

Jefferson and Kosciuszko: Friends of Liberty and of Man

“**I** SEE HIM OFTEN, and with great pleasure mixed with commiseration.* He is as pure a son of liberty, as I have ever known, and of that liberty which is to go to all, and not to the few or rich alone.”¹ Thus did Thomas Jefferson describe his new-found friend General Kosciuszko in 1798. Kosciuszko had left his native Poland in 1776 to join the American patriots in their fight for independence and had served honorably and well throughout the Revolutionary War.² Jefferson had scarcely known him then, but when he returned to his adopted fatherland for a second time in 1797 the two men became close friends and saw each other, for a time, almost daily.³

By then Thaddeus Kosciuszko, though only fifty-one, was well on his way to becoming a myth. Leader of the unsuccessful Kosciuszko Insurrection of 1794 in Poland, he had endeared himself to lovers of liberty everywhere by insisting that spirit and determination could overcome lack of men, materiel, and money. As temporary dictator of Poland, he gave his peasant followers limited freedom from serfdom, and symbolically wore the long white woolen coat of his

* This article differs somewhat in form from one written for a forthcoming book of essays in honor of my distinguished friend, Professor Stanislaw Lorentz, Director of the National Museum at Warsaw. All the libraries and collections mentioned in the Notes have been kind in supplying copies of manuscript materials, but Dr. Stephen T. Riley of the Massachusetts Historical Society and Dr. Zdzislaw Zygulski, Jr., of the National Museum at Cracow have taken special pains to help me. Dr. Julian P. Boyd and Dr. Dumas Malone, those wise and enthusiastic Jeffersonians, have encouraged me, helped me find materials, and they have read the article before publication.

¹ Jefferson to Horatio Gates, Feb. 21, 1798, Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

² The best biographies of Kosciuszko are Miecislaus Haiman, *Kosciuszko in the American Revolution* (New York, 1943) and *Kosciuszko, Leader and Exile* (New York, 1946), and Henri de Montfort, *Le drame de la Pologne: Kosciuszko, 1746-1817* (Paris, 1945).

³ Jefferson to John Adams, Mar. 20, 1818, Albert Ellery Bergh, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (Washington, 1907), XIX, 253-254; Jefferson to Frantz Xavier Zeltner, July 23, 1818, Massachusetts Historical Society.

scythebearers. Yet scythes hammered into spears eventually proved ineffective against Russian guns, and at Maciejowice that October Kosciuszko's forces were defeated and he himself wounded and captured. After he was sent to prison in St. Petersburg, the third and final partition of Poland among Russia, Prussia, and Austria followed.⁴

Czar Paul I, having succeeded his mother Catherine the Great in 1796, took his nineteen-year-old son Alexander to call on Kosciuszko, whom he considered a man of honor who had done his duty. Showering the Pole with gifts and money, Paul released him and his many compatriots on their word not to act against him. Kosciuszko, still weak from his wounds, set out for Sweden, accompanied by his former secretary Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, a servant, and a burly, cheerful officer, Libiszewski, who often had to carry the General.⁵ The American newspapers followed with interest his triumphal journey through Sweden and England.

At Gothenburg, the principal inhabitants turned out to greet the Polish hero, the ladies taking musical instruments with them to "strive by charms of melody to assuage his misfortunes."⁶ In London, Whig leaders, including Fox, Wilberforce, and Sheridan, waited on him. The members of the Whig Club had their president, General Banastre Tarleton, the former dashing cavalry commander who almost captured Jefferson during the American Revolution, present a sword worth 200 guineas to Kosciuszko "as a public testimony of their sense of his exalted virtues and of his gallant, generous, and exemplary efforts to defend and save his country."⁷ The chief physicians of the city examined him and prescribed treatment for wounds at the base of his head from a blunt sabre and in his thigh from a Cossack pike.⁸ Rufus King, the American Minister to Britain, arranged his passage to the United States. At Bristol, where the citizens

⁴ Robert Roswell Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution* (Princeton, 1959, 1964), I, 412-435; II, 86-96, 148-156; Haiman, *Kosciuszko, Leader*, 1-29.

