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PARTICIPATION OF JEWS IN THE KOŚCIUSZKO UPRISING. THE MEMORY OF POLISH AND JEWISH BROTHERHOOD OF ARMS

At the end of the second half of the 18th century, about 750–800 thousand Jews lived in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.¹ That constituted approximately 6% of the overall population. A significant number of Orthodox Jews lived in quahals, Jewish Communities. About 66% of them lived in towns, the rest lived in villages.² A major part of that society worked as traders, innkeepers, or craftsmen. Only a small percentage worked as farmers.³ The majority of Jews living in Poland strictly adhered to the principles set in the Old Testament and Talmud. There was an idea to assimilate worshippers of Judaism into the Polish culture. Enthusiasts of this idea were, among others, Elias Accord and Mendel Lefin.⁴ In their plan, they referred to the concept of "maskils", followers of Moses Mendelssohn, the creator of *haskalah*, i.e. the Jewish enlightenment.

Worshippers of Judaism did not serve in the army of the Crown and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.⁵ It resulted from i.a. religious differences and the common opinion that worshippers of Judaism were cowards.⁶ What is more, some radical Jews warned their fellow worshippers against any military service, which they found a breach of religious principles.⁷ However, during armed conflicts representatives of that minority were obligated to participate in defending cities and supplying

¹ *Historia Żydów Polskich*, „Polityka”, wydanie specjalne. Pomocnik Historyczny, 2013, p. 15.

² E. Ringelblum, *Żydzi w powstaniu kościuszkowskim*, Warszawa 1937, p. 9.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 12-13.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 19-20.

⁵ A. Eisenbach, *Emancypacja Żydów na ziemiach polskich 1785–1870 na tle europejskim*, Warszawa 1988, p. 267.

⁶ M. Janion, *Pułkownik żydowski. Życiorys romantyczny i nieromantyczny*, Kraków 2008, p. 18-19.

⁷ W. Trąpczyński, *Henryk Dąbrowski i Legjony Polskie. Życie i czyny wybitniejszych legionistów: Karol Kniaziewicz, Franciszek Rymkiewicz, Józef Wielhorski, Cyprjan Godebski, Władysław Jabłonowski, Wincenty Axamitowski, Stanisław Fiszer, Józef Wybicki, Berek Joselewicz*, Warszawa 1907, p. 74-75.

the army with necessary equipment.⁸ There were situations in which, during the Second Northern War (1655–1660) or uprisings of the Cossacks, the Jewish community actively took part in fights against the enemies of the country.⁹ Among Christians of Jewish origin (neophytes) there were also people who served in the army. At the end of the 18th century, among social activists (Piotr Świtkowski) there were postulates saying that worshippers of Judaism should have the obligation to serve in the army.¹⁰ It was justified by the fact that the Jewish minority was quite large, and that there are Jewish officers in i.a. the Netherlands and Denmark.

On 24 March 1794, the commander of the insurrection, Tadeusz Kościuszko, who stayed in Kraków, announced the act of the uprising.¹¹ That event was an attempt to save the Commonwealth which lost, a vast part of its territory due to two partitions in favour of Prussia, Austria, and Czarist Russia, the army of which occupied the rest of the country. In 1793, Kościuszko, who emigrated to Leipzig, Hugo Kołłątaj, and Stanisław Potocki, with the support of a French diplomat, Marie-Louis Descorches, established the National Committee.¹² That organization made contact with the conspiracy commanded by Ignacy Działyński, who wanted to start an anti-Russian uprising in the country. Działyński's plans were supported by i.a. Pawlikowski, Jelski, and a Hungarian, Kapostas.¹³ On 13 March, the brigadier Antoni Madaliński, the commander of Wielkopolska brigade of cavalry, moved from Ostrołęka to the Southern part of the country, since he did not want to decrease the number of soldiers in his unit. That action decided on the outbreak of the uprising. The first battle took place in Raclawice on 4 April, when the troops of insurgents supported by peasantry defeated Russian troops commanded by gen. Alexander Tormasov. A peasant named Wojtek Bartos showed great bravery in that battle.¹⁴ After the news about the victory, on 17 and 18 April 1794, Polish army supported by citizens of Warsaw and commanded by Jan Kiliński defeated the Czarist troops that stationed in the city.¹⁵ On 22–23 April, the insurgent forces commanded by Jakub Jasiński took over Vilnius. Thanks to that, the uprising spread over the rest of the country. The situation of fighting insurgents got worse because of the attack of the Prussian troops, which resulted in their defeat in the battle of Szczekociny (6 June) and the Prussian troops taking over Kraków. Later on, from 13 July to 6 September, the Prussians unsuccessfully besieged Warsaw with the Russian army. The end of the uprising resulted from the defeat in the battle of Maciejowice on 10 October, after which Kościuszko was taken captive by the Rus-

⁸ A. Eisenbach, *Emancypacja*, p. 267.

