeland!' (Kościuszko sighs heavily).

Meanwhile Niemcewicz is unaware of what happened. But on the 27 November Inspector Makarov brings him the good news along with his supper..

'It's cheerful in Kościuszko's kitchen! They say that the Tsar visits the General and he's going to free you all.'

The next day, the same Makarov rushes into the cell puffing, sits on Niemcewicz's bed, and pulls out a document from his pocket:

'Sir, the Tsar has set you free! – he hugged the Pole and congratulated him.

'We're going to town, but first we have to shave off your beard.'

Narrator Niemcewicz put the shaved beard into his pocket – as a souvenir. In the evening, in the presence of Samońłow a group of Poles took the oath of loyalty. In his heart, Kościuszko fought a battle more dire than the one at Maciejowice.

(Voice of historian Korzon) 'How could this be? The country had entrusted him with wider powers and with greater rank than the majesty of the king himself. Should he now place these priceless national jewels at the feet of a foreign monarch and accept a slave's surrender?'

'I, Tadeusz Kościuszko, whose signature appears below, promise and swear in front of Almighty God and on the Holy Bible, that I should be, and want to be subservient, faithful and obedient to his Imperial Majesty ..' (his voice fades)

Caption” „No cóż, przysięgę można złamać, ale jak zapobiec represjom szalonego cara wobec Polski?”

(Historian Korzon). After that, he never complained to anyone about what an enormous sacrifice he had made for his vanquished compatriots. The beauty of a fulfilled offering radiated from his martyred figure.

Caption: 29 November, amnesty

Narrator: Kościuszko drove to an audience with the Tsar, to whom he presents a list of prisoners eligible to be freed ... The Tsar's amnesty covered not twelve, but as many as twenty thousand Poles. Not only were the soldiers of the Uprising freed, but patriots exiled to Siberia earlier, were also freed.

Niemcewicz visits Kosciuszko in his cell in the Marble Palace.

Kościuszko is lying on a sofa. Feeble, stuttering voice, he is fearful. He gestures that someone is eavesdropping. Niemcewicz kneels down beside Kościuszko and embraces him.

Kościuszko: *'I know you have suffered a lot, but please sacrifice yourself and accompany me to America.'*

'Aaaaaa??? ... You know how much I am attached to you, but after so much suffering, I've been separated from my family for so long, I'd like to visit my homeland, fall at my father's feet ...'

Kościuszko: *'I'm planning to leave in a week. Can't you see the state I'm in? Can I endure such a long journey alone?'*

Niemcewicz: *I won't abandon you.*

Caption: 15 December, funeral ceremonies of Catherine the Great

Narrator: The Poles were ordered to attend the funeral ceremonies. Niemcewicz refused to go to the catafalque, to avoid kissing the Tsarina's hand – the hand which had assassinated his homeland.

[Niemcewicz, memoirs] *'... on a ceremonial bed, elevated on twelve posts, you could see the dead remains, the futility of all greatness, the queen of a fifth of the world, today, feasted on by worms. Her face concealed by a bloated stomach. She wore a Muscovite robe of green velvet, lined with richly embroidered sable. Many crowns, sceptres, globes of the world and medals were laid around the base of the funerary podium.'*

Caption 18 December 1796, Farewelling the Tsar

Narrator Kościuszko arrives at the Winter Palace in a carriage. He is pushed through a long series of palace chambers in a wheeled armchair. Tsar Paul, together with his family, receive their guest in the bedroom. The Tsar's wife gives Kościuszko a beautiful lathe workshop and other presents. The prince asks him to write often. The Tsar gives Kościuszko 12,000 roubles, a great carriage thoughtfully decked out with a bed, a field kitchen, table linen as well as a sable fur.

Korzon: *'In the history of Russia there is no other example of a Tsar endowing a defeated foe with so many graces.'*

The Tsar appoints an officer escort for Kosciuszko's journey to Stockholm.

