

# National Heroes and National Mythology in 19th and 20th Century Poland

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Heroic myths of the 19th and 20th century Europe invented by Romanticism resonate with echoes of Scandinavian sagas and mythological legacy from our European antiquity. Heroes appear in difficult times in order to deal with existential situations. The hero's birth is foreseen and accompanied by special signs; his future deeds portended as early as his childhood; he must, however, pass through initiation rites which reveal his destiny and at the same time transform him into someone capable of undertaking tasks designated by fate: he need not die though he is not allowed to enjoy family life; he must struggle to the end.

Polish national heroes retain their traits to this day - they express a specific historical situation which is linked to universal values. Tadeusz Kościuszko, Józef Piłsudski, Father Ignacy Skorupka, Father Jerzy Popiełuszko, and, to some extent, Pope John Paul II belong to this group. Still we are awaiting the appearance of new heroes.

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The nineteenth, and to some extent the twentieth, century in Europe was, and still is, an age of heroes. The figure of Napoleon stands at its beginning, encircled by lesser figures but of equal symbolic significance. One need only think of Prince Józef Poniatowski, Marshal of France, whom Polish historic legend - completely at odds with facts - claims that, seeing his battle lost (Leipzig, 1813) and captivity imminent, jumped on horseback into the Elster crying, "God entrusted me with the honour of the Poles, I return it only to Him". And died.

Another nineteenth century figure in European Pantheon is Garibaldi, a figure who has been so engraved on the Italian memory that, up to this day, folkloric documentation records the prevalence of excellent familiarity with his life story and notes that accounts of his deeds are told with such enthusiasm and attention to fine detail that it seems as though the narrators had actually taken part in the events

themselves, so heedless are they of the distance between his time and their own.<sup>1</sup>

Every country has the heroes it deserves, and these change depending on the historical period. We know that they make their appearance in times of social difficulty, that they perform impossible feats and that, as often as not, they die - for a cause, the nation or an idea. And this, of course, is why they do not emerge in times of peace and why heroes are not people who have laid foundations of the national economy or the nation's cultural life. In Poland, for example, Chopin is not considered to be a hero although he, or rather his works, are taken to symbolize Polish national culture. Equally, those who under Bismarckian "Ostpolitik", and on Wielkopolska (Great Poland province) territory, sowed the seeds of an independent Polish social and economic order with great tenacity and at great risk, are not regarded as heroes. They are eminent figures, and if the word

"hero" is used in speaking of them, it is with a completely different meaning from when Napoleon, Kościuszko, Piłsudski or Popiełuszko are spoken of. According to folk culture practitioners' way of thinking, not only are the hero's exploits extraordinary, but his very person. His birth is foreseen and accompanied by special signs. Usually his future deeds are portended as early as his childhood. In order to carry these he must, however, pass through initiation sites which reveal to him his destiny and at the same time transform him into a different person, capable of undertaking certain tasks designation by fate.

This is why it is not easy to create a hero, and why not all political attempts to do so have been successful. Indeed most of them, undertaken by various ideologies, have been fruitless. In Poland, from 1948–1980, the so-called "heroes of socialist labour" or stakhanovites, didn't become heroes. Producing 100%, 200% or 300% the norm, these workers were supposed to inspire the working masses by their example and simultaneously, create a new work ethos. Despite vigorous attempts to make them models for emulation, they were rejected by the masses and never made their way into the annals of folk history: they rather became anti-heroes, as Andrzej Wajda's film *Man of Marble* shows.

This confirms the thesis that only someone who faces up to an existential or difficult situation, or even the "to be or not to be" of a society or nation, becomes a hero.

Such an understanding of the hero is linked on the one hand to the mediaeval Song of Roland and on the other it resonates with echoes of Scandinavian sagas and even earlier examples of the mythological legacy from our European antiquity. Classic myths were texts recounting not only the exploits of gods, but also those of heroes who were afforded protection by the gods (and sometimes persecuted by them). The latter sometimes worked through heroes or instructed them to carry out certain tasks whilst under their protection. It is important to note that heroic figures cannot be understood unless one knows the myth containing the motives for their actions.