⁹ J. Goldberg, *Żydzi wobec wrogów Rzeczypospolitej*, [w] *Żydzi w obronie Rzeczypospolitej*. Materiały konferencji w Warszawie 17 i 18 października 1993 r., Warszawa 1996, p. 10-11.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 15.

¹¹ M. Markiewicz, *Historia Polski 1492–1795*, Kraków 2002, p. 708.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 707.

¹³ K. Bartoszewicz, *Dzieje Insurekcji Kościuszkowskiej*, Wiedeń 1909, p. 127- 128.

¹⁴ E. Łuniński, *Berek Joselewicz*, Kock 1928, p. 9.

¹⁵ K. Bartoszewicz, *Dzieje*, p. 201.

sian. His successor as the commander was Tomasz Wawrzecki.¹⁶ On 4 November, Russian army stormed and took over the district of Praga. On 16 November, the remaining troops surrendered in Radoszyce. The failure of the insurrection resulted in the Third Partition of the Commonwealth in 1795, which made Poland vanish from the map of Europe.

The leaders of the unsuccessful uprising hoped for the country to regain its independence. They also wanted to improve the fate of peasantry. In order to do that, on 7 May 1794, Kościuszko issued in the camp near Połaniec an universal in which the following was promised: personal freedom, right to cultivated land and decrease of serfdom by 33–50%.¹⁷ It should be mentioned that Kościuszko supported the idea that everyone could join the fight to regain freedom of the country regardless of their social background.¹⁸ During his stay in Kraków he was to give a speech in the synagogue. According to rabbi Lewi, Kościuszko claimed that he would try to improve faith of the citizens, including Jews.¹⁹ In contrast, the Jewish Community of Kraków promised to conduct recruitment among worshippers of Judaism to have them join the insurgents troops, as well as donate a specified sum of money. Due to the rapid conquest of the city by the Prussians, both promises were fulfilled only partially.²⁰

A part of the Jewish population participated in the fights in Warsaw in April.²¹ Among the participants were: Abraham Fiszel, Abrahamowicz Cątek (tar maker), Ickowicz Josiek, doctor Jan Rozenfeld, and Moszek Szmulewicz of Kutno.²² The participation of worshippers of Judaism in the fights was related i.a. to the anti-Semitism, which was common in Czarist Russia and to the hope for improving the fate of worshippers of Judaism. On 9 May 1794, Civic Militia was established in the capital. Men in the age of 15–50 could serve in it.²³ It included also the representatives of the Jewish community. Responsibilities of the members of the Civic Militia included i.a. guarding hostages, ditches, and cannons. Their weapons included pikes, sabers and rifles, a part of which had bayonets.²⁴ About 150 Jews served in the militia.

¹⁶ M. Markiewicz, *Historia*, p. 715.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 712.

¹⁸ *Żydzi polscy w służbie Rzeczypospolitej. Tom I 1918- 1939. Żydzi bojownicy o niepodległość Polski (reprint)*, seria pod red. Andrzeja Krzysztofa Kunerta i Andrzeja Przewoźnika, Warszawa 2002, p. 29.

¹⁹ *Księga Pamiątkowa (Album) ku czci Berka Joselewicza pułkownika wojsk Polski. W 125-letnią rocznicę Jego bohaterskiej śmierci*, pod red. dr Majera Bałabana, Warszawa 1934, p. 34.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 34.

²¹ I. Schipper, *Żydzi Królestwa Polskiego w dobie Powstania Listopadowego*, Warszawa 1932 p. 54.

²² E. Ringelblum, *Żydzi*, p. 53- 54.

²³ W. Tokarz, *Żołnierze kościuszkowscy*, Kraków 1915, p. 18.

²⁴ E. Ringelblum, *Żydzi*, p. 47.

