

TWO BANNERS

The Flag is raised! It shines with stars,
On a blue background – in the land of miracles –
It is the symbol of unity, between States,
Of equality under the law – of the freedom of peoples!

The starry Banner! Symbol of freedom –
Of brotherhood, accord, great deeds –
It waves proudly – but every pilgrim
Will always remain faithful to it.

Here, our brave general Pulaski
Laid down his life – his greatest treasure!
Here fought Kosciuszko! He constructed forts –
He was the best friend of Washington!

The starry Banner! The dawns of freedom!
Today it flies over us, blowing in the wind...
So bless it, oh Almighty God!
When the whole nation sings a hymn to Thee.

But look to the left, at the Flag of Poland!
On it, the sign of the Eagle – with silver feathers,
On a red background – as if martyred,
But it proudly raises its head far above – into the clouds.

With its wings stretched out wide...
It seems to rise up somewhere higher, to the great expanse of the sky!
The eagle's sight has turned far into the distance... [to its people]
Beyond the blue mountains – beyond the blue seas.

There! Is its nest – where the tribe of Piast,
And Wawel castle on the Vistula River – Cracow, the ancient city –
There the whole past history sleeps in the crypts...
The Brave Kings of ancient Poland sleep.

So the Eagle keeps watch – and strains to hear,
Is that the sound of Sigismund Bell calling?
So as to lead the soldiers of Poland
To battle! For there are enemies all around.

Because it still remembers the fetters of slavery,
For a hundred years it was enslaved – but it did not perish!
Today, the Polish Republic is now free!
Her heraldic sign once again is famous.

Look! Two Banners! Two bright rainbows...
Under their sign, life is glorious,
The Lord God has them under His protection –
May the sun of happiness shine bright for us!

By Bronisława Wolnik, 1935
Translated by Joanna Radwańska-Williams, 2024

DWA SZTANDARY

Wznosi się Sztandar! Błyszczący gwiazdami,
Na tle błękitu – w krainie cudów –
On znak jedności, między Stanami,
Równości prawa – wolności ludów!

Sztandar gwiazdzisty! Symbol wolności –
Braterstwa, zgody, wielkich wyczynów –
Dumnie powiewa – lecz mu wierności
Dochowa zawsze, każdy z pielgrzymów.

Tu nasz Pułaski dzielny generał,
Położył życie – ten skarb największy!
Walczył Kościuszko! Forty budował –
On Washingtona był druh najlepszy!

Sztandar gwiazdzisty! Wolności zorze!
Dzisiaj nad nami szemrze, powiewa...
Więc mu błogosław Wszechmocny Boże!
Gdy cały naród hymn Tobie śpiewa.

Lecz popatrz w lewo: na Sztandar Polski!
Na nim znak Orła – z srebrnymi pióry,
W czerwonym polu – jakby męczeński,
Lecz dumnie wznosi głowę hen – w chmury.

Z rozpostartymi skrzydły szeroko...
Zdaje się wznosić gdzieś w wyż, w przestworza!
Orli wzrok zwrócił swój hen – daleko... [swym]
Za sine góry – za sine morza.

Tam! Jego gniazdo – gdzie Piasta plemię,
Nad Wisłą Wawel – Kraków, gród stary –
Tam cała przeszłość w podziemiach drzemie...
Śpią Chrobre Króle – Polski prastarej.

Więc Orzeł czuwa – i słuch wytęża,
Czy głos Zygmunta dzwonu nie woła?
Aby prowadzić Polski żołnierza
Na bój! Wszak wrogów pełno dokoła.

Wszak jeszcze pomnie niewoli pęta,
Sto lat zakuty był – lecz nie zginął!
Dzisiaj już wolna Rzeczpospolita!
Jej znak herbowy, znowuż [znowóż] zaślnął.

Patrz! Dwa Sztandary! Dwie jasne tęcze...
Pod których znakiem chlubą jest życie,
Pan Bóg nad niemi ma swoją pieczę –
Oby nam słońca jaśniało szczęście!

By Bronisława Wolnik, 1935

ANNOTATIONS

DWA SZTANDARY: The poem is titled “Two Banners”, but its text makes clear that it is about the two national flags, the flag of the United States (“the Star-Spangled Banner”) and the flag of Poland (or alternatively, the banner of the White Eagle, the heraldic symbol of Poland, used by the head of state).

Wznosi się Sztandar! Błyszczą gwiazdami,
Na tle błękitu – w krainie cudów –
On znak jedności, między Stanami,
Równości prawa – wolności ludów!

Wznosi się Sztandar: The verb **wznosi się** is in the present tense, 3rd person singular (infinitive **wznosić się** “to be raised, elevated”), and can either be translated as “has been raised” or “is flying on high”. See [wznosić - Wiktionary, the free dictionary](#)

Na tle błękitu: Literally, ‘On the background of blueness’. This can either refer to the blue color which is the background of the stars on the American flag, or to the blue color of the sky under which the flag flies.