Caption 19 December 1796, Kościuszko travels the world

Narrator: The close knit group of travellers is comprised of Kościuszko, Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz his faithful friend and adjutant now acting as quartermaster; the musically talented officer Stan Libiszewski, a cheerful little jackass, who ends up carrying the ailing leader, Lapierre the handsome, dark-skinned valet and Jean the French cook.

A six month journey over land and water awaits. Finland, Sweden and England, before they finally set sail from Bristol to Philadelphia.

Heavy snow slows the journey. The comfortable, large and heavy carriage is pulled by twelve horses. It was freezing cold. They didn't get far on the first day; snow drifts, a broken shaft ...

22 December, the snows of Finland

'Niemcewicz *Travelling in December is appalling. Dress on dress, fur over fur makes you heavy and immobile as a granite block. You can hardly breathe in the tightly packed vehicle and your fur sticks to your face.'*

Snow, eight foot deep stops the carriage. All who get out find themselves waist deep in snow.

Libiszewski *'In the next village we have to get strong horses that can pull us out from this chasm! These postilion driven, miserable horses are good for nothing!'*

Kościuszko: *What time is it? Nine? We've wasted another four hours! Nice pace!*

Caption: 26 December, Kymene River [Kymijoki] the river of freedom

Narrator: The travellers are nearing the Kymene River, which separates the Russian zone of Finland from the Swedish part.

(Niemcewicz)- *'Our emotions overflowed when we arrived on Swedish soil! Our ties with Russia were severed, but we were still dragging the rest of the chain behind us. We felt intensely relieved sensing we had abandoned the dregs of prison life on the other side of the river. Flowing tears, fervent hugs, a poignant and unforgettable moment.'*

Caption: 2 January 1797, Abo [nowadays called Turku]

Narrator: They reach Abo, the former capital of Finland, just before noon. They find rooms in the famous and elegant Seipel inn (archival photo), near the historic cathedral.

an uninterrupted stream of tributes and veneration begins. The newspaper Åbo Tidningar welcomes them effusively:

(CAPTION) 'Our town proudly welcomes General Kościuszko, one of the greatest personages of the contemporary world.'

In the newspaper **Åbo Dagligt Allehanda** - an enthusiastic account of the farewell concert. Local students carried Kościuszko to the concert hall and after the concert, they carried him back to his rooms; later, they sang into the night under his window.

Caption 10 January 1797, a concert under the bunks (Kumlinge)

Narrator: The travellers stop for the night on the Åland Archipelago with a friendly fishing family. In the cottage there is an unusual bedroom: three storey bunks. The fishermen are mending their nets, while Libiszewski is giving a concert under the bunks.

(Niemcewicz): *'Libiszewski, tired out by the journey, throws himself on the bed. There, sprawled out, almost totally undressed, he takes up his fiddle and gives a most special show: a person playing contradances and Cossacks in bed. The strange form and movements of our musician, the funny faces he pulls, the jollity of the dances he plays, brings about loud laughter ... the laughter continues until sleep overcomes the fiddler ...'* (here music plays)

Caption: 11 January, dismantling of the carriage

Narrator: the caravan continues through the frozen Archipelago. The wheels are on the first sledge and the carriage box is on the second. The passengers ride in the open, but an improvised rug canopy shields Kościuszko. Will the ice hold? Locals test the path with their pikes.

Kościuszko's terrified cook shouts, *'Oh General, Sir, this ice is no thicker than a rissole! We'll all be drowned!'*

Caption: 13 January, Eckerö

Narrator: Severe weather, gale force winds *ice floes and ice sheets*, frustrate progress; for eleven days travel is interrupted at Eckerö, a small town., Niemcewicz, visits a local post office.

'An optical telegraph. What a clever invention! What a marvel! What a pleasure it is to be able to send one's words through the air with the speed of thought!'