Kościuszko's troops could count on the support of the rich Jews. Among persons who provided support were i.a. a doctor from Vilnius, Salomon Polonus²⁵, and Szmuel Zbytkower (Zbitkower), who was a royal warrant of appointment – a supplier of goods for Stanisław August Poniatowski.²⁶ Regardless of the approach of those worshippers of Judaism, other Orthodox Jews from Warsaw offered 72 450 zlotys to support the military effort of the Polish Commonwealth. Pursuant to regulations of the authorities of the uprising, representatives of the Jewish community paid taxes (mainly headage payments) and i.a. *voluntary payments / contributions*. They were handed over by Jewish Communities and individual persons. Jews from Vilnius paid 25,500 zlotys, while the ones from Puławy, Włostowice, and Końska Wola – 112,21 zlotys.²⁷ Additionally, Benjamin Josielowicz of Vilnius paid 90 zlotys, while a man called Landy – 200 zlotys.²⁸ They were obligated to supply a specific quantity of shirts, trousers and shoes for the army. Traders were to provide cloth, gunpowder, nitrate, and lead. Cloth was supplied i.a. by Jews from Galicia. Among them were Moszko Aufrechtogow and Judka Wolfowicz, for whom the army owed respectively 32988.80 zlotys and 16327 zlotys.²⁹ Szmul Ickowicz (Idzkowicz) and Abraham Librowicz purchased weapons and ammunition for the insurgents. Some of the transactions were held in Vienna, but in order to conduct a safe transport to the Commonwealth, the local authorities were informed that the destination of supplies was Sardinia. It should be mentioned that merchants included those who organized purchases due to orders by military authorities, and those who did that at their own responsibility.³⁰ There were situations, which prove that some rich Orthodox Jews wanted to escape from Warsaw. Among them were Chaim of Łask, Dawid Kenigsberger, and a man named Lewi, who initially obligated to provide uniforms for 40 soldiers. Soon, their wives were stopped during an attempt of illegal escape to Prussia with a part of their wealth. That situation resulted in the abovementioned persons having been placed in jail.³¹ Poorer Jews participated in building ditches around the capital, which was noticed by a German named Gronau in his treatise titled *Ueber den Verfall der Hauptstadt Warschau*.³² It took place both in Kraków and Warsaw.

It should be mentioned that authorities reacted to anti-Semitic incidents. In the middle of June Antoni Niewiarowski was sentenced for one year of imprisonment for

²⁵ It should be highlighted that on 17 May, during his speech in the Vilnius synagogue, he encouraged his fellow worshippers to support insurrection. He tried to convince them that Russians behaved unjustly towards Orthodox Jews, while the insurgents respected everybody, regardless their national origin. *Księga Pamiątkowa*, p. 35, 95-99.

²⁶ A. Kraushar, *Syn Berka Joselewicza, pułkownika z czasów Kościuszki, szefa szwadronu ułanów polskich*, Kraków 1889, p. 20.

²⁷ E. Ringelblum, *Żydzi*, p. 80.

²⁸ *Księga Pamiątkowa*, p. 94.

²⁹ E. Ringelblum, *Żydzi*, p. 85.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 87.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 36.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 39.

preparation and distribution of documents calling for the attack against neophytes, while a man named Kostecki – for three months.³³ Some insurgent units used to rob Jews. Such incidents occurred in Lubartów and within the area of Sałanty.³⁴

During the insurrection, the authorities of individual counties organized recruitments. Some of them, like e.g. radomski or grodzieński county, allowed the worshippers of Judaism to join the army. On the other hand, in Podlasie or Ziemia Łukowska, the authorities limited themselves to collecting payments from the Jewish Community, which usually amounted to 50 zlotys for a person.³⁵ The army included neophytes. On 7 July 1794, the 18th regiment under lieutenant Radziejowski lost three Polish soldiers, including Christians of Jewish origin, during fights against the Prussians between Nowy Dwór and Zegrze. A neophyte, Józef Czyński, was promoted to captain for his military achievements.³⁶ Józef Glikzelig was accused of spying for Russia, but he was acquitted during the proceedings. The support of Orthodox Jews was not limited to economic matters and participation in battles. Some of them were spies and gained remuneration for their services. That remuneration depended on the assigned task, and it could amount to 2–25 zlotys. Among such spies were, i.a. Herszk Zelmanowicz, Izrael Lewkowicz, Erszek Wigdorowicz, and a man named Ways.³⁷ Representatives of Jewish Communities had the obligation to track movements of the Russian army and report them to the authorities of the uprising. Such actions took place in, e.g. the area of Stężyca Land and Mielnik Land. In Warsaw and other areas conquered by the insurgents, the Jewish Community was obligated to help with transportation. It was due to the fact that a significant number of carmen was related to that religious minority. The army included Jews, who were doctors like e.g., dr Chaim Dawid Bernard from Działoszyn, and feldshers (Hersz Ickowicz). Among craftsmen, the following hatters: Daniel Joelowicz, Kiwa Aronowicz, Herszek Abramowicz, and the following tent makers: Chaim Moskowicz and Mojżesz Fabian, distinguished themselves.³⁸

