

Civic education of a soldier in the Polish national army during the struggle for independence (1794–1864)

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Abstract. The army is one of the oldest state institutions. Its existence is an inseparable attribute of the state organisation. The army’s strength and combat efficiency played a significant role in deciding the state’s fate. Poland’s geopolitical location meant that the state depended on strong, trained and well-equipped armed forces. The army is a highly formalised institution with its internal regulations. Its strength and combat efficiency, alongside many other factors (e.g. equipment, command, communications), largely depend on the upbringing of soldiers, their high morale, exceptional courage and bravery, physical condition, discipline, self-control, and perseverance. Therefore, military education is an integral part of the functioning and development of the army and its successes in the theatre of war. The process of education in the military takes place in specific conditions. These include, among others, barracks for soldiers, basing the daily agenda on regulations and orders, the existence of a service hierarchy, and living in a collective. The existence of these properties means that military education greatly influences the psyche and personality of soldiers. For this reason, high demands are placed on military education.

Keywords: army, education, patriotism, soldier, independence, sovereignty, homeland, history, tradition

1. Introduction

In Poland, the army has always been and continues to be an important educational environment for shaping citizens, patriots, and soldiers. The most patriotically active units came from the army’s ranks, especially during the independence uprisings. The first military historian in Poland to initiate research in this area was Prof. Wacław Tokarz [39–43, 45].

The issue of military education during the period of national uprisings and national liberation struggles, which is the subject of this work, is one of the most interesting periods of Polish education in the 19th century. Politically, the period 1794–1864 can be divided into five distinct sub-periods: the Kościuszko Uprising, the Polish Legions, the Duchy of Warsaw, the Kingdom of Poland, the November Uprising, and the January Uprising. This issue has been and still is the subject of scientific research and lively discourses by renowned educators and military historians. This issue has been addressed by, among others: Bronisław Gembarzewski [12, 13], Marian Kukiel [22], Janusz Sikorski [27–30], Leonard Ratajczyk [35]. The author of this study also dealt with research in this area in his earlier works [5–9].

This study aims to present this topic, which is so interesting from the point of view of pedagogy (including military pedagogy). Due to the limitations resulting from the editorial framework applicable to the author, the issue was treated selectively, and when analysing the problem, the author tried to focus on the most important issues

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*Educational
Dimension*



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related to the civic education of a soldier in the Polish national army in the years 1764–1864.

2. Results

2.1. Historical context

2.1.1. Formation of national armies

National armies were created at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. This phenomenon occurred in the United States of America and revolutionary France, where the army of citizen soldiers, supported by popular enthusiasm and the principles of promotion to higher levels according to merit, became a permanent and very effective element in military operations.

The characteristic features of national armies include: the universality of military duty treated as a civic duty, strong ties between the army and society, democratic relations between superior and subordinate, openness of the officer corps – the possibility of broad promotion of soldiers who meet the criteria (education, leadership skills, courage, etc.). These factors strengthened national awareness and the sense of national community, commitment, common interest and unity with the state.

The Polish national army was formed at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, i.e., during the great national uprisings and the fight for independence [21]. During the period in question, the modern, invigorating ideas of the Enlightenment flowed into Poland in a broad stream, as well as the progressive, reformist socio-political movement that was gaining ever wider circles, aiming to sanate the country in order to stop the ongoing process of economic collapse, political isolationism, and the destruction of the state system, resulting in the visible, slow decline of the Noble Republic.

These activities culminated in the Constitution of May 3, 1791 and the extremely important act on the 100,000-strong army, which was necessary for the country. This groundbreaking act of historical significance for the Polish army initiated, among others, its auction (enlargement of the army by increasing its numerical strength), implementation of intensive activities aimed at modernising the armed forces [35, p. 92] and their gradual evolution towards an army of a nationwide nature fulfilling mainly external functions related to the defense of the country. The record of Chapter XI of this most important state constitutive legal act entitled: “National Armed Forces” stated: “[. . .] *Therefore, all Citizens are defenders of the National integrity and freedoms. The army is nothing else but a defensive and orderly force drawn from the general strength of the Nation* [. . .]” [18].

