

# **FREEMASONRY IN POLAND**

***PAST AND PRESENT***

*Mitchell Ozog, 32°*



## **FREEMASONRY IN POLAND – PAST AND PRESENT**

*Mitchell Ozog, 32°*

The first Masonic lodges were established in Poland during the early 18th century, circa 1720-1730. At first Masonic lodges in Poland had an elite character and only admitted large land owners, local rulers, wealthy commercial magnates and bishops. As time passed they also began to admit outstanding scientists, politicians and entrepreneurs. The movement gained momentum in Warsaw in 1764 when King Stanislaw August Poniatowski, a devotee of Enlightenment and a man well known in Western Masonic circles, came to the throne in Poland.

The 18th century produced three Constitutions considered as the first modern freedom documents. The American Constitution of 1789 was the oldest. The second and third were Polish and French of 1791. The Polish Constitution was deemed to be too radical by the “tyranny of absolutism” still rampant in Europe. The “absolute” countries of Russia, Prussia and Austria eliminated this freedom movement.

Among the authors of the Polish Constitution were Masonic Brothers Ignacy Potocki, a member of a prominent family and the author of the original draft of the Constitution, and Stanislaw Kostka Potocki, brother of Ignacy and statesman, famed orator, and member of the Permanent Council of the Diet. The last King of Poland Brother Stanislaw August Poniatowski, a patron of the arts and science was one of the most enlightened monarchs in the annals of Europe. Speaker of the Diet Stanislaw Malachowski, was known in the intellectual communities throughout Europe, as “Polish Aristides” for his erudition and abiding sense of justice.

### **Polish Freemasonry in 18th and 19th Century**

On April 28, 1738 the Polish movement was terminated by the Holy See Encyclical, "In Eminenti", of Clement the XII which was focused primarily against the Masons. This act by the Catholic Church led to the Masons establishing new criteria for their lodges.

For the first time criteria of the society membership were set on the 4th of August 1769 in the "Code des Status." Citizens of the arts and science, military men, diplomats, and all found their place there in equal degree. Among the guests present during the celebration of the play “Midsummer Night” was the head of the Polish Catholic Church, Primate Gabriel Podoski. Although only a small number of the Polish clergy belonged to the lodges, anti-Masonic projects had not won the Church's approval because most of the bishops were afraid to risk a conflict with the king and his supporters. Norbert Wojtowicz in 1999 wrote “...that during the 1780s Polish Freemasonry experienced significant growth. Its cause was chiefly the sum of western novelties and some degree of secrecy, which gave rise to an increased interest in the organization. The Polish faction consisted mainly of the nobility, whereas the lower ranks - doctors, lesser

officers or higher servants of the Court were considered mainly foreigners. The huge growth was also visible in the second branch of the Polish Freemasonry, which was constituted by the "adopting" lodges. This period can be considered the greatest expansion of Polish Freemasonry. In 1788 the Warsaw headquarters mastered 23 symbolic lodges and 4 Scottish lodges. There were about 1000 people in its ranks, intellectuals, patriots, and clergy."

On May 14, 1781 the Grand Orient of France authorized a commission to create and install lodges in Poland. The Grand Orient of Poland was born on February 2, 1783. This obedience was very active on the social plans policy during all the period which followed. The political reform of 1791 worried the foreign powers, which feared its Jacobin character. Russia and Austria agreed on a new division in 1793. Masons became alarmed for their ability to perform the work on a regular basis. The development of Freemasonry in Poland was halted by the collapse of the First Republic of Poland in 1795 when Poland was partitioned among three neighboring countries. After an unfruitful insurrection attempt, Poland was divided into thirds in 1795. Accordingly, Poland was striped of its charters and divided among Russia, Austria and Prussia. The Polish language was prohibited. Only Prussia, which occupied the area of Warsaw, tolerated Masonry. Austria and Russia emphatically pronounced its prohibition.

After its fall and the third partitioning of Poland in 1794, the Grand Orient vanished and local Polish Freemasonry disintegrated. Only in the Prussian sector did it survive, with charity as its only activity. The relative Prussian tolerance of the Polish language in Masonic Lodges did not satisfy the brothers as they opened Lodge in 1805. The Polish Brothers looked toward France to restore their individual rights to a free lodge. Brother Henryk Dambrowski, a military general with service to France, authored the "Song of Resistance" which was later adopted as the official anthem of Poland. He later founded several lodges at the time of the Napoleonic campaigns in Italy. In 1807 Napoleon assimilated the Grand-Duchy of Warsaw and authorized the free practice of Masonry. For a second time, Brother Henryk Dambrowski assumed the position of Master of the Lodge in Poznan. Frederic Guillaume was given credentials to transform this lodge into a French lodge which had the effect of bringing the Poles together. This Polish language lodge attracted new brothers and marked the rebirth of Polish Masonry under the Regis of the Grand Orient of France.