The Jewish formation commanded by Berek Joselewicz played a more significant role in the uprising. Berł Josels (Berek Joselewicz) was born in 1764 or 1765 in Kretinga, a town that belonged to the bishop of Vilnius, Ignacy Massalski (1726–1794).³⁹ According to another thesis, he was born in one of the towns near Warsaw.⁴⁰ During his activities he married Rebeka, with whom he had a daughter and a son. Joselewicz's father was a religious Jew, who worked as a trader and had contacts with the bishop of Vilnius. When Berek was three years old, his parents sent him to cheder, a Jewish school. Later, the young Joselewicz started to learn to trade in horses under the super-

³³ A. Skalkowski, *Z dziejów Insurekcji 1794 r.*, Warszawa, Kraków, Lublin, Łódź, Paryż, Poznań, Wilno, Zakopane 1926, p. 31.

³⁴ E. Ringelblum, *Żydzi*, p. 89.

³⁵ Ibidem, p. 43-44.

³⁶ E. Ringelblum, *Żydzi*, p. 117.

³⁷ Ibidem, p. 72-73.

³⁸ Ibidem, p. 79-78.

³⁹ I. Baszewiss Singer, *Felietony, eseje, wywiady*, Warszawa 1993, p. 65.

⁴⁰ W. Trąpczyński, *Henryk*, p. 55.

vision of his father. He was also, together with his peers, probably interested in military matters. The bishop of Vilnius sent Berek to trade, among others, in Paris and Brussels. This young man was fluent in Polish and quickly learned French.⁴¹ About 1788, Joselewicz withdrew from cooperation with the bishop, and started trading activities of his own. Because of that he moved at that time to the Warsaw district of Praga.⁴² On 25 April, Joselewicz, together with Józef Aronowicz⁴³, submitted to the proposition of the commandant of Warsaw, general Mokronowski, who suggested forming a Jewish unit. Due to the lack of historical resources, it may be only assumed that the idea was rejected.⁴⁴ The situation changed in the second half of 1794. On 17 September, the issue of *Gazeta Rządowa* newspaper presented Kościuszko's positive opinion on the idea of worshippers of Judaism fighting with the invaders. Participation of Orthodox Jews in the insurrection constituted a proof for arguments of the participants of the uprising.⁴⁵ The commander of the uprising kindly addressed Aronowicz and Berek: *There are no inhabitants of the Polish land who, deeming the uprising to be a chance for freedom and happiness of the nation, would not make all the effort to support such a cause.*⁴⁶ At that time Joselewicz conducted recruitment to the regiment. It was mentioned in the document dated 23 September, sent by gen. Józef Orłowski, the commandant of Warsaw, to the president of Warsaw, Ignacy Zakrzewski. That document informed on the recruitment to the regiment held among Jews.⁴⁷ On 4 October 1794, Joselewicz, who was already a colonel, announced a proclamation, in which he called Jews to support the uprising. The text of the proclamation highlighted faith in the success of Kościuszko's actions, as well as the patriotic need to overcome the forces of invaders.⁴⁸ Joselewicz highlighted that Jews, as a nation without a country, should participate in the fights to regain independence by Poland. On 5 October, the authorities of the uprising contributed to Joselewicz 3 thousand zlotys in treasury notes, for the purpose of forming a unit. That formation could have consisted of about 500 or more soldiers. Among soldiers there were butchers, carmen, as well as young people.⁴⁹ A part of them joined the unit voluntarily, others were forced without a pos-

⁴¹ E. Łuniński, *Berek*, p. 10.

⁴² K. Koźmiński, *Pułkownik Berek. Opowieści o Berku Joselewiczu*, Warszawa 1959, p. 57.

⁴³ Józef Aronowicz, due to lack of historical resources, is a totally unknown figure. Karol Koźmiński, in his tale about Berek, described, i.a. their relations from before the outbreak of the Kościuszko Uprising. He also presented information that Aronowicz, as the co-founder of the unit, was to be responsible for food rations and finances. See: K. Koźmiński, *Pułkownik*, Warszawa 1959.

⁴⁴ E. Ringelblum, *Żydzi*, p. 58.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 32.

⁴⁶ As cited in: T. Korzon, *Kościuszko. Biografia z dokumentów wysnuta. Poprzedzona rzutem oka na dzieje Muzeum Narodowego w Rapperswyłu i Katalogiem zbiorów kościuszkowskich, w temże muzeum przechowywanych*, Kraków 1894, p. 416.

⁴⁷ E. Ringelblum, *Żydzi*, p. 59.

⁴⁸ *Historia Żydów Polskich*, p. 57.

