

= Emilia Plater =

Countess Emilia Plater (Broel @-@ Plater , Lithuanian : Emilija Pliaterytė) (13 November 1806 ? 23 December 1831) was a Polish noblewoman and revolutionary from the lands of the partitioned Polish ? Lithuanian Commonwealth . Raised in a patriotic Polish tradition , she fought in the November 1830 Uprising , during which she raised a small unit , participated in several engagements , and received the rank of captain in the Polish insurgent forces . Near the end of the Uprising , she fell ill and died .

Though she did not participate in any major engagement , her story became widely publicized and inspired a number of works of art and literature . She is a national heroine in Poland and Lithuania , all formerly parts of the Polish @-@ Lithuanian Commonwealth . She has been venerated by Polish artists and by the nation at large as a symbol of women fighting for the national cause .

= = Biography = =

= = = Early life = = =

Emilia Plater was born in Vilnius (Wilno) into a noble Polish ? Lithuanian Plater family . Her family , of the Plater coat of arms , traced its roots to Westphalia , but was thoroughly Polonized . Much of the family relocated to Livonia during the 15th century and later to Lithuania , of which Vilnius is the capital . She is described as either Polish , Polish @-@ Lithuanian or Lithuanian .

Her parents , Franciszek Ksawery Plater and Anna von der Mohl (Anna z Mohłów) , divorced when she was nine years old , in 1815 . She was brought up by distant relatives , Michał Plater @-@ Zyberk and Izabela Helena Syberg zu Wischling , in their family 's manor L?ksna near Daugavpils (D?wina) , then Inflanty (now Latvia) . Well @-@ educated , Plater was brought up to appreciate the efforts of Tadeusz Kościuszko and the Prince Józef Poniatowski . She was fascinated by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Schiller , who she could read in the original German language . She was raised in an environment that valued the history of Poland , and her literary heroes included Princess Wanda and Adam Mickiewicz 's Grażyna . She also admired Bouboulina , a woman who became one of the icons of the Greek uprising against the Ottomans , a Polish fighter Anna Dorota Chrzanowska , as well as Joan of Arc . These pursuits were accompanied by an early interest in equestrianism and marksmanship , quite uncommon for early 19th @-@ century girls from aristocratic families . She was also deeply interested in the Ruthenian and Belarusian folk culture . She had contacts and friends in the Filaret Association .

In 1823 , one of her cousins was forcibly conscripted into the Imperial Russian Army as a punishment for celebrating the Constitution of 3 May ; this incident is said to be one of the key events in her life , and one that galvanized her pro @-@ Polish and anti @-@ Russian attitude . In 1829 , Plater began a grand tour throughout the historical Polish ? Lithuanian Commonwealth , visiting Warsaw and Kraków , and the battlefield of Raszyn . Her mother died a year later ; her father remarried and refused to even meet his daughter . After the outbreak of the November Uprising against Imperial Russia , she became a vocal supporter of the anti @-@ Tsarist sentiments in the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania . She became one of a dozen or so females to join the Uprising , and the most famous of them all .

= = = Uprising = = =

A document from 25 March contains her note that joining the uprising was her sole idea , and that she had hoped that such a moment would come her entire life . She cut her hair , prepared a uniform for herself and organized and equipped a group of volunteers , speaking passionately after a mass on 29 March . On 4 April she signed a declaratory document marking her access to the local uprising forces . Her unit was composed of roughly 280 infantry , 60 cavalry and several hundred peasants armed with war scythes .

From the area of Daugavpils she entered Lithuania , where in April 1831 her unit is rumored to have seized the town of Zarasai (Jeziorosy) , although the historians are not sure this event really occurred . She planned to take Daugavpils , but after a reconnaissance mission discovered that the city was defended by a strong garrison and was impregnable to attack by such a small force as her own unit , that plan was abandoned . She then returned to Samogitia and headed for Panevėžys (Poniewież) , where on 30 April she joined forces with the unit commanded by Karol Zajączkowski . On May 4 , she fought at the battle of Prastavoniai (Prestowiany) ; shortly afterwards , with Konstanty Parczewski , she fought at Maišiagala (Mejszagoża) . On 5 May , she witnessed General Dezydery Chłapowski entering the area with a large force and taking command over all units fighting in the former Grand Duchy .

