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Tadeusz Kościuszko

Andrzej Tadeusz Bonawentura Kościuszko (*Andrew Thaddeus Bonaventure Kosciuszko*;[[]^{note} ^{1]} February 4 or 12, 1746 – October 15, 1817) was a Polish-Lithuanian military engineer, statesman, and military leader who became a national hero in Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, and the United States.^{[3][4]} He fought in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth's struggles against Russia and Prussia, and on the U.S. side in the American Revolutionary War. As Supreme Commander of the Polish National Armed Forces, he led the 1794 Kościuszko Uprising.

Kościuszko was born in February 1746, in a manor house on the Mereczowszczyzna estate in Brest Litovsk Voivodeship, Grand Duchy of Lithuania, a part of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. At age 20, he graduated from the Corps of Cadets in Warsaw, Poland. After the start of civil war in the Bar Confederation in 1768, Kościuszko moved to France in 1769 to study. He returned to Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1774, two years after its First Partition, and took a position as tutor in Józef Sylwester Sosnowski's household. After Kościuszko attempted to elope with his employer's daughter and was severely beaten by the father's retainers, he returned to France. In 1776, Kościuszko moved to North America, where he took part in the American Revolutionary War as a colonel in the Continental Army. An accomplished military architect, he designed and oversaw the construction of state-of-the-art fortifications, including those at West Point, New York. In 1783, in recognition of his services, the Continental Congress promoted him to brigadier general.

Upon returning to Poland in 1784, Kościuszko was commissioned as a major general in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth Army in 1789. After the Polish–Russian War of 1792 resulted in the Second Partition of Poland, he organized an uprising against Russia in March 1794, serving as its *Naczelnik* (commander-in-chief). Russian forces captured him at the Battle of Maciejowice in October 1794. The defeat of the Kościuszko Uprising that November led to Poland's Third Partition in 1795, which ended the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth's independent existence for 123 years. In 1796, following the death of Tsaritsa Catherine the Great, Kościuszko was pardoned by her successor, Tsar Paul I, and he emigrated to the United States. A close friend of Thomas Jefferson's, with whom he shared ideals of human rights, Kościuszko wrote a will in 1798

Tadeusz Kościuszko



Portrait by Karl Gottlieb Schweikart.

Kościuszko is shown wearing the Eagle of the Society of the Cincinnati, awarded to him by Gen. Washington.

Birth name	Andrzej Tadeusz Bonawentura Kościuszko
Born	4 February 1746 <div>Mieračouščyna, Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth (now in Belarus)</div>
Died	15 October 1817 (aged 71) <div>Solothurn, Switzerland</div>
Allegiance	Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth (1765–1776, 1784–1794) <div>United States of America (1776–1784)</div>
Service/branch	Continental Army <div>Army of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth</div>

dedicating his U.S. assets to the education and freedom of U.S. slaves. He eventually returned to Europe and lived in Switzerland until his death in 1817. The execution of his will later proved difficult, and the funds were never used for the purpose he had intended.

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Years of service	1765–1794
Rank	Brevet U.S. Brigadier General, October 1783 Polish Lieutenant General, 1792
Unit	Engineer, (Continental Army) <i>Naczelnik</i> (commander-in-chief), (Polish Army)
Battles/wars	American Revolutionary War Polish–Russian War of 1792 <ul style="list-style-type: none">Battle of Zieleńce Battle of Dubienka <p>Kościuszko Uprising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Battle of Raclawice Battle of Maciejowice
Awards	Order of Cincinnati Virtuti Militari
Signature	

Early life



Merczowszczyzna manor (1848)

Kościuszko was born in February 1746 in a manor house on the estate called "Mereczowszczyzna" near Kosów, (now Kosava, Belarus) in Nowogródek Voivodeship, Grand Duchy of Lithuania, a part of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth.^{[5][6]} His exact birthdate is unknown; commonly cited are February 4^[5] and February 12.^[note 2]

Kościuszko was the youngest son of a member of the *szlachta* (*nobility*), Ludwik Tadeusz Kościuszko, an officer in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth Army, and his wife Tekla, *née* Ratomaska.^[9] The Kościuszkos held the Polish *Roch III coat of arms*.^[10] At the time of Tadeusz Kościuszko's birth, the family possessed modest landholdings in



Kościuszko, aged 15, in 1761

the Grand Duchy, which were worked by 31 peasant families.^{[11][12]}

Tadeusz was baptized by the Roman Catholic church and the Orthodox Church, thereby receiving the names *Andrzej*, *Tadeusz*, and *Bonawentura*.^{[13][14][15][16]} His paternal family was ethnically Lithuanian–Ruthenian^[11] and traced their ancestry to Konstanty Fiodorowicz Kostiuszko, a courtier of Polish King and Grand Duke of Lithuania Sigismund I the Old.^[17] Kościuszko's maternal family, the Ratomskis, were also Ruthenian.^[18]



Roch III coat-of-arms

Modern Belarusian writers interpret his Ruthenian or Lithuanian heritage as Belarusian.^[19] He once described himself as a *Litvin*,^[18] a term that denoted inhabitants, of whatever ethnicity, of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, within the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. Modern Belarusian writers interpret *Litvin* as designating a Belarusian, before the word "Belarusian" had come into use.^[20] Kościuszko, however, did not speak the Belarusian language; his family had become Polonized as early as the 16th century.^[21] Like most Polish–Lithuanian nobility of the time, the Kościuszkos spoke Polish and identified with Polish culture.^[22]