This leads us to certain theoretical-method-

ological considerations. How are we to understand the hero-figure? And whose perspective do we take - that of those who created and outlived the figure, or that of the researchers who frequently adopt very personal attitudes to the subject of their studies? The relation between these two positions - which might be called *emics* and *etics* - is extremely complex. Certain categories formulated by cultural practitioners and deemed by researchers to belong to the category of *emics*, are also used as academic categories, at times with the same meaning - and vice versa.

The concept of the hero is employed in heretological research in three fundamental senses. Some writers, tracing the figure back to epic poetry, believe that the hero is are historical figure, and that epic - in accordance with the laws of genre - is an interpretation of certain events. Consequently supporters of this line search for various heroes of a folk prototype in heroic texts produced for the courts of kings and the houses of magnates. The second group hold that the term refers to a personification of the values of a given society. Just as folklorists constitute the main body of the first orientation, mainly from the historical school (see Jan de Vries, *Heroic Song and Heroic Legend*), so sociologists predominate the second. This latter group includes the great Polish sociologist Stefan Czarnowski, author of a study of St. Patrick, manifestly influenced by H. Hubert and M. Mauss. In the Polish ethnological tradition it is the latter school of interpretation which has gained the widest acceptance. However, in my research I use the term "hero" to mean a universal cultural category as does Aaron Gurievitch in his *Main Categories of Mediaeval Culture*. This definition is derived from analyses of the reconstructed structures of heroic myths - and consequently it ostensibly belongs to the category of *etics*. Thus it will be one of the categories which order the world, necessary for building a model of the world - a model which gives meaning to all humankind's ritual activities, and one which is not always conscious (Rank 1912, 1919; Jung 1953; Campbell 1962). This search for, or discovery of, the meaning of the concept of the hero in Polish folk culture will allow us to see

how its creators categorized and ordered the world, in short, it will reveal their way of thinking - leaving etics we will arrive at emics.

A seminal work for today's reconstruction of a scheme of heroic myth, and one which indirectly leads to a typology of the hero figure, is Lord Raglan's *The Hero* (1938). Criticizing theories of the historical origins of heroic myths, he claims that they ought to be traced back to rituals of initiation and investiture of the king<sup>2</sup>. A comparison of numerous myths leads Raglan to identify a repeated pattern: the hero is a child king who, with force of circumstance denying him high birth, must prove his right to the throne, secure it through heroic feats (a fight with a dragon ect.), claim the throne, but die a violent death.

Both Raglan's main hypothesis and that of his followers, together with the accepted scheme of heroic myth and the heroic characteristics resulting from it, are insufficient and not very useful in the analysis and interpretation of what we have named national heroes and myths in 19th and 20th century Europe; this will be made clear in a moment.

Work produced both by Soviet semioticians with E. Meletinski as an example and the contemporary master of Indo-European studies, Georges Dumézil, has been extremely influential in hereological research. These writers distinguish the hero from the king, stressing that the hero is born on the borderlands between the human and non-human worlds, and that it is this which determines his subsequent fate. We also have Dumézil to thank for the idea that the hero does not necessarily have to possess positive characteristics. I have to apologize for not taking into my consideration the anti-heros, for the purpose of this presentation.

The findings of contemporary hereological research have been recapitulated by M.H. Zowczak in her Ph.D. thesis submitted at the Warsaw University in 1986:

*Hero's characteristics*

human	non-human
mortality	immortality
weakness	strength, power
submission	freedom
subordination	authority
lack of knowledge	knowledge
ignorance	consciousness

the trial —————>

She writes, "A hero appears when a person contests the limits which, according to the accepted world order, delimit human nature - when he dreams of what is, or seems to be, impossible for him" (1991, in print). This is the definition given by the people when questioned about the hero, he is "someone who performs impossible feats" (KEiAK, archive of...).

The above mentioned authors: Raglan, de Vries, Dumézil, Rank and Meletinski, together with those inspired by their work, associate the figure of the hero with myth or epic. Folklorists stress that the epic is a genre not to be found in Western Slavonic cultures (according to the linguistic classification, thus Poland among them). Reconstructions of archaic myths (Banaszkiewicz, Gieysztor, Tomicki) indicate that they were not as many and not so rich as Indian, Scandinavian, German or Greek myths. Kazimierz Moszyński, the greatest authority in matters of Slav ethnography suggested that, "epics can disappear and then reappear in the same or a different form amongst one and the same people". (Moszyński, KLS, v. II 1968 p. 760). The absence of epics in Western Slav cultures during the 19th century (and earlier!) that is to say at the moment when systematic folklore research began there, is explained by Moszyński as evincing not its absence from the very beginnings of the culture, but its disappearance during the Middle Ages when the gap between the peasant and the noble estates widened, and was followed by an increasingly differentiated culture and the appearance of written literature. Some consequences of literacy, very much similar to the Polish situation, are analysed by J. Goody in his subsequent works on the subject.