In March of 1810 the Wielki Wschód Narodowy Ksiestwa Warszawskiego (National Grand Orient of the Warsaw Princedom) was constituted. Although the military had not been the most numerous group, they had been the main advocates of Freemasonry. After the crushing defeat of Napoleon in the East, Masonic activities in Poland were again suspended.

The fall of the Napoleonic Empire issued the death knell of the Masonic revival. The Congress of Vienna granted a broad partition of the Polish territory to Russia in the form of a protectorate including Warsaw.

Tsar Nicolas I was hostile to Freemasonry and ended up occupying Poland militarily following the Romantic Revolution. Under Alexander I the Masonic fortunes greatly improved as the Great National Orient was able to continue its work. Ernst Mayer, member of the first chronicle of Poznan's lodge wrote, "... in April 1820 all brothers arrived to found the new lodge named Unity Temple. The Unity Temple's constitution was in effect beginning on the 29th of May 1820."

The Tsar of Russia was concerned with the new social liberalism movement and forcibly ended the enrollment in Lodges. It was at this time that Brother Potocki of the Great Master and President of the Council of Ministers and Senate pursued a path to protect the Order from Russian repression. Brother Potocki was forced to resign on March 3, 1821. On August 12th of the same year the Tsar published a ukase (bill) prohibiting Masonry. The year 1821 also saw the radical element of the Catholic Church leadership emerge against the Masons.

After 1824 the Tsar showed liberal tendencies to the Enlightenment Movement and the philosophy ideas of Freemasonry. He protected Russian Masonry and forced many officials to do the same. He revived the Masonic organization in the Polish Kingdom which caused a violent inflow of adepts. During the year of 1821, 3,000 Masons were members in symbolic lodges. The membership of many dignitaries added to the popularity, but most of the Masons saw their own membership in purely social terms.

The working relationship with the new emperor did not last long. Broken agreements and violations of the constitution created a strong opposition toward the monarch. Authorities tended to pacify and subordinate Polish Masonry to the emperor. Not all members were going to accept this condition which split the organization into factions. Once again an edict issued on the 25th of September 1821 by Józef Zajaczek, Prince-Steward of the Kingdom, suspended all Masonic activities. This edict was not successful as secret organizations appeared such as the "Wolnomularstwo Narodowe" (National Freemasonry) of Walerian Lukasinski.

The November Uprising of 1830–1831, also known as the Cadet Revolution, was an armed rebellion against the rule of the Russian Empire in Poland and Lithuania. The uprising began on November 29, 1830 in Warsaw when a group of young non-commissioned officers from the Imperial Russian Army's military academy in Warsaw revolted. As a result the uprising, many clandestine brothers sought weapons.

In 1831 Brother Fayette became the leader of Polish refuges. Accordingly, the French, American and English Lodges accommodated the refugee Freemasons. Many Polish Masons sought exile and would later initiate their descendants in local lodges. A defeat of the patriotic insurrection of 1830-31 helped to increase Polish emigration which reinforced working lodges in Besançon, Avignon, and Le Puy. Many

brethren arrived in the British Isles where numerous initiations took place as evidenced by the "Polish National Lodge" created in exile. In the 1880s there appeared in the Polish Kingdom a surrogate of a former lodge or so-called "lounges" where important meetings and current problems were discussed.

### **Polish Freemasonry in 20th Century**

The first signs of the reawakening of Polish Masonry appeared in the early 1900's. In November 1909 seven candidates from Warsaw were initiated in the Parisian lodge "Les Rénovateurs". These lodge brothers started their work in "The Liberation" (Wyzwolenie) movement. The outbreak of World War I activated Polish adepts. There were attempts to negotiate with Russian cadets whereby independence movements were supported. Attempts to contact the Entente governments were made but proved unsuccessful. After the 1918 Armistice, attempts were made to create their own obedience. On 19 March 1920 a regular lodge "Kopernik" was opened as the mother lodge for subsequent workshops. The Supreme Council of Poland was supervised by Andrzej Strug and established Wielka Loza Narodowa "Polacy Zjednoczeni" (National Grand Lodge "Poles United") governed by Rafal Radziwilowicz.