In 1755, Kościuszko began attending school in Lyubeshiv, but never finished due to his family's financial straits after his father's death in 1758. Poland's King Stanisław August Poniatowski established a Corps of Cadets (*Korpus Kadetów*) in 1765, at what is now Warsaw University, to educate military officers and government officials. Kościuszko enrolled in the Corps on December 18, 1765, likely thanks to the patronage of the Czartoryski family. The school emphasized military subjects and the liberal arts,^[23] and after graduating on December 20, 1766, Kościuszko was promoted to *chorąży* (a military rank roughly equivalent to modern lieutenant); he stayed on as a student instructor and by 1768 had attained the rank of captain.^[9]



Warsaw's Kazimierz Palace, where Kościuszko attended the Corps of Cadets

European travels

In 1768, civil war broke out in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, when the Bar Confederation sought to depose King Stanisław August Poniatowski. One of Kościuszko's brothers, Józef, fought on the side of the insurgents. Faced with a difficult choice between the rebels and his sponsors—the King and the Czartoryski family, who favored a gradualist approach to shedding Russian domination—Kościuszko chose to leave Poland. In late 1769, he and a colleague, the noted artist Aleksander Orłowski, were granted royal scholarships, and on October 5 they set off for Paris. They wanted to further their military education, but as foreigners they were barred from enrolling in French military academies, and so they enrolled instead in the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture.^[9] There Kościuszko pursued his interest in drawing and painting and took private lessons in architecture from the noted French architect

Jean-Rodolphe Perronet.^{[24][note 3]}

Kościuszko, however, did not give up on improving his military knowledge. He audited lectures for five years and frequented the libraries of the Paris military academies. His exposure to the French Enlightenment, along with the religious tolerance practiced in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, strongly influenced his later career. The French economic theory of physiocracy made a particularly strong impression on his thinking.^[25] He also developed his artistic skills, and while his career would take him in a different direction, all his life he continued drawing and painting.^{[9][26]}

In the First Partition of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1772, Russia, Prussia and Austria annexed large swaths of Polish–Lithuanian territory and gained influence over the internal politics of the reduced Polish and Lithuanian states. When Kościuszko finally returned home in 1774, he found that his brother Józef had squandered most of the family fortune, and there was no place for him in the Army, as he could not afford to buy an officer's commission.^[27] He took a position as tutor to the family of the magnate, province governor (voivode) and hetman Józef Sylwester Sosnowski and fell in love with the governor's daughter Ludwika.^[note 4] Their elopement was thwarted by her father's retainers.^[9] Kościuszko received a thrashing at their hands, an event that may have led to his later antipathy to class distinctions.^[11]

In the autumn of 1775, he decided to emigrate to avoid Sosnowski and his retainers.^[9] In late 1775, he attempted to join the Saxon army but was turned down and decided to return to Paris.^[9] There he learned of the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War, in which the British colonies in North America had revolted against the crown and begun their struggle for independence. The first American successes were well-publicized in France, and the French people and government openly supported the revolutionaries' cause.^[30]

American Revolutionary War

On learning of the American Revolution, Kościuszko, himself a man of revolutionary aspirations, sympathetic to the American cause and an advocate of human rights, sailed for America in June 1776 along with other foreign officers, likely with the help of a French supporter of the American revolutionaries, Pierre Beaumarchais.^{[9][25]} On August 30, 1776, Kościuszko submitted an application to the Second Continental Congress; he was assigned to the Continental Army the next day.^[9]

Northern region

Kościuszko's first task was building fortifications at Fort Billingsport in Paulsboro, New Jersey, to protect the banks of the Delaware River and prevent a possible British advance up the river to Philadelphia.^[31] He initially served as a volunteer in the employ of Benjamin Franklin, but on October 18, 1776, Congress commissioned him a colonel of engineers in the Continental Army.^[32]

In spring 1777, Kościuszko was attached to the Northern Army under Major General Horatio Gates, arriving at the Canada–US border in May 1777. Subsequently posted to Fort Ticonderoga, he reviewed the defenses of what had been one of the most formidable fortresses in North America.^{[9][33]} His surveys prompted him to strongly recommend the construction of a battery on Sugar Loaf, a high point overlooking the fort.^[33] His prudent recommendation, in which his fellow engineers concurred, was turned down by the garrison commander, Brigadier General Arthur St. Clair.^{[9][33]}

This proved a tactical blunder: when a British army under General John Burgoyne arrived in July 1777, Burgoyne did exactly what Kościuszko had warned of and had his engineers place artillery on the hill.^[33] With the British in complete

control of the high ground, the Americans realized their situation was hopeless and abandoned the fortress with hardly a shot fired in the Siege of Ticonderoga.^[33] The British advance force nipped hard on the heels of the outnumbered and exhausted Continentals as they fled south. Major General Philip Schuyler, desperate to put distance between his men and their pursuers, ordered Kościuszko to delay the enemy.^[34] Kościuszko designed an engineer's solution: his men felled trees, dammed streams, and destroyed bridges and causeways.^[34] Encumbered by their huge supply train, the British began to bog down, giving the Americans the time needed to safely withdraw across the Hudson River.^[34]



Fort Clinton (West Point), fortified by Kościuszko. *In background*: his statue.

Gates tapped Kościuszko to survey the country between the opposing armies, choose the most defensible position, and fortify it.