The opposite situation obtaining in Southern

and Eastern Slav cultures made for the preservation of epics. And here the question arises - to what might we link heroic stories in 19th and 20th century Poland, if they had been, as it were, cut off from their roots? And how might this have affected the creation of heroic figures?

The source of the 19th and 20th century national mythologies is obviously the French Revolution and, prior to that, the Enlightenment. Political writings, belles lettres, prose and poetry, all forged new myths. The Beginning of the New Order demanded that myth be invoked so that new institutions, laws and values be legitimized. The mechanism working in Europe during the 18th and 19th centuries was that which was later to be discovered by anthropologists in tribal and archaic societies; only the historical situation and the heroes' names differed. And frequently perspectives on the future were different. If we look at 20th century ideologies, we might think of how fascist ideology invoked German "Ragnarök", chaos which was to occur after the mutual destruction of the gods and forces of evil as well, and also how communist ideology/mythology invoked a utopian communist community, a community of the future and the end of class and ethnic difference.

The cornerstone of Polish national mythology was the Constitution of the Third of May 1792 - the most progressive in the world for its time. The response to this was the first Partition of Poland, effected by her neighbouring powers, Prussia, Russia and Austria. In stating the commonwealth's laws and privileges, the constitution had to define itself! Consequently political writers and statesmen, such as Stanisław Staszic and Hugo Kołłątaj, produced accompanying political writings dealing with the origins of the Polish nation. This basically led to a search for genealogies, the tracing back of Poles from Japhet and the Romans and a pointing to the Sarmatians origins if not of the whole Polish nation, then at least of its heart, the Polish nobility, who were keen to distinguish themselves from other estates, the bourgeoisie, and then the peasantry.

These biblico-genealogical considerations were linked with attempts to produce a specific

world model, at any rate, such as it was after the Flood, to discover the most fundamental, universal laws of humankind, to find a place for everybody in the world which was moving towards new constitutions and revolutions. Neither the English or French Revolution nor the English Constitution were drawn on; Poland was disposed to search for its own solutions or to reach after continental models

However, we have to remember that a year after the passing of the Constitution of the Third of May, and after an attempt to overthrow foreign rule (the Kościuszko Uprising of 1794). Kościuszko returned to Poland not only as the leader of the 1794 Uprising, but as the hero of the American War of Independence.

And so attempts to discover universal qualities and to establish human liberty were bound up with a search for the nation's place in this changing world. Consequently, towards the end of the 18th century, and during the 19th, there arose a national mythology clothed in the words of the French Revolution: *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*. And though the slogan appeared to be universal, each nation gave it its own specific complexion, stamped it with its own history. It was principally the great romantic poets who decked this mythology in words and broadcast it: Byron becoming the leader in Europe, and Mickiewicz, Słowacki, Krasiński and Norwid in Poland. Mickiewicz was the greatest contributor to this, presenting Polish national mythology at his Sorbonne lectures in the mid-19th century. And it was he who created the suggestive and longlasting myth of Poland as the Christ of Nations. At that time, Poland, after, the failure of the Napoleonic epoch and of the 1830 Uprising against Russia, and partitioned between the three invading powers Prussia, Austria and Russia, did not exist as a state. However, a cultural community and tradition, a Polish nation who spoke Polish and referred to a common historical fate, manifestly did exist. The Partition of Poland was metaphorically termed a "crucifixion". And this signified the coming liberty of all those who struggled for it in the mid-19th century. This crucifixion was a sacrifice made to God for others. It was a repeti-

