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Circumstances of Poland's Independence in Women's Accounts. Participants and Witnesses

ABSTRACT

Women have always played an important, though not always fully perceived and properly exposed, role in the history of our nation. They were active participants in many significant events, engaged in armed struggle and took part in political and social life. They supported soldiers and political activists. This has given them an important place in the public consciousness. It is hard to imagine discussing any event today without taking into account the participation of women and the female perspective on the event. This also applies to Poland's regaining of independence in 1918. It is worth looking at these events through the prism of not only famous writers, but also other women (among others: Zofia Romanowicz, Countess Maria Lubomirska), who, by taking part or observing, recorded them as written accounts.

KEY WORDS: independence, women, 1918, diaries, Piłsudski

STRESZCZENIE

Okoliczności odzyskania niepodległości w relacjach kobiet – uczestniczek i świadków wydarzeń

W dziejach naszego narodu i państwa kobiety odgrywały bardzo ważną rolę, choć nie zawsze należycie dostrzeganą i eksponowaną. Były aktywnymi uczestniczkami wielu znaczących wydarzeń, angażowały się w walkę zbrojną, brały udział w życiu politycznym i społecznym. Wspierały żołnierzy, działaczy politycznych. Dzięki temu zapewniły sobie istotne miejsce w świadomości społecznej. Trudno dziś wyobrazić sobie omawianie jakiegokolwiek wydarzenia bez uwzględnienia zarówno udziału kobiet, jak i kobiecego spojrzenia na nie. Dotyczy to również odzyskania przez Polskę niepodległości w roku 1918. Warto spojrzeć na te wydarzenia z punktu widzenia nie tylko znanych pisarek, lecz również innych kobiet (m.in.: Zofia Romanowiczówna, księżna Maria Lubomirska), które – uczestnicząc lub obserwując – pozostawiły ich ślad w swoich relacjach.

SŁOWA KLUCZE: niepodległość, kobiety, rok 1918, pamiętniki, Piłsudski

The subject of this analysis are personal documents – written accounts by women from the years 1914-1918. According to Roman Zimand, personal document as a genre

consists of two cosmoi: the world of writing about oneself and the world of the eye witness. Except that what one writes about oneself and how the personal nature of an account is understood are properties designated by both the author's personality, and the cultural patterns of an era.¹

The authors-narrators-heroines at the same time reported on their experience, describing the events which they witnessed. The functioning of this triad has a significant impact on the nature of the personal documents discussed here. Anna Pekaniec believes that

1 R. Zimand, *Diarysta Stefan Ż. Z dziejów formy artystycznej w literaturze polskiej*, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków 1990, pp. 17-18.

emphasizing the name of the author implies increasing the visibility of the female genealogy, it is a reminder of a matrilineal narrative, emphasizing the importance of written maternal history, invisible or under-exposed in textbooks and scientific studies.²

This phenomenon was characterized by Barbara Skarga in these words: "Experience is a relational structure of a self-experiencing other. This another may be near and far, immanent to the Self..."³ Women's experiences were quite different than men's, as they resulted from a different perception of the world, a different sensitivity, and finally from another mental construction, on top of their specific place in the world. This perception of reality by women is extremely important for both autobiographic writing and for considerations of femininity and its cultural conditions in the present reality. In the genre of personal documents by women one can observe the authors' dilemmas between reporting public affairs over personal ones, a desire to provide a precise account of events they were participants in or witnesses of, and documenting personal experiences creating the image of a woman, heroine, and author of the account. On top of this is the opposition between striving to maintain individuality which is so typical for women and melting of individual existence into the fate of a social group or an entire nation. It should be emphatically stressed that Polish women transformed into active participants of the events, and that they saw the service for the homeland as their duty and command resulting from patriotic education. They were aware of the importance of their time and aware of their historical role. There were also attentive observers and commentators of events. Their accounts concerning the same situations often differed greatly, because they viewed the reality in various ways, and above all, they were highly involved emotionally. Their way of describing and analyzing the surrounding world was influenced by many factors, primarily the social background of the authors, their educational conditioning, and their position in society, as "the story of my life is always woven into the history of these communities, of which I derive my personal identity."⁴

The authors of memoirs include women fighters, wives of statesmen and independence activists, writers, and social activist. Their diaries and journals that were often written on an ongoing basis, often had the form of reports. Undoubtedly, the journal is the best kind of personal document,

2 A. Pekaniec, *I wojna światowa w kobiecej literaturze dokumentu osobistego. O czym, jak, dlaczego (nie) pisano?*, "Ruch Literacki," Vol. LVIII, 2017, Iss. 1, 340, p. 34.