Równości prawa – wolności ludów! Literally, ‘Of equality of the law – of the freedom of peoples/nations’.

Sztandar gwiazdzisty! Symbol wolności –
Braterstwa, zgody, wielkich wyczynów –
Dumnie powiewa – **lecz mu wierności**
Dochowa zawsze, każdy z pielgrzymów.

lecz mu wierności

Dochowa zawsze, każdy z pielgrzymów: Literally, ‘but faithfulness to it/ Each of the pilgrims will always maintain’. The poet is alluding to the fact that Pilgrims founded America in the 17th century; symbolically, they represent all immigrants and hence, citizens. See [Pilgrims \(Plymouth Colony\) - Wikipedia](#)

Tu nasz **Pułaski** dzielny generał,
Położył życie – **ten skarb największy!**
Walczył **Kościuszko!** Forty budował –
On Washingtona był **druh** najlepszy!

Pułaski: This refers to **Kazimierz (Casimir) Pułaski** (born 1745, died 1779), a Polish general who fought alongside George Washington in the American War of Independence. See [Casimir Pulaski - Wikipedia](#)

ten skarb największy: Literally, ‘this greatest treasure’.

Kościuszko: This refers to **Tadeusz Kościuszko** (born 1746, died 1817), a Polish military architect and statesman, who fought alongside George Washington in the American War of Independence and built American military fortifications. See [Tadeusz Kościuszko - Wikipedia](#)

druh: This masculine noun can be translated as ‘friend, companion, comrade (in arms)’. See [druh \(Polish, Czech, Old English\): meaning, translation - WordSense](#)

Sztandar gwiaździsty! Wolności zorze!
Dzisiaj nad nami szemrze, powiewa...
Więc mu błogosław Wszechmocny Boże!
Gdy cały naród hymn Tobie śpiewa.

Dzisiaj nad nami szemrze, powiewa: Literally, 'Today over us it makes a rustling noise, blows slightly'. The infinitives of these descriptive verbs are **szemrać** 'to emit a murmuring sound' and **powiewać** 'to blow lightly, flutter (as, of the wind or in the wind)'. See [szemrać - Wiktionary, the free dictionary](#) , [powiewać - Wiktionary, the free dictionary](#)

Lecz popatrz w lewo: **na Sztandar Polski!**
Na nim znak Orła – **z srebrnymi pióry,**
W czerwonym polu – jakby męczeński,
Lecz dumnie wznosi głowę **hen** – w chmury.

na Sztandar Polski: Literally, 'at the Banner of Poland'. The banner or flag in question bears the emblem of Poland, the White Eagle, which is the official coat of arms. There are two current versions of the flag of Poland – one has a lower red stripe and an upper white stripe; the other bears the White Eagle on a red background coat of arms on the upper white stripe. See [Flag of Poland - Wikipedia](#) The poet could have been referring to this second version of the flag, or to a banner of the coat of arms itself, which is used by the head of state of Poland. See [Pennant of the president of the Republic of Poland - Wikipedia](#) , [Banner of Poland - Wikipedia](#)

z srebrnymi pióry: 'with silver feathers' – this refers to the White Eagle. The grammatical form **pióry** of the instrumental plural of **pióro** 'feather' is archaic; the contemporary form is **piórami**.

W czerwonym polu – jakby męczeński: 'On a red background – as if martyred'. Poland has suffered much in its history, leading to images of martyrdom. It is sometimes said that the Polish national colors red and white represent blood and scars.

hen: The meaning of this particle or adverb is 'pointing or looking into the distance; far away'.

Z rozpostartemi skrzydły szeroko...
Zdaje się wznosić **gdzieś w zwyż, w przestworza!**
Orli wzrok zwrócił swój hen – daleko... [swym]
Za sine góry – za sine morza.

Z rozpostartemi skrzydły szeroko: 'With widely spread wings'. The grammatical form **skrzydły** of the instrumental plural of **skrzydło** 'feather' is archaic; the contemporary form is **skrzydłami**.

gdzieś w zwyż, w przestworza: Literally, 'somewhere on high, in the expanses'. The adverb **wzwyż** means in the direction of being higher, upwards; in contemporary Polish it is written as one word rather than as a two-word phrase. See [Jak piszemy: wzwyż czy w zwyż – razem czy osobno?](#)

Orli wzrok zwrócił swój hen – daleko... [swym]: Literally, 'It has turned its eagle sight to the distance – far away... [to his own]' The last word **swym** is not in the printed version – it has been penciled in by the poet, meaning that the eagle on the banner (which is seen by the poet in America) is looking back to the home country, Poland.