Finding just such a position near Saratoga, overlooking the Hudson at Bemis Heights, Kościuszko laid out a strong array of defenses, nearly impregnable from any direction. His judgment and meticulous attention to detail frustrated the British attacks during the Battle of Saratoga,^[9] and Gates accepted the surrender of Burgoyne's force there on October 16, 1777.^[35] The dwindling British army had been dealt a sound defeat, turning the tide to an American advantage.^[36] Kościuszko's work at Saratoga received great praise from Gates, who later told his friend Dr. Benjamin Rush: "[T]he great tacticians of the campaign were hills and forests, which a young Polish engineer was skillful enough to select for my encampment."^[9]

At some point in 1777, Kościuszko composed a polonaise and scored it for the harpsichord. Named for him, and with lyrics by Rajnold Suchodolski, it later became popular with Polish patriots during the November 1830 Uprising.^[37] Around that time, Kościuszko was assigned a black orderly, Agrippa Hull, whom he would treat as an equal and a friend.^[38]

In March 1778 Kościuszko arrived at West Point, New York, and spent more than two years^[39] strengthening the fortifications and improving the stronghold's defenses.^{[40][41]} It was these defenses that the American General Benedict Arnold subsequently attempted to surrender to the British when he became a traitor.^[42] Soon after Kościuszko had finished fortifying West Point, in August 1780, General George Washington granted Kościuszko's request to transfer to combat duty with the Southern Army. Kościuszko's West Point fortifications would be widely praised as innovative for the time.^{[43][44]}

Southern region

After traveling south through rural Virginia in October 1780, Kościuszko proceeded to North Carolina to report to his former commander General Gates.^[40] However, following Gates's disastrous defeat at Camden on August 16, 1780, the Continental Congress had selected Washington's choice, Major General Nathanael Greene, to replace the disgraced Gates as commander of the Southern Department.^[45] When Greene formally assumed command on December 3, 1780, he retained Kościuszko as his chief engineer. By then, he had been praised by both Gates and Greene.^[40]

Over the course of this campaign, Kościuszko was placed in command of building bateaux, siting the location for camps, scouting river crossings, fortifying positions, and developing intelligence contacts. Many of his contributions were instrumental in preventing the destruction of the Southern Army. This was especially so during the famous "Race to the Dan", when British General Charles Cornwallis chased Greene across 200 miles (320 km) of rough back country



Portrait by Wojniakowski

in January and February 1781. Thanks largely to a combination of Greene's tactics, and Kościuszko's bateaux, and accurate scouting of the rivers ahead of the main body, the Continentals safely crossed each river, including the Yadkin and the Dan.^[40] Cornwallis, having no boats, and finding no way to cross the swollen Dan, finally gave up the chase and withdrew back into North Carolina. The Continentals regrouped south of Halifax, Virginia, where Kościuszko had earlier, at Greene's request, established a fortified depot.^[46]

During the Race to the Dan, Kościuszko had helped select the site where Greene eventually returned to fight Cornwallis at Guilford Courthouse. Though tactically defeated, the Americans all but destroyed Cornwallis' army as an effective fighting force and gained a permanent strategic advantage in the South.^[47] Thus, when Greene began his reconquest of South Carolina in the spring of 1781, he summoned Kościuszko to rejoin the main body of the Southern Army. The combined forces of the Continentals and Southern militia gradually forced the British from the back country into the coastal ports during the latter half of 1781 and, on August 16,

Kościuszko participated in the Second Battle of Camden.^[48] At Ninety Six, Kościuszko besieged the Star Fort from May 22 to June 18. During the unsuccessful siege, he suffered his only wound in seven years of service, bayoneted in the buttocks during an assault by the fort's defenders on the approach trench that he was constructing.^[49]

Kościuszko subsequently helped fortify the American bases in North Carolina,^[50] before taking part in several smaller operations in the final year of hostilities, harassing British foraging parties near Charleston, South Carolina. He had become engaged in these operations after the death of his friend Colonel John Laurens, taking over Laurens's intelligence network in the area. He commanded two cavalry squadrons and an infantry unit, and his last known battlefield command of the war occurred at James Island, South Carolina, on November 14, 1782. In what has been described as the Continental Army's final armed action of the war,^[51] he was very nearly killed as his small force was routed.^[52] A month later, he was among the Continental troops that reoccupied Charleston following the British evacuation of the city. Kościuszko spent the rest of the war there, conducting a fireworks display on April 23, 1783, to celebrate the signing of the Treaty of Paris earlier that month.^[53]

Leaving for home

Having not been paid in his seven years of service, in late May 1783, Kościuszko decided to collect the salary owed to him.^[54] That year, he was asked by Congress to supervise the fireworks during the July 4 celebrations at Princeton, New Jersey.^[55] On October 13, 1783, Congress promoted him to brigadier general, but he still had not received his back pay; many other officers and soldiers were in the same situation.^[56] While waiting for his pay, unable even to finance a voyage back to Europe, Kościuszko, like a number of others, lived on money borrowed from the Polish-Jewish banker Haym Solomon. Eventually, he would receive a certificate for 12,280 dollars, at 6%, to be paid on January 1, 1784, and the right to 500 acres (202.34 ha; 0.78 sq mi) of land, but only if he chose to settle in the United States.^[57] For the winter of 1783–84, his former commanding officer, General Greene, invited Kościuszko to stay at his mansion.^[58] He was also inducted into the Society of the Cincinnati.^[40]

Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth

On July 15, 1784, Kościuszko set off for Poland, where he arrived on August 26. Due to a conflict between his patrons, the Czartoryski family, and King Stanisław August Poniatowski, Kościuszko once again failed to get a commission in the Commonwealth Army. He settled in Siechnowicze (Belarusian: Сяхновічы, now Sehnovichi, Belarus).^[40] His brother Józef had lost most of the family's lands through bad investments, but with the help of his sister Anna, Kościuszko secured part of the lands for himself.^[59] He decided to limit his male peasants' *corvée* (obligatory service to the lord of the manor) to two days a week, and completely exempted the female peasants. His estate soon stopped being profitable, and he began going into debt.^[40] The situation was not helped by failure of the money promised by the American government—interest on late payment for his seven years' military service—to materialize.^[60] Kościuszko struck up friendships with liberal activists; Hugo Kołłątaj offered him a position as lecturer at Kraków's Jagiellonian University, which Kościuszko declined.^[61]

Finally the Great Sejm of 1788–92 introduced some reforms, including a planned build-up of the army to defend the Commonwealth's borders. Kościuszko saw a chance to return to military service and spent some time in Warsaw, among those who engaged in the political debates outside the Great Sejm. He wrote a proposal to create a militia force, on the American model.^{[40][62]} As political pressure grew to build up the army, and Kościuszko's political allies gained influence with the King, Kościuszko again applied for a commission, and on October 12, 1789, received a royal commission as a major general.^[40] He began receiving the high salary of 12,000 *złoty* a year, ending his financial difficulties. He asked for a transfer to the Lithuanian army but was instead assigned to a unit in the west, in Greater Poland. On February 1, 1790, he reported for duty in Włocławek, and in mid-March he was given a command. Around summer, he commanded some infantry and cavalry units in the region between the Bug and Vistula Rivers. In August 1790 he was posted to Volhynia, stationed near Starokostiantyniv and Międzyborze.^[40] Prince Józef Poniatowski, who happened to be the King's nephew, recognized Kościuszko's superior experience and made him his second-in-command, leaving him in command when he was absent.^[63]

Meanwhile, Kościuszko became more closely involved with the political reformers, befriending Hugo Kołłątaj, Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz and others.^[64] Kościuszko argued that the peasants and Jews should receive full citizenship status, as this would motivate them to help defend Poland in the event of war.^[65] The political reformers centered in the Patriotic Party scored a major victory with the adoption of the Constitution of May 3, 1791. Kościuszko saw the Constitution as a step in the right direction, but was disappointed that it retained the monarchy and did little to improve the situation of the most underprivileged, the peasants and the Jews.^[66] The Commonwealth's neighbors saw the Constitution's reforms as a threat to their influence over Polish internal affairs. A year after the Constitution's adoption, on May 14, 1792, reactionary magnates formed the Targowica Confederation, which asked Russia's Tsaritsa Catherine II for help in overthrowing the Constitution. Four days later, on May 18, 1792, a 100,000-man Russian army crossed the Polish border, headed for Warsaw, beginning the Polish–Russian War of 1792.^[67]

Defense of the Constitution

The Russians had a 3:1 advantage in strength, with some 98,000 troops against 37,000 Poles;^[68] they also had an advantage in combat experience.^[69] Before the Russians invaded, Kościuszko had been appointed deputy commander of Prince Józef Poniatowski's infantry division, stationed in West Ukraine. When the Prince became Commander-in-Chief of the entire Polish (Crown) Army on May 3, 1792, Kościuszko was given command of a division near Kiev.^[70]

The Russians attacked on a wide front with three armies. Kościuszko proposed that the entire Polish army be concentrated and engage one of the Russian armies, in order to assure numerical parity and boost the morale of the mostly inexperienced Polish forces with a quick victory; but Poniatowski rejected this plan.^[69] On May 22, 1792, the Russian forces crossed the border in Ukraine, where Kościuszko and Poniatowski were stationed. The Crown Army was



Kościuszko, by Juliusz Kossak

judged too weak to oppose the four enemy columns advancing into West Ukraine, and began a fighting withdrawal to the western side of the Southern Bug River, with Kościuszko commanding the rear guard.^{[70][71]} On June 18, Poniatowski won the Battle of Zieleńce; Kościuszko's division, on detached rear-guard duty, did not take part in the battle and rejoined the main army only at nightfall; nonetheless, his diligent protection of the main army's rear and flanks won him the newly created Virtuti Militari, to this day Poland's highest military decoration. (Storożyński, however, states that Kościuszko received the Virtuti Militari for his later, July 18 victory at Dubienka.^{[70][72]}) The Polish withdrawal continued, and on July 7 Kościuszko's forces fought a delaying battle against the Russians at Volodymyr-Volynskyy (the Battle of Włodzimierz). On reaching the northern Bug River, the Polish Army was split into three divisions to hold the river defensive line—weakening the Poles' point numerical superiority, against Kościuszko's counsel of a single strong, concentrated army.^[70]

Kościuszko's force was assigned to protect the front's southern flank, touching up to the Austrian border. At the Battle of Dubienka (July 18, 1792) Kościuszko repulsed a numerically superior enemy, skilfully using terrain obstacles and field fortifications, and came to be regarded as one of Poland's most brilliant military commanders of the age.^[70] With some 5,300 men, he defeated 25,000 Russians led by General Michail Kachovski.^[73] Despite the tactical victory, Kościuszko had to retreat from Dubienka, as the Russians crossed the nearby Austrian border and began flanking his positions.^[73]