3 B. Skarga, *Doświadczenie*, in: eadem, *Kwintet metafizyczny*, Kraków 2005, p. 119.

4 A. MacIntyre, *Dziedzictwo cnoty. Studium z teorii moralności*, transl., introduction and footnotes by A. Chmielewski, Warszawa 1996, p. 394.

written systematically, almost day by day, for private purposes, often without awareness that it would be made public one day. However, it is worth recalling, as Antonina Kłoskowska had, that the “spontaneity of such materials may be subjected to certain social conventions ...”⁵ Another type of text are memoirs written after years of hindsight, which often made the authors aware how difficult it is to deal with memory and emotions.

The text analysis applies to fragments of several authors’ accounts of the return of Józef Piłsudski from Magdeburg on 10 November 1918 and the events that unfolded in these special November days on the streets of Warsaw. These events are part of the process of Poland’s regaining independence, and describe the atmosphere in Warsaw of the time. Focus around the foreground character illustrates the way of perceiving the reality of November 1918. Selected excerpts come from the memoirs of: Maria Lubomirska, Zofia Nałkowska, Maria Dąbrowska, Anna Minkowska, Aleksandra Piłsudska, and Zofia Romanowiczówna.

A look of the elites on the events of the Great War are presented in the diary of Countess Maria Lubomirska née Branicka. The wife of Count Zdzisław Lubomirski, a landowner, lawyer, politician, social activist, and member of the Regency Council was comprehensively educated, well-read and frequented in the world. She described the period of 1914-1918 from a personal perspective, but through the prism of the wife of a man having an impact on the course of events. She wrote down the events which she witnessed, also recording her impressions and emotions.

The chronological framework of her diary is set within the dates of July 26, 1914 and November 14, 1918. The notes were prepared daily. The author applied a first-person narrative and did not intend to print the text. She wrote for her children. The specificity of the diary was noted by Monika Wąs, who stressed that the author “did not explain her aspirations, did not justify her conduct, did not think about publication, but rather she wrote down her impressions of the events which she witnessed. This has given her memories of a unique research value.”⁶

Lubomirska’s notes are both descriptions of events and a show of literary skill, which confirms the words of Szymon Askenazy, who claimed that “the art of writing diaries centers itself somewhat between historical art and poetics with a certain separateness from both.”⁷ The author tried to be meticulous; she placed details, portrayed people, and added

5 A. Kłoskowska, *Kulturotwórcza analiza biograficzna*, “Kultura i Społeczeństwo,” 1985, Vol. 29, 3, p. 16.

6 M. Wąs, *Obraz bezpieczeństwa społecznego w I wojnie światowej – spojrzenie elit na przykładzie księżnej Marii Zdzisławowej Lubomirskiej*, “Security, Economy & Law,” 2015, 4, p. 161.

7 S. Askenazy, *Wczasy historyczne*, Warszawa 1902, p. 54.

comments on military and political issues. She described reality from her own perspective, but remained heavily influenced by her husband. It was his activity that she paid particular attention to, and Zdzisław Lubomirski's involvement in the matters of great politics was put bluntly into words recorded on 14 August 1914: "Zdziś ceased to be my husband, he married the Nation!"⁸

She also paid a lot of attention to other persons of importance from the point of view of Poland's aspirations for independence. She mentioned Piłsudski several times, presenting him in various ways. In 1915, she called him "the vile Piłsudski."⁹ She described his visit to Warsaw in December 1916 in detail:

This morning Piłsudski came to Warsaw for the first time since the occupation; for the first time openly and not for conspiracy. University youth unharnessed horses from a carriage and dragged the hero who behaved with dignity and met the enthusiastic reception with a serious face, rather inhibiting the fervors and not seeking applause. I was terribly curious to meet Piłsudski, as he is an uncommon character, of this kind of spark which attracted [people] to Napoleon.¹⁰

Realization of the greatness of her husband made her say with a sneer: "Piłsudski will ride on Zdzisio's back."¹¹ She was convinced that "Piłsudski is uncertain, dangerous, acting by fair means or foul"¹² however, she admitted: "There is no doubt that Piłsudski is a hot-headed Pole. ... During the battles he never hid in the trenches, but stayed on the surface, giving orders to soldiers under a hail of bullets."¹³

Her description of reality was dominated by the perception of her husband as the most important person in the political arena of his time. Understandably, then, she believed that Piłsudski a supporting role. Piłsudski came to Warsaw "at the request of the Regency Council," so that the Council (according to Lubomirska) was the host in Warsaw. On behalf of the Council, Zdzisław Lubomirski planned to welcome Piłsudski at the train station, although

8 *Pamiętnik księżnej Marii Zdzisławowej Lubomirskiej 1914-1918*, print by J. Pajewski, Poznań 2002, p. 22.

9 *Ibidem*, p. 200.

10 *Ibidem*, p. 443.

11 *Ibidem*, p. 444.

12 *Ibidem*, p. 445.

13 *Ibidem*, p. 444.

some criticize plan to meet Piłsudski at the train for the reasons of etiquette; as for me, I think that the experience of a moment in which a lifeless form cannot be taken into consideration ... This is about the living matter of the time, when every move counts, every minute.¹⁴

Under the date of November 10, Lubomirska reported on the course of the meeting the two gentlemen. Let us add that the course of the meeting was known to solely, and understandably so, from what was said to her by her husband. She emphasized particularly strongly that Piłsudski rejected the invitation of the head of the POW, Adam Koc, who “welcomed him, provided the report, said that the carriage was waiting, and [announced] that breakfast was ready in the house.”¹⁵ However, he accepted the proposal from Lubomirski, who “imposes his own invitation, asking the commander to the car, promises tea at Frascati’s and asks for a conversation.”¹⁶ The verbs used here are significant: “asking,” but also “imposes” when compared to Koc’s behavior, described by the words: “welcomed, said, provided.”

Her commentary on Piłsudski’s behavior is clear: “LUCKILY, he does not hesitate in choosing and gets in the Regency car.”¹⁷ At the same time, she did not spare virulent comments on the reaction of the opposite side: “Members of the POW throw scathing looks at Zdzisio.”¹⁸

In Lubomirska, we will also find mention of the situation at the train station: “There are no crowds at the station due to the hour early, and the arrival of the hero is unexpected. Here and there, groups exclaim in recognition.”¹⁹ Although generally skeptical towards Piłsudski, Lubomirska could see his role and seemed to have high hopes in him: “So, Piłsudski arrives in Poland five minutes before the hour strikes! May he be able to grab the helm of the national boat and take it to the harbor between the reefs.”²⁰ However, these were her expectations of Piłsudski, without any guarantee for effectiveness at the time.

14 Ibidem, p. 706.

15 In opposition to this description there is the account from Adam Koc. Cf. *Relacja Adama Koca z przyjazdu Józefa Piłsudskiego do Warszawy 10 listopada 1918 roku*, in: *Listopad 1918 we wspomnieniach i relacjach*, selection and introduction by P. Łossowski, P. Stawiecki, Warszawa 1988, pp. 93-103.

16 *Pamiętnik księżnej Marii Zdzisławowej Lubomirskiej 1914-1918*, op. cit., p. 706.