⁴⁹ I. Baszewiss Singer, *Felietony*, p. 67.

sibility of objection under the guise of religious principles. Officers included: Herszek Lewkowicz, Jakub Epstein, and a man named Abraham.⁵⁰ Soldiers had no uniforms. One of the persons supporting Berek was a Polish officer, Antoni Skotnicki, who proposed to increase the number of soldiers in the unit to 1800, and introducing identical black uniforms. It is unknown whether the formation consisted of infantry or cavalry. The soldiers stationed in the district of Praga and dealt with guarding the ramparts and managing sentinels.⁵¹ They also served during Shabbat. The unit had freedom of faith.⁵² Berek, together with his subordinates, went to pray at a synagogue.⁵³ Joselewicz's unit took part in the defense of the Warsaw district of Praga. The Jewish formation suffered significant losses during the fights. A very small number of survivors included the commander⁵⁴, as well as a few soldiers. Among them were Jakub Epstein and Kanc Deroń (1771–1843). After the fall of the uprising, the former moved to Pilica, where he was respected by Poles and Jews. He died after 1826.⁵⁵ In 1816, Deroń permanently moved to Warsaw. In 1821 and 1833–1837, he was the member of the Synagogue Supervision, which was the element of the council in Jewish communities. He supported financially a poorhouse and a hospital for Orthodox Jews.⁵⁶ Ordinary Jews, who were citizens just like Poles, took part in defending the ramparts.⁵⁷ After the district of Praga was conquered, a massacre of the unarmed civilians took place: *The Cossacks played sport games, but instead of using balls, they used heads of Jewish children speared on pikes.*⁵⁸ The massacre took lives of about 12 thousand Poles and Orthodox Jews. What is more, approximately 2 thousand citizens of Praga drowned in the Vistula during their escape to the part of Warsaw located on the left side of the river.⁵⁹ Among Jews murdered by Russians were: Issachar Ber, Zew Wolf, Izrael Icchak son of Samuel, Cwi Hirszt, and Zew of Lublin. They were considered as martyrs, which may be found in this fragment of an elegy: *And one must mourn the numerous martyrs who died a martyr's death in Praga, the outskirts of Warsaw.*⁶⁰

During the massacre, Zbytkower, who has been already mentioned, paid Czarist soldiers in gold for each Pole or Jew brought alive. He also gave silver coins for bringing bodies of the dead.⁶¹ He conducted such activities to be able to bury the murdered

⁵⁰ *Żydzi polscy*, p. 30.

⁵¹ J. Moraczewski, *Pamiętniki Franciszka Karpińskiego*, Poznań 1884, p. 135.

⁵² J. Opatoszu, *W lasach polskich*, Warszawa 1923, p. 131.

⁵³ M. Janion, *Pułkownik żydowski*, p. 39.

⁵⁴ S. Rubinrot, *W imię prawdy... W sprawie żydowskiej z powodu uchwalenia odnośnej komisji w sejmie polskim*, Warszawa 1919, p. 23.

⁵⁵ I. Schipper, *Żydzi*, p. 55.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 56.

⁵⁷ *Żydzi polscy*, p. 33.

⁵⁸ As cited in: B. Borucki, *Bohater trzech narodów*, „Mówią Wieki. Magazyn Historyczny” 2009, no. 06/09 (593), p. 7, p. 7.

⁵⁹ I. Baszewiss Singer, *Felietony*, p. 69.

⁶⁰ As cited in: I. Schipper, *Żydzi*, p. 55.

⁶¹ A. Kraushar, *Syn*, p. 20.

people according to religious laws. A Prussian county commissioner named Nufer saved 35 Jewish children. He managed to do that by paying the Cossacks 1 zloty for every person.⁶² After he got to the part of the town located on the left side of the Vistula, he handed saved children to adult Jews.⁶³ As a token of gratitude, Orthodox Jews gave him as much money as he paid for saving the children. What is more, a furrier from Turobin named Izrael took care of 200 orphans. As a result of the fights, the Russians obtained 101 cannons and took captive 11 thousand people.⁶⁴ Among Jews there were also people who spied for Prussia and Russia. Those people included, i.a. Szmul Jakubowicz and Wolfgang Heyman.⁶⁵ According to the diplomate and general, Nicholas Repnin, some of the Vilnius Jews had negative attitude towards the insurrection.