After the battle, King Stanisław August Poniatowski promoted Kościuszko to lieutenant-general and also offered him the Order of the White Eagle, but Kościuszko, a convinced republican would not accept a royal honor.^{[74][75]} News of Kościuszko's victory spread over Europe, and on August 26 he received the honorary citizenship of France from the Legislative Assembly of revolutionary France. While Kościuszko considered the war's outcome to still be unsettled, the King requested a ceasefire.^{[70][76]} On July 24, 1792, before Kościuszko had received his promotion to lieutenant-general, the King shocked the army by announcing his accession to the Targowica Confederation and ordering the Polish–Lithuanian armies to cease hostilities against the Russians. Kościuszko considered abducting the King as the Bar Confederates had done two decades earlier, in 1771, but was dissuaded by Prince Józef Poniatowski. On August 30 Kościuszko resigned his army position and briefly returned to Warsaw, where he received his promotion and pay, but refused the King's request that he remain in the Army. Around that time, he also fell ill with jaundice.^[70]

Émigré

The King's capitulation was a hard blow for Kościuszko, who had not lost a single battle in the campaign. By mid-September 1792 he was resigned to leaving the country, and in early October he departed from Warsaw. First he went east, to the Czartoryski family manor at Sieniawa, which gathered various malcontents. In mid-November he spent two weeks in Lwów (in Ukrainian, *Lviv*; in German, *Lemberg*), where he was welcomed by the populace; since the war's end, his presence had drawn crowds eager to see the famed commander. Izabela Czartoryska discussed having him marry her daughter Zofia.^{[70][77]} The Russians planned to arrest him if he returned to territory under their control; the Austrians, who held Lwów, offered him a commission in the Austrian Army, which he turned down.^[78] Subsequently they planned to deport him, but he left Lwów before they could do so. At the turn of the month, he stopped in Zamość at the Zamoyskis' estate, met Stanisław Staszic, then went on to Puławy.^{[70][78]}



Kościuszko wearing the Virtuti Militari and, below it, the Eagle of the Cincinnati

He did not tarry long there either: on December 12–13, he was in [Kraków](#); on December 17, in [Wrocław](#); and shortly after, he settled in [Leipzig](#), where many notable Polish soldiers and politicians formed an émigré community.^[70] Soon he and some others began plotting an uprising against Russian rule in Poland.^[79] The politicians, grouped around [Ignacy Potocki](#) and [Hugo Kołłątaj](#), sought contacts with similar opposition groups in Poland and by spring 1793 had been joined by other politicians and revolutionaries, including [Ignacy Działyński](#). While Kołłątaj and others had begun planning an uprising before Kościuszko joined them, his support was a major boon to them, as he was among the most popular individuals in Poland.^[80]

After two weeks in Leipzig, before the second week of January 1793, Kościuszko set off for Paris, where he tried to gain French support for the planned uprising in Poland. He stayed there until summer, but despite the growing revolutionary influence there, the French paid only lip service to the Polish cause, and refused to commit themselves to anything concrete.^[79] Kościuszko concluded that the French authorities were not interested in Poland beyond what use it could have for their own cause, and he was increasingly disappointed in the pettiness of the [French Revolution](#)—the infighting among different factions, and the growing [reign](#)

[of terror](#).^[81]

On January 23, 1793, Prussia and Russia signed the [Second Partition of Poland](#). The [Grodno Sejm](#), convened under duress in June, ratified the partition and was also forced to rescind the Constitution of May 3, 1791.^{[82][83]} With the second partition, Poland became a small country of roughly 200,000 square kilometers (77,000 sq mi)^[84] and a population of some 4 million.^[82] This came as a shock to the Targowica Confederates, who had seen themselves as defenders of centuries-old privileges of the magnates, but had hardly expected that their appeal for help to the Tsarina of Russia would further reduce and weaken their country.^{[83][85]}

In August 1793, Kościuszko, though worried that an uprising would have little chance against the three partitioning powers, returned to Leipzig, where he was met with demands to start planning one as soon as possible.^[86] In September he clandestinely crossed the Polish border to conduct personal observations and meet with sympathetic high-ranking officers in the residual Polish Army, including General [Józef Wodzicki](#). The preparations went slowly, and he left for Italy, planning to return in February 1794. However, the situation in Poland was changing rapidly. The Russian and Prussian governments forced Poland to again disband most of her army, and the reduced units were to be incorporated into the Russian Army. In March, Tsarist agents discovered the revolutionaries in Warsaw and began arresting notable Polish politicians and military commanders. Kościuszko was forced to execute his plan earlier than he had intended and, on March 15, 1794, set off for Kraków.^[79]

Kościuszko Uprising

Learning that the Russian garrison had departed Kraków, Kościuszko entered the city on the night of March 23, 1794. The next morning, in [the Main Square](#), he announced an uprising.^[79] Kościuszko received the title of *Naczelnik* (commander-in-chief) of Polish–Lithuanian forces fighting against the Russian occupation.^[87] He proceeded to mobilize the populace, intending to raise sufficient numbers of volunteers to counteract the larger and more

professional Russian Army. He also hoped that neither Austria nor Prussia would intervene, and so discouraged insurgent activity in the Austrian and Prussian Partitions.