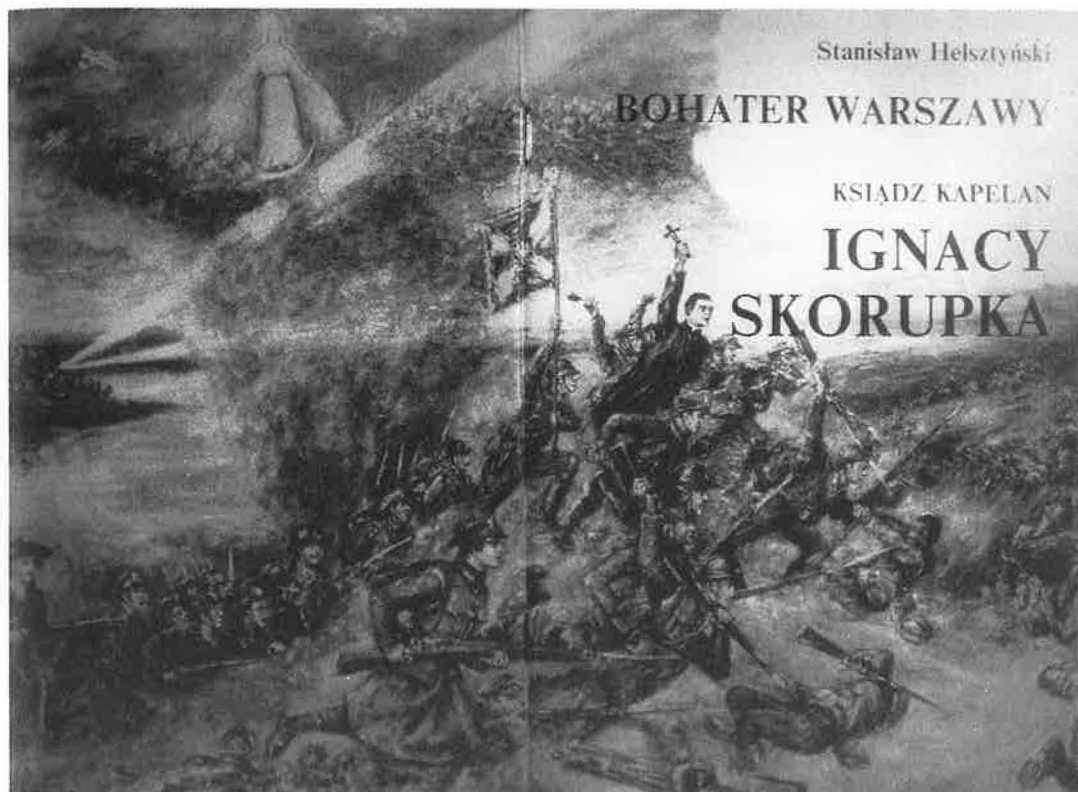


Fig. 1. A part of the painting by Jerzy Kossak "Miracle on the Vistula" used as the design for the cover of the popular book on Father Skorupka. The painting being itself the important source of the mythological image of the battle.

tion of the idea of the Chosen People, but with a New Testament meaning.

Thus the romantic poets revealed the significance of the nation's sufferings, prophesizing their end and prospective liberty. Such suffering couldn't be in vain. Hence the oft repeated words found in this poetry: Christ of Nations, suffering, blood, sacrifice, life through death, tomb, resurrection, Mother - identified with Fatherland (Patria), and finally, the Mother of God, the Fatherland as a country betokening a historical (genealogical) community. As late as 1991, in his greetings to Poles after the Urbi and Orbi proclamation, Pope John Paul II, a poetry specialist and poet himself, invoked the poet in his words "we have come through the trial of the tomb - this gives us right to resurrection". Krasiński, *Przed-swit* (Before Dawn), verse 175-76.

This metaphorical resurrection was, neither in the 19th century nor, and to an even greater

extent, today, understood as something which arrived without huge effort and exertion: it could only be achieved through the moral rebirth of the whole nation, and especially through the remarkable feats of exceptional people. For the 19th century, the romantic idea and the rise of romantic myths were inseparable from action (Janion p. 116). And the embodiment of action was, of course, Napoleon. His fervent supporter, Adam Mickiewicz proclaimed from the lectern of the College de France that the only ideas of any value were those which moved the masses.

And so belles lettres, together with art in general - painting, sculpture, music being connected with it too - took the place of the heroic epic (at the same time as drawing on it), and, on the ruins of the old world, they built a new image of the world which facilitated "conditional and changable components of experience to connect teleologically, by invoking uncondi-





MARSZAŁEK JÓZEF PIŁSUDSKI

mal. W. Kossak

Fig. 2. Piłsudski on his Chesnut, painted by Wojciech Kossak.

tional reality" (Kořakowski, 1976 p. 7). These "literary" texts together with iconography which differed from that of the 18th century (Białostocki p. 12) fed and inspired folk creations too.