Za sine góry: ‘Beyond the blue mountains’. The feminine plural adjective *sine* (masculine singular *siny*) is used for a color that is grayish-blue. (This is the adjective used when we say someone’s hands or lips are “blue” from the cold; it can also be used for the color of the sky when it is overcast with rainclouds.) According to [siny - Wiktionary, the free dictionary](#) , it can also dialectally mean ‘dark blue’.

Tam! Jego gniazdo – gdzie **Piasta plemię**,
Nad Wisłą Wawel – Kraków, gród stary –
Tam cała przeszłość w podziemiach drzemie...
Śpią **Chrobre Króle** – Polski prastarej.

Piasta plemię: ‘the tribe of Piast’. This refers to the Piast dynasty, the oldest dynasty of Polish kings. See [Piast dynasty - Wikipedia](#)

Nad Wisłą Wawel – Kraków, gród stary – ‘On the Vistula River, Wawel Castle – Cracow, the old city’. Cracow used to be the capital of Poland, before Warsaw. The masculine noun *gród* ‘city’ is somewhat archaic and originally referred to a fortified city. (The contemporary word for ‘city’ is the neuter noun *miasto*.) Cracow was originally surrounded by city walls, parts of which still remain. The Wawel Castle overlooking the Vistula river was the residence of Polish kings (before the capital and royal residence was moved to Warsaw in 1596). See [Wawel Castle - Wikipedia](#)

Tam cała przeszłość w podziemiach drzemie: ‘There the whole past sleeps in the crypts...’ This refers to the tombs of Polish kings and dignitaries in the basement level of the cathedral on the grounds of the Wawel Castle.

Chrobre Króle: ‘Brave Kings’. The plural adjective *Chrobre* (masculine singular *Chrobry*) is an archaic word for ‘brave’; it was also the title or nickname of the first crowned king of Poland, Bolesław I the Brave (*Bolesław Chrobry*) of the Piast dynasty, the son of Prince Mieszko I, the founder of the Polish state, i.e., Poland as a recognized Christian nation (in 966). The plural form *króle* ‘kings’ is archaic; in contemporary Polish, it is *królowie*. See [Bolesław I the Brave - Wikipedia](#) , [Mieszko I - Wikipedia](#)

Więc Orzeł czuwa – i słuch wyteża,
Czy głos **Zygmunta dzwonu** nie woła?
Aby prowadzić **Polski żołnierza**
Na bój! **Wszak wrogów pełno dokoła.**

Zygmunta dzwonu: The Sigismund Bell is the largest of five bells in Wawel Cathedral, cast in 1520 and named after King Sigismund I the Old. It tolls on special official occasions and is one of Poland’s national symbols. See [The Sigismund Bell - Wikipedia](#)

Polski żołnierza: Literally, ‘the soldier of Poland’.

Wszak wrogów pełno dokoła: Literally, ‘For all around is full of enemies’. There were many wars in the history of Poland, which is partly due to its geographical position in the plains of the central part of Eastern Europe, where its western and eastern borders are demarcated only by rivers.

Wszak jeszcze pomnie niewoli pęta,
Sto lat zakuty był – lecz nie zginał!

Dzisiaj już **wolna Rzeczpospolita!**
Jej znak herbowy, znowuż [znowóż] zasłynął.

Sto lat zakuty był – lecz nie zginął: ‘For a hundred years it [i.e., the Eagle] was captive [in fetters] – but it did not perish.’ This refers to Poland’s loss of independence during the nineteenth century, when it was partitioned by the imperial powers of Prussia, Russia and Austria-Hungary. The wording ‘did not perish’ is an allusion to the Polish national anthem, **Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła, kiedy my żyjemy** ‘Poland has not yet perished, since/as long as we are alive’, which expresses the patriotism and identity of the Polish nation.

wolna Rzeczpospolita: ‘free Republic’ or ‘the Republic [of Poland] is free’.

Jej znak herbowy, znowuż [znowóż] zasłynął: ‘Her heraldic sign once again is famous/has become famous’. This refers to the sign of the White Eagle. The adverb **znowuż** (which is the correct spelling) is the emphatic form of **znowu** (alternative form **znów**) ‘once again’.

Patrz! Dwa Sztandary! Dwie jasne tęczę...
Pod których znakiem **chlubą jest życie**,
Pan Bóg nad niemi ma swoją pieczę –
Oby nam słońca jaśniało szczęście!

chlubą jest życie: Literally, ‘life is glory’ or ‘life is pride’.

Pan Bóg nad niemi ma swoją pieczę: Literally, ‘The Lord God over them has His protection’. The grammatical form **niemi** ‘them’ (personal pronoun, 3rd person plural, instrumental case) is archaic; in contemporary Polish, it is **nimi**.

Oby nam słońca jaśniało szczęście: Literally, ‘May the happiness of the sun shine brightly for us’.