Kościuszko gathered an army of some 6,000, including 4,000 regular soldiers and 2,000 recruits, and marched on Warsaw.^[79] The Russians succeeded in organizing an army to oppose him more quickly than he had expected, but he scored a victory at Raclawice on April 4, 1794, where he turned the tide by personally leading an infantry charge of peasant volunteers (*kosynierzy*, scythemen). Nonetheless, this Russian defeat was not strategically significant, and the Russian forces quickly forced Kościuszko to retreat toward Kraków. Near Połaniec he received reinforcements and met with other Uprising leaders (Kollątaj, Potocki); at Połaniec he issued a major political declaration of the Uprising, the Proclamation of Połaniec. The declaration stated that serfs were entitled to civil rights and reduced their work obligations (*corvée*).^[88] Meanwhile, the Russians set a bounty for Kościuszko's capture, "dead or alive".^[89]

By June, the Prussians had begun actively aiding the Russians, and on June 6, 1794, Kościuszko fought a defensive battle against a Prussian-Russian force at Szczekociny.^[88] From late June, for several weeks, he defended Warsaw, controlled by the insurgents. On June 28, a mob of insurgents in Warsaw captured and hanged Bishop Ignacy Massalski and six others. Kościuszko issued a public reproach, writing, "What happened in Warsaw yesterday filled my heart with bitterness and sorrow", and urging, successfully, that rule of law be followed.^[90] By the morning of September 6, the Prussian forces having been withdrawn to suppress an uprising underway in Greater Poland, the siege of Warsaw was lifted. On October 10, during a sortie against a new Russian attack, Kościuszko was wounded and captured at Maciejowice. He was imprisoned by the Russians at Saint Petersburg in the Peter and Paul Fortress.^[91] Soon afterward, the uprising ended with the Battle of Praga, where according to a contemporary Russian witness, the Russians troops massacred 20,000 Warsaw residents.^[92] The subsequent Third Partition of Poland ended the existence of a sovereign Polish state for the next 123 years.^[93]

Later life

The death of Tsaritsa Catherine the Great on November 17, 1796, led to a change in Russia's policies toward Poland.^[91] On November 28, Tsar Paul I, who had hated Catherine, pardoned Kościuszko and set him free, after he had tendered an oath of loyalty. Paul promised to free all Polish political prisoners held in Russian prisons and forcibly settled in Siberia. The Tsar gave Kościuszko 12,000 rubles, which the Pole later, in 1798, attempted to return, when also renouncing the oath.^[94]

Kościuszko left for the United States, via Stockholm, Sweden and London, departing from Bristol on June 17, 1797, and arriving in Philadelphia on August 18.^[94] Though welcomed by the populace, he was viewed with suspicion by the American government, controlled by the Federalists, who distrusted Kościuszko for his previous association with the



Kościuszko and his peasant scythemen, from Matejko's *Battle of Raclawice*



The Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth first issued *złoty* banknotes in 1794 under the authority of Tadeusz Kościuszko. Above: 5-, 10- and 25-*złoty* notes.

Democratic-Republican Party.^[94]

In March 1798, Kościuszko received a bundle of letters from Europe. The news in one of them came as a shock to him, causing him, still in his wounded condition, to spring from his couch and limp unassisted to the middle of the room and exclaim to General Anthony Walton White, "I must return at once to Europe!" The letter in question contained news that Polish General Jan Henryk Dąbrowski and Polish soldiers were fighting in France under Napoleon and that Kościuszko's sister had sent his two nephews in Kościuszko's name to serve in Napoleon's ranks.^[95] Around that time Kościuszko also received news that Talleyrand was seeking Kościuszko's moral and public endorsement for the French fight against one of Poland's partitioners, Prussia.^[94]



House in Philadelphia where Kościuszko stayed in 1797

The call of family and country drew Kościuszko back to Europe.^[95] He immediately consulted Thomas Jefferson, who procured a passport for him under a false name and arranged for his secret departure for France. Kościuszko left no word for either Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, his former comrade-in-arms and fellow St. Petersburg prisoner, or for his own servant, leaving only some money for them.^{[96][97]}

Other factors contributed to his decision to depart. His French connections meant that he was vulnerable to deportation or imprisonment under the terms of the Alien and Sedition Acts.^[98] Jefferson was concerned that the U.S. and France were verging on the brink of war after the XYZ Affair and regarded him as an informal envoy. Kościuszko later wrote, "Jefferson considered that I would be the most effective intermediary in bringing an accord with France, so I accepted the mission even if without any official authorization."^[99]

Disposition of American estate

Before Kościuszko left for France, he collected his back pay, wrote a will, and entrusted it to Jefferson as executor.^{[94][96]} Kościuszko and Jefferson had become firm friends by 1797 and thereafter corresponded for twenty years in a spirit of mutual admiration. Jefferson wrote that "He is as pure a son of liberty as I have ever known."^[100] In the will, Kościuszko left his American estate to be sold to buy the freedom of black slaves, including Jefferson's own, and to educate them for independent life and work.^[101]

Several years after Kościuszko's death, Jefferson, aged 77, pleaded an inability to act as executor due to age^[102] and the numerous legal complexities of the bequest. It was tied up in the courts until 1856.^[103] Jefferson recommended his friend John Hartwell Cocke, who also opposed slavery, as executor, but Cocke likewise declined to execute the bequest.^[102]

The case of Kościuszko's American estate reached the U.S. Supreme Court three times.^[note 5] Kościuszko had made four wills, three of which postdated the American one.^[105]

None of the money that Kościuszko had earmarked for the manumission and education of African Americans in the United States was ever used for that purpose.^[106] Though the American will was never carried out as defined, its legacy was used to found an educational institute at Newark, New Jersey, in 1826, for African Americans in the United States. It was named for Kościuszko.^{[95][107]}

Return to Europe

Kościuszko arrived in Bayonne, France, on June 28, 1798.^[94] By that time, Talleyrand's plans had changed and no longer included him.^[94] Kościuszko remained politically active in Polish émigré circles in France, and on August 7, 1799, he joined the Society of Polish Republicans (*Towarzystwo Republikańców Polskich*).^[94] Kościuszko, however, refused the offered command of Polish Legions being formed for service with France.^[94] On October 17 and November 6, 1799, he met with Napoleon Bonaparte; however, he failed to reach an agreement with the French general, who regarded Kościuszko as a "fool" who "overestimated his influence" in Poland.^{[note 6][108]} Kościuszko, for his part, disliked Napoleon for his dictatorial aspirations and called him the "undertaker of the [French] Republic".^[94] In 1807, Kościuszko settled in château de Berville, near La Genevraye, distancing himself from politics.^[94]