⁵ Anne Cary Morris, *The Diary and Letters of Gouverneur Morris* (New York, 1888), II, 238; Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, *Under Their Vine and Fig Tree: Travels through America in 1797-1799, 1805 . . .*, Metchie J. E. Budka, transl. and ed. (Elizabeth, N. J., 1965), xix; Haiman, *Kosciuszko, Leader*, 32.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 33-34, 135-136.

presented him with a magnificent mahogany case of silver plate weighing more than 216 ounces, each piece inscribed "The Friends of Liberty in Bristol to the Gallant Kosciuszko,"⁹ the General stayed in the home of the American Consul.

After a long and perilous trip across the Atlantic, Kosciuszko arrived at Philadelphia in August, 1797. "That illustrious Defender of the Rights of Mankind," as a Philadelphia paper described him, his head swathed in bandages, was greeted with a "Federal" salute and rowed to shore in a barge manned by eight masters of vessels in the harbor. A huge crowd gave him three cheers, "and according to an English custom they harnessed themselves to his carriage and drew him to the boarding house of Mrs. Loveson on Second Street."¹⁰ For the next few months, the leading citizens and several noble French emigrés feted him. Later, when driven north by the yellow fever, he visited his old friends General Anthony Walton White in New Brunswick, New Jersey, and General Horatio Gates just outside New York City.¹¹

For a time Kosciuszko enjoyed a popular triumph similar to that Lafayette was to receive in 1824. Portraits of him were sold in Philadelphia; toasts were drunk to "the Defender of the Rights of Man" at nearly every public meeting; and a female poet assured him that "The sons of freedom hail thee to their land, And blooming virgins sing thee ever blest."¹² The Duc de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt reported in September, 1797:

There is no heart friendly to liberty or an admirer of virtue and talent, in whom the name of Kosciuszko does not excite sentiments of interest and respect. . . . Simple and modest, he even sheds tears of gratitude, and seems astonished at the homage he receives. He sees in every man who is the friend of liberty and of man, a brother. His countenance, sparkling with fire, discovers a soul which no circumstances can render dependent, and ex-

⁹ *Ibid.*, 35; Charles R. King, *The Life and Correspondence of Rufus King* (New York, 1894-1900), II, 188-189; "Particulars of General Kosciuszko's Plate," 1797, Massachusetts Historical Society.

¹⁰ Niemcewicz, *Travels*, xix; Ludwik Krzyanowski, ed., *Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz and America* (New York, 1961), 8; Władysław Mieczysław Kozłowski, *Washington and Kosciuszko* (Chicago, 1942), 52-53; William Cobbett, *Porcupine's Works . . . Exhibiting a Faithful Picture of the United States . . . 1783-1801* (London, 1801), VII, 113.

¹¹ Niemcewicz, *Travels*, 7-55; Haiman, *Kosciuszko, Leader*, 50-63.

¹² *Ibid.*, 42, 59.

presses the language of his heart, *Shall I never then fight more for my country?* He speaks little, particularly on the misfortunes of his country, although the thoughts of these occupy his whole soul. . . .¹³

No one in Philadelphia saw the General more often than Vice-President Jefferson; he was with him almost daily, and, as Niemcewicz remarked, "Kosciuszko completely adhered to Jefferson." An amateur artist, he painted a small watercolor, probably in April, 1798, of Jefferson, complete with laurel leaves on his brow. The original likeness has disappeared and an aquatint engraving by General Michel Sokolinicki of the Polish Legions does both sitter and painter little credit. Dr. William Thornton, an architect of the United States Capitol, wrote Jefferson in 1816 of this near caricature: "Never was such an injustice done to you except by sign-painters and General Kosciuszko . . . when I saw it I did not wonder that he lost Poland."¹⁴

Since the General had never received full payment for his services in the Revolution, Jefferson helped him claim what was due. Oliver Wolcott, Secretary of the Treasury, paid him \$12,280.54 principal and \$2,947.33 in interest for the years 1785-1788. Interest for the next few years had already been sent him, and Congress, in January, 1798, voted an additional \$3,684.16 for 1793-1797.¹⁵ Jefferson also assisted in securing for Kosciuszko a 500-acre military land warrant, located on the Scioto River in what is today Columbus, Ohio.¹⁶

Yet not everyone admired the brave Pole. The pro-British Federalist newspapers distrusted him as a supporter of France, and his intimacy with Jefferson added to their enmity. William Cobbett, the venomous and partisan "Peter Porcupine," criticized the Czar for freeing Kosciuszko and scoffed at General Tarleton: "You present the Polander with a sword, as a token of your approbation of his labors in the cause of what you call *liberty*, when it is well known that

¹³ F. A. F. La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, *Travels through the United States . . . in the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797* . . . (London, 1799), II, 468-469.