After the fall of the uprising, Berek stayed for some time in Austria. It is probable that the authorities of that country had imprisoned him.⁶⁶ After 1798 he went to Italy. He had served in the Polish Legions under Józef Dąbrowski,⁶⁷ when, he became the member of one of the Masonic lodges. After 1809, when staying in the Duchy of Warsaw, he became a member of the lodge of the United Polish Brethren.⁶⁸ It should be highlighted that during his patriotic activities, Joselewicz was treated with respect. For his merits, he was awarded the Virtuti Militari medal and the Legion of Honor. There were, however, some exceptions, when he was accused of not coming from the nobility.⁶⁹

On 7 July 1807 in Tylza, a truce was made between the French emperor Napoleon I Bonaparte and the Russian tsar Alexander I. On the basis of the provisions of the truce, the Great Duchy of Warsaw was established, with its territory corresponding to the lands taken by Prussia during the Second and the Third Partition, as well as some parts of lands from the First Partition.⁷⁰ The ruler was Frederick Augustus I of Saxony.⁷¹ Shortly after that, Joselewicz got back to the newly established Duchy. He was a cavalry officer.⁷² His annual income was 6837 zlotys.⁷³ In 1809, Austria attacked the Duchy of Warsaw and the Confederation of the Rhine. That war ended with the victory of Napoleon and his allies. As a result of the fights, the Duchy of Warsaw expanded its territory with lands taken by Austria during the Third Partition.⁷⁴ During

⁶² *Księga Pamiątkowa*, p. 39.

⁶³ K. Bartoszewicz, *Dzieje*, p. 359.

⁶⁴ *Żydzi polscy*, p. 31.

⁶⁵ A. Skąłkowski, *Z*, p. 32.

⁶⁶ *Księga Pamiątkowa*, p. 50.

⁶⁷ Sz. Askenazy, *O Berku*, „Kwartalnik Poświęcony Badaniu Przeszłości Żydów w Polsce” 1912, no. 2, p. 104.

⁶⁸ A. Eisenbach, *Emancypacja*, p. 275.

⁶⁹ *Listy znakomitych Polaków wyjaśniające historię Legionów Polskich*, Kraków 1931, p. 90.

⁷⁰ Danzig with its surroundings was announced the free city, in which a unit of French army functioned.

⁷¹ A. Chwałba, *Historia Polski 1795- 1918*, Kraków 2000. p. 234.

⁷² Sz. Askenazy, *O*, p. 106.

⁷³ I. Baszewiss Singer, *Felietony*, 72.

⁷⁴ A. Chwałba, *Historia*, p. 244.

that conflict, Polish army was commanded by prince Józef Poniatowski. Joselewicz, who was a commandant of one of the cavalry units, conducted activities in Lubelszczyzna. He died on 5 October 1809 in Kock during a skirmish with two squadrons of emperor's hussars commanded by major Count Hoditz.⁷⁵ The soldier who killed him was Stefan Toth. Due to the lost fight, the Polish formation lost 9 officers and over 40 soldiers.⁷⁶ Berek's body has never been found. Perhaps the local Jews made a secret funeral.⁷⁷ According to another theory, Catholics and worshippers of Judaism wanted to bury Joselewicz in their cemetery. It is said that the dispute was settled with horses that were to pull the carriage on which the body laid.⁷⁸ The place at which they stopped would be the place of burial. A mound was made in the place that was the possible place of Joselewicz's death.⁷⁹ In 1909, Count Żółtowski, owner of Bedlno, a settlement located near Kock, raised a stone on the mound with an inscription picturing Berek's activities.⁸⁰ It should be highlighted that the place and circumstances of Joselewicz's death resulted in the saying *It is there, where in a rascal event Berek died near Kock*.⁸¹

On 22 December 1809, at the meeting of the Society of the Friends of Learning, Count Stanisław Potocki claimed: *The motherland will always remember your death, as well as the wounds you got in your previous battles. You are an example of newly awoken bravery of the Israeli folk and it is thanks to you that the figures of knights mourned by daughters of Zion have been reborn once again*.⁸² In the middle of 1810, Frederick Augustus I, the ruler of Saxony and the Duchy of Warsaw gave an annual remuneration of 1800 zlotys to Berek's family.⁸³

In November 1918, Poland regained its independence after 123 years. Matters related to Berek Joselewicz and the participation of Jews in the fight against invaders have been presented by filmmakers, politicians, and historians. At the beginning of January 1929, in Poland there was a premiere of the movie titled *W lasach polskich* (in English: *In Polish forests*). It was directed by Zygmunt Turkow, while one of historians, Major Bałaban (1877–1943), helped in the production.⁸⁴ The movie was an adaptation of the work with the same title written by Josef Meir Opatowski (1886–1954), born close to Stupsk near Mława. The movie presented elements related to the military

⁷⁵ *Księga Pamiątkowa*, p. 58.