The national character of the Polish army was deepened during the Kościuszko Uprising in 1794 (where, for the first time in the history of the Polish armed forces, we encounter well-thought-out and planned educational activities carried out on a large scale), and then consolidated during subsequent national uprisings and liberation fights in the 19th century.

2.1.2. The soldier-citizen concept

The fundamental differences between the estate (feudal) army in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the new, national army that was taking shape were concisely embodied in the maxim: soldier-citizen. It contained the idea of social and civic activation of lower classes and social strata, transformation of communities constituting the foundation of the nation into an authentic nation of Polish citizens (see [34, p. 25], [26, p. 98], [19, p. 55]). The idea was based on respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy and tolerance. Unlike in the feudal army, the common soldier began to be perceived and treated as a citizen and defender of the fatherland.

The common soldier began to be perceived and treated differently than in the feudal army, as a citizen and defender of the fatherland. This was an important value of the new education (civic education), which was very clearly emphasised by such progressive Polish thinkers of the time as Hugo Kołłątaj (1750–1812) and Stanisław Staszic (1755–1826), who believed that only a free citizen, aware of his or her full duties and rights, recognising the fact that the Republic of Poland *is their homeland and all its inhabitants constitute one nation, can fully bear the burden of responsibility for the fate of the homeland and the nation* (see [36, p. 20–21], [38]). Unlike the state army, the national army was to serve the entire nation and defend the freedom and independence of the country.

2.1.3. The Kościuszko Uprising (1794)

General Tadeusz Kościuszko (1746–1817), who played a vital role in promoting the idea of unity of soldier and civic education, stated in his appeals to the nation, at meetings with cadre and soldiers, many times that *“I will not fight for the nobility alone, I want the freedom of the whole nation and I will risk my life only for it”* [33, p. 86]. This declaration, alongside the insurgent oath of allegiance to the Nation and the Republic taken in Kraków on March 24 1794 [24, p. 78], was a guideline for the actions of the commander of the uprising, called in military historiography after the surname of the commander-in-chief – the Kościuszko Uprising.

2.1.4. The Polish Legions (1797–1807)

After the fall of the Kościuszko Uprising, the centre for patriotic and civic education of Polish soldiers was moved to Italy to the Polish émigré military formations operating alongside the French army – the Polish Legions (1797–1807). Their creator and commander, General Henryk Dąbrowski (1755–1818), describing the goals of the Legions, wrote: *“I created the Legions to save my homeland, not for France, not for Italy, not for myself – but exclusively for the Polish nation”* [31]. This idea is also confirmed in the general’s memoirs, in which he states, among other things: *“[...] neither Dąbrowski nor any of those who took part in the formation of the Polish Legions had any personal interest in mind; but that all of them, without exception, were animated by the only desire to work and devote themselves to the cause of restoring the existence of their unfortunate Fatherland”* [11, p. 25]. Dąbrowski [11] is considered by educators and military historians to be a pioneer in conducting educational activities – as evidenced by numerous orders and instructions from the general regulating this form of work with soldiers in legion formations.

2.1.5. The Duchy of Warsaw (1807–1815)

This activity was continued during the existence of the Duchy of Warsaw (1807–1815), when it was already possible to implement on home soil the educational models developed in the ranks of the Polish Legions in Italy. The then French ambassador in Warsaw, Louis Pierre Bignon (1771–1841), speaking about the army of the Duchy, said: *“There had never been a more national army than this one; for in it rested the hope of winning national existence”* [22, p. 28].

Although the Duchy of Warsaw did not fulfil Poles’ dreams, it was a substitute for a free homeland. It bound Poland and Poles in a strong alliance with republican France, opened hope and encouraged them to continue the fight for the resurrection of an independent Republic within its former borders.