¹⁴ Niemcewicz, *Travels*, 45-47; Haiman, *Kosciuszko, Leader*, 63, 93; Alfred L. Bush, *The Life Portraits of Thomas Jefferson* (Charlottesville, Va., 1962), 40-42.

¹⁵ Haiman, *Kosciuszko, Leader*, 70-72; Krzyzanowski, *Niemcewicz*, 18.

¹⁶ Haiman, *Kosciuszko, Leader*, 129-130; Land Receipt for Military Lands, Feb. 11, 1800, Massachusetts Historical Society; Jefferson to Kosciuszko, May 7, 1800, Library of Congress; Kosciuszko to Jefferson, Aug. 13 [1800], Massachusetts Historical Society.

you owe your present rank and pay to your having fought against him."¹⁷ Cobbett sarcastically pointed out:

Disinterested, generous Kosciuszko! . . . received *in cash* his full proportion of what American soldiers received in paper. . . . Whatever might be his views in crossing the Atlantic, it is certain that it has turned out no unprofitable voyage; no bad *spec* in liberty and equality. I do not like these *after-claps*. If a man fights for the sheer love of liberty, let him have the honour of it; but let him not enjoy this honour with the wages of a *mercenary* in his pocket. What does this man want with 20,000 dollars?¹⁸

Such virulent criticism worried Kosciuszko and may have had a bearing on his plans. When young Niemcewicz late on the evening of May 4, 1798, returned to the house in Philadelphia where the General and he were staying, Kosciuszko swore him to secrecy and then dramatically informed him: "I leave this night for Europe." The young man, stupefied by this bolt from the blue, offered to go along, but Kosciuszko refused to take him and would give no reason for his departure. He begged Niemcewicz to act as a decoy, to journey toward the springs of western Virginia, telling everyone he met that he was going to join Kosciuszko there. At 4:00 A.M. Jefferson arrived in a covered carriage; Kosciuszko was carried out and the carriage drove off to Newcastle.¹⁹

News that Polish emigré leaders were organizing Polish legions to fight with the Italian allies of Napoleon was Kosciuszko's chief reason for returning to France. He hoped that Poles who had been drafted into the Russian, Prussian, and Austrian armies would desert to join the legions, and that eventually they, with French aid, would re-establish the Polish state. By March, 1797, the Polish general Dombrowski had 2,000 men organized into the first legion.²⁰ Kosciuszko, learning about the movement soon after his landing in America, had wanted to go to France immediately. The French Consul informed his government of this two days after the General's arrival: "This Martyr of liberty cannot speak or act, but only with

¹⁷ *Porcupine's Works*, V, 118; VII, 4-6.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, VII, 113-114; X, 82.

¹⁹ Niemcewicz, *Travels*, 65-67. Compare also Krzyzanowski, *Niemcewicz*, 19.

²⁰ Haiman, *Kosciuszko, Leader*, 64-65; Władysław Młeczysław Kozłowski, "Kosciuszko et les légions polonaises en France (1798-1801)," *Revue historique*, CXIX (1915), 88, 92-94.

the greatest precaution. He is here only to mislead his enemies."²¹ Kosciuszko had been made an honorary citizen of France in 1792, and he constantly hoped that French conflict with the partitioning powers would give Poland a chance to rise again.²² Later, upon his arrival in Paris, the General told the officers of the Polish legions who welcomed him: "I want to be ever and inseparably with you. I want to join you to serve our common country. . . . Like you I have fought for the country, like you I have suffered, like you I expect to regain it. This hope is the only solace of my life."²³

Jefferson, fearing that the tensions resulting from the XYZ Affair might lead to war, treated Kosciuszko as an informal envoy from the United States to France. Kosciuszko 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."²⁴ Jefferson helped him obtain a passport under the assumed name of Thomas Kanberg.²⁵ Kosciuszko, jittery about securing his passage, frequently importuned Jefferson to hurry. On one occasion he wrote: "Do not fogget [*sic*] that I am under your protection. And you only my [*sic*] resource in this Country."²⁶ The two men agreed upon a cipher or code in which they could correspond, though, as it turned out, they did not actually use it.²⁷

Kosciuszko gave Jefferson power of attorney to act for him in all business concerning his property in the United States²⁸ and also drew a most unusual will that ran as follows:

I, Thaddeus Kosciuszko, being just in my departure from America, do hereby declare and direct that, should I make no other testamentary disposition of my property in the United States, I hereby authorize my friend Thomas Jefferson to employ the whole thereof in purchasing Negroes from

²¹ Letombe to Charles Delacroix, Aug. 20, 1797, in Haiman, *Kosciuszko, Leader*, 46-47.

