

ARDUOUS ROAD TO STATEHOOD AT THE END OF IMPERIAL RULE

SACRIFICE COOPERATION TRADITION

GEN. JÓZEF DOWBOR-MUŚNICKI (1867-1937)

COMMANDER OF THE GREATER POLAND UPRISING, MODEL OF CARE FOR THE HOMELAND IN TIMES OF WAR AND PEACE

1867

On October 25, he was born as the youngest of six children in a Polish-Lithuanian noble family, strongly attached to patriotic traditions and cultivating the memory of the deprived Homeland.

1884 - 1902

He was educated at three military universities in St. Petersburg; he graduated with honors from each of these schools despite the dislike shown to him - a Pole - by his Russian lecturers.

1904-1914

He served in the Russian army gaining military experience in organizing and commanding troops of varying size and character (including participation in the Russo-Japanese War); His efforts were rewarded with promotions and decorations (at that time he received the first of seventeen decorations awarded to him - the St. Vladimir's Cross, the Order of St. Anne, the Order of St. Stanislaw and the Order of St. Vladimir).

1914-1917

After the outbreak of World War I, he fought with commitment in the Russian units allied with England and France, hoping that such a balance of forces would lead to the defeat of the two remaining partitioners of Poland (Germany and Austria), and consequently - to the rebirth of the Republic;

He commanded in numerous victorious battles and was severely wounded several times on the battlefield; In recognition of his merits, he was awarded the English "Order of the Bath" and the Russian "Golden Sabre", among others.

1917-1918

On August 23, after the outbreak of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and its withdrawal from the world war, he was appointed organizer and commander of the Polish I Corps in Russia (the so-called "Dowborczycy" [Dowborians]) - the first independent military formation for decades, consisting of Poles who wished to continue the struggle in pursuit of the rebirth of the Homeland; the area occupied by this detachment (called "Dowboria") can be considered the first historic patch of Rzeczpospolita [the Republic] liberated from the hands of the partitioners, a Polish enclave with its capital in the headquarters of the Corps - Bobruisk; However, in the face of pressure from the ten times stronger German army and the Bolshevik threat, the Corps was demobilized in 1918, and the funds acquired by the unit - the so-called Corps Treasury - were donated to the authorities of the reborn Republic.

1919

On January 15, on the orders of Józef Piłsudski - the Commander-in-Chief of the reborn Republic - he became commander of the anti-German Greater Poland Uprising, which had been underway for several days;

Within three months, he organized the Polish Armed Forces of the former Prussian partition (the so-called Greater Poland Army), which numbered 100,000 well-trained Polish soldiers, had all kinds of weapons and aviation, as well as its own munitions and medicine factories, military hospitals and patriotic education points; At the same time, he organized troops that supported the efforts of Poles to regain the German-occupied territories of Pomerania and Silesia, and provided military support to compatriots fighting at the other end of the reborn Homeland, in Lviv;

He took part in diplomatic talks with the Anglo-French Inter-American Mission, which was to settle the course of the Polish-German border;

On March 19 he received the highest general rank.

1920

After the end of the Greater Poland Uprising, he carried out the seizure from German hands (revindication) of cities granted to Poland under international treaties in recognition of the insurgents' heroism.

1921-1937

After the death of his wife, he retired and joined his children living on the estate of Lusowo (called Batorowo), where he took up writing and promoted modern land management among local farmers;

At the same time, he cared for veterans from his former units and for the patriotic upbringing of young people (both his own offspring - all four joined the ranks of the army, as well as students affiliated with the academic corporations "Lechia" of Poznań and "Batoria" in Vilnius);

On October 26, 1937, he died of a heart attack, and four days later his funeral was held in Lusowo, which - against the wishes of the deceased - was extremely solemn and became an occasion for manifestations of patriotic feelings.



Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki during his service in the 11th Fanagory Grenadier Regiment, ca. 1896



The march of the Russian army during the war with Japan, in which J. Dowbor-Muśnicki participated as a Pole conscripted into the Russian army



Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki - as a Pole conscripted into the partitioned army during World War I - surrounded by officers of the Russian 123rd Infantry Division (seated third from the left), 1916



Gen. Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki as commander of the Polish I Corps in Russia, 1917. (photo from the collection of the Military Historical Office)

"Dowbor's name acted as an order. The entire officer corps, soldiers, youths, all Poles capable of bearing arms reported to him. Officers' legions were formed, because officers were the most numerous. Józef Piłsudski formed legions in Galicia, Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki organized the Polish Army in the eastern territories" report by Tomasz Zan, a volunteer in the Polish I Corps



Officers and soldiers of the I Polish Corps (the so-called "Dowborczycy") created with the consent of the Russians and on the territory of the Russian partition during World War I by Gen. Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki - the first independent military formation for decades consisting of Poles who wanted to continue the fight striving for the rebirth of the Fatherland, spring 1918



Gen. Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki with members of the Polish Red Cross during patriotic celebrations (anniversary of the May 3 Constitution) in Poznań, May 3, 1919



Gen. Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki as commander of the Greater Poland Uprising, January 1919



Gen. Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki during the visit of Gen. Józef Haller - founder of the Polish Army in exile in France - to Poznań, June 25, 1919

My children should remember that they are Poles, that they come from an old noble family with a five-century impeccable past, and that their father has done his utmost for the resurrection of Poland in her former glory and power. He therefore has the right to demand of his offspring that our name shall not be tainted by anything.

excerpt from the will of J. Dowbor-Muśnicki



Meeting of the "three Józefs" in the castle chapel in Poznań: Gen. Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki - commander of the Greater Poland Army, Józef Piłsudski - Commander-in-Chief of the Republic of Poland reborn after the partitions, and Gen. Józef Haller - Commander-in-Chief of all the reconstituted post-partition Polish Army, October 26, 1919

Announcing this great honor for me [i.e., appointment as Commander-in-Chief of the Uprising], I vow obedience to the Nation and call upon you Compatriots - Polish officers and soldiers, to work together in the position entrusted to each of you. Remember that at the present time the Fatherland can neither promise nor give you anything extraordinary, because it often lacks [the] necessary. On the contrary, seeing in you defenders, the Homeland now only demands from you sacrifice, discipline, obedience, because only through them will our dream, the dream of our fathers and grandfathers - the Rebirth of an Independent United Poland - be realized.

oath of General Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki taken on January 17, 1919 in Poznań



Gen. Józef Dowbor-Muśnicki with his children in the park near the manor house in Lusowo (from left: son Olgierd, daughters Agnieszka and Janina and son Giedymin), 1925



Lieutenant Janina Lewandowska - elder daughter of General Dowbor-Muśnicki, pilot and paratrooper, murdered during World War II in 1940 by the Soviet NKVD in Katyn



Agnieszka Dowbor-Muśnicka - younger daughter of the general, executed during World War II by the German Gestapo in 1940 in Palmiry near Warsaw for conducting underground anti-Nazi activity