Kościuszko's last residence, in Solothurn, Switzerland, where he died

Kościuszko did not believe that Napoleon would restore Poland in any durable form.^[109] When Napoleon's forces approached the borders of Poland, Kościuszko wrote him a letter, demanding guarantees of parliamentary democracy and substantial national borders, which Napoleon ignored.^[108] Kościuszko concluded that Napoleon had created the Duchy of Warsaw in 1807 only as an expedient, not because he supported Polish sovereignty.^[110] Consequently, Kościuszko did not move to the Duchy of Warsaw or join the new Army of the Duchy, allied with Napoleon.^[108]

Instead, after the fall of Napoleon, he met with Russia's Tsar Alexander I, in Paris and then in Braunau, Switzerland.^[108] The Tsar hoped that Kościuszko could be convinced to return to Poland, where the Tsar planned to create a new, Russian-allied Polish state (the Congress Kingdom). In return for his prospective services, Kościuszko demanded social reforms and restoration of territory, which he wished would reach the Dvina and Dnieper Rivers in the east.^[108] However, soon afterward, in Vienna, Kościuszko learned that the Kingdom of Poland to be created by the Tsar would be even smaller than the earlier Duchy of Warsaw. Kościuszko called such an entity "a joke".^[111] When he received no reply to his letters to the Tsar, he left Vienna and moved to Solothurn, Switzerland.

On April 2, 1817, Kościuszko emancipated the peasants in his remaining lands in Poland,^[108] but Tsar Alexander disallowed this.^[112] Suffering from poor health and old wounds, on October 15, 1817, Kościuszko died in Solothurn at age 71 after falling from a horse, developing a fever, and suffering a stroke a few days later.^[113]

Funerals

Kościuszko's first funeral was held on October 19, 1817, at a formerly Jesuit church in Solothurn.^{[108][114]} As news of his death spread, masses and memorial services were held in partitioned Poland.^[115] His embalmed body was deposited in a crypt of the Solothurn church. In 1818, Kościuszko's body was transferred to Kraków, arriving at St. Florian's Church on April 11, 1818. On June 22, 1818,^[115] or June 23, 1819^[108] (accounts vary), to the tolling of the Sigismund Bell and the firing of cannon, it was placed in a crypt at Wawel Cathedral, a pantheon of Polish kings and national heroes.^{[108][115]}

Kościuszko's internal organs, which had been removed during embalming, were separately interred in a graveyard at Zuchwil, near Solothurn. Kościuszko's organs remain there to this day; a large memorial stone was erected in 1820, next to a Polish memorial chapel. His heart, however, was not interred with the other organs, but instead kept in an urn at the Polish Museum in Rapperswil, Switzerland.^{[108][115]} The heart, along with the rest of the Museum's holdings,

were repatriated back to Warsaw in 1927, where the heart now reposes in a chapel at the Royal Castle.^{[108][115]}

Memorials and tributes



Kościuszko Mound, 34 m (112 ft) high, Kraków, Poland

The Polish historian Stanisław Herbst states in the 1967 *Polish Biographical Dictionary* that Kościuszko may be Poland's and the world's most popular Pole ever.^[108] There are monuments to him around the world, beginning with the Kościuszko Mound at Kraków, erected in 1820–23 by men, women, and children bringing earth from the battlefields where he had fought.^{[108][116]} The Thaddeus Kosciusko Bridge, a twin bridge structure across the Mohawk River in Albany, New York, completed in 1959,^[117] and the Kosciusko Bridge, built in 1939 in New York City, were named in Kościuszko's honor.^[118] The New York City bridge was partially replaced in 2017 by a new bridge of the same name, with an additional bridge scheduled to open in 2020.^{[119][120]}

Kościuszko's 1796 Philadelphia residence is now the Thaddeus Kosciusko National Memorial, America's smallest national park or unit of the National Park System.^[121] There is a Kościuszko Museum at his last residence, in Solothurn, Switzerland.^[122] A Polish-American cultural agency, the Kosciusko Foundation, headquartered in New York City, was created in 1925.^[123]

A series of Polish Air Force units have borne the name "Kościuszko Squadron". During World War II a Polish Navy ship bore his name, as did the Polish 1st Tadeusz Kościuszko Infantry Division.^[124]

One of the first examples of a historical novel, *Thaddeus of Warsaw*, was written in Kościuszko's honor by the Scottish author Jane Porter; it proved very popular, particularly in the United States, and went through over eighty editions in the 19th century.^{[125][126]} An opera, *Kościuszko nad Sekwaną* (Kościuszko at the Seine), written in the early 1820s, featured music by Franciszek Salezy Dutkiewicz and libretto by Konstanty Majeranowski. Later works have included dramas by Apollo Korzeniowski, Justyn Hoszowski and Władysław Ludwik Anczyc; three novels by Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, one by Walery Przyborowski, one by Władysław Stanisław Reymont; and works by Maria Konopnicka.