Chłapowski advised Plater to stand down and return home . She allegedly replied that she had no intention of taking off her uniform until her fatherland was fully liberated . Her decision was accepted and she was made a commanding officer of the 1st company of the Polish - Lithuanian 25th Infantry Regiment . She was promoted to the rank of captain , the highest rank awarded to a woman at that time . She spent some time in Kaunas (Kowno) , before the insurgents were forced to retreat in late June .

After the Polish units were defeated by the Russians at Śiuliai (Szawle) , Gen. Chłapowski decided to cross the border into Prussia and become interned there . Plater vocally criticized that decision , refused to follow orders and instead decided to try to break through to Warsaw and continue the struggle . However , soon after separating from the main force , accompanied by only two others , including her cousin (or uncle , sources vary) , Cezary Plater , she became seriously ill . She never recovered , and she died in a manor of the Abramowicz family in Justinavas (Justianowo) on 23 December 1831 . She was buried in the small village of Kapčiamiestis (Kopciowo) near Lazdijai (Łódź) . After the defeat of the uprising , her estate was confiscated by the Russian authorities .

Stefan Kieniewicz , in a more critical treatment in the Polish Biographical Dictionary , notes that a lot of her exploits are poorly documented , and it is not always possible to separate legend from facts . He notes it is not certain she ever commanded any unit , and that her role as the commander of the 25th Regiment was more honorary than real ; he also notes that she is known to have fainted on the battlefield , distracting her comrades , and in at least one instance (at the battle of Śiuliai) , she was purposefully held behind front lines , as her comrades tried to ensure she would not endanger herself .

= = Legacy = =

Her death was widely publicised shortly afterwards by the Polish press , which contributed to her growing fame . Plater became one of the symbols of the uprising . The symbol of the fighting girl became quite widespread both in Poland , Lithuania and abroad . Mickiewicz immortalized her in his poem , Śmierć pułkownika (Death of a Colonel) , although the description of her death is a pure poetical fiction and was only loosely based on her real life . Mickiewicz has also idealized her personality and skills , portraying her as the ideal commander , worshiped by her soldiers . That poem has entered the elementary curriculum in the independent Poland .

Other literary works based on her life were published , mostly abroad , both by Polish emigres and by foreigners . Among them were Georg Büchner , Konstanty Gaszyński , Wacław Gęsiowski , Tadeusz Korczyński , Antoni Edward Odyniec and Władysław Buchner . Józef Straszewicz published three successive versions of her biography in French .

She also became the theme of paintings by several artists of the epoch , among them Hippolyte Bellange , Achille Deveria , Philipp Veit , Francois de Villain and Wojciech Kossak . In 1842 , J. K. Salomowski published a short biography of Plater in New York , under the title of Emily Plater , The Polish Heroine ; Life of the Countess Emily Plater . A lithograph by F. De Villaine , based on Deveria 's work , became one of the most recognizable portraits of her , popularizing her image as a delicate and noble female warrior .

She was depicted on the Second Polish Republic 's 20 złoty note . During World War II , a Polish

female support unit , Emilia Plater 1st Independent Women 's Battalion (1 Samodzielny Battalion Kobiety im . Emilii Plater) , a part of the Polish 1st Tadeusz Kościuszko Infantry Division was named in her honor ; its former members founded a village of Platerówka in Lower Silesia . Several streets in Poland are named after her , including one in Warsaw . In 1959 , the MS Emilia Plater , a Polish Merchant Navy bulk carrier , was named after her .

Her life has also been a subject to studies from a feminist perspective , by scholars to point out the significance of her participation in the military conflict as a female going against the stereotype that only males can fight .