Narrator: Niemcewicz drifts through a deeply snowed forest; suddenly, he plunges through the crusted snow into a sinkhole.. Deeper and deeper his heavy boots and thick fur mire him in the morass. Sensing danger his nostrils flare, Help, Help, he shouts. Just as he loses strength, help arrives. Major Udom “the guardian angel” pulls him out.

Caption: Hut under snow.

Temperatures plunge; confined in the snow submerged ‘dacha’ the party feasts on the hazel grouse and white rabbits hospitable locals have dropped down the chimney.

At last, on 22 January, it thaws. Major Udom commands,
‘Hurry up, let’s get yourselves onto the boat!’

Kościuszko climbs into a sledge; the kitchen and the rest of the baggage are packed onto the three other sledges. What about the carriage? The carriage was too large and the boat too small. For several days they struggle to find a way through icebergs.

Caption: 26 January, Stockholm

Narrator: ‘

Kościuszko is the sensation of the day. He is welcomed as a conqueror, a hero, a national martyr. Crowds of people come on foot hoping to catch a glimpse. Concern for Kosciuszko’s health causes local authorities to limit the amount of carriage traffic in the hotel street, so the clatter of hooves and wheels on the pavement doesn’t disturb the recuperating hero.

For some this is the journey’s end. Their mission concluded, the Tsar’s escort sets off on the return trip to Petersburg. Kościuszko presents Major Udom a watch and now it’s time to farewell Lapierre.

Kościuszko: *‘Domingo, you have to think of the future. Do you want to come with me to America?’*

Domingo:[in broken Polish] *‘O no sir! I liv thirteen years in Europe. I be a European man. I speak lots of languages. I go to Poland, find a job there, America – no Sir.’*

[Show a caption of a black slave tortured]

Kościuszko: *‘Make up your mind. If that is your wish, go to Poland. I will give you a reference to Prince Dominic Radziwil. He will look after you properly. Remember, always love Poland.’*

The young king Gustav IV, who only a few months ago broke off his engagement to the Tsarina's granddaughter, is very keen to meet Kościuszko. He invites him to the palace. The General refuses to go; such a visit might be construed as an anti-Russian act. The king proposes a secret meeting, but the General doesn't agree to that either.

Artists come seeking inspiration for Kościuszko portraits. Images emerge of a man with bandaged head on a chaise longue. The first appears in Stockholm.

Kosciuszko at his desk. *'Too many guests, too little time for reading. And there's so much news about our beloved homeland. Ursyn, my heart is pulsating! The conspiracy is full-blown. Polish regiments are forming in exile.'* (after a pause – he whispers secretly), *'Listen, I need to have contact with Paris!'*

Niemcewicz whispers;

'Maybe that Dutch diplomat who visited yesterday can help us establish correspondence with the Directorate, or even with Napoleon himself?'

Kościuszko is excited:

'He'll help, he'll help! In the meantime, take a look around to see if there's a boat sailing for France?'

Niemcewicz: *'A small port, a large ice floe. It'll be easier to find something in Göteborg.'*
(Confused) *'So... sooo, we're not sailing to America?'*

Closely supervised by the Tsar's ambassador, the lack of privacy, the impossibility of secret correspondence with France, induce Kościuszko to leave the Swedish capital; he departs on 23 February by stagecoach making his way to Göteborg.

Caption: Göteborg 3 March 1797.

Narrator: The guests are given quarters with the garrison commander, Colonel Anders Leonard Trefenberg. Local musicians organise concerts.

Göteborg is a wealthy town; the people love to feast ... and drink . . . and drink. One day a rich wine merchant invites Niemcewicz to see his cellars.

'Niemcewicz :We came into a huge, underground vault where barrels galore, filled with all kinds of wine, stood in a row reaching right up to the ceiling. My host kept on wanting me to try yet another, even better wine, and as I kept on tasting good ones, better ones, the best, right up to wines that were incomparable, so our heads began to spin so much, that we rested them against a barrel and both fell into a deep sleep.'