It was on the foundations laid by literature

that a rational world model could be built, a transhistorical model. However, as every myth articulated these transhistorical principles of truth, value and humanity in an historical language, at least two levels were to be distinguished - the universal and the national. This



Fig. 3. Kościuszko swearing allegiance to Poland on the market in Cracow, collection of Marian Prokopek.

accords with Roland Barthes' understanding of myth as that which transforms the historical into the universal.

The vast arena of contemporary myth which embraces political ideology, racial and national stereotypes, fashion, propaganda, advertising, film stars et al., offers ample opportunity for the articulation of myths of national community. And it even seems that the stronger the myth of European cultural community, the more aggressive the national myth of the group feeling threatened. Firm proof of this is to be found in the literature produced on the 500th anniversary of the battle of Kosowe Pole<sup>3</sup>. It also proves that the texts and contents

of myths are functions of specific historical situations.

Polish heroes of myths produced in the 19th century retain their traits to this day - they express a specific situation which is linked to universal values: universal for European civilization at least. Tadeusz Kościuszko of the 19th century and Józef Piłsudski, Father Ignacy Skorupka and Father Jerzy Popiełuszko - all of 20th century - belong to this group. Pope John Paul II, very close to them, but falls into a different category.

Tadeusz Kościuszko - leader of the 1794 Uprising against Russian invaders, and hero of the American War of Independence.

Józef Piłsudski - architect of the Polish Legions during the First World War, later Marshal of Poland, died 1935.

Father Ignacy Skorupka - army chaplain who died in the Battle of Radzymin, also called



Fig. 4. Emilia Plater, the heroine of January Uprising of 1863, painting on the glass, W. Sowiński, collection of Marian Pokropek.



Fig. 5. Marshal Józef Piłsudski - "Grandfather" - folk sculpture, J. Markowski, collection of Marian Pokropek.

"the Miracle on the Vistula", during the Polish-Soviet War of 1920.

Father Jerzy Popiełuszko - the "Solidarity" chaplain of the Warsaw Steelworks, murdered by the secret police in 1984 as a result of a political conspiracy.

They are accompanied by a number of lesser heroes, such as General Bem, leader of the 1830 Uprising who later fought for Hungarian Independence; one of the first female soldiers, the Lithuanian, Emilia Plater and a dozen of local heroes whose only monuments are their headstones. And here one must also consider the negative heroes, those Poles regarded as traitors for collaborating with their country's

invading powers. Stanisław Poniatowski, the last king of Poland is included here - his final resting place remains a subject of controversy - should he be buried alongside the other kings, in Wawel or, once his body has been brought back from the Soviet Union (he was initially buried in Russia, then transferred to the church in his estate on the former Polish, then - after Yalta - Soviet Union), should he be given a private burial? The Targowica traitors - the group of aristocrats who conspired at Targowica to recognize Tsarina Catherine II and the First Partition of Poland. Hitler and Stalin are such anti-heroes on a world scale. And in some ways Dzierżyński - a Pole, the creator of the KGB who, as late as 1990 was, according to Soviet public opinion polls<sup>4</sup>, rated second only to Lenin as the hero who most served the communism and the USSR.

We also find treacherous tragic heroes in the literature of the 19th century. These are figures who, using a pseudonym, infiltrate enemy ranks, throwing them into disarray. Konrad Wallenrod from Adam Mickiewicz epics is one of these: he ascends to the rank of Grand Master of Livonian branch of the Teutonic Order and destroys its greatness. This example, created by Literature, supplies a role model to be emulated during Poland's periods of tragedy - the 145 years of subjection (from the First Partition of Poland to the end of the First World War) and the periods of German and Soviet occupation, until 1989 (the date of the Round Table talks). However, it must be underlined that although the literature played a large part in the creation of mythic texts and heroic types, they also became the subject of non-professional and folkloric treatment. This, to my understanding, ultimately implies that we can say that these heroes are national heroes in the folk tradition sense, that they possess some of the pre-18th century folk hero traits to be found in figures such as Janosik, Wyrwidąb (Oak-uprooter), Waligóra (mountain-destroyer), St. Stanisław and King Bolesław the Brave.