²² Palmer, *Age of Democratic Revolution*, II, 54-55; Jefferson to Gates, Feb. 21, 1798, Alderman Library.

²³ Haiman, *Kosciuszko, Leader*, 100.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 74.

²⁵ Kosciuszko to Jefferson, undated [March, 1798], *ibid.*, 74; Jefferson to Liston, Mar. 27, 1798, Bergh, X, 48; Kosciuszko to Jefferson, undated [March, 1798], Maine Historical Society.

²⁶ Kosciuszko to Jefferson, undated [received Apr. 14, 1798], Pierpont Morgan Library.

²⁷ Jefferson to Kosciuszko, June 8, 1798, Library of Congress.

²⁸ Document dated Apr. 30, 1798, Rosenbach Foundation, Philadelphia. There is an unsigned, unwitnessed copy dated only 1798 in the National Museum, Cracow, Poland.

among his own or any others and giving them Liberty in my name; in giving them [an] education in trades or otherwise and in having them instructed for their new condition in the duties of morality which may make them good neighbours, good fathers or mothers, husbands or wives, and in their duties as citizens teaching them to be defenders of their Liberty and Country and of the good order of society, and in whatsoever may make them happy and useful. . . .²⁹

Thus did Kosciuszko once again demonstrate his amiability toward mankind and his desire to liberate the oppressed. For this, of course, he was famous. Dr. Benjamin Rush, his Philadelphia friend and physician, when reporting the General's wounds almost healed, though he would always limp slightly, had added: "Every step he takes will remind him of his patriotism and bravery."³⁰

For the next twenty years, Jefferson and Kosciuszko corresponded, usually several times a year. Part of this exchange was over business. Although Jefferson had turned the General's funds over to John Barnes, an excellent Philadelphia banker who had moved to Georgetown, he continued to watch them carefully. At first Kosciuszko's money, about \$12,500, was invested in stock of the Bank of Pennsylvania, which paid a generous eight per cent dividend, or some \$500 every six months. During the War of 1812, Barnes had difficulty in transmitting bills of exchange to Kosciuszko in France, and the General had to borrow money in order to live. On a later occasion, a bill of exchange was protested, but Barnes replaced it with little loss.³¹

Two incidents of this financial trusteeship are of note. Upon retiring from the presidency to Monticello, Jefferson found himself financially embarrassed. At Barnes' suggestion, he borrowed \$4,500 of Kosciuszko's money that happened to be momentarily uninvested. He meticulously paid the eight per cent interest it had been earning and returned the full sum to Barnes in 1815. Jefferson wrote Kos-

²⁹ Albemarle County (Charlottesville, Virginia) Circuit Court, Will Book, 1, 42. An earlier version of this will, about Apr. 30, 1798, is in Massachusetts Historical Society.

³⁰ Rush to Gates, Sept. 3, 1797, Lyman H. Butterfield, *Letters of Benjamin Rush* (Princeton, 1951), II, 788.

³¹ Jefferson's Power of Attorney to Barnes, June 12, 1798, Rosenbach Foundation; Barnes' Account with Kosciuszko, Jan. 14, Nov. 15, 1799; Kosciuszko to Jefferson, May 15, July 14, 1814, Massachusetts Historical Society; Jefferson to Barnes, May 17, 1817, *Magazine of History with Notes and Queries*, IX (Extra No. 36, 1915), 273-295.

ciuszeko of this arrangement in February, 1810, and fretted somewhat before he received the General's approval more than a year later.³²

In 1814 Jefferson showed financial acumen in overruling Barnes' advice and selling Kosciuszko's remaining stock in the Bank of Pennsylvania. Jefferson thought the banks throughout the country had overextended themselves in issuing paper money, and that their circulation was "advancing fast to the 40 to 1 at which the paper money of the revolution began generally to be refused." Barnes sold the stock at a premium, receiving \$12,700 for its face value of \$8,000, and invested this money in a United States loan which paid only six per cent interest but which was much safer. Were Kosciuszko to lose his capital in bank stock, Jefferson thought he could not "answer it to my friendship or to my conscience . . . [or ever] have another sound night's sleep."³³ In 1815 he wrote triumphantly to his old friend:

I informed you in mine [of June 28, 1814] of the operation by which we had saved your capital by a timely withdrawing of it from the banks, before their failure. Every bank in the U. S. has since stopped payments. They promise indeed they will resume as soon as cash can be obtained. Perhaps some of them may be able; but most of them are irrecoverably gone, and in the mean time their stock is become an absolute zero at market.³⁴

Though Jefferson was cautious about discussing politics in his correspondence, he had difficulty avoiding some partisan comment. In 1801, soon after his inauguration as President, he exulted "on the return of our fellow citizens to the principles of '76 and to their thorough understanding of the artifices which had been played off on them and under the operation of which they were while you were here."³⁵ In 1802 he gave a classic summary of his first year in office,

³² Jefferson to Barnes, Apr. 27, May 24, June 15, 1809, Apr. 18, 1815, *ibid.*, IX, 276, 289; Jefferson to Kosciuszko, Feb. 26, 1810, Apr. 16, 1811, Library of Congress; also recipient's copies in National Museum, Cracow, Poland; Kosciuszko to Jefferson, Mar. 1, 1811, Massachusetts Historical Society.

³³ Jefferson to Barnes, Jan. 29, Feb. 23, Mar. 22, May 8, June 28, 1814, *Magazine of History*, IX (Extra No. 36, 1915), 273-295; Jefferson to Barnes, Apr. 25, 1814, in Anderson Galleries, *Memorial Exhibition: Thaddeus Kosciuszko . . . Collection . . . Formed by Dr. & Mrs. Alexander Kahanowicz* (New York, 1927), 40-41.

³⁴ Jefferson to Kosciuszko, Mar. 1, 1815, Massachusetts Historical Society; identical letter, Herbert R. Strauss, Chicago.

³⁵ Jefferson to Kosciuszko, Mar. 14, 1801, Library of Congress; recipient's copy in National Museum, Cracow, Poland.



Benjamin West, 1797

Courtesy of Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College
THADDEUS KOSCIUSZKO

during which he had reduced the Army and Navy; done away with one-half the jobs under executive patronage; dismissed the parasites attached to the judiciary by his predecessors; removed all internal taxes; encouraged immigration of fugitives from oppressed lands; and dropped useless public forms of government. "The people are nearly all united, their quondam leaders, infuriated with the sense of their impotence will soon be seen or heard only in the newspapers, which serve as chimnies to carry off noxious vapours." Remembering the need for caution, he left the letter unsigned: "I add no signature because unnecessary for you."³⁶

In February, 1810, Jefferson wrote the General an explanation of his conservative policy of correspondence:

I have rarely written to you; never but by safe conveyances; and avoiding everything political, lest coming from me in the station I then held, it might be imputed injuriously to our country or perhaps even excite jealousy of you. Hence my letters were necessarily dry. Retired now from public concerns, totally unconnected with them, and avoiding all curiosity about what is done or intended, what I say is from myself only, the workings of my own mind, imputable to nobody else.³⁷

From then on, his letters were more regular and contained fuller comments on American affairs. Usually they were models of clear and cogent writing. A typical one of March 1, 1815, devoted about two-thirds of its space to Kosciuszko's financial affairs and the remainder to comment on the peace ending the War of 1812. Jefferson was uncertain whether it would last, "no arrangement being made against the impressment of American citizens," but the United States should employ the armistice "in fortifying our seaports, providing military stores, classing & disciplining the militia, and arranging our finances." The "brilliant transactions at New Orleans . . . proved the superiority of both our regulars & militia, when well commanded, to the regulars of the enemy." The burning of the White House, Capitol, and library in Washington only immortalized British infamy, and "had the war gone on," the able American officers who had come to the fore "would have planted our standard

³⁶ Jefferson to Kosciuszko, Apr. 2, 1802, Library of Congress.