### **Situation Pre-War Period**

At the end of the First World War Poland rejected annexation and the cultural destruction imposed by Bismarck. Only one Masonic Lodge continued to practice the work. Nevertheless, on August 1, 1920, a Grand National Lodge was created thanks to the return of various underground Polish lodges in exile from Europe and also to the return of the emigrants. In 1922, the Supreme Council 33°, A.A. & S.R. of Freemasonry, was created in Warsaw.

Two years later, eighteen lodges had membership of four hundred Masons as Masonry continued to grow. In 1930 the Masons slowly left the lodges. The influence of Masonry on the current affairs of State was initially very high. Brother Andrzej Strug claimed that, "in every government of the restituted Poland there were at least two ministers, and in each ministry at least one departmental director, who were Masons". These words were no idle boasting because comparatively small number of Masons constituted a real political power.

A repressive bill in 1938 against the Freemasons was filed to prohibit Masonry in Poland. On November 22 of the same year the decree of prohibition was published forbidding the Masons to hold public office. On September 1, and September 17, 1939 the troops of Germany and the Soviet Union invaded Poland, thus starting the Second World War.

According to different estimates eight to fourteen lodges operated in Poland in the interwar period with 200-600 + members. Prominent citizens were allied to Marshal Józef Pilsudski. After Pilsudski's death, a decree outlawing Freemasonry in Poland was issued in 1938. During the WW II Nazi occupation few

Masonic groups were active in Warsaw and Cracow. Death or exile to the concentration camps was their fate. The Kopernik Lodge had to operate in exile as part of the Grand Lodge of France. (Grande Loge de France)

### **Situation after 1945**

After the close of WW II many of the Freemasons joined a new Masonic structure with surprisingly good results. Of all the brethren who remained 40.5% occupied high positions in the state administration such as departmental directors, PMs, and ministers), thirty-two per cent became higher education teachers, 9.5% gained high ranks in the cooperatives. Only a few Freemasons had been persecuted but the reason was their political activity not the fact of Freemasonry membership. In the first years after the war President Boleslaw Bierut (General-Secretary) suggested restoring the lodge. Many prominent Freemasons refused to support the government as they feared being made a tool of the ruling political party. Later attempts were equally unsuccessful.

In Poland the Masons were subjected to the dictates of the Yalta Conference agreement and further purging by Stalinist terror. There was no place for Masons and Masonic Lodges who were rejected by both the Communists and hostile Catholic leadership. Nevertheless, it is documented that underground Polish Masonry was active 1945 to 1989. This was due to the large Polish Diaspora in the Northern Alsace-Lorraine, region of France, in the United States especially Chicago, and in the United Kingdom. Since 1989, Masonry has been gradually reinstated its roots in Poland.

Meanwhile, a conspiratorial lodge had existed since 12 February 1961 when a ritual "reawakening" of the pre-war "Kopernik" lodge took place. A week later first initiations were accepted including the initiation of future Grand Master, Jan Józef Lipski. The post in Warsaw did not avoid an unofficial participation in the political life of the country. From these circles support came for Komitet Obrony Robotników. The Committee for Defense of Workers and later for the "Solidarnosc" and "Kopernik" of Warsaw both were conspiratorial workshops.

As recently as 1989 twenty adepts had been initiated, but the resuming of workshop activities had not been announced to the brethren holding high official positions. The conspiracy was so perfect that even in the Masonic circles for nearly thirty years only the Polish Kopernik Lodge in Paris knew officially of the existence of the Warsaw post.

The political breakthrough of 1989 opened the way to the reemergence of Polish Freemasonry. As Communism faded openness to various influences occurred. The Brethren grouped around "Kopernik" thus increasing their activity, and on 27 December 1991, they performed a ritual reawakening of the

Wielka Loza Narodowa Polski (National Grand Lodge of Poland). After 1990 due to the influence of the Grand Orient de France, toleration and increases in liberal Freemasonry activity flourished.

In 1997 the Grand Orient of Poland and the Grand National Lodge of Poland were founded. This formation was followed by the Polish jurisdiction of Le Droit Humain and its three principal Obediences represented in Poland on the numerical level and followed by the Large Grand Female Lodge of France and Grand Lodge of France. Two French speaking Lodges currently work in Poland. The REAA was under the aegis of the GLNF France and the other under the DH Fraternal Meeting. A provisional Lodge of the GLDF joined the French-speaking Freemasons of the GLDF and is currently active in Poland. An independent magazine "Wolnomularz Polski", the Polish Freemason was connected with the liberal current of the times. In a similar way, some other brochures were published such as series "Biblioteczka Wolnomularza Polskiego", the Polish Freemason Library, and series "Ex Oriente Lux", the latter published by demand of the Grand Master of the Grand Orient of Poland. In publication today is the quarterly "Ars Regia" which is devoted to Freemasonry, but due to its scientific character it has a limited number of readers. According to Norbert Wojtowicz, "Polish Freemasons are still far from practicing what could be called openness in the society."