The following brief lists of characteristics distinguishing Piłsudski, Skorupka and Popiełuszko are given in order to reveal their difference from the characteristics set out in Lord





Fig. 6. The murder of Father Popietuszeko, folk sculpture, J. Markowski, collection of Marion Pokropek.

Raglan's typology, but their retention of certain universal heroic traits.

Marshal Piłsudski - born in Lithuania four years after the failure of the 1863 January Uprising against Tsarist Russia. Brought up by his mother who, through a suitable choice of literature and national traditions, instilled in her son the imperative for liberty, the pride of belonging to the Polish nation, the necessity to persevere despite the momentary setbacks and the need of social justice. The notion of a revolutionary socialist movement - of which Piłsudski became the theoretician and leader - led him into exile in Siberia, the place inscribed in Polish history as the Tsarist prison, the land of exile. His aim is to win liberty at all, and in

spite of all costs. Piłsudski came from the Polonized Lithuanian gentry - his social position was sufficiently high for him to be "someone" in the social structure, and at the same time, sufficiently low and humble for him to make contact with the masses, with workers to whom freedom, liberty and fraternity addressed their socialist ideas.

The source of the symbols which Piłsudski used in his fight was romanticism. The source of his inspiration was the January Uprising, in spite of its failure. Indeed, it was the latter that reminded people of the need for liberty: it had great psychological significance. This is why it became the subject of his analyses and preparations for the next battle. It became a symbol-defeat or rather spilt blood would be the root of liberty and soldiers' graves the source of life. The simile used by Norman Davies is common currency - Poland rising like the phoenix from the ashes (Davies, II, 1981 p. 378). The figure of Piłsudski from the later, Legion period of the First World War - on horseback, in grey uniform, peaked cap on his head - is in the same style as a figure of insurgents painted by Gierymski and Grottger in the 19th century.

Piłsudski adheres to the fight for freedom tradition - battle is something normal for Poles, it has a certain everydayness about it which is shown in the song, "Let me have one more mazurka with you, Miss Kryisia, before the break of the day, the young uhlan pleas." Then, straight from the dance he jumps onto his horse, to die in battle. Dance and battle, music and the soldier's bugle are intermingled. As are love and death.

Piłsudski's death in 1935 was accompanied by a long discussion on where his final resting place should be. The Church did not want a self-professed atheist buried in Wawel. But his funeral was - like funerals of the great men<sup>5</sup> an extremely solemn occasion. The whole nation followed him to Wawel in Cracow, where the tombs of all Poland's kings are to be found. And not even his faithful horse was missing - though surely it can't have been the same Chesnut (Kasztanka) on whom he had led the legion into battle.

Piłsudski was (and is) a highly controversial figure even though in military coup d'état of

1926, he removed a government which he regarded as inefficient and became a dictator, acting brutally towards his political opponents. But the nation built a mound of earth in his honour, outside Cracow and he continues to figure as a national hero in the minds of Poles, as the engineer of their country's independence. No attempt by historians to remove the guilt from his name, not by communists to defame him, has met with any success. He is still a living figure - no question about that.

Proof of this are tales which have come to surround his name, these are clear expressions of his mythologization. The following anecdote is a good illustration. In 1976, during the defence of a doctoral thesis at Warsaw University on the subject of Pilsudski's military strategy (these defences are announced in the press and open to the public), a stranger to University circles turned up and claimed that it was incorrect to speak of Pilsudski's strategies without emphasizing his great patriotism, proof of this being his express agreement that his own daughters be enlisted into the legion despite great personal danger to them. What is interesting about this event is that the daughters at this time were not born.

This mythologization of the hero employs the well-known scheme from accounts of medieval history, of battles and sieges of fortified Polish castles by the Germans and Tartars. Tales emerged of the children of the leaders of the defence being taken hostage or cunningly captured, so that the attackers could use them as human shields.