Kościuszko also appears in non-Polish literature, including a sonnet by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, another by James



Urn with Kościuszko's

heart, Royal Castle, Warsaw



Polish postage stamp (1938):
Kościuszko with saber (*left*), Thomas Paine with book (*center*), George Washington with U.S. flag



U.S. postage stamp (1933):
Kościuszko statue

Henry Leigh Hunt, poems by [John Keats](#) and [Walter Savage Landor](#), and a work by [Karl Eduard von Holtei](#).^[124]



Mount Kosciuszko, Australia

In 1933, the U.S. Post Office issued a [commemorative stamp](#) depicting an engraving of *Brigadier General Thaddeus Kosciuszko*, a statue of Kościuszko that stands in [Washington, D.C.'s Lafayette Square](#) near the White House. The stamp was issued on the 150th anniversary of Kościuszko's naturalization as an American citizen. Poland has also issued several stamps in his honor.^[127]

There are statues of Kosciuszko in Poland at Kraków (by [Leonard Marconi](#)), which was destroyed by German forces during the World War II occupation and was later replaced with a replica by Germany in 1960^[128] and Łódź (by [Mieczysław Lubelski](#));^[108] in the United States at [Boston](#),^[128] [West Point](#),^[128] [Philadelphia](#) (by [Marian Konieczny](#)),^[128] [Detroit](#) (a copy of Leonard Marconi's Kraków statue),^[129] [Washington, D.C.](#),^[108] [Chicago](#),^[108] [Milwaukee](#)^[108] and [Cleveland](#);^[108] and in Switzerland at [Solothurn](#).^[108] Kościuszko has been the subject of paintings by [Richard Cosway](#), [Franciszek Smuglewicz](#), [Michał Stachowicz](#), [Juliusz Kossak](#) and [Jan Matejko](#). A monumental *Raławice Panorama* was painted by [Jan Styka](#) and [Wojciech Kossak](#) for the centenary of the 1794 Battle of Raławice.^[108] The first monument to Kosciuszko in [Belarus](#) was erected in his birthplace in [Mieračouščyna](#) in 2018. Construction of the monument was financed through a crowdfunding campaign organized by a journalist [Gleb Labadzenka](#) ([Hlieb Labadzienka](#)).

[Mount Kosciuszko](#), the tallest mountain in Australia, was named after the Polish freedom fighter by explorer [Paweł Strzelecki](#). Strzelecki noted:

The particular configuration of its eminence struck me so forcibly by the similarity to the tumulus elevated in Kraków over the tomb of patriot Kosciusko (sic), that, although in a foreign country, on foreign ground, but amongst a free people, who appreciate freedom and its votaries, I could not refrain from giving it the name of Mount Kosciusko (sic).

In the United States, places named after Kościuszko include [Kosciusko Island](#) in [Alaska](#), [Kosciusko County](#) in [Indiana](#), the city of [Kosciusko](#) in central [Mississippi](#) and numerous streets and parks.^[108]

Kościuszko has been the subject of many written works. The first biography of him was published in 1820 by [Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz](#), who served beside Kosciuszko as his aide-de-camp and was also imprisoned in Russia after the uprising.^[130] English-language biographies have included [Monica Mary Gardner's](#) *Kościuszko: A Biography*, which was first published in 1920, and a 2009 work by [Alex Storozynski](#) titled *The Peasant Prince: Thaddeus Kosciuszko and the Age of Revolution*.^[131]



Statue of Kościuszko on Northerly Island, Chicago

See also

- [Kazimierz Pułaski](#) (Anglicized as "Casimir Pulaski"), another Polish commander in the American Revolutionary War

Notes

1. A number of Anglicized spellings of Kościuszko's name appear in records, including "Thaddeus Kosciuszko" and the full "Andrew Thaddeus Bonaventure Kosciuszko". In Lithuanian, Kościuszko's name is rendered *Tadas Kosciuška*. In Belarusian, it is *Tadevuš Kaściuška* (Тадэвуш Касьцюшка).^[1] His name has a common anglicized pronunciation, /ˌkɒziˈʌskoʊ/; the Polish pronunciation is [ˈandʑej taˈdɛuʂ bɔnavenˈtura kɔɛˈtɕuʂkɔ] ^(ⓘ) listen, which has been approximated in English as /təˈdeɪʃ kəˈfʊʃkoʊ/.^[2]
2. Alex Storozynski, in his 2009 biography of Kościuszko, notes that the "twelfth is generally used", and that Szyndler (1991:103) discusses theories about Kościuszko's birthdate.^{[7][8]}
3. Sketches from Kościuszko's hand still survive and are guarded as national treasures in Polish museums.
4. After he returned to Poland from America and sought a Polish Army commission, the then Princess Lubomirska—she had been forced by her father to marry into the higher nobility—urged the King to offer Kościuszko a commission. When he went to Warsaw in summer 1789 to pursue the matter himself, he chanced upon her at a ball. As his friend Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz later recounted, "The meeting was so emotional [for both] that they were unable to speak to each other; each moved away to a different corner of the *salon* and wept."^[28] In 1791, he sought to marry Tekla Zurowska, but again met paternal opposition.^[29]
5. Associate Justice Joseph Story issued a decision to remand in *Armstrong v. Lear*, 25 U.S. 12 Wheat. 169 169 (1827), based on failure to submit the will for probate. The same estate was also the subject of *Estho v Lear*, 32 U.S. 130 (7 Pet. 130, 8 L.Ed. 632)(1832), in which Chief Justice John Marshall wrote a brief opinion suggesting remand, apparently to Virginia. Finally, the decision in *Ennis v. Smith*, 55 U.S. 14 How. 400 400 (1852) mentions no individual author; the chief justice was Roger Taney, and the only jurisdictions mentioned were those of Maryland, the District of Columbia, and Grodno (now in Belarus).^[104]
6. Letter from Napoleon to his Minister of Police, Joseph Fouché, 1807.

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