Caption: 16 April 1797, Göteborg. Kościuszko with a light-hearted reproach

'You weren't around yesterday, Ursyn. You were gadding about, so I had to rejoice in the good news alone.'

'Could this be news from Europe?'

Kościuszko is elated; *'Oh yes, [general] Dąbrowski is in Paris! He has negotiated a deal with the French government that they will finance a new legion. Apparently our soldiers sent around a rumour that "their leader would soon be arriving and will stand at the head of the army". And do you know what Dąbrowski did? He gathered together all the officers and made it known that he still regarded Kościuszko as his chief and leader. Oh the legions! Poland will not perish yet.'*

Niemcewicz says contrarily, *'Oh I see. But in the meantime, the leader and chief can neither walk nor get up on a horse.'*

Kościuszko beaming, *'But I can still get to a clavichord [on crutches] and with a joyful heart compose a waltz for those gallant boys.'*

He plays 'Waltz' [his original composition!]. *'Poland will ... dance again!'*

Libiszewski *'General sir, now there are two polonaises and a waltz in the collection.'*

Kościuszko: *'Remind me in London to get my compositions published. We need to send them to our soldiers.'*

Narrator: Weeks pass. Kościuszko grows gloomy. An invitation from Napoleon has still not arrived. It didn't come. Depressed, with a heavy heart, on 10 May, he boards a small merchant ship and sails for England.

Here the song 'Lullaby for the General' plays (or part of it)

Caption 30 May 1797, England

Narrator: Kościuszko takes residence in Hotel Sablonierre, Leicester Square. His arrival is announced in the 'Gentleman's Magazine': **(Caption) "Kościuszko, the hero of freedom is here."** The whole of London queues up to visit the world famous hero. During two weeks, crowds of people trail through Kościuszko's room – politicians, philosophers, poets, aristocrats, the best doctors and the most famous painters.

By the order of the Tsar, ambassador Woroncow convenes a medical consultation.

(The head of the group dictates:) – *‘The head wound- from a cut by a sabre – brought about concussion and a partial lack of feeling, because of damage to a nerve in the head. Whereas, the wound that’s come about from a deep stab with a lance in the hip, damaged a nerve near the sciatic lymph node, which is causing hip weakness and a paralysis of the (left) leg, it also damaged the bladder. The recommended treatment for the patient comprises exercise, massage, warm baths, showers, diathermy. - General, please send this report to Dr Rush, who will assume responsibility for your health in America.’*

Narrator Kościuszko is advised to have spectacles made for himself. He doesn’t keep them long. In America, less than a year later, Little Turtle, the Indian chief from Miami, visits Kościuszko. He tries on the spectacles and declares that he sees a lot better with them. As well as the spectacles, Kościuszko gifts the chief two matching pistols, and says *‘use them on the first man who ever comes to subjugate you’*.

Modest and pathologically suspicious, Kościuszko refuses to pose for painters. Richard Cosway, the royal painter to King George III, paints him from memory. The famous Benjamin West gazes at him through a key hole. Kościuszko, although fatigued, yearns to meet the poet Wolcot, whose satirical verses he read when he was in tsarist prison. He gives Libiszewski a letter and a bottle of wine.

-‘Staś, I’ve written a note to Dr Wolcot, he’s the only person in London, truly the only person, whom I wish to meet. Here’s the last bottle from our stores of ancient Falernian wine, take it to him and beg him if he would deign to come here, because I would like to thank him in person ’.