If we adopt the typology of heroic activity in heroic myth and employ it to analyse Pilsudski's life story it becomes evident that -

- 1) The hero is born into a family with relatively low status,
- 2) the mother determines the direction his life is to take. It is she who teaches him about the heroic tradition, the January Uprising, who instills in him the value of liberty and also familiarity with patriotic romantic poetry,
- 3) his fascination with socialism shows him to the value of equality and fraternity,

- 4) he proves his faith in these principles during the period of his Siberian exile,
- 5) this gives him the necessary strength to organize the requisite army for Poland's liberation,
- 6) he is subjected to further trials (imprisonment in Moabit by the Germans),
- 7) his victory is not final, Poland's liberation is threatened by the USSR in 1920,
- 8) he declares war on the Soviet Union and the decisive Battle of Radzymin (also called "the miracle on the Vistula") bars the communist road to Poland and the rest of Europe,
- 9) after the victory he retires to a quiet spot outside Warsaw where he intends to enjoy family life,
- 10) this is impossible: once more Poland needs his strong will and decision making ability. At a vital moment he seizes power,
- 11) by the time he returns it, he is too ill to enjoy family life. He dies in 1935.

If we take a look at the sequences of episodes in the lives of the next two heroes, whose names are linked with Polish independence, Father Ignacy Skorupka and Jerzy Popieluszko, we can see that both have humble backgrounds, give up personal happiness for the religious life. Both undergo tests of prison and police interrogation. Their lives consist in proclaiming truth about God and the Fatherland, mainly to young people who are ready to lay down their lives for their country. In the end, both priests face a decisive struggle. Father Skorupka loses his life in the battle of Radzymin, the battle which decides the victory of the Polish Army over Soviet Marshal Tukhachevsky's troops. Folkloric texts say that the battle was the result of the genius of another hero, Marshal Pilsudski (in reality he didn't plan the strategy of this battle), or even of the intervention of the Mother of God (the battle took place on the Feast of Assumption, 15th August). Sacrifice played an important part here - the blood of young soldiers who were practically children. Father Skorupka led a company of young students from Warsaw schools. Father Popieluszko was chaplain to

young workers who were also prepared to lay down their lives for the country's freedom.

A similarity of fates, upbringings, service to the nation, trials which eventually lead to death in enemy hands - deaths which they do not seek to avoid - Father Skorupka volunteered for the army in this war and Father Popieluszko had repeatedly been warned to stop his activities by the police. Charisma links them too, their ability to draw the crowds, and their devotion to the Mother of God who intercedes between people and God.

Lord Raglan's scheme mentioned at the opening of this paper might help clarify the heroic myths which derive from rituals vesting the king with power and installing him on the throne. Dumézil's critical analysis of Indoeuropean myth has pointed to a far wider field of activity for the hero and other of his appearances and functions. Heroes of the 19th and 20th centuries need more and deeper studies, and indicating on the one hand, the "universality of myths" - as Kołakowski terms it, "obecność" (presence) (Kołakowski, 1972) - and on the other hand, the historical dimension relating to the national community of a certain group of these universal myths. The hero still undergoes a trial, he is still endowed with uncommon strength, his birth is still, in some way, extraordinary. However, he has humble origins which might be a sign of his simplicity and innocence, his not being connected with the prevailing political order and class system. He need not die, though he is not allowed to enjoy family life. He frequently offers his own life and that of his followers, as a sacrifice.

The Polish national heroes and myths mentioned here are not exceptions in Europe. Everywhere we can find examples of heroes still alive: in Bulgaria: Christo Botev and Wasył Levski, in Hungary: St. Stephen and Árpád, in Yugoslavia: King Marko and Zmij and others in Ukraine and Russia. Such figures are to be found in the history of every European nation. A given historical situation determines whether they belong to the past, or whether they are kept alive.

Translated from Polish by Julia Pozdiewska.

## Notes

This is an extract from a book on 19th-20th century national mythology and heroes in Europe, currently being prepared by the author.

1. The information given to me Nov. 1990 from the current research by Dr. Luigi Spedicato, Lecce University.
2. The comprehensive review of the theories presented by M.H. Zowczak in her Ph.D. thesis *The hero of contemporary village in Poland*, 1986, Warsaw University archive.
3. Ljubomir Relitsh (ed.), *The legend of Kosovo in folk art and tradition*, Beograd 1989 (in Serbo-Croatian and English).
4. Moscow News research, Nov. 11-18 1990 "The Russian Revolution as judged by its descendants", pp. 8-9.
5. Avner Ben-Amos, Patriotism and Popular culture in the State Funerals of the French 3rd Republic, paper presented to the 2nd conference of the international Society for the Study of European Ideas "European Nationalism - toward 1992," Sept. 3-8 1990, The Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium - planned to be published in *The Journal of European Ideas*.

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