³⁷ Jefferson to Kosciuszko, Feb. 26, 1810, *ibid.*

on the walls of Quebec in the first campaign, & on those of Halifax in the second."³⁸

Through the years, Kosciuszko confined his letters chiefly to business. He usually wrote in French with considerable misspelling and bad grammar. Kosciuszko's opinion of Jefferson remained high. When the Virginian was nominated for the presidency, the Pole urged him to be "always good, true American a Philosopher and my Friend,"³⁹ and again: "Do not forget in your post be always [the] virtuous Republican with justice and probity without pomp and ambition in a word be Jefferson and my friend."⁴⁰

The General thought that Jefferson's inaugural address of 1801 had "made the greatest impression in Europe. Even men of contrary opinion have admired it. They pretend only that such beautiful promises will not be actually effected."⁴¹ Beginning about 1805, he repeatedly urged Jefferson to set up schools, especially military academies, in each state. They should be supervised directly by members of Congress, open to all, and would provide trained officers for the militia. He also thought that Jefferson should attack the Spaniards and take over Florida at once; thus, European nations would be impressed and impelled to seek alliances with the United States.⁴² That country ought to establish democratic decorations of gold, silver, and iron, to be awarded for devotion to the Republic in the arts, sciences, and, especially, agriculture.⁴³ On one occasion Kosciuszko addressed Jefferson as his dear Aristides, insisted again that the education of youth was the basic foundation of any republic, and asserted that as many heroes would come from the United States as from Greece, and more wise men than from Rome.⁴⁴

After the War of 1812 began, Kosciuszko wrote Jefferson: "Your land is rich, large and populous; your inhabitants are good, active and courageous. But do not be too ambitious to acquire all of

³⁸ Jefferson to Kosciuszko, Mar. 1, 1815, Massachusetts Historical Society; identical letter, Herbert R. Strauss, Chicago.

³⁹ Kosciuszko to Jefferson, Aug. 13 [1800], Massachusetts Historical Society.

⁴⁰ Kosciuszko to Jefferson, undated [Oct. 10, 1800], *ibid.*

⁴¹ Kosciuszko to Jefferson, undated [received June 24, 1801], *ibid.*

⁴² Kosciuszko to Jefferson, undated [received Nov. 15, 1805], undated [September, 1805], *ibid.*

⁴³ Kosciuszko to Jefferson, Mar. 1, 1811, *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Kosciuszko to Jefferson, Feb. 1, 1812, *ibid.*

Canada. Too great security will soften you. . . . It will be useful to avail yourself of plenty of light artillery, mounted and afoot for your woods are uncleared and the speed with which the artillery can move to where it is needed often decides the victory."⁴⁵ This last advice was to be expected from the author of *Manoeuvres of Horse Artillery*, which had been published in French at Paris in 1800. Kosciuszko wrote this military manual at the request of General William R. Davie, United States Minister to France. In 1808 it was translated into English and became the textbook used at West Point, where Kosciuszko was known as "the Father of American Artillery."⁴⁶

When Kosciuszko returned to France in 1798, he wrote the Czar a strong letter, which he gave to the newspapers, revoking his oath not to resist him on the grounds that the Czar's ministers had exacted that promise by terror and against his free will. This letter infuriated Paul and resulted in reprisals against the families of leading Polish emigrés, including Niemcewicz's. Kosciuszko served for a time as a kind of ambassador of the Polish legions with the French Directory; he was known as "chief of the Polish nation." Two legions based in Italy contained about 7,000 crack fighting men, and Kosciuszko helped organize a third unit, the Legion of the Danube.⁴⁷

After Napoleon assumed dictatorial powers under the coup d'état of November, 1799, Kosciuszko developed a deep distrust of him. To a friend he said: "Do you think . . . that he will restore Poland: he thinks only of himself. He hates every great nationality and still more the spirit of independence. He is a tyrant, and his only aim is to satisfy his own ambition. I am sure he will create nothing durable."⁴⁸ In 1807, after the Treaty of Tilsit, Napoleon set up the

⁴⁵ Kosciuszko to Jefferson, May 30, 1813, Anderson Galleries, *Kahanowicz Collection*, 28-29.

⁴⁶ General [Thaddeus] Kosciuszko, *Manoeuvres of Horse Artillery*, Jonathan Williams, transl. (New York, 1808). Kosciuszko evidently sent Jefferson a copy of the first edition. Kosciuszko to Jefferson, Aug. 13 [1800], Massachusetts Historical Society. Williams also presented Jefferson with a copy of his translation. Jefferson to [Williams], Oct. 28, 1808, Bergh, XII, 185. See also Elizabeth Camille Brink, "Kosciuszko—Forefather of American Artillery," *Field Artillery Journal*, XXII (May-June, 1932), 303-313.