17 Ibidem, p. 706.

18 Ibidem.

19 Ibidem. It is not true, however, because Piłsudski’s arrival was expected for a long time.

20 Ibidem.

Lubomirska further described in detail her husband's conversation with Piłsudski. She did it so minutely, and in places she was more accurate than Lubomirski was in his memoirs.²¹ We learn that

Zdziś long conferred with Piłsudski over a cup of tea ... he painted the situation and spoke hot words: a Pole to a Pole; he excited his ambition, expressing firm belief that he alone can save Poland at this historic moment, the most important moment of all; himself belonging to the generation of the fallen, with confidence he was ready to give power to Piłsudski, who had to be a winner.²²

Lubomirska knew the course of the meeting from her husband, but she seems to have been there, seen and heard everything: "Piłsudski listened – he said little ..."²³ She even guessed that he probably would not express his opinion before he realized what the situation was. She knew that her husband did quite a good impression, but after that she added in a womanly manner: "he appeared haggard and tired of prison."²⁴ She also made a high-flying statement, though not without sarcasm: "A smaller measure Samson after SLAVEDOM cut his hair."²⁵ However, she was a fierce critic of Piłsudski, too. She reproached him for his egocentricity and a visible tendency to create his own legend. She doubted his suitability to meet the contemporary situation. In her opinion, he was "unable to cope with real, harsh tasks."²⁶ Not only that, she openly stated that she did not trust him, even though she would really like to: "I so want to believe! because we in the fierce need there is so much necessity for a guide."²⁷ She was so aware of Piłsudski's rank and his place in the Polish reality of November 1918.

Lubomirska's diary makes one clearly sense her bitterness arising from the facts that the time of the Regency Council was coming to an end, which "hosts of the reluctant ones would wish to drive out like miserable pest."²⁸ Also the time of her husband's political domination was ending, which she wrote about that

not thinking about myself at all, but caring for the fate of the Fatherland as a loving son, impotent with sorrow as if crucified. He looks for a solution

21 *Relacja* ks. Zdzisława Lubomirskiego, "Niepodległość," 1937, 15, pp. 235-240.

22 *Pamiętnik księżnej Marii Zdzisławowej Lubomirskiej 1914-1918*, op. cit., p. 707.

23 *Ibidem*.

24 *Ibidem*.

25 *Ibidem*.

26 *Ibidem*.

27 *Ibidem*.

28 *Ibidem*, p. 708.

in vain, reconsidering the past, grasping at the future through the black shrouds of premonitions.²⁹

These were bitter words for Piłsudski entering the political scene, as the vision of the Polish future with his participation did not fill her with optimism.

However, positive experiences took over these gloomy thoughts. The atmosphere on November 11 made Lubomirska enjoy the nascent independence. She wrote:

Today belongs to the historical, unforgettable, the happier, the triumphant [days]! We are free! We are masters in our own home. This happened in such unexpected circumstances. When today I was going to town, the city street seemed to be singing, young, rocking with the sense of freedom!³⁰

This enthusiasm of the usually quite restrained Countess Lubomirska corresponds with the words of Maria Dąbrowska, who wrote under the date of 11 November 1918: "In all this, Poland rises. And no one sees how beautiful it is. Among this hustle and bustle, nobody notices."³¹ Only the writer's sensitive soul noticed. Dąbrowska is known to us as a champion of the pen, who was able to make extensive descriptions of events, landscapes, and human behavior very vividly. The brevity of her accounts may therefore seem surprising.

She also noted Piłsudski's arrival to Warsaw just casually. Under the date of November 10, she wrote: "Today, Piłsudski arrived. Now really, he is all hope we have. Today is a time of trial for him. In his previous activities, could only be the plaything of incidents, but now he could, in fact, take their course in his hands."³² Thus Dąbrowska placed great hopes in the Com-mandant, but she was also aware – like Lubomirska – that it was a time of trial, to face a difficult situation. If he is strong and manages to control various groups, to control political emotions, to join the often-fighting groups together, he will manage to lead Poland to victory, to rebirth.

Although restrained in descriptions and comments, in this case, she saw the role of Piłsudski. She was convinced that now was a special time, time for action. However, the brevity, and even the enigmatic tone of her account may be surprising. The more so that previously, under the date of 28 November 1916, we find a detailed account of Piłsudski's stay in the capital.