Libiszewski: *‘Is that the poet who aimed satirical jabs at King George, General?’*

Kościuszko: *The same. See Staś, there are countries where the spirit of freedom reigns. The satirist can poke fun at the king and somehow no one shackles him in irons. (sighs). Poor Ursyn, he suffered so much for his rhymes about the Tsarina ...’*

And Wolcot does visit Kościuszko: *- ‘Doctor, when my tormented heart wanted to die, your verses lifted my spirits greatly. But one must keep on living, to build a country where freedom of speech reigns.’*

Dr Wolcot:- *‘But by what miracle, General, did you come upon my satire?’*

Kościuszko: *-‘The Hand of God! (laughing) – The prison guard brought me a book to read, but he must have been blind and didn’t know what he was bringing ...’*

Dr Wolcot:-*(loudly composes a poem,*

Subtitles over the song in Polish---- do not read the poem

*Me, Kosciuszko deems a Bard divine;
My Works illumed his dungeon of affright*
T'was here the Hero read my Lyric Line;
Yea, read my Lucubrations with delight.
To me the Hero rich Falerian sent,
To soothe the horrors of our gloomy weather:
To him in Leicester-fields with joy I went;
For Bards and Heroes pair like Doves together.*

NARRATOR Wolcot reminisced about his meeting with Kościuszko many years later, telling the poet Lord Byron about it, who then wrote an account of it in his memoirs. Byron cited Wolcot, saying that the people, who kept on running to see Kościuszko, were mainly politicians from the opposition. That's not surprising – the ruling Tories officially supported the third partition of Poland – they were courting an alliance with Russia. Those who turned up at Kościuszko's were liberals: the abolitionist William Wilberforce, the MP Charles James Fox, the playwright Richard Sheridan and others.

Niemcewicz introduces the guests in a courtly manner: - *'General, may I present the young parliamentarian William Wilberforce. They say he is the wittiest person in England ...'*

Wilberforce (contrarily) – *'Don't they say that I was once a profligate and a gambler? Ah, maybe they don't say that anymore because I have honestly converted.'*

Niemcewicz:- *'Our new friend is concerned about the fate of African prisoners, and at the moment is writing a bill, in the hope that Parliament will abolish this hideous trade. It's a disgrace, eleven million people have been sold into slavery.'*

Wilberforce:- *'We're thinking, General, how to organise the world, so that all races can live together in harmony. A few years ago we created a colony in Sierra Leone, to where we're directing black and white settlers... they are learning to exist together. We'll see how it will go. Is it true, general, that you used to have a black-skinned aide-de-camp?'*

Kościuszko:- *'I have had two wonderful friends. My valet Agryppa had many talents, including medical ones. He used to assist in operations during the war. The second, Domingo, also a valet, was a 'European', a dandy, very well read, mastered several languages, including our not easy Polish one. That first one didn't want to come to*

Poland, the second one didn't want to return to America. I miss them both very much. Oh, but that's a very long story...'

Narrator Kościuszko was extremely surprised to see his old foe – the English general Banastre Tarleton, who fought on the opposite side of the barricades in America!

Now, in London, Tarleton visited him with members of the Whigs Club. It was on Tarleton's initiative that the members passed around a collection for an elegant, gold-encrusted commemorative sword, **CAPTION 'To General Kosciuszko from the Whigs Club of England'**.

It was also due to the initiative of the Whigs Club, that finally, the sheet music of three pieces composed by Kościuszko, was published.

Caption: Sheet music.

A Stationers Hall publication appeared: 'Two Polonaises and a Waltz composed for the Patriotic Army of Poland by General Kosciusco'.

Narrator: Kościuszko didn't feel well in London, It was with relief, that he welcomed an invitation to Bristol. There, he was greeted with great honours: Sheriffs appeared at the tollgates, a cavalry regiment, as well as two old friends: the American ambassador Rufus King (a friend from the War of Independence) and a painter, John Trumbull, a friend from Saratoga. Another friend from the War of Independence, the US Consul for the Port of Bristol, Elias Vanderhost invited him to be a guest in his house.

Caption (photo of the Consul's house).

Each evening, on the initiative of the garrison commander, the army orchestra plays under Kościuszko's window. Crowds of people gather in the park hoping to get a glimpse of the famous hero.