⁴⁷ Kozłowski, *Revue historique*, CXIX (1915), 91, 99-102, 113; CXX (1916), 65; Niemcewicz, *Travels*, xxv-xxvii; *Porcupine's Works*, X, 88-89.

⁴⁸ W. F. Reddaway et al., *Cambridge History of Poland* (Cambridge, 1941), 212-213. See also Haiman, *Kosciuszko, Leader*, 101-103; Kozłowski, *Revue historique*, CXX (1916), 73-76.

Grand Duchy of Warsaw, but Kosciuszko would have nothing to do with it. Napoleon had failed to meet his demands for an independent nation, a constitution based on the British model, and freedom and lands for the serfs. On the other hand, Julian Niemcewicz, who had married and settled in New Jersey, though "an American Citizen & enjoying . . . the blessings of the only free Government in the world," enlisted Jefferson's help in securing a passport to Poland so that he might fulfill "a sacred duty to hasten to my post, and join my feeble Services to those my Countrymen undertake."⁴⁹

In 1814, after the defeat of Napoleon, things appeared more hopeful for Poland. Czar Alexander I, known for his liberalism and friendliness toward the Poles, came to Paris, called upon Kosciuszko, and made much of him. The exile, in turn, urged Alexander to become ruler of a new Kingdom of Poland, and hopefully went to Vienna in 1815 where Alexander was attending the famed Congress of the Allied Powers. But things did not turn out well, and Kosciuszko sadly returned to exile, this time in Switzerland. In his letter of April, 1816, he explained to Jefferson what happened:

Tsar Alexander promised me to enlarge the Duchy of Warsaw to the Dzwina [Dvina] and Dnieper, our former limits, but his ministers refused to carry out his generous and magnanimous plans, and unfortunately the Kingdom of Poland is smaller by a good third than the Duchy of Warsaw. . . . Tsar Alexander pledged me a constitutional government liberal and independent and even to enfranchise our unfortunate serfs and give them their land. That alone would have immortalized him, but it went up in smoke. I am now at Soleure in Switzerland watching the Allied Powers in bad faith treating the little states unjustly and acting toward their own subjects as wolves with sheep.⁵⁰

In the last letter Kosciuszko wrote Jefferson, in September, 1817, he added: "I am the one true Pole in Europe, all the others under the circumstances are the subjects of different foreign powers. . . . Especially, my dear and respectable friend, one can be independent when one thinks well, reasons well, when one has good heart, humane sentiments, and a character firm, upright, and open, who confounds

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*; Niemcewicz to Jefferson, Apr. 10, 1807, Library of Congress.

⁵⁰ Kosciuszko to Jefferson, April, 1816, Massachusetts Historical Society; rough draft in National Museum, Cracow, Poland.

always the most astute diplomat and knavish, cunning, and low being."⁵¹

Late in October, 1817, Frantz Xavier Zeltner, in whose home Kosciuszko lived at Soleure, wrote Jefferson that the General had died in his arms on October 15.⁵² Jefferson commented thus to Zeltner in reply:

To no country could that event be more afflicting nor to any individual more than myself. I had enjoyed his intimate friendship and confidence for the last 20 years, and during the portion of that time which he spent in this country, I had daily opportunities of observing personally the purity of his virtue, the benevolence of his heart, and his sincere devotion to the cause of liberty. His anterior services during our revolutionary war had been well known and acknowledged [*sic*] by all. When he left the U.S. in 1798 he left in my hands an instrument, giving, after his death, all his property in our bonds, the price of his military labors here, to the charitable purpose of educating and emancipating as many of the children of bondage in this country as it should be adequate to. . . . I am therefore taking means to have it placed in such hands as will ensure a faithful discharge of his philanthropic views. . . .⁵³

Jefferson realized that his advanced age and remote situation at Monticello made it unwise for him to serve as executor of the will, and, after getting the probate placed in the federal courts, he renounced the executorship. Kosciuszko's American estate by then exceeded \$17,000 in value. In addition to the terms contained in the will in Jefferson's hands, the General had left about \$3,700 to Thaddeus Kosciuszko Armstrong, youngest son of his old comrade and friend General John Armstrong. However, the descendants of Kosciuszko's two sisters in Poland claimed the whole estate, and so did Frantz Xavier Zeltner and his family. The question was not finally settled until 1852, when the United States Supreme Court ruled that Kosciuszko's will of 1816 had revoked the one he left with Jefferson and the bequest to young Armstrong. In his own hand Kosciuszko had written: "I revoke all the wills and codicils which I may have made previous to the present, to which I alone confine

⁵¹ Kosciuszko to Jefferson, Sept. 15, 1817, Massachusetts Historical Society; rough draft in National Museum, Cracow, Poland.