**So mote it be**

**Mitchell Ozog, , 32°**

**Email: mozog@bonisteelml.org**

**Web site: www.bonisteelml.org**

**Sources:**

- European Masonic Pages - <http://www.fm-europe.org/pages/en/index.htm>
- Norbert Wojtowicz's web page:- <http://www.republika.pl/adnikiel/masonica.htm>
- Polish Freemason web site - [http://wolnomularz.pl/7\\_eng.htm](http://wolnomularz.pl/7_eng.htm)
- Virtual Masonic Orient - <http://wolnomularstwo.pl>
- The National Grand Lodge of Poland - <http://wlnp.pl/site>
- Ludwik Hass, Wolnomularstwo w Europie Srodkowo-Wschodniej w XVIII I XIX wieku
- The Ossolinski National Institute – Wroclaw. - <http://www.oss.wroc.pl>
- Polish Freemason web site - [http://www.fmpol.pl/7\\_eng.htm](http://www.fmpol.pl/7_eng.htm)
- Maciej B. Stepień web site - <http://stepbystep.republika.pl>

**Notes:**

**GRAND LODGE OF POLAND – Web site - <http://wlnp.pl>**

**Polish Lodges -**

- Mother Lodge „Kopernik” – Warsaw (Warszawa)
- Lodge # 2 „Walerian Lukasinski” – Warsaw (Warszawa)

- Lodge # 3 „Przesąd Zwycięzcy” – Cracow (Kraków)
- Lodge # 4 „La France” – Warsaw (Warszawa)
- Lodge # 5 „Świątynia Hymnu Jedności” – Poznan (Poznań)
- Lodge # 6 „Eugenia Pod Ukoronowanym Lwem” – Gdansk (Gdańsk)
- Lodge # 7 „Pod Szczęśliwą Gwiazdą” – Warsaw (Warszawa)
- Lodge # 8 "Iwan Luckiewicz" - Warsaw (Warszawa)

## **GRAND ORIENT OF POLAND -**

<http://wolnomularstwo.pl>

- Mother Lodge - Wolność Przywrócona (inst. 26.4.1991)
- Lodge - Nadzieja (inst. 9.11.1991)
- Lodge – Three Brothers (inst. 21.5.1993)
- Lodge - Europe (inst. 11.3.1994)

The Order of International Co-Freemasonry "Le Droit Humain" Poland Jurisdiction - <http://www.dhpolska.com>

## **B'NAI B'RITH POLAND -**

- Lodge Polin – (9.9. 2007)

The Supreme Council Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry of the Republic of Poland was established in October 1993.

### **The Supreme Council of Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Poland:**

#### **Lodges of Perfection:**

- #. 1 "Jan Jozef Lipski" (Warsaw)
- #. 2 "Góra Wawel" ("Wawel Hill") (Cracow)
- #. 3 "Temple of Isis" (French speaking) (Warsaw)
- #. 4 (Poznan)
- #. 5 (Gdansk)
- Chapter "Rose-Croix"
- Council of Kadosh "Odro ab chao"
- Tribunal One Consistory "Polonia".

## **POLISH AMERICAN MASONIC LODGE IN USA**

- Kosciuszko Lodge # 1085 - [www.kosciuszkomason.com](http://www.kosciuszkomason.com)

**Norbert Wójtowicz** – (Born 1 December 1972) Polish historian and theologian from Wrocław. Graduated from the University of Wrocław and Papal Theological Faculty in Wrocław. In 2000 research scholarship of The De Brzezie Lanckoronski Foundation in London. In 2000-2002 research grant of Polish Committee of Scientific Research "The stereotype of freemasonry in Polish political

thought 1918-1939". He defended PhD thesis entitled "A stereotype of a Freemason in Polish political thought 1918-1939" in the Institute of History, University of Wrocław. He has published many scientific and popular-scientific articles on Freemasonry and a few books in Polish, among others "Wielki Architekt Wszechświata. Teologiczna krytyka masonskich wizji Boga" (Great Architect of the Universe. Theological critics of Masonic concepts of God) in 1999, "Antymason'ska kampania 1938 roku" (Antimasonic campaign in 1938), "Rozmowy o masonerii" (Conversation about freemasonry) in 2005 and "Masoneria. Mały słownik" (Freemasonry. A small lexicon) in 2006. He was awarded Złote Pióro "Wolnomularza Polskiego" (Gold Pen of "Polish Freemason") in 2005. (sources: wikipedia)