29 Ibidem, p. 709.

30 Ibidem, p. 708.

31 M. Dąbrowska, *Dzienniki 1914-1932*, selection, introduction and footnotes by T. Drewnowski, Vol. I, Warszawa 1988, p. 124.

32 Ibidem, p. 122.

In addition to a faithful description of the event, the writer allowed herself to reflect on a more personal note. Commenting on Piłsudski's perfunctory thanks to the crowd greeting him, she let herself to say: "And it seemed to me that he should have said that he did not take all this personally, but that he applied it to the idea which he served ... I wished he did."³³

Dąbrowska remained under the spell of Piłsudski. She wrote of him that he was "socially graceful, simple and witty. When he lights up, he tells beautiful stories ... Looking at and listening to him, I thought, this is not a statesman, but a poet, romantic and actor, who threw his artistic vision of the world at the stake of events."³⁴ This admiration for the Commandant was in stark contrast to her later evaluation of him. Under the date of November 11, she noted: "Piłsudski disappointed me."³⁵ But it was not an assessment of his activities, but only a comment on his response to the welcome by the cheering crowd at the guest house. He said then that his throat was sore, about which Dąbrowska commented: "Why, at this moment, should anyone care?"³⁶

Questions arise here: Should a hero could not ever be sick? Should he be statuesque, perfect, superhuman strong, is disease not fitting for him? This commentator was demanding and harsh. She expected a strong, decisive, active leader. As we can see, the sore throat did not fit this image at all, as did the admission of a health condition. Dąbrowska then stressed sharply that at a time like that, no one cared if he was sick or not. She would look at this even from a perspective differently only in 1943 and append: "But now that's what I like."³⁷

Further opinions formulated by Dąbrowska were much more favorable than those of November 11. Three days later, she noted that

the Regency Council handed power to Piłsudski, who has become the *de facto* dictator of the nation. ... So far, Piłsudski's every step and proclamation has been extremely clever, full of moderation and at the same time worthy of any measure of the moment. Please God, let him turn out to be not only a fetish of the nation, but in fact its great helmsman.³⁸

The writer praised his political wisdom, his balanced attitude towards his opponents, but she stressed that the fact he was glorified did not imply full

33 Ibidem, p. 62.

34 Ibidem, p. 64.

35 Ibidem, p. 124.

36 Ibidem.

37 Ibidem.

38 Ibidem.

leadership of the nation. She pointed out another issue, expressing a probably fairly common opinion:

By the way it is characteristic that Piłsudski had [the nation's] "absolute confidence" while he was serving time in Magdeburg, but as soon as he appeared and moved his finger, people who had "surrendered without reservations," are already against him.³⁹

And immediately she added: "While I did not understand this fetishism for Piłsudski, his position was equally strange to me."⁴⁰ This shows that her attitude is more balanced, without being euphoric, but also without rash and unjustified criticism.

Zofia Nałkowska recounted the events of 10 November 1918 from a slightly different perspective. She was in Górkki, when Jan Jur-Gorzechowski told her about Piłsudski's arrival, and she learned about the atmosphere on the streets from her servant. In her *Diaries*, there is no comprehensive description. Under the date of November 13, there was a note that "Poland is crazy and joyful due to freedom regained."⁴¹ The writer was critical of this reality, saying:

this general crisis of Europe is, in a way, binding on Poland. And here things go wrong. The Lublin government's decree sounded so strong, and its program was entirely acceptable – and yet Piłsudski's arrival did not save it from this bizarre, unintelligible break-down. The sight of the proclamation, signed by the Regency Council, already allegedly dismissed by the Lublin decree, together with Piłsudski, was a terrible surprise for me, although the command of the entire armed forces was finally given to him. Altogether it was not necessary right now, the last days in Warsaw gave him the power of the people anyway.⁴²

Nałkowska was critical of Piłsudski's government's future (if he managed to create it). She knew that due to his having stayed outside the capital, his information was inaccurate and delayed. Regardless of these dilemmas, then and in subsequent months she was aware that she was participating in the great historical moments.