2.1.6. The January Uprising (1863–1864)

In turn, the armed formations of the January Uprising (1863–1864) had the character of a national army and, to a large extent, of a people’s army. The preserved documents of the insurgent authorities confirm this. In one of the circulars of the

insurgent authorities (announcements) addressed to soldiers and cadre we read: “*It is the will of the National Government that you (general, colonel) should pay special attention and zeal to achieving a close and cordial understanding and fraternisation of our army with the people [...] Remember that an uprising without the people is only a military demonstration on a larger or smaller scale; only with the people can we crush the enemy without worrying about any interventions [...]*” [48, p. 254-259]. From our considerations so far, based on the cited fragments of historical sources, it can be stated that the national character of the Polish formations of the years 1794–1864 does not raise any doubts – it was (and is) generally recognised in Polish historiography as an indisputable fact.

2.2. Educational models

2.2.1. Goals and tasks of the national army

The Polish national army pursued different goals and tasks from the feudal armies. It was supposed to serve not one estate (nobility), but the entire nation, to defend its freedom and independence. The social composition of the army has also changed significantly. The participation of the popular masses increased – soldiers from all social classes and strata (peasantry, proletariat, urban population) were conscripted or joined its ranks voluntarily. The national army was an institution that made it possible to overcome interstate barriers and mitigate birth's disadvantages. In part, military service opened the way to social advancement not only for the lower classes of the nobility (thecrofting nobility and the so-called *gołota*). Very often, townspeople and even peasants were given officer ranks. The fact of appointing Bartosz Głowacki, Kazimierz Deczyński, Maciej Kraśnik, Bartosz Świtalski and the townsman Jan Kiliński as standard-bearers is widely known to this day [17, 25]. Education, including military schools, was available to youth of all backgrounds.

At that time, the goals and content of educational work in the Polish army underwent a significant re-evaluation. Much emphasis was placed on shaping soldier awareness, civic and patriotic education, proper relations between subordinates and superiors, and between junior and senior service personnel. This – and rightly so, as history has repeatedly demonstrated – was seen as the source of the national army's strength, combat cohesion and battle successes. Implementing the above educational assumptions was undoubtedly facilitated by the just and liberating nature of the uprising's struggles.

According to the educational concept implemented at that time, every soldier should understand that he is a homeland defender and that his military service is a service for the entire nation.

Civic education was an important means of maintaining the high morale of Polish soldiers during national uprisings and national liberation struggles.

2.2.2. Educational principles in national armed forces

In the national armed forces, efforts were made to raise and train a tough, brave soldier who was aware of his duties and rights and a conscious citizen. This principle was already fully implemented during the insurrection of 1794. The leader of the uprising, General Tadeusz Kościuszko, demanded that his commanders at all levels of command show kindness and respect for their soldiers and treat them equally. Every soldier, regardless of his origin, property status and type of service, was treated as a citizen and defender of the homeland – “*a Polish General and a soldier should not only be a tool of military art, but also a citizen*” ([24, p. 187], [32, p. 9]). In his June 1794 appeal to soldiers, Tadeusz Kościuszko wrote: “*It is not the kind of dress or weapon that makes a soldier – he stated – but courage and the will to win [...]*” [24, p. 187]. Freedom, independence and the good of the fatherland should be the aim of the fight

of all soldiers, because one cannot have anything more precious than the fatherland “[...] relatives, friends, property, even life are nothing next to its freedom, integrity and independence” [24, p. 115].

The civic education traditions of the 1794 insurrection were continued and enriched in the Polish Legions in Italy, the army of the Duchy of Warsaw, and then in the November and January Uprisings.