The day before his departure, a delegation from the City Council arrived to see Kościuszko bearing an unusual present – a mahogany case with silver plate, each piece inscribed:

CAPTION 'The Friends of Liberty in Bristol to the gallant Kosciuszko'.

They deliver a sincere, albeit pompous speech,

ALDERMAN: 'Twenty five years ago, Prussia, Austria and Russia divided Poland between them, but Polish patriots did not abandon the hope of restoring their independence. So today, General Kościuszko, an embodiment of Polish nationalism, is royally welcomed in Bristol. We are delighted that we have an opportunity to express to you our high

veneration. It is with admiration that we regard your valour and iron obstinacy in the defence of your homeland, which has been attacked by tyrannical, bloodthirsty hordes.'

Witnesses recall the powerful impression Kościuszko made on them, especially his extraordinary warmth and a spirit untainted by life in captivity.

CAPTION: 19 June 1797, the last day in Europe.

Narrator: Crowds stand on rocky outcrops on the banks of the river Avon, and bid the general goodbye with shouts of '*Farewell*'. A day of triumphal procession.

English officers carry Kościuszko on a litter. Boats with flowers and fruit meet them. Out at sea the freighter "Adriana", decorated with American flags, waits at anchor. When Kościuszko is carried on board, those present take off their hats as a mark of respect.

The leader, conquered at Maciejowice, leaves Europe a victor.

EPILOGUE - female voice!!!

Two months later, across the Atlantic, crowds gather along Philadelphia harbour, to fete the famous Independence War hero. Kosciuszko's health improves. Knowing the respect French authorities have for the General, American Vice President, Thomas Jefferson, asks his friend to undertake a secret mission to persuade France not to declare war on America. Kosciuszko agrees; travelling incognito as Thomas Kannberg, he leaves for Paris, May 4, 1798. Perhaps his presence in Europe will inspire a Polish insurrection? France and America remain at peace, alas, Poland stays oppressed. Unable to return to his homeland, Kosciuszko settles in Switzerland. He dies in 1817. The following year his remains are reburied next to Polish Kings, in Wawel Castle, Krakow. His heart, in an urn, is placed in the Royal Castle, Warsaw.

Kosciuszko becomes a symbol of freedom and integrity. In 1823, his countrymen build a symbolic grave in his honour, the Krakow mound over 30 metres high. In 1825, West Point cadets choose Kosciuszko over all other Independence War heroes, to be commemorated in their first memorial. Today, there are over one hundred Kosciuszko monuments worldwide. Paul Edmund Strzelecki, son of a Polish Insurrectionist, after climbing a summit in Australia that resembled the Krakow mound, decided:

Male voice *“although in a foreign country on a foreign ground but amongst free people who appreciate freedom ... I could not refrain from giving it the name of Mount Kosciusko”.*

THE END

(Lullaby - lyrics by Ernestyna; translated by Marcel Weyland)

Sleep, o General, from all suffering
Let your soul be free
Poland, your land, has her freedom
In her destiny
Our soldiers shall recover
Our beloved land
And your spirit, firm, undaunted,
Shall be our command.
When the Slav Pope's troops march forward,
Vengeful regiments,
Wisia'll use again her magic
And in freedom dance!
Let the hellish hordes retreat, and
Let the lemmings flee!
Liberty shall blaze forever,
Poland shall be free!

Sleep, o General, from all suffering
Let your soul be free
Poland, your land, has her freedom
In her destiny
Close your eyes, o General,
Close your eyes, dear friend,
In your dreams see people risen
Time and time again.
Streams shall bear away the snow drifts,
Lumpy ice shall melt,
May victorious shall be with us
And all shall be well!
Poland has not, will not perish,
Will throw off her chains!
Will then hitch her skirts up gaily,
Her heels kick up again!

CREDITS OVER MUSIC.