39 Ibidem, p. 125.

40 Ibidem.

41 Z. Nałkowska, *Dzienniki, vol. III 1918-1929*, ed., introduction and commentary by H. Kirchner, Warszawa 1980, p. 42.

42 Ibidem.

Aleksandra Piłsudska's⁴³ notes are of a special character, focusing primarily on reporting on her husband's actions. Her casual narrative is devoid of emotion. It is even difficult to find more personal comments on current events there. She only recorded that she was informed about her husband's return by Janina Prystor, who also reported on the course of the welcome at the train station. It may come as a surprise, because we are dealing here with the person who was closest to Piłsudski and knew him well. The big question is: Why such casualness? It is due to the fact that Aleksandra Piłsudska was not present at the station and did not want to repeat hearsay opinions? Could it be that this event was not as important to her as to the other Poles? It is difficult to conclude that she only looked at him as her husband, because they shared their independence activism. Perhaps it should suffice as an explanation that when Piłsudski visited her and their daughter she did not leave the house. She waited in the apartment, because – as she wrote – she did not like to show affection in front of people.⁴⁴

Zofia Romanowicz, a Lviv teacher and independence activist, who knew the events only from the press comments, described the November events in the capital from a very different, distant perspective. She did not hesitate, however, to relate to the news. Besides, she wrote about Piłsudski in her diary several times before and did not hide her admiration for the Commandant. Describing national character of the legions in 1916, emphasizing that it was “sort of Piłsudski's work. One just can't not admire him!”⁴⁵ She was desperate to hear about the oath crisis and Piłsudski's arrest. “What He has to suffer! An eagle, tethered.”⁴⁶ Information about the events of 10 November 1918 in Warsaw reached Lviv with a delay. Miss Romanowicz only got the November 12th issue of the *Pobudka* news magazine on November 13, where she read there about the release of Piłsudski and arrival in the capital. It was good news, which raised her spirits. “Above all, it is important and pleasing that Piłsudski is free! From Saturday, already in Warsaw ...”⁴⁷ Focused on the current situation in Lviv, she only returned to the subject on 8 December, recalling that she had not written more about the release of Piłsudski, “which I was so excited about.”⁴⁸

43 A. Piłsudska, *Wspomnienia*, Warszawa 1989.

44 *Ibidem*, p. 170.

45 Z. Romanowiczówna, *Dziennik lwowski 1842-1930, vol. 2. 1888-1930*, transcribed with commentary and introduction by Z. Sudolski, Warszawa 2005, p. 275.

46 *Ibidem*, p. 284.

47 *Ibidem*, p. 303. The text contains an error: November 10 was a Sunday.

48 *Ibidem*. p. 306.

It turns out those who write about the course of events the most extensively are those who have not played a leading role in them. A detailed description of Piłsudski's arrival to Warsaw is found in the account of Anna Minkowska.⁴⁹ She probably was on the station in the group of POW female members, who are mentioned in Lubomirski's report: "At the station, there were about 15 women, members of that organization [POW-JZ]."⁵⁰

Minkowska began her notes with a grandiose statement:

The memory of it, about which I have written, is overshadowed in my memory by the image of the Commandant in person, when he left the train and walked down the stairs. Stuck in my memory is the sight of the Chief, in which the prison fatigue was already fading, and the sense of concrete power and direct was being reborn.⁵¹

The style is typical for this period and characteristic for texts full of ardent feelings for the beloved Commandant, then the Chief. We can find also such exalted sentence: "For this moment, we have pined immeasurably, all those who love him and for whom the fight for Poland and her freedom is linked to his person!"⁵² Next, we can find information about Piłsudski's earlier expected times of arrival to Poland and crowds of Varsovians gathering multiple times to await him. The author did not report how she knew about it. She could not even specify how long this situation lasted: "maybe a week, maybe just two days. These were continuous, joyful alarms ... How many flowers that were to be offered to the Commandant or thrown under his feet faded in the anticipation!"⁵³

Then, unfortunately, the author is not very precise, not to say outright that far from the truth. She wrote that "The Commandant arrived early in the morning of November 11," when it is known that the arrival took place on November 10. There are more inconsistencies. According to Minkowska, news of Piłsudski's release and his return reached Warsaw accidentally and at four in the morning it was Czarski who informed her about this. It is known from Adam Koc's account that the young journalist Wacław Czarski was a liaison between the POW staff and the Regency

49 A. Minkowska, *Powrót Komendanta z Magdeburga*, in: *Wierna służba. Uczestniczki walk o niepodległość 1910-1915*, eds. A. Piłsudska, M. Rychterówna, Warszawa 1929, pp. 220-222.