2.2.3. Educational institutions in the Polish Legions

The Legions of General Henryk Dąbrowski were not only an army fighting for a free Poland, but also a kind of school of civic education. Educational work, training of command staff, and spreading education among the masses of soldiers played an important role. These tasks were carried out by commanders and institutions specially established for this purpose: “Roman Military Institute” ([29, p. 237-239], [30, p. 653]), “Soldier and Citizen School” [28, p. 107, 146] and the first soldier’s newspaper in the history of the Polish armed forces – “Legion Decade” [29, p. 239], which was guided by the maxim: “A true soldier – a citizen conscious of the country”. Educational work – civic education in the Polish Legions in Italy played an important role in shaping the personality of soldiers and the model of a Pole – a patriot – a citizen fighting for the freedom of his homeland, nation and the independence of other societies. The goals and ideals that guided the creation and activities of the Legions determined their moral strength, soldierly spirit and patriotism.

2.2.4. The Army of the Duchy of Warsaw

According to the organisational and personnel concepts, the Army of the Duchy of Warsaw was to be national, fulfilling tasks nationwide. These were mainly external functions related to the country’s liberation and defence. Care was taken to ensure that soldiers understood and fulfilled them properly, as part of civic education, to develop and deepen their patriotism, the will to win, and high morale. In the armed forces of the Duchy of Warsaw, imbued with French republican ideals, the idea was promoted during the education process that a soldier is a full-fledged citizen and defender of the homeland.

The democratic principles of civic, patriotic and moral education were very progressive. The development of a positive attitude towards soldierly duty, patriotism and civic attitudes was supported by a wide range of educational forms and methods, starting from proper mutual relations between superior and subordinate, through disciplinary practice, military ceremonial, training process, educational and upbringing activities, and ending with the exposure of national symbols on soldier uniforms and banners [14, 15].

Civic education in the Duchy of Warsaw drew on progressive traditions. The principles of education were continued and developed, where the idea: a soldier is a citizen and defender of the country [23] – constituted the foundation on which the system of soldier education was based. The aim was to emotionally connect the soldier with the cause of liberating the homeland and consolidating its independence. This upbringing was imbued with a civic and patriotic spirit. The educational impact was taken from the glorious traditions of the Polish military; the soldiers’ dignity and sense of honour were stimulated and developed.

2.2.5. The Kingdom of Poland (1815–1830)

In the army of the Kingdom of Poland (1815–1830) there was a regression in military education, caused by Russian influence and the personal interference in the training and education process of the viceroy of Emperor Alexander I of Russia (1777–1825) – Grand Duke Konstantin Pavlovich of Russia (1779–1831). Konstantin’s policy aimed at Russifying the Polish army, transforming it along the lines of the tsarist army. The

ideals of democracy were alien to him. However, the civic and patriotic, progressive ideas of the Kościuszko Uprising and the Legions – still alive in the army – influenced the mitigation of these anti-national, foreign, Russification tendencies.

In the Kingdom of Poland, military schools were important centres of anti-Russification activities, which should be emphasised. The training process conducted within the walls of these institutions, together with elements of civic education, brought tangible results in the form of a patriotic attitude of the vast majority of staff and students of military schools and in their glorious participation in the fights against the occupiers – the November Uprising (1830–1831).

The education of soldiers was carried out in two ways. The first trend, which could be described as official and based on Russian models, implemented assumptions resulting from the imperial policy of subordinating the Polish army to Russia and its Russification. It assumed the formation of a soldier's personality – especially among the officer corps – in which complete devotion and attachment to the Russian throne and the apparatus of power would dominate.

The second, semi-official trend was based on the traditions of the national liberation movement. It was represented mainly by patriots, veterans of the fights for the freedom of Poland, and referred to the tradition of educating soldiers in the Kościuszko Uprising, the Polish Legions in Italy and the army of the Duchy of Warsaw. Due to their experience and professionalism, many served as instructors in schools and military units. The influence of these transmitted civic and patriotic ideas of the second stream of education was later reflected in the attitudes of officers and soldiers of the November Uprising and during the fighting of the Spring of Nations (1848–1849), both in Poland and in other European countries.

The democratic ideas of military education were also clearly visible in the activities of the post-uprising emigration centres (military schools, courses) of Polish political emigrants (the so-called “Great Emigration”) in Western Europe after the fall of the November Uprising [1, 4, 12, 13, 16, 20, 22, 27–30, 37, 45–47].