⁷⁶ E. Łuniński, *Berek*, 30.

⁷⁷ W. Trąpczyński, *Henryk*, p. 56.

⁷⁸ R. Włodek, "W lasach polskich" *Josefa Opatowszu na ekranie*, *Midrasz* 2011, no. 5 (163), p. 26.

⁷⁹ W. Przyborowski, *Berek pod Kockiem. Powieść historyczna dla młodzieży*, Warszawa 1911, p. 221.

⁸⁰ "Wiadomości Literackie" 1926, no. 48 (152), p. 1.

⁸¹ As cited in: Z. Borzymińska, R. Żebrowski, *Polski słownik judaistyczny. Dzieje, kultura, religia, ludzie*, Warszawa 2003, volume I, p. 171.

⁸² As cited in: W. I. Baszewiss Singer, *Felietony*, p. 78.

⁸³ A. Kraushar, *Syn*, p. 25.

⁸⁴ R. Włodek, "W lasach", p. 23.

activities of Joselewicz, such as, e.g. recruitment of soldiers, fights against Czarist soldier and death in the skirmish of Kock.⁸⁵ Some Jewish organizations operating in the area of the Second Polish Republic referred to Joselewicz with respect. Among them were members of the extreme left and Zionist youth organization *Haszomer Hacair* (The Young Guardian). They took part in events related to anniversaries of events referring to i.a. cultivation of the memory of Berek Joselewicz.⁸⁶ Young Jewish enthusiasts of assimilation to the Polish culture operated in Berek Joselewicz's Troops of Polish Scouts. The first structures of that organization were established at the turn of 1912/1913 in Lviv.⁸⁷ Since 1932 the members of the association formed part of the Association of Academic Unification Youth. There were also some exceptions. Among Hassids, meaning religious people related to *tzadiks*, there were people who had negative approach towards Joselewicz, calling him *the outcast of Israel*.⁸⁸ They claimed that it was caused by the fact that he did not obey the religious principles of Judaism.⁸⁹ On the other hand, some supporters of Roman Dmowski claimed that Joselewicz, due to his ethnic background, was not a Polish hero and a patriot.⁹⁰

Historians of the inter-war Poland had divergent opinions on the Jewish participation in fights during the Kościuszko Uprising. Adam Skalkowski stated that Berek's formation, due to the time of the uprising, did not play any significant role.⁹¹ It was said to be created for purposes of propaganda, just like the plans to accept deserters in the army of the insurgents. The idea was abandoned due to the lost battles.⁹² Ernest Łuniński claimed that despite the short duration of the uprising, a Jewish regiment could exist. He referred to the quickly formed units of townsfolk commanded by Kiliński as the examples – those units played a significant role in freeing Warsaw from the Russian army in April 1794.⁹³ He also claimed that Skalkowski's theses were not supported by historical sources, and they were just a product of *rich imagination*.⁹⁴

The memory of Joselewicz lasted throughout the Second World War. Stefan Ernest, in his memories written down in the middle of 1943, compared Jewish inhabitants of Warsaw murdered by Germans with Samson, victims of the unsuccessful defense of the district of Praga in 1794, and to Legionnaires of Józef Piłsudski from the First World War.⁹⁵ It should be highlighted that the figure of Ernest is very mysterious.

⁸⁵ Ibidem, p. 26.

⁸⁶ M. Adamczyk-Garbowska, A. Kopciowski, A. Trzcíński, *Tam był kiedyś mój dom... Księgi pamięci gmin żydowskich*, Lublin 2009, p. 345.

⁸⁷ Z. Borzymińska, R. Żebrowski, *Polski*, p. 348.

⁸⁸ T. Mściślawski, *Wojsko Polskie a Żydzi*, Warszawa 1923, p. 16.

⁸⁹ J. Opatoszu, *W*, p. 130, 136.

⁹⁰ R. Włodek, *W lasach*, p. 26.

⁹¹ A. Skalkowski, *Z*, p. 34.

⁹² W. Tokarz, *Żołnierze*, p. 38.

⁹³ "Wiadomości Literackie" 1926, no. 48 (152), p. 1.

⁹⁴ As cited in: "Wiadomości Literackie" 1926, no. 50 (154), p. 3.

⁹⁵ S. Ernest, *O wojnie wielkich Niemiec z Żydami warszawy 1939–1943*, oprac. M. Młodkowska, Warszawa 2003, p. 13–14.