50 Z. Lubomirski, *Położenie Rady Regencyjnej. Sprawa rządu ogólnonarodowego i pertraktacje z przedstawicielami obozu piłsudczyńskiego. Powrót Piłsudskiego z Magdeburga i oddanie mu władzy*, in: *Rok 1918 we wspomnieniach mężów stanu, polityków i wojskowych*, selected and edited by J. Borkowski, Warszawa 1987, p. 202.

51 A. Minkowska, *Powrót Komendanta z Magdeburga*, op. cit., p. 220.

52 Ibidem.

53 Ibidem, p. 221.

Council office. It was he who informed Koc about the arrival of a telegram from Berlin to the Regency Council confirming Piłsudski's release and his planned arrival on 10 November around 6 am.⁵⁴

Minkowska also imprecisely stated the date on which the Regency Council handed over power to Piłsudski ("About three days passed before the Regency Council relinquished its authority"). On the other hand, she meticulously described Piłsudski's appearance ("pale, gray complexion"), his outfit ("he was dressed in a legions' coat and a *maciejówka* cap and was girded with a German belt, on which a short, also German dagger was hung"). She was concerned, being aware that too little attention was paid to Piłsudski's health. "How little was thought of the Commandant in those days as a man who was coming back from prison and had the right to catch a breath and rest. It was not thought about how much he had suffered." With a typically feminine sensitivity, she described the emotions of the people of Warsaw: "hearts pounding with emotion. Eyes of joy that see the tale of freedom become a reality." The gray dawn, cloudy and rainy – typical of Polish November – was contrasted with the mood: "The memories of these cloudy days of November seem now joyful, full of spring sunshine!"⁵⁵ Although we are not dealing with a master of the pen to measure Dąbrowska or Nałkowska, this verbosity brings associations with the art of literature.

The entire statement – written in retrospect – was dominated by reverence for Piłsudski. Each word was proof of deep reverence and great expectations. Because, as earlier in the legions, so now people "waited again for his thought and deed". Minkowska was convinced that "even opponents breathed a sigh of relief that there is a Józef Piłsudski, who takes responsibility for everything and everyone." She was aware that a "true tale of freedom" was unfolding.⁵⁶

Conclusions

The accounts quoted here show different images of Piłsudski's return from Magdeburg. Sometimes may seem as if we are dealing with descriptions of not one but several different events. The authors of the accounts approached what took place in Warsaw on 10 November in very different

54 *Relacja Adama Koca z przyjazdu Józefa Piłsudskiego do Warszawy 10 listopada 1918 roku*, op. cit., p. 96.

55 All quotations in this passage of the text: A. Minkowska, *Powrót Komendanta z Magdeburga*, op. cit., p. 222.

56 *Ibidem*.

ways. They drew definitely different pictures and conveyed different emotions. They described the events in detail, but were often silent on some issues. Regardless of that, however, they gave proof of their personal attitudes towards Piłsudski, which was usually admiration and respect.

The analysis of diaries proves that the way of describing events and documenting reality depends on an author's position and sensitivity and, of course, his or her literary skill. This is not at all determined by whether the author is a professional writer or just loosely connected with literature.

However, regardless of the differences indicated above, the above descriptions are a valuable historical and literary source, so they deserve the attention of researchers. Analyzing them, it is worth to remember that the choice of content is subjective, because it is the author who decides what will be written and what will remain unspoken. "Both what was written and what was omitted becomes a component of history. It is needed to fill blank spots on the map history, which was also created by women."⁵⁷

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