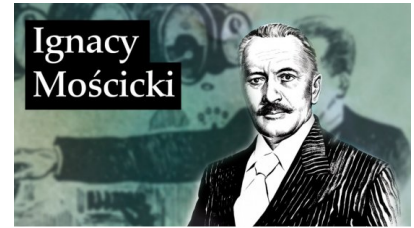


Giants of Science

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Ignacy Mościcki

Ignacy Mościcki (born 1 December 1867, died 2 October 1946)



Ignacy Mościcki

Józef Piłsudski's age-mate, one of the posthumous supporters of the January Uprising, a generation of the rebels. He came from a noble Mazovia (Mazowsze) family of well-established patriotic traditions: his grandfather, Walenty, took part in the November Uprising, and his father, Faustyn Walenty, along with his brothers, fought in the January Uprising.

Ignacy grew up with five siblings – three brothers and two sisters. He studied in Płock, Zamość and Warsaw, as well as at the Riga Polytechnic, where he initially joined the “Zet” youth underground, and then the Second Proletariat workers' organization. In 1892, fleeing arrest (he was involved in preparing an attempt on the life of the Governor-General of Warsaw), he went abroad, and eventually settled in England. There, he joined the Foreign Union of Polish Socialists (serving on the board of the London section), and became a delegate for the congress of the Second International.

In 1897, Mościcki joined the University of Freiburg, where he specialised in electrochemistry. He also took up a job with Société de l'Acide Nitrique, a nitric acid manufacturer, developed an original method of nitric acid production, and constructed – and then put into production – high voltage capacitors. He also invented hydrogen cyanide synthesis technology, as well as several industrial patents. In 1912, he became involved with the Polytechnic School in Lviv (renamed the Lviv Polytechnic in 1925), and in 1915 became the Dean of the Chemistry Faculty. During World War I, he was actively engaged in the independence work of the Polish Independence League.

In free Poland, Mościcki became involved in building the

chemical industry. He established the Chemical Research Institute, and at the end of 1925, was appointed Chair of Technical Electrochemistry at the Warsaw Polytechnic. From mid-1922, he managed the State Nitrogen Compounds Factory in Chorzów, and in 1928-1930, the State Nitrogen Compounds Factory in Tarnów – though the latter in theory only, as in June 1926 he was elected to the office of the President of the Republic of Poland.

At the time when the real state power was in the hands of Józef Piłsudski, Mościcki's role came down to fulfilling representative functions – although he did try to influence the directions of the country's economic development. His re-election to the office of the President in May 1933 made him more active in politics, and after Piłsudski's death, Mościcki became the head of a Sanation wing called the Castle Group, ruling the country together with politicians gathered around Marshal Rydz-Śmigły. In the summer of 1939, as President, he strongly opposed the idea of establishing a national defence government jointly with the opposition. On 1 September 1939, Mościcki issued a proclamation calling on the society to support the “Commander-in-Chief and the armed forces” in order to give “a worthy response to the attacker”. On the evening of 17 September, faced with the rapid advance of German troops and the Soviet aggression, Mościcki left for Romania, where he was interned. He resigned from the office on 30 September 1939, in late 1939 left Romania for Switzerland, and died there in October 1946.

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