There are no data on his life.⁹⁶ The memory of Polish and Jewish brotherhood of arms was used by people related to the Society of Polish Patriots (hereinafter referred to as ZPP) in 1943 in Soviet Union. In the middle of 1944, Dawid Sfar, Efraim Kaganowski, and the historian Bernard Mark submitted a memorial to the General Board of ZPP.⁹⁷ In that document, they described the need of creating an official letter that would be directed towards Polish Jews living in the communist Russia. Its content should refer to pro-Polish activities of rabbi Ber Majzels and Joselewicz.⁹⁸ In July 1943, as a part of ZPP, the Organizational Committee of Polish Jews was established. Its members declared participation in the post-war restoration of Poland. Emanuel Ringelblum, the co-founder of the archive Oneg Szabas (The Joy of Shabbat), in his work describing Polish and Jewish relationship during the Second World War, compared the inhumanity of Czarist soldiers murdering the inhabitants of the Warsaw district of Praga in October 1794 with the behavior of German units destroying the Warsaw ghetto in April and May 1943.⁹⁹

Commemoration of Joselewicz's bravery also took place after 1989. On 20 April 2009, a conference devoted to that character was held in Warsaw at the French embassy. The honorary patronage over that event was taken by the speaker of the Lower Chamber (Sejm) of the Parliament at that time, Bronisław Komorowski, who claimed that the memory of Joselewicz is *a legend about beautiful and wise assimilation*.¹⁰⁰ Among the invited guests were: Jarosław Czubaty, Jacques-Olivier Boudon and Marcin Wodziński. Two weeks after that event, Barry Delongchamps, French ambassador, together with representatives of state authorities, authorities of Lubelskie Voivodeship and the commune of Kock, laid wreaths at the stone commemorating Joselewicz's death.¹⁰¹ In the same year, the Polish Post, along with the Israeli post, issued a stamp with the figure of Joselewicz. It was related to the celebrations of the Polish Year in Israel.

Summary

PARTICIPATION OF JEWS IN THE KOŚCIUSZKO UPRISING. THE MEMORY OF POLISH AND JEWISH BROTHERHOOD OF ARMS

In April 1794, in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth broke out an uprising against the invaders. One of the persons responsible for preparations and the outbreak of the insurrection was Tadeusz Kościuszko. During the fights, the insurgents received

⁹⁶ Ibidem, p. 5.

⁹⁷ J. Nalewajko-Kulikow, *Obywatel Jidyszlandu. Rzecz o żydowskich komunistach w Polsce*, Warszawa 2009, p. 139.

⁹⁸ Ibidem, p. 140.

⁹⁹ E. Ringelblum, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w czasie drugiej wojny światowej*, oprac. Artur Eisenbach, Warszawa 1988, p. 130.

¹⁰⁰ As cited in: B. Borucki, *Bohater*, p. 7.

¹⁰¹ Ibidem, p. 7.

support from the Jewish community. The members of that community were rich and poor Orthodox Jews. Their help included, i.a. co-financing the military effort of the country, as well as participating in construction of fortifications. Others joined the regiment of Berek Joselewicz. That formation was the first regular unit of worshippers of Judaism after the Jewish country was conquered by the Roman Empire. The formation participated in defending the Warsaw district of Praga in October 1794. Although the uprising was unsuccessful, and the Third Partition took place, it serves as an example of a friendly coexistence of Polish and Jewish people, also with regard to military activities.

Keywords: Kościuszko, uprising, Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, Jews

Streszczenie

UDZIAŁ ŻYDÓW W POWSTANIU KOŚCIUSZKOWSKIM. PAMIĘĆ O POLSKO-ŻYDOWSKIM BRATERSTWIE BRONI

W kwietniu 1794 r. w Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów wybuchło powstanie wymierzone w zaborców. Jedną z osób odpowiedzialnych za przygotowania i wybuch insurekcji był Tadeusz Kościuszko. W trakcie walk powstańców wsparła część społeczności żydowskiej. Wśród nich byli zamożni oraz ubodzy starozakonni. Ich pomoc polegała m.in. na współfinansowaniu wysiłku militarnego państwa, a także na uczestniczeniu w budowie fortyfikacji. Jeszcze inni dołączyli do pułku Berka Joselewicza. Formacja ta była pierwszym regularnym oddziałem wyznawców judaizmu po podbiciu państwa żydowskiego przez starożytny Rzym. Formacja ta uczestniczyła w obronie warszawskiej Pragi w październiku 1794 r. Powstanie, mimo że zakończyło się klęską oraz III rozbiorem, stanowi przykład przyjaznej koegzystencji polsko-żydowskiej także na polu kwestii militarnych.

Słowa kluczowe: Kościuszko, powstanie, Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodów, Żydzi

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