⁵² Kosciuszko to Jefferson, Oct. 29, 1817, Worthington Chauncey Ford, *Jefferson Correspondence . . . from . . . the Collections of William F. Bixby* (Boston, 1916).

⁵³ Jefferson to Zeltner, July 23, 1818, Massachusetts Historical Society.

myself, as containing my last wishes." The General must have thought his American will exempt from this statement, for in his last letter to Jefferson, September 15, 1817, he spoke of the need of receiving "the interest on my money punctually; of which money, after my death, you know the fixed destination." The court also decreed that a will of 1817, making bequests to the Zeltners, covered only specific personal property and did not include the American estate. As far as those funds were concerned, Kosciuszko had died intestate, and their distribution was determined by French law since he was a resident of France. The property, which then amounted to more than \$40,000, was awarded to the seven grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Kosciuszko's sisters.⁵⁴

The Senate of the Free City of Cracow asked Jefferson in 1820 to collect money from the American friends of Kosciuszko for a memorial being erected to him in Cracow. Jefferson declined because of his retirement and unsuccessfully urged President Monroe to take charge of the collection of funds to build the Kosciuszko Mound atop a hill on the edge of Cracow. From 1820 to 1823, men, women, and children using their hands, baskets, and wheelbarrows carried soil from Kosciuszko's battlefields and the Polish earth, which he so loved, to create a mound about 100 feet high and 250 feet in diameter at the base that still dominates the old city. Kosciuszko's body was interred in Cracow at Wawel Cathedral, the resting place of Polish kings, and, after Poland again became a nation in 1918, the casket that contained his heart was brought from Switzerland and deposited in a small chapel near the Mound. The street leading to it is named "George Washington Avenue."⁵⁵

Each in his own way, Jefferson and Kosciuszko promoted the cause of freedom and forwarded the ideals of the integrity of the individual as

⁵⁴ Albemarle County (Charlottesville, Virginia) Circuit Court, Will Book, 1, 42; General [John] Armstrong to Jefferson, Jan. 4, 1818, Anderson Galleries, *Kahanowicz Collection*, 42; Jefferson to John Adams, Mar. 20, 1818, Bergh, XIX, 253-254; Haiman, *Kosciuszko, Leader*, 125-129; Stephen P. Mizwa, "Kosciuszko's 'Fortune' in America and What Became of It," Kosciuszko Foundation, *Monthly News Letter*, X (April, 1956), 1-3; Benjamin C. Howard, *Reports of Cases . . . in the Supreme Court of the United States*, December Term, 1852 (New York, 1905), XIV, 399-433.

⁵⁵ Jefferson to Monroe, Aug. 13, 1821, Bergh, XIX, 274-277; Haiman, *Kosciuszko, Leader*, 117; Jan Lubicz-Pachonski, *Kosciuszko in Krakowie* (Krakow, 1953), 150; Zofia Uszynska, *Poland: Travel Guide* (Warsaw, 1960), V, 14, 16.

promulgated by the Enlightenment. Jefferson was the more successful of the two; from his responsible position as President and party leader, he managed to establish a strong framework of democratic government for the youthful United States. His literary eloquence, as expressed in his many public papers, kindled the hopes of mankind everywhere. Kosciuszko, without real political power and living in exile, was not able to secure for his unhappy country the self-government and individual rights he so desired. Though he was relatively inarticulate, yet a romantic age appreciated his good intentions, his bold actions, and his generous willingness to sacrifice himself.

In the twentieth century when dictatorship and oppression reached new heights, the world eagerly sought historical personalities that could rally man's faith in himself as an individual. Jefferson then joined Washington and Lincoln in the highest pantheon of United States character; symbolically it was fitting that his Memorial in the nation's capital was dedicated in 1934, the year that Hitler came to power. The brutal blitzkrieg of the Germans sent Poland reeling in 1939. In their precarious struggle for existence, the Poles turned to their historical hero for support and named some of their military units after Kosciuszko. The two leaders, famed in their day as friends of mankind, thus have become ever more powerful symbols of human liberty.

*Colonial Williamsburg
Williamsburg, Va.*

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