2.2.6. The November Uprising

With the outbreak of the November Uprising, the educational process of a soldier in the insurgent armed forces changed radically. The concept of civic education reflected the goals of the uprising, the national character of the army, the continuation of Kościuszko's educational thought, referred to the glorious traditions of the Polish army, recalled the memory and figures of national heroes, and the love of freedom. The educational process itself was also transformed – its intentions became similar to the educational intentions implemented in the army of the 1794 insurrection, in the Polish Legions and the army of the Duchy of Warsaw. The main goal of education, realised in the motto: “A real soldier – a conscious citizen of the country” ([2, p. 24], [24, p. 115]), was to shape civic awareness and attitudes. Patriotism was aroused among soldiers, and the will to fight and win against the invader. Patriotism, the will to fight and win against the invader, became the primary goal of civic education. The November Uprising covered the Polish army with glory and inspired further fights for national liberation. The ethos of the army and its cadre remained “intact” concerning the whole.

2.2.7. The January Uprising educational model

The democratic ideas of military education were also very clearly visible in the last independence uprising – the January Uprising of 1863 [1, 4, 12, 13, 16, 20, 22, 27–30, 37, 44, 46, 47]. The armed forces of the 1863–1864 uprising were partisan and consisted mainly of volunteers. The urban intelligentsia, small and middle burghers, craftsmen, the emerging urban proletariat and the peasantry participated in the fight.

A significant part of the command corps was recruited from these classes. For this reason, the uprising took on a popular character.

The animators of the uprising movement tried to implement the educational assumptions using various methods and by selecting appropriate educational content. However, due to the specific nature of the fighting (guerrilla warfare), slightly different principles of educational activities were applied. The educational work aimed to mobilise the partisan soldiers to fight and to instil faith in the possibility of victory. Appeals were made to the best national and military traditions. Military commissioners conducted it and chaplains appointed exceptionally for this purpose ([3, p. 272], [10]). Apart from religious services, the priests staying in the insurgent units were also involved in broader educational and upbringing activities. In the broadly understood educational work, the influence of the plebeian trend is visible, shaping the personality of the insurgent soldier. The insurgent authorities ordered that relations between superiors and subordinates be based on mutual respect and trust. Commanders should be demanding and fair towards soldiers, because “[...] *people who sacrifice their lives for the homeland are worthy of the highest respect*” [48, p. 82].

3. Conclusions

More than a hundred years of national captivity prevented systematic development and the development of coherent forms of educational (and training) activities in Polish armed formations. Some attempts were made during national uprisings and in legion formations. These periods were short stages when favourable conditions were created for conducting educational activities among the soldiers of the insurgent forces. However, it was made difficult by the dynamics of the fighting and, in the January Uprising, by its partisan nature. However, despite the difficulties, many interesting experiences were developed in the forms and methods of conducting educational work.

Polish military education has long, rich, and beautiful traditions stretching back many years. Within its framework, the most valuable soldier virtues were shaped and instilled: love for the homeland and the duty to defend it, honour, bravery, and loyalty to oaths and alliances.

A Polish soldier's upbringing was based on a system of Christian values and love of the homeland. Much attention was paid to civic and patriotic education and to shaping the moral image of soldiers. These values were cultivated and developed over the following centuries. The educational tradition of the Polish Army contains all the valuable messages and the most precious values of Polish military customs.

This paper attempts to present and evaluate civic education in Polish national formations from 1794 to 1864. Although presented here only in fragments, it contains many progressive, democratic, and patriotic contents. Despite the passage of time, these have retained their relevance.

They are highly valued in the contemporary education of Polish Army soldiers, which accepts them, continues them in the new conditions of the 21st century, and enriches them with new values.

The author is aware that he does not exhaust the entire scope of the problem, but he expresses the hope that this study, which is a modest attempt to present the problem, will perhaps contribute to initiating a broader historical and pedagogical discussion on this very interesting topic.

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