

JÚLIUS JURAJ THURZO - first Slovak naval captain, the giant of World Seas

Július Juraj Thurzo was born 21st February 1882 in Detva. He was the successor of the family Radvaň Thurzos who passed their gunpowder craft from generation to generation. Tradition was broken up by grandfather of Julius Thurzo - Ján, born in 1803, who was a cabinet maker master. Július' father, Ján Daniel Thurzo was the district road specialist. After the death of his wife Rosina, nee Rochová who died in 1880, he married the second time to Katarína Gondová from Detva, born 5th March 1859.

They had three children in Detva: daughter Mária, son Július and daughter Anna. Their father was later transferred to Brezno where he died of pneumonia 2nd February 1893. He is also buried there.

After their father's death, the family moved to Banská Bystrica, where there was better earning potential. Mother, who came from Detva, embroidered and cooked for students. After arriving to Banská Bystrica she enrolled her son in lower grade of Grammar School, where he emerged as clever and talented student.

Július realized he must do everything to help her mother, who worked and try to arrange good education and life for her children. So that, when he got the information about Hungarian Naval Academy in Fiume (today Rijeka) offering free education with possibility of becoming a captain of the ship, he was enthusiastic. His application was supported by his professor Ján Kmeť, because he found Július as diligent student with excellent physical condition. He graduated his studies in Fiume and passed with great academic achievements in 1900. He also



J. J. Thurzo

gave his thanks this way to his mother, who supported him financially during their studies.



J. J. Thurzo with the crew on the Hieronymi board

An important part of future captain preparation was tough practice on steamers and sailing vessels, and thus, sailing through the seas, he often remembered his mother and his great love, Kornélia Petrikovichová from Radvaň. In his numerous letters to them he remembers the joint moments, but he also sensitively assesses the hard life of sailors at sea: "... If I wanted to describe all this, I would have a lot to write, I would end up writing the truth but I cannot write lies." (From the estate of Július Juraj Thurzo - from letter to mother from 27th April 1901).

He changed several ships survived the shipwreck, experienced chilly winters, cold wind and rain, often starved. His working hours lasted for 24 hours a day and his earnings were miserable. Work at Hungarian ships was the worst paid in Europe. Steamer companies were

rich but they did not make good work condition for their crews who worked hard and often were risking their lives to import cargos to the destination.

After graduating officers' exams 27th January 1903 Július Thurzo became lieutenant of maritime shipping business. After his service on a sailboat Ausilio he passed the captain tests and 31st March 1906 in Fiume he receives diploma of long voyages captain. One of the most beautiful events in his difficult life was his marriage with his beloved Kornélia on 25th November 1906. Later they meet and say good bye many times before his long journeys.

After World War I., which he got over in the Navy, he was not able to find an appropriate employment for a long time. Newly formed Czechoslovak Republic was the terrestrial state without any access to the sea. At the end of October 1919 he has taken the job of navigational adviser to the Czechoslovak Embassy in Belgrade. In 1923, however, he came back to Bratislava and began to work on Catchments and Waterway Office for the Danube, becoming the port captain and later the director of the Office.



Július Juraj Thurzo with his wife

In the meantime, however, the other personal tragedies happened: 21st December 1911 his son Julko died and after that, in the difficult years of World War II his two young granddaughters, were killed in a train accident in the Orava region. Thereafter, their mother – the daughter of J.J.Thurzo - Gabriela Jurkovičová died in 1943. He tried to overcome the pain and suffering by hard work and writing his memoirs of his travels, but the book named Through World's Oceans was edited after his death in 1973.

The naval captain, the giant of Slovak shipping history, Detva native - Július Juraj Thurzo passed away on 16th February 1950 in Banská Bystrica at the age of 68.

Prepared using the publication Through World's Oceans, 1973.

The other information could be found in Podpoľanie Museum.

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